

INDIA SPEAKS

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

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BILATERAL ISSUES

a. EGYPT

1. MACIC to organize Kathak dance classes in June, Cairo, 5 June 2014

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture will offer introductory classes in Kathak dance in the month of June 2014. The classes will be take place at the Cultural Centre on 11, 16, 18 and 23 June from 1000 to 1200 hours. All applicants will have to come personally to register for the course and should have sufficient time at their disposal to complete the formalities. There are only 30 vacancies. Registration will be on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The classes will be given by Ms. Maria K, a professional Kathak Dancer, trained for 6 years in Kathak dance with guru Prerana mali at Ram Bharatiya Kala Kendra in New Delhi, and at the Chakkar Dance Centre in Moscow. She is also currently training in Hindustani Classical Music in Delhi.

Kathak is one of the eight forms of Indian classical dances. The word Kathak is derived from the Sanskrit word katha meaning story, and katthaka in Sanskrit means one who tells a story. This dance form traces its origins to the nomadic bards of ancient northern India, known as Kathakars or storytellers. From the 16th century onwards it absorbed certain features of Persian dance and central Asian dance which were imported by the royal courts of the Mughal era. Today, Kathak has emerged as a distinct dance form. Being the only classical dance of India having links with Islamic culture, it represents a unique synthesis of Hindu and Muslim genius in art.

REGISTRATION will take place at MACIC premises at 23, Talaat Harb Street, Down Town, CAIRO from 9 - 10 June 2014 from 10am-4.30pm or until the vacancies are filled.

The following documents are required to be submitted at the time of registration:

1. Two Passport size photographs
2. Copy of National ID (for Egyptians) / copy of passport with valid visa (non-Egyptian)

Middle East Institute @ New Delhi, www.mei.org.in

For More information, please contact the Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture at macic@indembcairo.com or info.cairo@mea.gov.in. You can also follow us on Facebook at Indian Embassy Cairo.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,

http://www.indembcairo.com/tabid/171/Default.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=19957

2. Lecture by Misbah Kotb on 'Impressions from India', Cairo, 08 June 2014

The Embassy of India, in collaboration with the Egypt-India Friendship Association (EIFA) will organize a lecture by senior Journalist Misbah Kotb on 'Impressions from India' at the Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC – 23, Talaat Harb, Downtown Cairo) on 15 June 2014 at 6pm. Recently, Kotb travelled to India to attend iPHEX 2014, an exhibition that brought drugs, pharmaceutical and healthcare industry together to showcase Indian pharmaceutical products and technologies to a global audience. The event was organized at Mumbai in May by PHARMEXCIL, which is the nodal Indian agency to represent Drugs, Pharmaceutical & Healthcare industry. During his visit, Kotb also visited the industrial town of Pune where he toured the offices and factories of three leading Industrial companies: Tata& Sons, Kirloskar Brothers and Bajaj Automobiles.

The Indian Ambassador, Navdeep Suri, and the Chairperson of the Egypt-India Friendship Association, Dr. Magued Osman will deliver opening remarks. Kotb will talk about his impressions from the visit, including the Indian pharmaceutical sector and the possibility of collaboration in the field with Egypt, as well as his observations from his visits to Indian companies. Both Kirloskar Brothers and Bajaj Automobiles have been active in Egypt for several years – the former manufactures pump sets, while the latter imports a number of two wheelers, three wheelers and their spare parts.

Misbah Kotb is currently the head of the Economic Division at Al Masry Al Youm newspaper. He joined the paper in 2006 in his current designation. He has earlier worked as head of Economic Division at Al Sharq Al Awsat Daily Newspaper (Regional office in Cairo) from 2001-2008. He has also worked as producer with Egyptian Television, during which he prepared various documentary films. He also appears frequently as a commentator on Arab & Egyptian satellite Channels

For more information please contact the Embassy at info.cairo@mea.gov.in or follow us on Facebook at Indian Embassy Cairo.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,

http://www.indembcairo.com/tabid/171/Default.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=20963

3. Kathak Dance Lecture-cum-Demonstration, Cairo, 15 June 2014

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC) will organize a lecture-cum-demonstration on Kathak dance by Ms. Maria Krizhanovskaya, on Tuesday, 24 June at 6.00 p.m at its premises (23, Talaat Harb, Downtown Cairo). MACIC is conducting introductory classes in

the Kathak dance during the month of June 2014 by Ms. Krizhanovskaya, a professional Kathak dancer, trained for 6 years in Kathak dance with Guru Prerana Mali at Ram Bharatiya Kala Kendra in New Delhi, and at the Chakkar Dance Centre in Moscow. She is also currently training in Hindustani Classical Music in Delhi. Some of her students will perform along with her during the event, which will represent the culmination of the month long dance training programme.

Kathak is one of the eight forms of Indian classical dance. The word Kathak is derived from the Sanskrit word katha means story, and kattrhaka in Sanskrit means a storyteller. This dance form traces its origins to the nomadic bards of ancient northern India, known as Kathakars or storytellers. From the 16th century onwards it absorbed certain features of Persian dance and central Asian dance which were imported by the royal courts of the Mughal era. Today, Kathak has emerged as a distinct dance form. Being the only classical dance of India having links with Islamic culture, it represents a unique synthesis of Hindu and Muslim genius in art.

For further details, please contact: The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture, Tel: 23933396/23960071; Fax: 23936572; e-mail: macic@indembcairo.com or follow us on Facebook at Indian Embassy Cairo.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=21973

4. India Day function at Misr Public Library, Cairo, 18 June 2014

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Cultural (MACIC) held a successful India Day outreach programme at the Misr Public Library in El Zawia on 16 July 2014. The programme started with a tour of Misr Public Library during which Iman Abdel Mohsen, Director of the Library briefed the dignitaries on the various activities and services offered by the library. After the end of the tour, Ambassador of India to Egypt Navdeep Suri and Ambassador Abdel Raouf El Reedy, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Misr Public Libraries jointly inaugurated an exhibition on Indo-Egyptian relations.

During a session themed, “India and Egypt: Civilization and Heritage,” Ambassador Suri and Ambassador El Reedy addressed the attendees about the rich history of interactions between the two countries. During the session a documentary film titled “The Spirit of India” was screened. In his remarks, Ambassador Reedy reviewed the deeply-rooted relations between the two countries since ancient times and later between the leaders of the two countries, such as Sa’d Zaghloul and Gandhi and Nasser and Nehru. He complimented India’s such as democracy, which is manifested in an elected parliament, freedom of expression and smooth rotation of power between consecutive governments. He also referred to the major leap achieved by India in the field of IT and software exports, which hit today a record of US\$ 110 billion. He added that there are many lessons, which we should draw from India. For instance, India has achieved self-sufficiency in terms of wheat and exports to the world countries about 10 million tons of wheat.

On his part, Ambassador Suri said that the Embassy was doing its bit to build on the firm foundations of bilateral relations, emphasizing the role of culture and events such as the India by the Nile festival. On the sidelines of the event, prizes were distributed to winners of a painting competition on India through the eyes of Egyptian kids. The competition was organized early on the same day amongst students of two age groups (6 to 10 years & 11 to 15 years old). In addition, artistic shows were performed by members of MACIC at the open theatre of the library.

For more information, please contact the Indian Cultural Centre at macic@indembcairo.com or follow Indian Embassy Cairo on Facebook.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,

http://www.indembcairo.com/tabid/171/Default.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=24971

5. 'India through Egyptian Eyes' – The Cairo Camera Club presents experiences from their India visit, Cairo, 18 June 2014

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC) in association with Discover India in Egypt group will hold a lecture on 'India Through Egyptian Eyes' on 22 June 2014 at 6.30 p.m. at its premises (23, Talaat Harb, Downtown Cairo). A group of members from the Cairo Camera Club (CCC) visited India recently, and recorded their experiences in India. Some of the members will share these experiences and present a selection of their photographs. The lectures and presentations will be followed by an interactive session.

Ms. Mai Khafagi, Founder of 'Discover India in Egypt' group will deliver the opening remarks. The Indian Ambassador, Navdeep Suri will grace the occasion.

'Discover India in Egypt' has worked for many years in order to energize the relationship between the Egyptians and Indians in Egypt and to spread Indian culture in Cairo and other governorates. The group has been organizing various activities to build people to people relations, which includes international trips to India, movie nights and discussions, meditation classes, social gatherings, organization of Holi, the festival of colours, etc.

For further details, please contact: The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture, Tel: 23933396/23960071; Fax: 23936572; e-mail: macic@indembcairo.com or follow us on Facebook at Indian Embassy Cairo.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=25976

6. India Day at Children Civilization & Creativity Centre, Cairo, 26 June 2014

Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC) in association with Children's Civilization & Creativity Centre will be holding an India Day programme at premises on Thursday, 26 June 2014. The exhibition will be open to the public from 1000 – 2200 hrs. In addition, the programme will include screening of documentaries on India, interaction session, Indian dance and fashion show and also Yoga lecture-cum –demonstration.

The Children Civilization & Creativity Centre, located at 34 Abou Bakr El Seddik Street, Heliopolis, Cairo, assists children and young adults to learn through hands on exhibits, inter-actives, computer games and takes the visitor through the history of science in Egypt. The models and replicas at the museum represent the talent and creativity of Egyptian children.

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC) was established in 1992 is located at 23, Talaat Harb, Downtown Cairo. It holds languages classes in Hindi and Urdu, Yoga classes for Beginners and Intermediate level, and regularly conducts lectures and symposia on various topics, exhibitions on India, and dance classes. MACIC also does outreach activities with educational institutions and cultural centres both within and outside Cairo.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,

http://www.indembcairo.com/tabid/171/Default.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=27977

7. Ramadan Kareem, Cairo, 30 June 2014

A blessed and peaceful Ramadan for all our Egyptian friends. Ramadan Kareem, from us at the Indian Embassy in Cairo and from all your friends in India!

As you know, India takes great pride in its religious diversity and in the fact that communities from virtually every religious denomination can feel comfortable in calling India their home. There is an abiding spirit of respect and tolerance towards different religious faiths.

India is also home to the second largest Muslim community in the world and the second oldest mosque in the world (the Cheraman Jama Masjid in Kerala- built around 629 A.D., seven years after the migration of Prophet Mohammed (Peace be Upon Him) to Medina.

This makes Ramadan and Eid ul Fitr as much of an Indian celebration as it is an Egyptian one in Egypt. Cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Aligarh and Srinagar are known for their distinctive local touch to Iftar, a celebration that is not limited to the Muslim community alone. It is common for senior government and political leaders and also for ordinary individuals from other communities to host an Iftar banquet for their Muslim friends and brethren.

Like Kunafa in Egypt, Sheer Khurma, a mouth-watering delicacy made with a very fine variety of vermicelli, is prepared in every Indian household. Food items are also sent to mosques, where people get together to break their fast. All the mosques are geared up to accommodate larger number of faithful. Loud speakers are installed in all the mosques so people far and distant can also hear the Azan. Throughout this month, all the Television and Radio channels broadcast special programs, including recitation of Quran. Like Egypt, mosques and private organizations in India establish places where poor can come for “Sehri” and “Iftar”.

Ramadan brings a spirit of piety, of charity, of sacrifice and of celebration. We join our Egyptian friends in celebrating the remarkable spirit of Ramadan.

Ramadan Kareem

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=30977

b. IRAQ

8. Travel Advisory for Indian nationals in Iraq, New Delhi, 15 June 2014

In view of the precarious security situation prevailing in Iraq, Indian nationals are advised to avoid all travel to Iraq, until further notification.

Indian nationals in Iraq may consider leaving the country by commercial means if it is safe to do so. Our nationals living in areas affected by the ongoing armed conflict are advised to stay indoors as far as possible and are advised to remain in contact with our Embassy in Baghdad for necessary advice and updated information on the evolving security situation. Those nationals who do not have travel documents or need other consular services are advised to seek assistance from the Indian Embassy in Baghdad.

The Indian Embassy in Baghdad has set up a 24 hour helpline which can be accessed for information or assistance as per contact details given below:

Tel. No. +964 770 444 4899 (Mobile)

Tel. No. +964 770 484 3247 (Mobile)

Email: amb.baghdad@mea.gov.in

hoc.baghdad@mea.gov.in

cons.baghdad@mea.gov.in

edubaghdad@yahoo.com

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/23437/Security+situation+in+Iraq>

9. Security situation in Iraq, New Delhi, 16 June 2014

The Government of India is deeply concerned with deteriorating security situation in Iraq, resulting out of recent attacks and taking over of some cities, including of Mosul and Tikrit by terrorist outfits since 8 June 2014, which is a direct threat to the security and territorial integrity of Iraq. The Government of India strongly condemns such attacks and firmly stands by the Government and the people of Iraq in their fight against international terrorism and in their efforts to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the friendly country of Iraq.

India remains strongly committed to the emergence of a stable, peaceful, united and democratic Iraq, which is in the interest of regional and global peace and security.

The safety and security of the Indian nationals currently in Iraq remains a matter of serious concern for the Government of India. An advisory has been issued on 15 June 2014 giving the details of a 24 hour helpline set up by the Indian Embassy in Baghdad for assistance of Indian nationals there.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/23437/Security+situation+in+Iraq>

10. Official Spokesperson's response to media queries on the evolving situation in Iraq, New Delhi, 17 June 2014

In response to media queries on the evolving situation in Iraq, the Official Spokesperson stated:

"Events in Iraq have been high on the agenda of the Ministry of External Affairs today. The External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has herself been monitoring and reviewing the situation on a regular basis. In accordance with her instructions, the Embassy of India in Baghdad is providing us updated reports on their updated contacts with the Indian nationals in the affected areas. Also, the minister had requested that the Secretary in-charge of that region i.e. Secretary (East) Anil Wadhwa should be chairing a crisis management team to review all aspects of assistance that can be provided to the Indian nationals in the affected area. Wadhwa had also, earlier today, met the Iraqi Ambassador in India Ahmad Tahseen Ahmad Berwari who apprised him of the situation and also, they discussed possibilities of ground-level cooperation and assistance in assisting Indian nationals who are in the affected area. We shall, of course, be monitoring the situation on an hourly basis and will keep you informed if there are further developments in this regard. Thank you very much."

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/23444/Official+Spokespersons+response+to+media+queries+on+the+evolving+situation+in+Iraq>

11. Transcript of Media Briefing by Official Spokesperson (Syed Akbaruddin), New Delhi, 18 June 2014

Good afternoon friends and thank you very much for being here this afternoon for our regular weekly briefing. I have just one area to focus on and then I am open for any other questions that you would ask....

Question:

Akbar, I just wanted to know about the 'rescue operation', if you want to call it that, of the Indians in Iraq. I have been reading various reports. There is Swaraj who has been speaking to the family members of the Punjabis. There is Baby who is on television speaking about the Malayali nurses, then the Telangana Government trying to find out which people there are of Telangana origin. Is there a central, there must be, coordinated effort? If there is one, which there is, what kind of a figure is it based on? The only figure I have is 18,000 total number of Indian oil rig workers and doctors and nurses. But there must be an overall figure including everyone else. And why these different initiatives from each State?

Answer:

Let me try and explain to you that there are various initiatives naturally because when ordinary citizens are involved it is normal for many channels to work simultaneously. These are not competitive, but they are complementary. Let me try and explain to you how it is working. Our understanding is that on last count there were approximately 10,000 Indian nationals in Iraq. Iraq is a big country. There are areas where there is a concern in terms of the situation there. And those areas are not all over Iraq. So, there is the northern part of Iraq, the Kurdish areas is there, there is a local government fully working, and there are no issues there. Also, in the southern part there are no issues.

So, if you take all our Indian nationals, there are approximately I would think 6,000 in the northern part, there are approximately another 3,000 or so between Baghdad and Najaf and Basra, etc. In the affected part, our evaluation

is that their number is a little above 100 where there are areas of uncertainty where the security situation is tenuous, where communication is uncertain, and where we are trying to work with small communities, we are trying to work with construction companies, etc. And that is why the difficulty in this.

There are normally people from various States in any country and it is normal if the State Governments set up a contact place where they can get information. So, relatives of people who are in Iraq are perhaps contacting people in Kerala, in Telangana, also in New Delhi. By my account, since last evening we have received something like 60 phone calls from families of people who are in the region and who would like to know the situation.

Also I am getting information from a variety of sources including some journalists here. This morning, a colleague of yours contacted me and said that there were 200 Indians in Najaf who were feeling uncomfortable because of the situation. Immediately we contacted the Ambassador there who contacted this company, it was a Turkish company, and the company said that if any Indians want to go back they are willing to provide assistance. And the first lot of people from that Turkish company are leaving on Friday, because the airports in Baghdad and in Irbil are open. So, there are no restrictions on those areas.

So, please be rest assured that the area which is facing this uncertainty in terms of the security situation is not where the majority of Indians are. That said, this is not about a majority or a minority, this is about Indian nationals. You are aware of two major cases of Indian nationals where their security situation seems to be rather tenuous. One relates to the 46 Indian nurses who are in Tikrit. Our Mission has been in touch with them; some of you have directly been in touch with them also. We had requested the Red Crescent to try and contact them and to see at first hand ensure their security and welfare. The Red Crescent did respond to us that they had gone there, met several of them, and had communicated to them that in the current situation in Tikrit and in Mosul it is not appropriate to take the surface route. Therefore, they have advised in Tikrit that they do not use the surface route.

As part of our planning we have a Contingency Planning Unit working in Delhi. They have worked on a variety of options. Whatever the number, yes it is true out of the 46 several Indian nurses prefer to stay back. But even if there are one, two, five, ten, we are willing to assist them to the best of our abilities.

Let me assure you, as you said, we are working on all fronts. There are those States working, there is the External Affairs Minister who took time off even from her meeting this morning to make telephone calls to the relatives of some of those who are involved in these areas where the security situation is tenuous. We have Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs, spearheading all our contacts with various international organizations to try and see what we can best achieve in that. We have our Ambassador there along with an Embassy. We are not fair-weather friends, we do not intend to shut down our Embassy. In fact we intend to increase our Embassy's effectiveness and we have decided that our former Ambassador there Suresh Reddy, who is currently in Delhi awaiting his next posting, will be sent back to Baghdad so that he can reinforce the Embassy's abilities in this crisis situation. These are difficult times for us, and we are trying our best on all fronts. Let me assure you, we will not leave any stone unturned in our quest to help every single Indian national.

Question:

(Inaudible).....

Answer:

The forty workers who were working in Mosul were working with a company called Tariq Noor al-Huda Construction Company. Based on information that we have gleaned from a variety of sources including the International Red Crescent, our understanding is that these 40 Indian workers, I can confirm to you now, have been kidnapped. These are difficult situations. We are working with the company. Also, we are trying to work with International Red Crescent who have confirmed to us. But they have also indicated that at this stage they do not know the location of these 40 Indian workers who are kidnapped.

This has triggered off for us a very difficult situation with us working with several of our partners in Iraq as well as elsewhere to try and see what would be the best ways to take our effort further. At this stage I am afraid I cannot share further information with you except to indicate to you and to confirm that yes, 40 workers of the Tariq Noor al-Huda construction company who are Indians, have been kidnapped. We will keep you informed of further information on this matter as we proceed.

Question:

Which States do these construction workers belong to mostly? Anything that you can share about these workers?

Answer:

My understanding is they are largely from the northern part of India, from Punjab belt, etc. But I cannot be very precise because in terms of information flow in such circumstances you can never be certain about exact information. So, I can indicate to you broadly the trend of this information rather than get into specifics. I hope you will understand that.

Question:

Have you received any ransom call at all because this Group is known to make demands for ransom? Any indication of that yet ?

Answer:

I can confirm to you again, we have not received any calls of any nature from anyone who has indicated about ransom or also that they have taken these Indian workers under their control. We have not received any information whatsoever, nor any request in this. At this stage, as I said, even the Red Crescent is not aware of their location.

Question:

Who have kidnapped those 40 Indian nationals and when did it happen?

Answer:

I cannot give you details because we do not know who it is. What we know is from the humanitarian agencies. They themselves do not know where the location is. So, speculating on how, who, at this stage I do not have that answers for you. But I have an answer and a confirmation that it is with deep, deep sadness that we can indicate to you that 40 Indian workers working in Mosul in the Tariq Noor al-Huda construction company have been kidnapped.

Question:

You said that you confirm they were kidnapped. How do you know that they were kidnapped? How are you getting this information if there has not been a ransom, if there has not been any sort of ...

Answer:

I said that we are working with the humanitarian organizations working there. We have contacts with UNAMI, with the Red Crescent, with the Iraqi Government. Please do not ask me what channel is providing what information, but I have confirmed to you that the Red Crescent did indicate to us that as per their information, they can indicate that 40 Indian workers have been kidnapped, they do not know the location.

Question:

There are some missing links like were they kidnapped en masse, when were they kidnapped, from where were they kidnapped, any idea whether they were taken away in trucks, or at gunpoint from the street, were they kidnapped while trying to come to Baghdad? Do you have any details on all that?

Answer:

This is a situation where information is trickling in from various sources. It is information that we are piecing together here based on inputs received. I do not want to provide you information which is not authenticated and validated. So, at this stage please bear with us. These are difficult circumstances for the families, for those who are working, and for the country itself. So, please bear with us. We will try and share with you information as it trickles in.

Question:

You said that the Indian Government is working with the humanitarian and international agencies and the Iraqi Government. To get them back as well, to rescue them?

Answer:

At this stage we need to get as much information as possible, and we are trying to get information, we are trying to establish contacts, we are trying to work with anybody on the ground who can assist us in this difficult circumstance.

Question:

Are we also taking help from the US, since they have a lot of experience in Iraq, to establish their coordinates and rescue the workers?

Answer:

I will not get into operational details. Please try to understand that in an evolving situation we are not going to share such information of who we are working with. I have told you we are willing to work with every organization and every individual who will assist us in this difficult circumstance.

Question:

You mentioned that you are in touch with the international organizations. Have they given any assurance to us on the safety of the kidnapped workers?

Answer:

Humanitarian organizations work very differently. There are no guarantees in this. But all that it indicates is our willingness to interact with everybody on this. So, please do not think in terms of ironclad guarantees. We have exposure and understanding of these situations. Please bear with us. We will try and provide you further information as it becomes available. For now all of that I have to share with you is that I can confirm that 40 Indian workers from Tariq Noor al-Huda construction company have been kidnapped.

Question:

(Inaudible)...

Answer:

I will not get into those details. We do not even know where they are. Please understand that.

Question:

Are you working with the Oil Ministry or has the Finance Ministry got in touch with you about the energy crisis that this has triggered?

Answer:

I think you are new here. I never get into intra-Ministerial consultations. This is not the remit of this briefing. We never get into discussions. But any matter which impinges on India in terms of its external relations is what we will be involved in. But I will not get into details of what 'x' Ministry or 'y' Ministry is working with us on. I never do that and everybody who is here knows of it.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/23455/Transcript+of+Media+Briefing+by+Official+Spokesperson+June+18+2014>

12. Transcript of Media Briefing by Official Spokesperson (Syed Akbaruddin), New Delhi, 20 June 2014

Good afternoon friends and I apologize for being late today. But there is always a reason for being delayed and in most cases it is a "newsy" reason.

I will try and encapsulate for you the events of today but I would like to begin with a plea. We are trying to give you authenticated, verified information rather than speculative inputs. So, please rest assured that whenever we have verified and authenticated information we will certainly share it with you. You are the transmitters of information globally and, therefore, please try and be restrained when you carry information because in such situations of tenuous security where there is uncertainty, there are bound to be rumours, there are bound to be conflicting views. Given that there are forty Indian lives at stake, my request to you is to please be restrained. We will provide you information, every day we are providing it, and I assure you we will continue to do so until the situation is resolved.

Let me begin with the substance of the issue. Today, like every day, the issue of Indian nationals in Iraq continues to be a matter of high priority. Previously I had said it had been a matter of high priority for the Ministry of External Affairs, but today I would like to say that this is a matter of high priority for the entire Government of India.

The Prime Minister has just concluded chairing a meeting of senior Ministers - who include the Home Minister, the External Affairs Minister - the National Security Advisor, the Cabinet Secretary, the Home Secretary and the Heads of Indian agencies as well as senior Foreign Service officials. This was a meeting to review the entire dimensions of the issue taking into consideration all facts that we now have available with us as well as piecing together information which is flowing to us from various actors. This information is coming to us not from one source but from a multiplicity of sources.

Based on that detailed review I can now indicate to you that we have information that the Indian nationals who have been abducted remain safe. We are making every effort so that the situation is resolved at the earliest. Let me assure you, everyday in the morning the first thing that happens in the Ministry of External Affairs is that the External Affairs Minister herself takes a review meeting, and that has what happened earlier today too.

Following that review meeting earlier this morning, there have been a few decisions taken which I will try and encapsulate for all of you. It was decided that any Indian national who is indigent and who desires to return but is unable to pay for his ticket, will be assisted through the Indian Community Welfare Fund in Iraq. What I am telling you is all about Iraq, so please do not think that this is global, this is relating to Iraq.

We are also working with the Iraqi authorities. They have a visa regime which basically specifies that you come in through a port of entry and go back through the same port of entry. This has caused some concerns to those of our nationals who have come through certain ports of entry who would like to go out from other ports of entry. We have taken this up with the Iraqi authorities who are amenable to our request. So, while today is a Friday and officially offices would not be functioning, we hope that this matter will be sorted out in a day's time whereby any Indian national who is in Iraq and who would like to leave could leave from the nearest port or land boundary rather than from where he has come.

The third thing is that we have informed all our Missions in the region to work on this matter with their respective governments. That is, our Missions in all bordering states are being requested to work with their national governments, host governments to ensure that in case there are people wanting to cross their land boundary, they should be assisted; and if there are documentation issues, our Mission in Baghdad has been replenished with adequate documentation. Also, our Missions in the region are on standby for any other documentation or proof that would be required for Indian nationals.

Thanks to the feedback from some of you here in this room, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has stopped granting emigration clearance for Iraq for a period of one month starting from last night. I would like to acknowledge those of our friends here who did indicate that they had noticed that there was a flow of traffic even though there was an advisory against it.

As regards our Mission in Baghdad, it has been in touch with various other diplomatic missions to see how we can coordinate together in what is essentially a humanitarian tragedy for some of our nationals. Our officials have had meetings with a number of Iraqi government officials at various levels. Information continues to flow, but it is understandably at times contradictory and at times difficult to verify. Therefore, we are only providing information that is verified and where there are no contradictions. So, you can trust us in terms of our ability to provide you

information, but that will only be authenticated information and information which has been corroborated not from one source but from multiple sources.

One last point, as per the information available with us, certain Indian nationals who were in the conflict zone, we have been able to move them out. Of these are eight who were working in Baiji who have already been brought to Baghdad and have travelled out of the country. Similarly, there were eight Indian workers of the Lanco project in Anbar who have also been facilitated to leave the country. As regards the 46 nurses, our officials have just talked to them a couple of hours ago. They told us that there was electricity now available in the hospital, there were food arrangements now available in the hospital, they felt that the situation there was quiet, there was no gunfire there, nobody had intruded in the hospital. We remain in constant touch with those 46 Indian nurses.

I think I have given you a broad idea of the developments here in Delhi as well as the developments in Baghdad. We will keep you informed of further developments as these happen. I assure you we will brief you once a day as long as there is corroborated, verified information coming.

Question:

You said that emigration clearance has been stopped for Iraq for one month. Does that mean that no Indian national can basically travel to Iraq for the next one month?

Answer:

No. There are only certain categories of Indian nationals who require prior emigration clearance. Others are those who are governed by the advisory. Those who require prior emigration clearance from the Protector General of Emigrants will not be provided that clearance for the next month for Iraq. There is a list which specifies who are the people who require prior emigration clearance. That emigration clearance has been stopped with effect from yesterday.

Question:... (Inaudible)...

Answer:

Correct, we can only advise and that we have done to the best of our abilities, and through your good offices that has gone all around.

Question:

Are there any cases of illegal immigrants among any of these individuals we are dealing with in the sense that the people who are there who are wanting to move out do not have proper things because they did not enter Iraq in a legal manner?

Answer:

Emigration is a very complex issue. However, I think I have made it clear yesterday and let me repeat it that provision of documentation for Indian nationals is a foremost priority, and no Indian will suffer on account of lack of documentation. If there is anybody who does not have documentation, our officials will be ready to provide that documentation on an urgent basis, on an immediate basis.

Question:

Sir, at the beginning you said 40 Indian lives are at stake. Could you please update about the negotiations under way for the rescue of these 40 Indians?

Answer:

Let me try and put it this way. We are knocking on all doors. As diplomats it is normal for us to knock on front doors. However, we are also knocking on backdoors, and working out measures through trapdoors.

Let me clarify. I said: front doors, backdoors, and trapdoors.

Question:

Akbar, you said that this is now a matter of high priority for the entire government, and you mentioned the External Affairs Minister, the Home Ministry, the IB and you said various agencies. Was Defence Ministry also a part of this meeting, and could you specify in greater detail which were the agencies and who all were present?

Answer:

Let me tell you, this was the meeting chaired by the Prime Minister of India, I do not think that there can be any executive meeting that gives a greater signal in terms of the importance that we place on this. I was not a fly on the wall on that meeting, so I cannot give you a blow-by-blow account. However, let me repeat who was there. By my understanding, the Home Minister, the External Affairs Minister, the National Security Advisor, the Cabinet Secretary, Heads of Indian intelligence agencies and security agencies, as well as senior officials of the External Affairs Ministry including the Foreign Secretary and the senior most official handling this region, i.e., Secretary (East) Anil Wadhwa. So, this is way above my pay grade in terms of who was there.

Question:

You said that eight Indians in Baghdad, eight in a project in Baiji ...

Answer:

Yes, eight from Baiji who had been transported to Baghdad and have flown out; and eight more from a Lanco project, the Indian company Lanco has a project I think in Anbar, have also been facilitated to return.

Question:

So, they are in Baghdad at the moment.

Answer:

No, they have also left.

Question:

Sir, can you confirm that one of the Indians managed to escape from the captivity and his whereabouts?

Answer:

I can confirm that one Indian national who was along with others in custody has escaped and has been in touch with the Embassy of India in Baghdad for some time.

Question:

Akbar, do we have a sense of how many people actually now need to be brought out of that country, or want to be brought out of that country?

Answer:

Let me put it this way. By our estimates, originally in the conflict zone there were approximately about a 120 Indian nationals. The larger groups were, as I mentioned to you, the 40 who are in captivity; 46 nurses; and then there were smaller groups. Of those, I have indicated to you, 16 have left. So, approximately from 120, 16 have left and the rest we are working on.

As you are aware, the situation is such that the land routes are extremely difficult to use for bringing out anybody. And that is the major issue in terms of bringing out people from the conflict zone. There is no other deterrent to that. There is no issue about logistics, there is no issue about willingness, and there is no issue about desire. We have all that. It is just that the situation on the ground does not permit and we have been advised by everybody we have been in touch with – for the present, hold on.

Question:

Sir, can you confirm whether we have begun negotiations with the abductors or not?

Answer:

I think I had explained in as broad a manner as possible that we are knocking on doors. I did not say about negotiations at all. I said we are knocking on doors. All types of doors are being knocked on. And we will let you know once those knocks prove productive.

Question:

Sir, you said one Indian has escaped. When did he come in touch with the Indian Embassy, and what has he said about how he escaped, and what has he said about the fate of the other Indians in captivity?

Answer:

I understand your desire to validate a story that you have written. But that said, I think it is only fair for us to tell you information which is corroborated, information which is verified by others. So, at this stage, in the process of an extremely sensitive operation, I hope none of the others feel that I need to disclose these details. It would not be responsible on my part and I do not think it would be responsible on the part of others to seek these details when an operation is under way. So, my request to you again is, please exercise restraint. We will provide you the information, we will provide it to you regularly, we will provide it to you in a manner that you can report that this is authentic information rather than going by hearsay, one source, half a source, phone conversations with people you have never had discussions with previously. Please understand that these things require corroboration. Ultimately it is important for us to work in a systematic manner, step-by-step, and we assure you that we are doing this. There is nothing more important right now than ensuring the safety of our nationals who are in a difficult situation.

Question:

Akbar, considering that India enjoys a great deal of goodwill with the government in Iraq and also with the ISIS Jihadists in Mosul and Tikrit, is the possibility of creating a safe corridor between Tikrit and Baghdad, Mosul and Baghdad - so that we can send our choppers and fly them to Baghdad and then bring them here - an option, a possible option? Is Suresh working on that?

Answer:

When lives of our nationals are involved, no option is off the table.

Question:

Has the Prime Minister of India been able to speak to his counterpart in Iraq? ... (Inaudible) ...

Answer:

Again, I will not go into these details because it is not proper to do. But let me tell you, when I said we were knocking on all doors, I did not only mean doors in Iraq.

With that we come to the end of this briefing. Thank you very much.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dl/23461/Transcript+of+Media+Briefing+by+Official+Spokesperson+June+20+2014>

13. PM reviews situation of Indian Nationals in Iraq, New Delhi, 20 June 2014

The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, chaired a high-level meeting to review the situation of Indian Nationals in Iraq. The meeting was attended by the Home Minister Rajnath Singh, the External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, the National Security Adviser, the Cabinet Secretary, the Foreign Secretary and other senior officials.

As per information available to the Government so far, the abducted Indian nationals are safe. The Government is making every effort to ensure their continued safety, and resolve the situation at the earliest. This issue remains a matter of high priority for the Government.

Source: Prime Minister of India, New Delhi, <http://pmindia.nic.in/details90.php>

14. Transcript of Media Briefing by Official Spokesperson (Syed Akbaruddin), New Delhi, June 23, 2014

Good afternoon friends and thank you very much for being here this afternoon. As usual what I'll do is that we'll focus on the update regarding the situation of Indian nationals in Iraq.

I have about 15-20 minutes, so I'll take about 6 questions on Iraq and 2 more on any other issue that you would like to ask.

Let me begin my opening remarks and that is that the safety and security of Indian nationals in Iraq continues to be a matter of priority for the government. On the diplomatic front, our efforts are continuing both in Iraq and outside. Our initiatives are gaining impetus. We are proceeding systematically and carefully. Various doors are opening now; these are primarily in Iraq at

various levels, all of which are significant. Our information flow has improved providing us channels to obtain, corroborate and confirm information. Our efforts are basically at two levels. One relates to those Indian Nationals who are in the conflict zone.

At the beginning of this situation, we had indicated to you that we have approximately a 120 plus Indian nationals in the conflict zone of whom 17, we had indicated to you, we were able to successfully remove from the conflict zone. What we are now trying to do is to try and assist the others in that zone, they are broadly in three rubrics, one are those Indian nationals who are in captivity. We have again received a reconfirmation that Indian nationals in captivity remain unharmed. As regards the 46 nurses, we are in constant contact with them. They remain safe and we are working to continue to assist them. Finally there are the rest of the Indian nationals, who we are working to assist to ensure that they are moved out of the conflict zone.

In addition, beyond the conflict zone there are more than about 10,000 Indian nationals. These Indian nationals are not facing a threat in terms of the conflict zone. However there are issues relating to their status, their documentation, their visa requirements as well as their contractual obligations. In essence labour issues.

Now we are in regular touch with a variety of companies because obviously these Indian nationals work in a large number of companies. I'd like to tell you by our count early this afternoon, we had requests in our Mission in Baghdad from about 120 Indian nationals of various sorts. Simultaneously, in our Control Room at Headquarters in New Delhi, we have received approximately 300 requests. Some of them are duplications, both there and here. 300 requests for assistance of various sorts. Of these approximately 100 plus relate to evacuation, another about 100 relate to information about people who are not able to be traced by their relatives in India and finally the rest are relating to the general information about the security situation etc.

Now, let me try and explain to you what our mission in Baghdad has done in terms of assisting Indian nationals who are a little worried about their situation in non-conflict zones. I have here with me a list of approximately 12 major companies where Indian nationals are working. For example the company with the largest number of Indian nationals is located in Najaf. This is a company which has between 2000-2500 Indian nationals. We did receive complaints that there were several amongst them who wanted to return. These came from individuals and also these came from organizations. Immediately we got in touch with this company and were told that they had arranged to send back, although there was no security threat, but it was a concern. There were some Indian nationals who wanted return and they had sent back 28 of them at their own request. We also got in touch with those Indian agents who had sent these Indian nationals to work with the company and we will have a meeting with that company at its Headquarters with our Mission personnel being present there in Najaf, so that we ascertain how many of these Indian nationals would like to return, what are their current obligations and how we could facilitate their return.

Similarly, there are smaller numbers in Kirkuk, and large number in Basra. I'd like to explain that Basra is approximately more than 500 km south of Baghdad. It is not an area anywhere near the conflict zone and I'd like to request some of you, who are running these TV visuals saying that those people are in imminent danger, that there is no such threat for them. Sure there is concern among them and if anybody would like to return we will try and work this out. However, if we need to work this out, we need to work this out under the normal contractual and legal terms under which these people are working there. Because that is not a conflict zone and therefore we cannot use 'force measure' requirements there.

So, let me try and summarize for you. We remain engaged with a variety of companies 12 by my record, largely in the southern part of Iraq but some of them also in the northern part which is with a Kurdish government there. There is a northern part of Iraq where, by all accounts, there is no safety issue there. But that said we will continue to assist everyone who would like to be facilitated in case he wants to return. However, in this we can do so only following the norms of the host country and we will have to do that. It is normal in those areas to have issues of an employer-employee nature, these are 'staple' and we are working those issues out one by one systematically, in accordance with the local laws.

I will stop at that and if you any questions, I am willing to answer them. Thank you. Thank you.

Question:

Sir, what is condition put by the people who have held our Indian nationals hostage? I am asking this question because is there real danger of these people using them as shield against the Iraqi forces?

Answer:

I think I am on record having said that there is no safety in captivity. That said we are every day trying to obtain information, corroborate information and then confirm that information and based on that I can confirm to you that they remain unharmed as of now.

Question:

The Iraqi Ambassador has said that there is no information regarding the 40 odd Indian workers having being captured, that he has no information regarding their capture. Is the government working with Red Crescent and the other humanitarians groups for confirmation on the capture because it seems like the Iraqi government is unaware?

Answer:

I mentioned to you that we have opened several doors and information is flowing. We are assimilating this information and only then providing to you. I haven't used the word that you used. I did indicate that they were in captivity. The rest is for you to use a word of your choice, I have used a word of our choice and that remains our view based on the information that we have received from several sources.

Answer:

Well, I did check up with our Mission some time ago about the possibility of an Indian worker in southern Iraq who may have succumbed to heart attack. Now, when I checked that up, they hadn't yet got confirmation from the concerned company because it is normal for the company to inform the Mission and then further action is taken. It is possible that the company is completing their procedures at their end before they come to us. But should this unfortunate event have taken place, we will assist the return of the mortal remains of that Indian national in accordance with the standard procedure. But at this stage, I can't confirm what you are saying.

Question:

Sir, of all these 10,000 how many even now are in this difficult area? How many have you managed to pull out as of now?

Answer:

I think in the starting I had said 120 in the conflict zone, the rest are not in the conflict zone. I began by saying 120 when this situation started in the conflict zone of whom 17 had moved out of the conflict zone. Then that leaves 2 large groups, one of 46 Indian nationals who are nurses in Tikrit and others who we believe are in captivity. This is a large group. Other than that there are small numbers of Indian nationals elsewhere and we are working to evacuate those in that category.

So let me try and summarize for you- three small groups, one of the nurses, one of those in captivity and others finally who make the rump who we are working to evacuate from that region.

Question:

(..inaudible..) you have been able to establish the location of the abducted persons. Any further progress?

Answer:

When we have information which is corroborated and confirmed, we will share with you.

Question:

What is Government of India's reaction to the political situation in Iraq?

Answer:

I think we have put out a statement on this. This is available, we did put out a statement and we will send that to you.

Source: *Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi*, <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/23465/Transcript+of+Media+Briefing+by+Official+Spokesperson+June+23+2014>

15. Transcript of Media Briefing by Official Spokesperson (Syed Akbaruddin), New Delhi, 19 June 2014

Good afternoon friends and thank you very much for being here. I will focus primarily on one issue and that is an update on the position of Indian nationals in Iraq. At the end of that if any of you want to ask any questions on any other issue too, I will take some of them. Given that I have limited time, I will take about four to six questions on the issue which is primary for today, and then a couple of questions on any other issue. Let me start by saying that since we met yesterday, the primary focus of attention of officials in the Ministry of External Affairs has been related to the situation of Indian nationals in Iraq. I now have further information that I can share with you on this matter.

I can now further confirm to you that our initial information based on inputs of the Iraqi Red Crescent of 40 Indian nationals being in custody has been reconfirmed by the Iraqi Government. We have been informed by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry that they also have been able to determine the location where these abducted Indian nationals are being held captive with workers of a few other nationalities.

Our Embassy in Baghdad has been persistently following this matter up with the Iraqi authorities, and it has been strengthened with the arrival of Suresh Reddy who joined earlier today. I understand that there are several meetings planned during the course of the day between Indian Embassy officials and Iraqi authorities on this subject.

In New Delhi, the crisis management group has met twice today. On both these occasions the External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj herself has chaired the meetings. She has also since yesterday talked to the Punjab Chief Minister, the Kerala Chief Minister, and the Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab.

The senior-most official of the Ministry of External Affairs handling issues in the region, Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), has had two conversations with the Iraqi Ambassador on this subject.

In both these conversations the information that was conveyed to us in Baghdad was reaffirmed.

Our Mission in Baghdad continues to assist those Indian nationals who would like to leave the region, even from areas where security is not tenuous as yet, and we keep in touch with Indian nationals in areas where security remains tenuous. Let me assure you again that the Government of India is giving the highest priority to the welfare, security and safety of our nationals, and we will keep you informed of further developments in this regard.

If any of you have questions, I am willing to answer them.

Question:

Coming back to that quick question, one of the victim's relative is saying that he had spoken to the victim and he says that ...(Inaudible)...to release the hostages to the Iraqi authorities, unless some Indian representative goes there and claims them, they are not going to leave them. Do you have any information on that?

Answer:

I will not answer speculative suggestions that you are making. As I told you, it is very simple for anybody to pick up the phone, call anyone, and we will try and arrange as far as possible documentation. Documentation we have arranged even by faxes. Documentation can be sent by other means also. Documentation is not an issue in the return and repatriation of any Indian national.

Question:

What is the channel that you will be pursuing? Will you be talking to Iraqi authorities and they will be pursuing it or would there be a chance of back channel ...(Inaudible)...?

Answer:

As I mentioned to you yesterday, every avenue will be pursued, every channel will be examined, we will utilize every opportunity to ensure the safety and security of our nationals – front door , backdoor, trapdoor, everything.

Question:

Sir, because these people have been kidnapped, if there is a ransom demand, would the Indian Government be willing to pay this ransom demand?

Answer:

There has not been any such demand.

Question:

Akbar, now that this crisis is going on since yesterday at least, you have confirmed about the hostages in Iraq, has the Government of India taken any steps to make sure that more kidnappings in the same country Iraq do not happen?

Answer:

Rajiv, we are talking of a tenuous security situation. We are talking of a situation where in those affected areas institutions have collapsed, interlocutors are not present. I would like to ask you or anyone else what steps can be taken in a situation where authorities are no more what they were

a few days ago. As regards the rest, I have already explained to you the detailed steps that we have taken.

In situations where there exists no single authority, where exist no established interlocutors, we are trying to do our best that is possible in the circumstances. And let me assure you, we will continue to do our best because this is not about work, this is about ensuring lives of our citizens, and we will do everything possible. I think I have explained in great detail on that subject.

With that we end this discussion.

Thank you very much.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/23457/Transcript+of+Media+Briefing+by+Official+Spokesperson+June+19+2014>

16. Transcript of Media Briefing by Official Spokesperson (Syed Akbaruddin), New Delhi, New Delhi, 25 June 2014

Good afternoon friends and thank you very much for being here this afternoon. I would like to apologize for having kept you waiting for a short while. As I have said previously, it is usually because we are trying to reconfirm information that we have received, and that accounts for the delay. Notwithstanding that, my apologies for having kept you waiting.

It has been a busy day for us today. The situation of Indian nationals in Iraq remains a matter of importance for the Government of India. Since I had last briefed you yesterday I now have additional information to share with you on this issue. This information pertains to both Indian nationals who are in the conflict zone in Iraq as well as Indian nationals who are outside the conflict zone.

Since the zone of conflict is an area where security and safety of Indian nationals is of utmost concern, I will first try and give you a readout of the situation there. Following that I will provide you information regarding other areas where there are Indian nationals but there is no immediate threat to their safety and security.

In the zone of conflict, we have repeatedly told you that there are a very limited number of Indian nationals. It is also the region where the security environment continues to be volatile. We have, therefore, today reiterated our advice to those Indian nationals still there, to remain indoors. As you are aware, there were three small groups of Indian nationals in this area. I will try and explain to you what the status of each of them is as of today.

We have been in touch with several Indian nationals in this zone of conflict. Let me first take those who are not in captivity. I am happy to inform you that we have, with the help of the local authorities, been able to evacuate 17 more of our nationals from the zone of conflict. This was just done a short while ago. I was waiting for confirmation before I came to you, and that is what

accounts for the delay. So, 17 more Indian nationals who were in the zone of conflict are no longer there. They are now in Baghdad and will go back to their homes very shortly.

The second group of Indian nationals was the nurses. We have been in touch with the 46 nurses. I can also confirm to you that they remain safe and there has not been any threat to their safety and security. They have food stocks, nobody has intruded into their premises. We remain in touch with them, we are constantly advising them, and we will take it from there on a day-by-day basis.

That leaves the third set of Indian nationals, those who are in captivity. I can reconfirm to you again today - despite the sceptics who think that this is a non-issue and they may not be in captivity let me reconfirm to them - that they remain in captivity but have not been hurt or harmed. With that I will close this issue relating to Indian nationals in the zone of conflict.

Let me now describe to you our activities relating to Indian nationals outside this zone of conflict. Our understanding as of now is airports in Irbil, Baghdad, Najaf and Basra are open to normal commercial traffic. Therefore, we are issuing an advisory today telling all Indian nationals who wish to travel voluntarily that they can take commercial flights out from these airports. We will provide them all assistance that is required if they so wish to travel.

Our help lines in Baghdad will be working on 24/7 basis. Let me read out to you the numbers of the help lines in Baghdad. These are: (1) 009647704444899, and (2) 009647704843247.

In addition to this, taking into account that a significant number of Indian nationals are also resident in the southern cities of Iraq, we have decided to set up camp offices of the Indian Embassy in Najaf, Karbala, and Basra. These offices will provide facilitation of every sort to any Indian national who requires assistance.

Finally, in consultation with the Iraqi authorities we are setting up a Joint Committee which will handle issues relating to those Indian nationals who have problems about their immigration status. On our side there will be officials from the Embassy, on the Iraqi side there will be officials from the Home and Interior Ministry relating to immigration, so that those Indian nationals who may have problems relating to their immigration status can be facilitated and assisted to travel if they so desire to travel.

In essence, today we have been able to move in a positive manner on both fronts. In the zone of conflict, the number of Indian nationals now that remains there has been reduced by a further 17. In other areas, we are moving to assuage concerns and facilitate the voluntary return of those who are desirous of coming back to India. I think that is what I have to say.

If you have any questions, as is usual I will answer six questions relating to this, and I am willing to answer a couple of questions on other issues beyond this.

Question:

Akbar, can we know of the condition of the Indian nationals in Kirkuk?

Answer:

Let me be very clear that this is not a general remark. There are issues in every place in terms of concerns but we are working with every organization, with every possible avenue and trying to assist. I will not get into general details about conditions of Indians in 'x' place or 'y' place. I have given you a broad outline, and that remains our understanding. Those areas where there are conflicts, I have explained to you, are areas of serious security concern. I have explained to you what we are doing. And those areas beyond that, I have explained to you what I have.

Question:

Yesterday Iraq lost its control over borders with Syria and Jordan. Now the ISIS is in complete control of the entire western frontier of Iraq. The question is, how does it impinge on the 39 Indian hostages?

Answer:

Rajiv, in a sensitive situation when our nationals are captive we are focused on trying to assist them. At this stage, I have told you yesterday that we have been able to knock on doors, those doors are opening. I have again told you today that we have further confirmation as of today that they remain in captivity, however, have not been harmed. We will take it day-by-day because captivity and safety are a contradiction in terms. Therefore, I do not want to go down that track and explain to you further what the levels of this concern are. The situation remains a matter of concern for us.

Question:

These 17 people evacuated, which States are they from?

Answer:

I am afraid we will not be able to share that information because this is a matter of operational detail at this stage. Once they fly out of Iraq back to their homes, you are free to find out from them. But they are people who have been through traumatic situations. We assist them as Indian nationals. At this stage we did not get down to tabulating their regional affiliations, the language they speak, etc. They were all Indian nationals and we have helped them as Indian nationals.

Question:

Given that, as you told us initially, there were about 120 Indians in the conflict zone to start with and 34 have been evacuated, are we, therefore, basically talking about the 40 in captivity and the 46 in Tikrit? Are these the only Indians in the crisis zone now?

Answer:

Charu, in a conflict zone, in an area where the security situation is tenuous, we can give you the drift of the situation. Please understand that there are no possibilities of pinning down exact numbers. What we can certainly say is that the numbers today are 34 less, as you said, than what they were at the beginning. You also are aware, we have given you an estimate of the numbers. In such situations it is best to work one-by-one rather than to jump to conclusions based on numbers and then try and prick people's balloons by saying, 'x' number was there and 'y' is now available', etc. We have told you the broad areas. And we remain intent on helping every Indian national. This is not a matter of numbers. It is a matter of helping every Indian national in (a) the conflict zone, and (b) beyond those areas. Both these numbers are approximations.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/23470/Transcript+of+Media+Briefing+by+Official+Spokesperson+June+24+2014>

17. Travel Advisory for Indian Nationals in Iraq, Cairo, 24 June 2014

- a) The security situation in Iraq continues to be fragile. A travel advisory had been issued on 15 June 2014 for Indian nationals in Iraq.
- b) Due to the uncertain and difficult security environment, Indian nationals in Iraq are again advised to remain indoors if they are in conflict-prone areas, and to leave the country on voluntary basis by commercial means, in areas where it is safe to do so. Indian nationals are advised to refrain from undertaking travel to Iraq until further notice. Airports in the cities of Erbil, Baghdad, Basra and Najaf are reported to be operational at present.
- c) Indian nationals in Iraq who need assistance in this regard may wish to contact the Indian Embassy in Baghdad on the 24 hour helpline as per the contact details indicated in the previous travel advisory of 15 June 2014.

Tel. No. +964 770 444 4899 (Mobile)

Tel No. +964 770 484 3247 (Mobile)

Email: amb.baghdad@mea.gov.in

hoc.baghdad@mea.gov.in

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edubaghdad@yahoo.com

Website: www.indianembassybaghdad.in

The Indian Embassy in Baghdad will shortly open camp offices in Najaf, Karbala and Basra for the convenience of Indians nationals in Iraq. Details will be intimated once these offices are set up.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/23467/Travel+Advisory+for+Indian+Nationals+in+Iraq>

18. Transcript of Media Briefing by Official Spokesperson (Syed Akbaruddin), New Delhi, 28 June 2014

Good afternoon and welcome to you all. I would like to make one announcement and that relates to the situation in Iraq. Following that I will answer any questions you may have on that issue. After that I am open to answering any other questions you may want to ask.

As regards the situation in Iraq we have now moved to what we term as the next phase in our assistance to Indian nationals. We term this phase as the facilitation phase. In this phase we have today opened three camp offices - in Basra, in Najaf and in Karbala. These camp offices are being staffed by our officials who have been specially flown in to Iraq.

The offices will not be functioning from one place but actually any time there is a request they will go to the Indian nationals or to the organization that he or she is working in. The idea is that they would be mobile, they would be willing to go across and meet any Indians because we have heard different stories coming out in terms of anecdotal evidence. We now stand ready to assist all our nationals in their places of work.

We will put out the mobile numbers of each of these teams. Each of these cities will have about three officials specifically designated to work with Indian nationals. In addition, in a couple of days we will double this strength. So, you will have adequate number of people attending to all requests for assistance of any sort. In this phase, the assistance will include not only going and meeting the Indian nationals in the place of their work but also providing them travel documents if any of them have a problem with travel documents, resolving issues of a contractual nature by interceding with their sponsors, and for those who are indigent and not able to afford air tickets air tickets will be provided.

These are for Indian nationals all over Iraq. There will not be any restriction for any place in any part of Iraq, should any Indian national want to return home. We will then have an idea of what the ground level realities in different parts of Iraq are, and we will accordingly adjust and work out a strategy to assist them in the best manner possible. For your information, on our last count we had received 421 telephone calls. And we will address each one of them according to their request. I will provide you the telephone numbers now and I would request you to disseminate them as broadly as possible so that no person has a grouse or is unable to be accessed due to want of information.

The numbers are as follows:

Najaf: Abu Mathen George - 00964 77165 111 90.

Srinivasa Rao - 00964 77165 111 81.

Rakesh Singh - 00964 77165 111 79.

All these three officials are already in Najaf. When we last spoke to them they were already working out with different companies from where they had received requests.

Karbala: Anil Sapra - 00964 77165 111 80.

Jeevan Singh - 00964 77165 111 76.

These officials are already in place in Karbala and working.

Our team for Basra is already on the way to Basra which is approximately 500 km from Baghdad. They left this morning, they should be reaching there in the next half an hour or so. I will in any case give you the numbers and the names of the persons because they are available on the mobile phones right away.

Basra: Narasimha Murthy - 00964 77165 111 82

Asif Shah Ahmad - 00964 77165 111 78

Also we will have control rooms in each of these cities so that in case people are not able to contact by phone they can also send in e-mails with the details and our officials will go to the places of work or places of stay, talk to them, talk to their sponsors, work out what they would want and then take the next step in this regard.

These seven numbers are operational. We will provide two more numbers which will be operational in the next few hours. And then in the next 48 to 72 hours we expect to double the officials who will be available in a roving capacity to assist any Indian national for each of these issues (a) in case they have any problem with travel documentation, (b) in case they have any problem with contractual obligations if they have to move out, and (c) in case they have any problem with acquisition of air tickets.

I will stop here and will respond to any questions that you may like to ask on this matter. After that I will be willing to respond to questions on anything else.

Question:

Sir, could you please tell us the progress of the rescue effort in the case of the 39 Indians in captivity? How far have we moved? Is there any positive information ...(Inaudible)...?

Answer:

Ashish, those Indians remain in captivity. Yet, we have additional information received today that they remain unharmed. There are some leads provided, we are working on them. But please understand, this is a conflict situation, there is no certainty in where we proceed from here. Therefore, we are extremely careful in taking this step-by-step. But what we can tell you is, they remain unharmed, they remain in captivity, and we have some leads about them. These are in addition to what we have got previously.

Question:

Akbar, have we sought any assistance from India's external partners, any other country, over the hostage situation or we have been proactively in touch with them over the Iraq situation in general?

Answer:

Manish, I think I mentioned very graphically what we are doing, let me repeat it. We are knocking on all doors - front doors, backdoors and trapdoors. Let me also add, tomorrow the External Affairs Minister has called in all our Ambassadors from the Gulf. They will provide their inputs. In addition, as part of an interactive session, Ambassadors of some of those countries located here will also join our Ambassadors so that we can take this matter forward in terms of what assistance we may require from all of them. The morning session in which we will have a brainstorming with our Ambassadors would be followed with a sort of an interactive luncheon meeting where we have called and requested Ambassadors of countries from where our Ambassadors are coming in to join in so that we can seek their assistance on specific issues.

Question:

Is any evacuation plan also ready to bring all Indians from Iraq?

Answer:

Let me tell you that this is a national endeavour and, therefore, it is normal for all our national assets to be in readiness. As and when they are required, it is normal contingency planning on a regular basis that this is done. I am not a logistics specialist to tell you the details of these because this is a specialized type of skill which unfortunately I am not privy to. That said, we do not see any possibility of any national asset not being available should it be required. That is what is perhaps percolating into the public space in all forms and that you may be jumping the gun in these. Let me tell you, this is a national endeavour and all national assets will be in readiness should they be required to assist our nationals who are in difficult circumstances in Iraq.

Question:

There are reports that a warship has also been sent to Iraq for evacuation. What was the need to send a ship and that too a warship?

Answer:

I already told you I am not a logistics expert. So I will not get into specifics of logistical issues. I explained that should any national asset be required, there is contingency planning being worked out to deploy there should it be required. At this stage, I told you what we are doing. We are doing on the ground what is required as a basic exercise. Everything else is some way down. At this stage we are contacting our nationals, asking them if they require assistance, if they have concerns and fears. Please understand, the overwhelming majority of our nationals are in what is today a safe zone. But there are concerns and, therefore, it is our duty as government officials to

try and assuage those concerns. If those concerns are assuaged by a logistical step, well and good; if they are assuaged by multiple logistical steps, those will also be taken.

Question:

Akbar, could you please outline which Ambassadors are being called in and Ambassadors from which countries exactly are coming in?

Answer:

All the Gulf states - Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia.

Question:

Sir, India has a very close relationship with Iraq and now diplomatically there must be some effort with Iraq so that the situation can be controlled. Some people are asking that the Prime Minister should resign and a new Prime Minister should be in place in Iraq to defuse the situation. What step is India taking so that politically we can intervene there in Iraq and a solution might be found?

Answer:

Dr. Akhilesh Suman, you are a commentator of long standing in terms of Indian foreign policy now. In matters essentially of a domestic nature, you know our views. There is already a process that has been set in motion domestically in Iraq. Let us allow that process to reach its normal conclusion or culmination. There are efforts by various people within Iraq to push the process in a variety of ways. As a well wisher and a friend of Iraq, as you said, we hope that Iraq will come to a conclusion which will ensure peace and stability in the region.

Question:

Almost two weeks are over now. Already allegations are being made that the Government of India has failed in handling the situation. Those who are making allegations are asking, apart from the daily press conferences what concrete steps you have taken to evacuate the people of India? As regards the 46 nurses from Kerala who are in Tikrit, there are reports that there was a blast inside the hospital yesterday.

Answer:

I think it is very easy to make allegations but it is very difficult to work on the ground. We have demonstrated that we are on the ground. We have added additional people on the ground, and we will remain on the ground. Secondly, you are aware and some of you are not aware also, the number of Indians wanting voluntarily to return is an ongoing thing. Let me give you an example. Just yesterday there were 20 Indian nationals from the State of Gujarat who wanted to come back, and they have returned. They were in what we term as safe areas. We have repeatedly said that there are no restrictions for anyone in the safe areas to return. There have

been people from different parts, every day we read stories of people coming in small numbers back to India voluntarily. We are facilitating those voluntary returns.

From the conflict zone, I have previously explained to you the number of people who we have been able to rescue and bring to India. The most recent were 17 from Samara. Samara is in a conflict zone. They were working in a Wartsila plant and from there those 17 Indian nationals were rescued, evacuated and returned to India. We are not providing those graphic details to you does not mean to say that we are not at work.

Let me put another thing for your consideration. Those in the conflict zone you referred to are 46 nurses and we are well aware of that. In fact, just half an hour ago our Ambassador did contact them. They are, you are right, worried because there has been a fresh bout of fighting in Tikrit. However, there have not been any explosions in their compound. We can confirm to you, there were no explosions in their compound. There were in a university complex which is some distance away and it is just those noises that they heard.

In conflict zones Missions can only do what is possible because we do not control the terrain there. The terrain is difficult for us to move them out. However, in the case of Samara we had used helicopters to airlift 17 Indians out of a difficult situation. Where it is possible we are doing all our best. Let me assure you, despite your misgivings we will continue to do our best and hope that we will succeed in what I mentioned to you is a national endeavour. So, let us all be united in this. We have Indian nationals there from different States. Let us work towards helping them out rather than pointing accusing fingers.

Question:

How many Indians are still in the conflict zone?

Answer:

Nobody can give you a headcount of great accuracy. We feel that they would be about a 100. I am just giving you a ballpark figure based on the numbers that we have. It is not that we have 100 per cent numbers with us, but the numbers remain extremely small. In the non-conflict areas which we are now addressing – Najaf, Karbala, Basra and Baghdad – our understanding is the numbers would be about 10,000. So, the overwhelming numbers of people who we are assisting currently are those who are also in the non-conflict areas. And this is as a pre-emptive measure where conflict has not yet even crept in.

Source: *Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi*, <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/23501/Transcript+of+Media+Briefing+by+Official+Spokesperson+June+28+2014>

19. Travel Advisory for Indian Nationals in Iraq, New Delhi, 29 June 2014

As indicated in the travel advisory of 24 June 2014, the Indian Embassy in Baghdad has opened camp offices in Najaf, Karbala and Basra for assisting Indians nationals in Iraq.

Following are the contact details of the officials stationed in these cities:

Najaf

Abu Mathen George +964 771 6511190

Srinivas Rao +964 771 6511181

Rakesh Singh +964 771 6511179

E-mail: controlroomnajaf@gmail.com

Karbala

P K Sharma +964 771 6511183

Anil Sapra +964 771 6511180

Jeewan Singh +964 771 6511176

E-mail: controlroomkarbala@gmail.com

Basra

Pramod K Aggarwal +964 771 6511185

Narasimha Murthy Kuppa +964 771 6511182

Asif Shah Ahmed +964 771 6511178

E-mail: controlroombasrah@gmail.com

The 24 hour helpline, as per details below, set up by the Indian Embassy in Baghdad on 15 June 2014 also remains operational.

Tel. No. +964 770 444 4899

+964 770 484 3247

+964 771 6511189

+964 771 6511193

Email: amb.baghdad@mea.gov.in

hoc.baghdad@mea.gov.in

cons.baghdad@mea.gov.in

edubaghdad@yahoo.com

Website: www.indianembassybaghdad.in

All Indian nationals requiring assistance in returning to India may contact the Indian Embassy officials at the station nearest to their location as indicated above. All necessary assistance, including provision of travel documents, air tickets and facilitation in any other form for travel out of Iraq, will be provided to those Indian nationals desirous of returning back to India.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/23502/Travel+Advisory+for+Indian+Nationals+in+Iraq>

20. Transcript of Media Briefing by Official Spokesperson (Syed Akbaruddin), New Delhi, 29 June 2014

Good afternoon friends and thank you very much for being here this afternoon for our regular briefing on the security situation of Indian nationals in Iraq. What I'll do, like usual, is try and put out to you the developments since yesterday evening, following which I am open for any question that you have. I will not be taking any questions on other than this issue because I have another meeting to attend but I will answer all the questions that you would like on this issue, unless there is anything that is of great importance, I'll try and answer if there is anything else also, in case there is something of great significance.

As regards the situation of Indian nationals in Iraq, we've been working on two fronts. This morning as you are perhaps aware, the External Affairs Minister who is also the Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs had called in all our Ambassadors in the Gulf. She chaired a meeting of this group of Indian Ambassadors in the Gulf for almost 3 hours. The focus of the meeting was on a) what was the assessment of our ambassadors in the region about the developments in the region. Specifically from their different locations, how they viewed the situation in Iraq. b) The second aspect was in terms of assistance that can be provided to Indian nationals in Iraq from their respective countries. Both to those who are in the conflict zone as well as those are outside the conflict zone, that is in the currently safe areas of southern Iraq.

Based on that meeting the External Affairs Minister has now decided that certain parts of the Indian Community Welfare Fund, which is available for our Missions in the Gulf, will be used for assisting Indian nationals in Iraq. She has already given these instructions and I understand that since her instructions earlier this morning funds have been transferred from two Indian Missions to our Mission in Baghdad. So there is adequate funding available for the activities of our Mission in Baghdad to assist Indian nationals in what we call is the facilitation phase of our assistance program there.

In addition, after this meeting, based on the inputs that she had received from our Ambassadors in the region, the External Affairs Minister had a fairly detailed discussion with Ambassadors of the Gulf countries resident in Delhi. Again the themes were both, as I said, their understanding of the situation as well as what they could do in case we seek their assistance on a wide variety of issues relating to assistance in Indian nationals in Iraq. The responses were very positive and forthcoming and we hope to work with these countries on issues relating to Indian nationals in Iraq.

This is what were the sum and substance of the discussions in the morning in Delhi. Let me now turn to what were the activities that we undertook in Iraq since yesterday. As you know the facilitation phase of our assistance to Indian nationals in Iraq is now underway. Yesterday I had informed you that we had set in motion three camp offices in Najaf, Karbala and Basra. We had also indicated to you the telephone numbers that are available for any Indian national to contact our officials. The External Affairs Minister has herself contacted each of these officials to check what sort of information is being requested by Indian nationals and what are their responses. So

the entire system is now in place after proper checks etc. and as I said the External Affairs Minister herself has taken those numbers and she did contact these people to check whether the responses they were providing were appropriate or not. In addition to these three places we have also started mobile units in Baghdad.

Although we have a Mission in Baghdad, we've decided that it is also important for us to reach out to Indian nationals who are resident in various compounds or work in different places in Baghdad. The telephone numbers of those two mobile units, I will mention to you.

These are:

00964 77044 44899 and 00964 77048 43247.

So, we now have mobile units in all cities starting from Baghdad and south of it. These people are not only staying in those places but they are moving around in the vicinity in suburbs or nearby areas wherever they are. And they are receiving responses. Our view, as explained by External Affairs Minister herself to these officers, is to tell them following:

- a) We have put out two advisories asking Indian nationals to leave those areas. Both these advisories were asking them to leave those areas given our understanding of the security situation.
- b) The officials concerned will be providing all assistance.

This assistance includes:

Documentation, if required and if it is not available. Air tickets, if they are indigent and not able to afford air tickets. In case they have issues related to their contractual agreements with their employers, we will also work with the employers and the Indian nationals concerned to see if we can try and assist them in this endeavour too.

We are receiving responses. At this stage, the numbers are such that we are working with them and their companies as well as those agents, who have sent them from here to Iraq, to bring them back by commercial flights. This initial phase will begin, I think, by tomorrow or latest by day after tomorrow depending on flight availability. Of course, as we have told you previously, this is a national endeavour and should we require other options, these are now ready.

As regards the nurses who are in Tikrit because, as you are aware, in Tikrit there has been some conflict going on and our understanding is that the army is trying to repulse those who have taken over Tikrit. My understanding, as of now, is that we have been in touch with the nurses just a few hours ago. Also, they remain unhurt. Their hospital has not been intruded upon. I understand they had some shortages in terms of funds for getting their essential provisions and we have, I can confirm to you right now, provided those funds through our contacts in that region. So, there is no shortage for them in terms of availability of their funds. Of course, they

remain concerned because of noises and fighting going in the surrounding areas but as of now they remain safe, we are in contact with them, we have provided them with funding for their essential requirements and we will continue to be in touch with them.

I think I will stop there because I have given you a broad picture of, what we see from here, are the developments from yesterday. In case any of you have specific questions and if I am able to answer them, I will try to do so. Thank you.

Question:

You mentioned that (..inaudible..) that getting an assessment out of the Indian envoys in Gulf about the situation, Can you give us a sense what their assessment really is in terms of the ground situation? Do they see it as spilling over and that mass evacuation will be needed sooner than later?

Answer:

Look, I think it's a bit of stretch for me to tell you what our Ambassadors have given in terms of confidential inputs to the External Affairs Minister. But that said, I have also told you what her specific advice to our officials on the ground have just been communicated in terms of what they should be telling the Indian nationals who are in the zone where there is no fighting as yet.

Also, I have told what the positive responses from the Gulf States' Ambassadors resident here have been. So, I think that's the extent to which I can share that information but I will not be able to share further of what were the specific inputs because obviously this is privileged communication between the External Affairs Minister and those who she has sought this direct information from. You'd appreciate that I can't get into those details.

Question:

Sir, this question is about those who are either in hostage or kidnapped. Has any demand come from those who have kept them in captivity?

Answer:

No, we have not received any demand.

Question:

Sir, what is the situation right now for those 39 Indians who have been abducted?

Answer:

I have no reports since last evening. The last evening's report I have communicated to you that they remain unharmed, that they are in captivity and that we have got some leads on them and we don't want to explain further because this is not like a situation that we can provide you information on sort of an hour-by-hour or day-by-day. But that's our last information, we are

working on the leads; that I can confirm to you that we are now working on the leads that were provided yesterday.

Question:

Is there any number that you can give of how many people of Ministry of External Affairs or Indian officials have gone to Iraq specially and people who are assisting them?

Answer:

Sure. Yesterday, we had inducted 12 officials who are diplomats in to the region, of which 9 were deputed to Najaf, Karbala and Basra. And we hope that tomorrow we will be able to induct another 12 people. So, you'll have 24 by tomorrow, more than what we were, in terms of our Mission there. Also, when Suresh Reddy had gone there, we had inducted with him a few personal staff to assist him. So, all in all I would say that as of tomorrow we would have inducted 26 more people. We already have identified many more, should that be required and they are already in readiness and are ready to move if that is a requirement. So, in terms of numbers there will not be any shortage of officials required. They will be inducted. We will also utilize locally available resources; after all they could be very useful resources available locally to assist us with local situations.

Question:

Can you give us a sense of, between the Control Room and the Camp; so far what kind of numbers we are talking about people who want to get out of Iraq?

Answer:

Well, I'll just give you a couple of examples but I won't be able to tell you all the details. For example, my understanding is that from a company which had approximately a 1000 people, initial responses were for about 120 odd (who'd like to leave). I am just giving a ball-park figure but, of course, we were not able to meet all the 1000. Our endeavour is to meet one by one etc. as many in groups to have an understanding and work it out. I won't be able to give you an exact thing. We've already made arrangements for day after tomorrow's flight for about 40 people. And we will do so in batches as and when tickets are available and we are able to complete all the contractual issues related to their stay in Iraq because that also is a matter that we have to take into account before we do this.

Question:

How many Indians would have left by now from Iraq and are they waiting for them to be evacuated?

Answer:

I don't know what they are waiting for. Let me tell you that when we started we said that there were approximately 10,000 plus and we also said that approximately 150 or so were in the zone of conflict. As of now, in the zone of conflict there are less than 100. So, approximately 50 plus have left from that region and that is the most difficult region.

As regards the areas which are outside the zone of conflict, there are international airports and flights available. Now, if you have a passport and if you an air-ticket, you don't need to contact me to let me know that I am leaving. So it's not for us to exactly know how many have left. We will only know those people who either don't have a ticket or don't have a passport or travel document or have some legal problems in terms of their contract and those are the most vulnerable and those are the ones we are trying to assist. As regards the others, they are free to leave. We have provided 2 advisories suggesting that they leave.

Question:

What kind of assistance did we request from Gulf Ambassadors, the ones resident here?

Answer:

Their assistance is in terms of what they could provide for us in the zone of conflict to help us in rescuing or helping our nationals in the zone of conflict out of it. That's our principal goal. The rest, we are handling it through our own assets.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/23515>

C. Kuwait

21. Indian Language Skills in Embassy of India, Kuwait (other than Hindi / English), Kuwait, 10 June 2014

To assist the distressed Indian nationals in Kuwait, the Embassy has drawn up a list of officials who can be accessed for help in different Indian languages besides Hindi and English. The list of such officials with their contact details is placed below. Members of Indian community are requested to make use of this initiative of the Embassy.

Indian Language Skills in Embassy of India. Kuwait (other than Hindi/English)

i) Malayalam

S. No.	Name	Designation	Telephone No.
1	Balram Kumar Upadhyay	Counsellor (Coordination)	22533125 Mob:97224029
2	Sunila Krishnan	Attaché (Labour – II)	22530409 Mob: 97264247

3	Dhanya Nair	Local Clerk	Mob: 65689503
4	M. Sudheendran	Local Clerk	Mob: 99183576
5	Mujib Kollorath	Local Clerk	Mob: 97610246
6	Justin James	Local Clerk	Mob: 94476852

ii) Telugu

S. No.	Name	Designation	Telephone No.
1	Thriveni Reddy	Local Clerk	Mob: 97108538
2	Deena Ratnam	Local Clerk	Mob: 66560773
3	K.S.S. Naidu	Local Clerk	Mob: 66442433

iii) Tamil

S. No.	Name	Designation	Telephone No.
1	Sunila Krishnan	Attaché (Labour – II)	22530409 Mob: 97264247
2	Sajan Varghese	Local Clerk	22550725 Mob: 99896053

iv) Bengali / Assamese / Oriya

S. No.	Name	Designation	Telephone No.
1	Shubashis Goldar	Deputy Chief of Mission	22510891 Mob: 97229942
2	Kalidas Roy	Attaché (Passport)	Mob: 97295728

v) Kannada: As there is no Kannada knowing officer in the Mission, we will be hiring a local staff member for this purpose to work in the Community Welfare section.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,

<http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=366>

22. Meeting with Maj. Gen. Abdul Fatah Al-Ali, Assistant Under Secretary, Public Security Affairs at Ministry of Interior, Kuwait, 11 June 2014

Amid reports of security raids on 6 June 2014 in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Murghab, Fahaheel, Abu Halifa, Al-Rai, Friday Market and some adjacent areas in Shuwaikh wherein approximate 820 expatriates were rounded for violating various Kuwaiti rule and regulations, Counsellor B K Upadhyay has met Maj. Gen. Abdul Fatah Al-Ali, Assistant Under Secretary, Public Security Affairs, MOI, Kuwait on 10 June to discuss the issues involved and appraise few complaint

received from Indians. Following advice is given to Indian community to avoid getting involved in illegal activities and later being deported.

- a) Recent raid was conducted based on complains received from various Ministries particularly Municipality, Commerce and Labour that expatriates were involved in selling used clothes, waste vegetables, expired food products etc at cheaper rates in the residential colonies and side of cooperatives. Such street type vendors are unauthorized and are creating problems that affect the functioning of above ministries.
- b) Before making raids, the residences, market area, outside cooperatives, etc were photographed and the activities of such persons have been so that such persons could be segregated from casual visitors. So details were collected in advance by police before planning raids.
- c) Those who are detained due to case lodged by their sponsor could be released by their sponsor only. It was informed that details of cases against individual have been computerized and one can get it checked oneself. In case of absconding cases, any individual can visit the Ministry of Labour and submit that one is not absconding. He is working because the sponsor failed to give him work. He can insist that Sponsor may be called and he is ready to go back with him.
- d) Maj. Gen. Abdul Fatah Al-Ali He further said that let these people have an authorization letter from the Sponsor that he is permitting them to work outside.
- e) On query regarding fear of night checking, it was informed that there would be no night checking and public need not to fear from it. In case, anybody is coming for night checking in civil dress, please ask for identity card and inform on number 112 of such checking. Police would help in such cases.

Out of 820 expatriates who were rounded up on 6 June, 720 were released after verification. Out of these 60 who were rounded for the above mentioned illegal activities, only 15-20 are Indians. That too there are photographs and video recording of their illegal activities. The Embassy will continue to render all help to the members of India community. There is no need to panic about the situation and ignore unsubstantiated rumours.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=367>

23. Amiri pardon to Indian prisoners, Kuwait, 12 June 2014

As a goodwill gesture, His Highness the Amir of Kuwait has recently granted pardon to some Indian nationals who are undergoing jail sentence. Our Embassy has received a list of Indian prisoners who have received Royal pardon this year.

- a) Details are below:
- i) A total of 16 Indian prisoners have been released with immediate effect. The charges against them range from being involved in drugs peddling, liquor trading or petty offences;
 - ii) The jail sentence of 38 Indian prisoners has been reduced — from life term to 15 years in few cases as well as reduction of the sentence period of other convicts to a half/quarter period of the original jail sentence. These persons were mainly involved in murder, liquor/drugs trafficking and petty misdemeanour cases;
 - iii) One Indian prisoner jailed in a traffic case has been granted exemption from deportation; and
 - iv) Total 33 Indian prisoners, involved in liquor & drugs cases, were exempted from payment of fines.
- b) At present 213 Indian prisoners are serving sentences (205 male in Central and Public Jails, 8 females in Central Jail).
- c) The Embassy's efforts are towards early ratification of bilateral Transfer of Sentence Prisoners Agreement from the Kuwaiti side, which would provide relief to many convicts enabling them to return to India for serving the remaining sentence period in Indian jails.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=368>

24. Advisory to community members, Kuwait, 19 June 2014

In our effort to reach out to the local police authorities to develop link between Indian Community and Police, Counsellor B. K. Upadhyay in the Indian Embassy along with community representatives recently met the Officer-in-charge of 4 police stations where the Indians are residing in large numbers i.e. Abbasiya, Fahaheel, Farwaniya, and Salmiya. During the interactions, a wide range of issues were discussed to improve security and better coordination.

Based on discussion with the police officers, following advice is given to Indian community:-

- a.) The major issue which was highlighted by community related to checking by persons impersonating as police officers. It was informed that Indians are being duped by using the confiscated civil IDs by way of making big purchase. It is advised to seek the police ID from the persons posing as policemen. During the meeting, the police officers informed that the real police would always show the Police ID and in case of any resistance, chances are that the persons are impersonating. As a standard practice worldwide, the police must show ID when in civil dress and even in Uniform. In case of doubt, one is advised to approach the concerned police station and verify the fact.
- b.) Whenever one is visiting Police Station related to reporting of crime and any follow up, an Arabic knowing friend should be taken along. The Indian community representatives have been requested to give list of Arabic speaking Indians, who can volunteer to help an Indian when such a need arises.

- c.) Various instances have come to notice when Indian nationals were duped for signing in Arabic written papers. Police authorities have advised that if those who do not know Arabic language, should not sign any paper which is in Arabic. It is advised to take an Arabic-knowing person with you who can inform you about the content of the letter. The law authorizes a person not to sign if he/she is not aware of the content of letter. Similarly giving blank signed bank cheques and one's passport as surety to someone else is improper.
- d.) Several instances have come to notice in Khaitan, Salmiya, Shuwaikh, etc when the workers were waiting on footpath for daily wages work. Such persons are generally detained during security checking by the police and deported. Such persons are generally on domestic visa and working outside is illegal. If someone is not getting job, better remain in the house. Don't roam freely for searching jobs on road.
- e.) Police authorities are ready to meet community representatives at regular intervals. Hence Indian embassy would like to advise the Indian community representatives to meet regularly with the police authorities which would create better understanding and coordination. Embassy would be happy to coordinate such efforts of the Indian community.
- f.) All must abide by the local laws and regulations regarding prohibition of alcohol in the State of Kuwait.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=371>

25. Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs (NORKA) contacts, 25 June 2014,

The Government of Kerala has provided contact numbers of key persons in Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs (NORKA) Department to assist our community in Kuwait.

Sl. No.	Name	Designation	Contact number	Fax Number	Mail ID
1.	K.C. Joseph	Minister, NORKA	Ph.0471-2333176 Mob.9495106600	0471-2320600	ministerkcyjoseph@gmail.com
2.	Rani George	Secretary, NORKA Department	Ph.0471-2518002/2339182 Mob.9447753565	0471-2327270	sec.norka@kerala.gov.in
3.	R.S. Kannan	Addl. Sec. NORKA Department	Ph.0471-2518129 Mob.9495569036	0471-2327192	addlsec.norka@kerala.gov.in
4.	P. Sudeep	Chief Executive Officer, NORKA Roots	Ph.0471-2330530/2770501 Mob.9447009907	0471-2326263	ceonorkaroots@gmail.com

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=378>

26. Ambassador hosted reception, Kuwait, 29 June 2014

The Ambassador of India, Sunil Jain and his wife Dr. Gargi Jain hosted a dinner at India House on 24 June 2014 in honour of the delegates from India and Kuwait for the Joint Working Group on Hydrocarbon. The visiting Indian delegation was led by P.K. Singh, Joint Secretary (International Cooperation), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India, and comprised of representatives from the Public Sector Undertakings in the oil and gas sector, namely, G.K. Satish, Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL), A.K. Srinivasan, Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), Upendra Maheshwari, Engineers India Limited (EIL), Prem Chand, Under Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs and D.K. Rudoda, CEO, The Energy Resource Institute. From the Kuwaiti side, Nasser Al-Shamma, Acting President of Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) and Ahmad Al-Qattan, Coordinator and Head representing Kuwaiti Oil Sector in the India-Kuwait JWG on Hydrocarbon were present in the dinner. During meetings on June 24-25, both sides discussed bilateral cooperation and means to strengthen the cooperation further.

Ambassador also bid farewell to the Ambassadors of Spain, Vietnam and Indonesia who are leaving Kuwait on completion of their assignment, while he welcomed the new Ambassadors from Brazil, South Korea and Serbia.

The dinner was also attended by few other Ambassadors and prominent members of the Indian community, particularly from the oil and gas sector in Kuwait.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=379>

d. Libya

27. Ambassador's farewell call on the Hon'ble Caretaker Prime Minister of State of Libya, Tripoli, 9 June 2014

- a) Ambassador of India Anil Kumar Trigunayat made a farewell call on Abdullah Al-Thinni, the Honourable Caretaker Prime minister of State of Libya in his office on 9 June 2014.
- b) His Excellency Abdullah Al-Thinni welcoming the Ambassador of India, spoke about India's long and rich cultural and civilizational heritage and standing in the community of nations adding that India's support to the countries of the Arab world was well known and appreciated.
- c) Ambassador of India thanking PM Al-Thinni for the meeting recalled how memorable and rewarding his tenure in Libya had been and that he was proud to have witnessed the making of modern Libyan history and be part of it.
- d) Reiterating India's full support to State of Libya in her transition to democracy and endeavour to build a new nation, Ambassador of India offered all possible and necessary assistance in the field of institution and capacity building in a manner of choosing by Libyans themselves. He also mentioned that the relations between the two friendly countries of Libya and India had grown post-revolution of 2011 especially at the popular level in the field of business and expressed the hope that it would only further deepen and diversify in the coming days adding that India desired to see a strong and prosperous State of Libya.
- e) Ambassador of India referring to the recently concluded general elections in India and conveying the wishes of our new Government to the Government and People of Libya underlined the importance of the forthcoming Libyan general elections planned to be held on 25 June 2014. He also stressed the importance of political dialogue and national reconciliation as an important pre-requisite for sustainable national progress.
- f) Ambassador of India sought PM Al-Thinni's full cooperation and support to ensure the safety and security of Indian nationals working in different fields in Libya even during and after the revolution in important fields like education, health among others.
- g) PM Al-Thinni wishing the Ambassador of India good luck for his future assignment thanked him for all the good work done during his tenure in Libya especially at a historical time full of unprecedented challenges.

Source: Embassy of India, Tripoli, <http://indianembassy.ly/Press-Center/Press-Releases?p=articles&news=13&title=Ambassador>

f. OMAN

28. Official visit of Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman to India, New Delhi, 2 June 2014

His Excellency Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman will be on an official visit to India on 3 June 2014 to congratulate our new leadership on behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman. He paid an official visit to India recently on 28 February 2014 at the invitation of Hon'ble External Affairs Minister.

India's close and friendly relations with Oman are based on historical people to people contacts. Oman is an important trading partner of India in the Gulf region with bilateral trade exceeding US\$ 5.70 billion in 2013-14. The contribution of over 700,000 strong Indian community in the progress and development of Oman is well acknowledged and appreciated.

During the forthcoming visit, the two sides would utilize the opportunity to also discuss bilateral, regional and other issues of mutual interest.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/23383/Official+visit+of+Minister+Responsible+for+Foreign+Affairs+Sultanate+of+Oman+to+India>

29. Foreign Minister of Oman first to visit India after new Government takes charge, Cairo, 4 June 2014

The Minister in charge of Foreign Affairs of Oman, Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, visited India on 3-4 June to congratulate the new leadership on behalf of the Omani Government. Yousuf Abdullah is the first Foreign Minister outside of South Asia to visit India after the Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the oath of office on 26 May.

During the visit, he called on the Prime Minister and extended his congratulations on behalf of the Sultan of Oman, reaffirming the importance of relations with India. Conveying his deep appreciation for the Sultan of Oman's gesture, the Prime Minister said he looked forward to further strengthening the close ties between the two countries. They discussed ways to increase trade and investment between the two countries. The Prime Minister also thanked the Sultan of Oman for looking after the welfare of 700,000 Indians living in Oman. Earlier in the day, the visiting dignitary held talks with his counterpart Sushma Swaraj and discussed ways to further consolidate the strong bilateral relations including enhancing of project exports from India.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi has within a few days of taking office, emphasized the importance of peaceful foreign relations aimed at prosperity and economic growth. He was the first Prime Minister in the region to invite

neighbouring leaders to his swearing in ceremony. Eight leaders from South Asia, including the Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif and the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai attended the swearing in ceremony.

For more information, please contact Indian Embassy Cairo at info.cairo@mea.gov.in

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=19948

g. PALESTINE

30. Official Spokesperson's response to media queries on the formation of the Unity Government in Palestine, New Delhi, 3 June 2014

In response to media queries on the formation of the Unity Government in Palestine, the Official Spokesperson stated:

"India supports the formation of the Unity Government of Fatah and Hamas, led by Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, on 2 June 2014. This is in keeping with India's stance of supporting the reconciliation efforts between the West Bank and Gaza, key to a sustainable Palestinian State.

At the same time, India has noted the commitment of the Unity Government to the obligations assumed by Palestine in the peace process with Israel. It is hoped that the dialogue between the two sides can be resumed at the earliest in a pragmatic and constructive spirit, towards a mutually acceptable political solution.

India has consistently supported a peaceful and negotiated solution between Palestine and Israel, resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side and at peace with Israel, within secured and recognized borders."

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/23389/Official+Spokespersons+response+to+media+queries+on+the+formation+of+the+Unity+Government+in+Palestine>

h. Qatar

31. Foreign Office Consultations between India and Qatar, New Delhi, 4 June 2014

- a) The second round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Qatar will be held in New Delhi on 5 June 2014. The Indian side will be led by Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East). The Qatari delegation is headed by Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mutib Al Rumaihi, Assistant Minister in-charge of Asia in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar.
- b) Qatar is an important trading partner of India in the Gulf region with bilateral trade exceeding US\$16.71 billion in 2013-14. It is the largest supplier of LNG to India.
- c) The meeting would provide a useful opportunity to review progress in bilateral relations and also to exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/23396/Foreign+Office+Consultations+between+India+and+Qatar>

32. Message of Greetings from Pranab Mukherjee, Hon'ble President of India to His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, The Emir of the State of Qatar on the First Anniversary of His Highness's Accession, Doha, 24 June 2014

On behalf of the Government and the people of India and on my own behalf, I extend warm greetings and congratulations to Your Highness and the people of the State of Qatar on the occasion of the Anniversary of Your Highness's Accession.

Our historical and friendly relations are deeply rooted in millennia-old cultural, religious and economic ties, characterized by extensive people-to-people contacts. I am confident that our multifaceted engagement in different fields would further deepen and strengthen our ongoing cooperation for the mutual benefit of both our peoples.

I take this opportunity to convey to Your Highness my best wishes for your personal good health and well-being and for the progress and prosperity of the friendly people of the State of Qatar.

Please accept, Your Highness, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Pranab Mukherjee)

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani

The Emir of the State of Qatar, Doha

Source: Embassy of India, Doha,

http://www.indianembassyqatar.gov.in/pages/press_release_detail.php?id=70&page=1

i. TUNISIA

33. Lecture-demonstration on Yoga organized by Embassy of India, Tunis, 6 June 2014

The Embassy of India in Tunis organized an Introduction to Yoga – a Lecture-demonstration by Dr. Chirayu Thakkar at Hotel Sheraton in Tunis on Friday, 6 June 2014. This was the first formal presentation on the ancient system of yoga in Tunisia. The presentation was attended by a wide-cross section of Tunisians and many representatives from the print and audio-visual media.

Dr. Chirayu Thakkar is a yoga teacher and practitioner based in Los Angeles, USA, who is on visit in Tunisia. He completed his medical degree in holistic medicine and yoga science from Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bangalore, India. He has spent several years promoting yoga in Cairo, Istanbul, some countries in Europe and India. Dr. Chirayu practices and teaches yoga to suit contemporary lifestyles, which emphasizes seeing the person as a whole being and working on the body mind- spirit complex.

Ambassador of India Nagma M. Mallick introduced Dr. Thakkar to the audience and gave a brief exposition on how yoga had come to carry different significance for different people, how it had brought physical, aesthetic, mental and spiritual benefits to people around the world, and that while yoga had emerged from the ancient Indian civilization, it now belonged to the world. Dr. Chirayu gave an in depth and comprehensive introduction to yoga;

he led the audience through breathing exercises, stretching exercises and some asanas; he gave an introduction to meditation techniques, and explained the importance of focusing the mind to live in the moment. The presentation was deeply appreciated and was followed by an intensive interactive question-answer session between the audience and Dr. Thakkar.

Source: Embassy of India, Tunis,

<http://www.embassyofindiatunis.com/pdf/Press%20release%20on%20yoga%20presentation.pdf>

34. An introduction to Kathakali performed in Tunis, Tunis, 25 June 2014

An elegant performance of Kathakali, explaining its origin, its base and demonstrating the beauty of the dance itself, was given by Ms. Maha Gaida in Tunis on Tuesday, 24th June, 2014 at the Institut Supérieur d'Art Dramatique (ISAD) in Tunis. Ambassador Nagma M. Mallick was guest of honour at the event at which she, in her remarks, highlighted the history and the popularity of this dance form in India and in the world. Mahmoud El Mejri, Director of the Institut, welcomed Ambassador and other guests on the occasion.

Maha Gaida is a young Tunisian dancer, who studied Kathakali at the celebrated Kathakali Institute, Kerala Kalamandalam. She had pursued her studies on a scholarship of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). Since her return to Tunis, Maha has played an important role in popularizing this dance form in Tunisia and in incorporating elements of this dance form into the repertoire of Tunisian theatre.

In her performance, Maha first demonstrated the 'navarasas' or nine classical expressions of dance, 'hasta mudras' or hand gestures. Assuming the form of a playful maiden and then of a graceful elephant; she also acted the part of a sportive gazelle at one moment and a warrior at the next. Maha completed the performance by performing a small vignette from the Indian epic 'Mahabharata'. Members of the diplomatic and the artistic communities of Tunis and performers and students of the Institut formed the audience. The beauty and grace of the Kerala dance form came alive for one evening in Tunis.

Source: Embassy of India, Tunis,

<http://www.embassyofindiatunis.com/pdf/An%20Introduction%20to%20Kathakali%20performed%20in%20Tunis.pdf>

MULTILATERAL ISSUES

j. THE 41ST SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC)

35. Official Spokesperson's response to a question on Resolutions adopted during the 41st Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), New Delhi, 20 June 2014

In response to a question on Resolutions adopted during the 41st Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia from 18-19 June 2014, the Official Spokesperson said:

"We note with regret that the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has once again made factually incorrect and misleading references to matters internal to India, including the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is an integral part of India. We reject all such references/resolutions. The OIC has no locus standi on matters concerning the internal affairs of India.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/23459/Official+Spokespersons+response+to+a+question+on+Resolutions+adopted+during+the+41st+Session+of+the+Council+of+Foreign+Ministers+of+Organization+of+the+Islamic+Cooperation+OIC>

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