

INDIA SPEAKS

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

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BILATERAL ISSUES

a. EGYPT

1. Flag Hoisting on Independence Day, Cairo, 3 August 2014

All members of the Indian community and friends of India are cordially invited to attend celebrations of the 68th Independence Day of India on Friday, 15 August 2014 at 0845 hrs at the India House, 19, Mohamed Mazhar St, Zamalek, Cairo. Ambassador Navdeep Suri will host the National Flag and read out the President's message on the occasion.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=34030

b. IRAN

2. India -Iran Gas Pipeline , New Delhi, 4 August 2014

Question:

Will the Minister of the State in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas be pleased to state:-

- a) Whether the Government is considering an underground natural gas pipeline between India and Iran passing through Afghanistan and Pakistan to be terminated at Fazilka in Punjab;
- b) if so, the details thereof along with steps taken by the government for formation of Special Purpose Vehicle and number of companies shortlisted for the said project;
- c) the quantum of land required for setting up its Terminal Point at Fazilka along with the employment likely to be generated, especially at Terminal Point;
- d) whether the interests of local people are being taken care of; and
- e) If so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons there for?

Answer:

The Minister of State (independent charge) in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (Dharmendra Pradhan)

(a) and (b) India is pursuing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Pipeline Project to receive Natural Gas supply from the Yolotan Osman (Galkynysh) fields in Turkmenistan. The landfall point of the pipeline in India will be at Fazilka (Punjab). The Gas Pipeline Framework Agreement (GPFA) and Inter Governmental Agreement (IGA) have been signed amongst the four member countries in December 2010. Company level bilateral Gas Sales and Purchase Agreements have been signed between each of the gas buyers and the seller. Pursuant to the signing of Transaction Advisory Services Agreement (TASA) between the four entities (3 Buyers and the Seller) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 19 November 2013, ADB was appointed the Transaction Advisor.

It was agreed to constitute a Special Purpose Vehicle (TAPI Ltd.) to carry out pre-project activities and to finalize an appropriate consortium leader for the Project. The Government of India approved the proposal for formation of SPV (TAPI Ltd.) for the TAPI Pipeline Project and permitted GAIL to join the SPV.

Based on the recommendations of the commercial and legal consultants, on the legal and corporate structure of the consortium, a decision to incorporate TAPI Limited at Jersey was taken in February 2014 among the Transaction Advisor (ADB) and the four member countries.

(c) to (e) the specific questions related to land requirement at Fazilka and manpower employment etc. would become known only after the basic engineering / Front End Engineering & Design (FEED) study has been completed.

Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 3450, asked by Sher Singh Ghubaya and Asaduddin Owaisi,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=2680>

3. Rail Road Link Iran, New Delhi, 06 August 2014

Question

Will the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Government proposes to construct a rail/road link to Iran;
- (b) If so, the facts and details thereof;
- (c) Whether the Government is also planning to use the Iranian port of Chabahar for establishing connectivity to Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan;
- (d) If so, the details thereof; and
- (e) The details of benefits likely to be derived out of such a move along with the time by which constructive steps likely to be taken in this regard?

Answer

The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (Gen. V. K. Singh)

- (a) and (b) currently there are no ongoing road or rail projects in Iran involving participation of Government of India.
- (c) to (e)

Government has been holding discussions with the Government of Iran to participate in the up gradation of the Chabahar Port which could, once it is developed, provide a reliable sea-land access route for India to Afghanistan and countries of the Central Asian region.

Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 3906, asked by Baijaynt Jay Panda, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=3087>

4. SAIL agreement with Iran, New Delhi, 13 August 2014

Question

Will the Minister of State in the Ministry of Steel, Mines and Labour and Employment be pleased to state:-

- a) Whether it is a fact that SAIL has entered into an agreement with Iran to supply steel worth Rs.15,000 crores for setting up of railway network project; and
- b) If so, the details thereof?

Answer

- (a) The Minister of State in the Ministry of Steel, Mines and Labour and Employment (Vishnu Deo Sai)
- (b) No, Sir. SAIL has so far not entered into any agreement with Iran for supply of steel for setting up of railway network project.
- (c) Does not arise.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of State), Unstarred Question No. 3756, asked by Devender Goud T., <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

C. IRAQ

5. Statement by External Affairs Minister in Rajya Sabha on 'Plight of Stranded Workers from India in Iraq on, New Delhi, 06 August 2014

At the outset, I would like to reiterate to this August House that the Government fully shares the concerns of the Hon'ble Members of this House regarding the recent developments in Iraq and safety and security of Indian nationals stranded in Iraq. In response to similar calling attention notices in Lok Sabha, I made a statement on 24 July highlighting the actions taken by the Government with regard to the security and safe return of Indian nationals stranded in Iraq.

The Government of India remains deeply concerned with the ongoing conflict and deteriorating security scenario in Iraq, resulting out of sudden attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS). The speed with which the ISIS began their attacks on 8 June and captured several cities in Northern and Central Iraq took everyone by surprise. Since then, the security situation in Iraq has remained critical and fragile.

An estimated 22,000 Indians were in Iraq at the onset of the conflict. This included 500 in Baghdad, 2,300 in Najaf, 1,000 in Karbala, 3,000 in Basra, 15,000 in Kurdistan and 200 in other cities. Some Indians got trapped in the conflict areas following these sudden attacks.

A group of 46 nurses working in a local hospital in the city of Tikrit got stuck due to the conflict. They were taken to Mosul on 3 July by an unidentified group. On 4 July, they were released and a special Air India flight was arranged on the same day to bring them back to India. They reached Kochi safely on the morning of 5 July by the special flight, which also brought back 134 other Indian workers, including 80 to Hyderabad and 54 to Delhi.

Another group of about 41 Indian nationals working in a construction company in Mosul were taken captives by an unidentified group. The Government is making all efforts and taking all steps to secure their release as well.

The Government of India has been regularly and closely monitoring the security situation in Iraq. Since the onset of crisis in Iraq, we have regularly issued travel advisories for our nationals, including on 15 June, 24 June, and 28 June. Indian nationals have been advised to avoid all travel to Iraq, until further notification and a ban has been imposed by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs on emigration to Iraq by ECR category travellers effective 19 June 2014.

We have reiterated our advice to our nationals in Iraq to leave the country by commercial means if it is safe to do so. Our nationals living in areas affected by the ongoing armed conflict have been advised to stay indoors as far as possible and to remain in contact with our Embassy in Baghdad for necessary guidance and updated information on the evolving security situation. Those Indian nationals, who do not have travel documents or need other consular services like air tickets, help with immigration clearances etc., have been advised to seek assistance from our Embassy in Baghdad.

Since 15 June, 24-hour help lines in dedicated control rooms have been set up by our Embassy in Baghdad and the Ministry of External Affairs to assist our nationals in Iraq and their concerned family members in India. The details of these helplines have been well publicized through the media.

We have also set up special camp offices in Basra, Najaf, and Karbala and strengthened our Mission in Baghdad through the addition of 25 staff members. These field offices are proactively contacting Indian nationals and companies where they work, offering their services for the facilitation of our nationals to leave Iraq by offering air tickets as well as help with immigration and departure facilities. We have sent our former Ambassador to Iraq to strengthen and coordinate our Embassy's efforts to assist our nationals. The 300 Indian Community Welfare fund (ICWF) is being used to provide assistance to our nationals in Iraq.

The inter-ministerial "Standing Group for Repatriation of Indian nationals from Abroad" has put in place robust contingency plans for safe and expeditious evacuation of our nationals from Iraq, if situation so demands. While we prepare ourselves to meet any emergency situation, as of now, we remain engaged in facilitating our nationals in safer areas in Iraq to return home by providing all required assistance including, travel documents and air tickets.

As of 2 August, over 4,900 Indian nationals have been provided assistance for travelling back to India, including air tickets to over 3,900 nationals, since the setting up of the camp offices.

The safety and security of Indian nationals, especially 41 Indian nationals in captivity in Mosul, is a matter of foremost concern and preoccupation for us. We are leaving no stone unturned for their safe return.

I assure this August House that it would remain the earnest endeavour of our Government to assist every Indian citizen currently in Iraq and ensure their safe return.

Many misconceptions have been expressed in the speeches I have heard here. I would like to clear the situation in my reply. 22,000 Indians are living in Iraq. They all are not stranded. We have divided these people in three categories. Safe, captive and stranded. 15,000 out of 22,000 are safe. 41 are captives, with whom the government has no direct contact. The remaining all are not trapped. Only 1,000 out of 5,000 who have been brought here are such whom tickets were provided either by the companies or came on their own. The government provided air ticket and travel documents to 3938 people. The Government opened camp offices in Basara, Najaf and Karbala in addition to Baghdad. We said to the officers to bring the people by issuing emergency certificate or by new passport, if the companies do not return their passports. The Government have provided air tickets to all to go to their respective states.

First of all our people went in the companies there. They met the Indians. Persuaded them to come. Passports were given to those who did not have the same. Those who did not have money were provided air tickets. There were brought to Delhi. They were taken to their respective state bhavans through Resident Commissioners. Out of 7,000 people, 5,000 have come. I conveyed message to those nurses who did not want to come, to give in writing that they do not want to come. In future, I will not accept that we did not evacuate them.

I am asking all of you that, if you want to evacuate any person of your state from Iraq and Libya, give a list. I assure you in this house that Government would evacuate them by passport, tickets or by providing money. I asked to bring all the people who are trapped in Benghazi to Malta so that Air-India aeroplane could bring them here. We are not talking about money even for a moment. No person would be left, trapped there due to lack of money. As far as the 41 people are concerned I would like to say here with responsibility that they are alive and safe. We should not believe on rumours. I have met their families ...several families. Chief Minister of Punjab, team of Akali Dal and all M.Ps from Punjab met me.

Secrecy is the fundamental principle of any such process. We talked to all foreign ministers, all Ambassadors from Gulf, and our ambassadors in Gulf. We also talked with the countries who can be helpful. I am waiting like a mother who waits for his child. Knocked every door from where we can get help. India has voted in favour of Palestine in UNHRC. There is a full-fledged Ministry to monitor all these things. We want to bring a perfect immigration bill by doing away

all the shortcomings of the existing bill. Regarding Daniel Solomon, I would like to inform that we are trying to bring his mortal remains at the earliest. We are also trying to evacuate the people in Libya. Many countries have closed their embassies but our embassy is working round the clock. They are working by putting their life in danger. 98 nurses have come, 126 are ready to come, and 236 people are ready to go to Malta from Benghazi. I again would like to say to you that if any known person is there; ask him to come from there because Libya is not at all safe at present.

INS Mysore has now returned. Evacuation work in Iraq is almost complete. Now our focus is more on Libya. We are evacuating Indians from there. Their safety is our top most priority. I want to assure all of you that safe return of Indians would be ensured.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/23847/Statement+by+External+Affairs+Minister+in+Rajya+Sabha+on+Plight+of+Stranded+Workers+from+India+in+Iraq+on+August+04+2014>

6. Storage of crude oil in Indian caverns by Kuwait and Abu Dhabi, New Delhi, 6 August 2014

Question

Will the Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether oil-rich countries Kuwait and Abu Dhabi are in talks with India to store about 2 million tons of crude oil in Indian caverns, which the country can use during emergencies such as supply constraint due to geo-political turmoil in the producing countries; and
- (b) If so, the details thereof?

Answer

Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (Dharmendra Pradhan)

(a) and (b). Yes, Sir. The National Oil companies (NOCs) of UAE and Kuwait, namely, ADNOC and KPC have expressed their interest in this regard. Bilateral Working Groups have been formed to discuss the subject further.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 3047, asked by A. W. Rabi Bernard, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QRresult.aspx>

7. Indian citizens rescued from Iraq, New Delhi, 7 August 2014

Question

Will the Minister of External Affairs be pleased to state:-

- a) the number of Indian citizens trapped, abducted in Iraq in the last two months;
- b) the efforts made by Government to facilitate their entry into India;
- c) the names of the countries which helped India in the operation; and
- d) the number of persons remained to be rescued; and those who do not propose to leave Iraq?

Answer

The Minister of External Affairs (Sushma Swaraj)

(a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to parts (A) to (D) of the Rajya Sabha starred question no. 428 regarding “Indian Citizens Rescued from Iraq” for answer on 7 August 2014

(a) An estimated 22,000 Indian nationals were in Iraq at the beginning of the conflict. This included 500 in Baghdad, 2,300 in Najaf, 1,000 in Karbala, 3,000 in Basra, 15,000 in Kurdistan and about 200 in other cities. Some Indians got trapped in the conflict areas following sudden attacks and capturing of several cities in northern and central Iraq by the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) beginning 8 June.

A group of 46 nurses working in a local hospital in the city of Tikrit got stuck due to the conflict, but were safely brought back to India in a special Air India flight on 5 July.

Another group of 41 Indian nationals working in a construction company in Mosul have been taken captive by an unidentified group.

(b) Our Embassy in Baghdad is in close and regular contact with the Iraqi Government authorities and Iraqi Red Crescent Society for the safe return of our nationals from Iraq.

On 19 June, the Government suspended emigration clearance to Iraq, until further notification and advised Indian nationals to avoid all travel to Iraq. The Government issued travel advisories on 15 June, 24 June and 28 June advising Indian nationals to leave Iraq by commercial means. Our nationals living in areas affected by the ongoing armed conflict were advised to stay indoors as far as possible and to remain in contact with our Embassy in Baghdad for necessary guidance and updated information on the evolving security situation. Those Indian nationals, who did not have travel documents or needed other consular services, were advised to seek assistance from our Embassy in Baghdad.

24-hour help-lines established at our Mission in Baghdad and the Ministry of External Affairs continue to remain operational to assist our nationals in Iraq and their family members in India.

Special camp offices set up in Basra, Najaf and Karbala continue to remain operational assisting Indian nationals in Iraq. Our Mission in Baghdad and the camp offices have been strengthened through deployment of 25 officials. These field offices are proactively contacting the remaining Indian nationals and companies where they work, offering their services for the facilitation of our nationals to leave Iraq by providing air tickets as well as assistance with travel documents, immigration and departure facilities. The details of these help-lines have been well publicized through the media.

Our Embassy has been providing all necessary assistance to Indian nationals, including provision of travel documents, air tickets and arranging special flights.

The Government of India has been closely monitoring the security situation in Iraq. The safety and security of Indian nationals in Iraq remains a matter of foremost concern and major preoccupation for the Government.

(c) The Government has been in regular touch with the countries in the region to assess and review the situation in Iraq.

(d) The group of 41 Indian nationals in Mosul taken captive by an unidentified group still remains to be rescued. The Government is making every effort and taking all steps to secure their release as well.

The Government is directly in touch with Iraqi Government through our Embassy in Baghdad to facilitate safe return of our nationals from Iraq. As of 3 August, over 4,900 Indian nationals have been provided assistance for travelling back to India. This includes air tickets to over 3,900 Indian nationals.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 428, asked by Shantaram Naik, <http://164.100.47.5/Osearch/Oresult.aspx>

8. Flight service between Srinagar and Karbala, New Delhi, 12 August 2014

Question

Will the Minister of State in the Ministry of Civil Aviation be pleased to state:-

- (a) The number of international airports in India, State-wise;
- (b) The number of countries connected through these airports and the number of flights operating from these airports airlines-wise;
- (c) The policy of Government to start flight service to the foreign country; and
- (d) Whether Government would consider the demand of the Shia Muslims living in Srinagar to start a flight from Srinagar to Karbala, Iraq once in a week; and
- (e) If not, the reasons therefore?

Answer

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Civil Aviation (G. M. Siddeshwara)

- (a) : There are 24 International airports in India. Details are at Annexure-I.
- (b) : Presently scheduled domestic airlines are operating to/from 34 international destinations namely Abu Dhabi, Brussels, Birmingham, Bangkok, Bahrain, Chicago, Colombo, Dhaka, Dammam, Dubai, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Jeddah, Kathmandu, Kabul, Kuwait, London, Moscow, Milan, Melbourne, Male, Muscat, New York, Newark, Rome, Riyadh, Sharjah, Shanghai, Seoul, Sydney, Singapore, Tokyo, Osaka. International flight schedules of Air India, Air India Express, Jet airways, Spice Jet & Indigo are at Annexure-II to Annexure VI.

(c) : The operation of air service on international sector depends on the Air Services Agreement between the countries and is based on principles of sovereignty of nations, nationality of carriers and reciprocity in terms of commercial opportunity for the airlines of each side. The Government

has laid down guidelines for allocation of traffic right on international sector, which provide a level playing field to all eligible private airlines while retaining the primacy of the national carrier viz. Air India. The foreign airlines can operate on designated points of call available under the bilateral agreement. The Indian carriers are free to mount services from any point in India to international destination available under bilateral agreements and the traffic rights allocated to them.

(d) & (e) : There is no such proposal at present.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 3556, asked by Avinash Rai Khanna, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

9. Reduction in import of crude oil from Iraq, New Delhi, 18 August 2014

Question

Will the Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the import of oil from Iraq, which is the second largest exporter of crude oil in Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), has reduced drastically due to unrest in that country; and
- (b) If so, the quantum of crude oil imported from Iraq since 1 June 2014?

Answer

Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum (Independent In charge) and Natural Gas (Dharmendra Pradhan)

(a) No, Sir. At present, there is no significant impact on import of crude oil from Iraq due to the prevailing political crisis in that country.

(b) The details of import of crude oil from Iraq during June 2014 and 1st quarter of 2014-15 are given below:-

Import Of Crude Oil during June 2014 and 2014-15 (Apr-June) (P) (Figures in MMT)

S. No.	Country	Jun-2014	Import of Crude as % of Total	2014-15 (Apr-June)	(P) % to Total
1	IRAQ	2.02	12.65	6.15	12.84
Total Crude Imports	-----	15.95	100	47.86	100

Source: Oil companies

(P): Provisional

Note: 1. During April 2014, no crude imports by RIL SEZ from Iraq and data is not available for the month of May & June 2014.

2. HMEL data for June 2014 is provisional.

Crude oil import data from oil companies for July 2014 is awaited.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of State), Unstarred Question No. 3828, asked by C.M. Ramesh, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

d. ISRAEL

10. Indo-Israel Work Plan on Agriculture, New Delhi, 5 August 2014

Question

Will the Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Government has signed an Indo-Israel Work Plan for the development of agriculture sector in the country;
- (b) If so, the details of areas identified for the development of agriculture sector including transfer and development of agricultural technology;
- (c) Whether Israel is providing technology for creation of Centres of Excellence (CoE) for transfer of various technologies for development of horticulture in the country;
- (d) If so, the details thereof; and
- (e) The details of CoE created in various parts of the country along with the funds allocated for the purpose under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)?

Answer

Minister of State in the Ministry Of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries (Sanjeev Kumar Balyan)

(a) & (b) An Indo-Israel work plan was signed in 2006 wherein a number of areas for cooperation were identified. These included energy efficient green houses, recycling of waste water for irrigation, post-harvest management for horticulture and dairy products, dairy development through genetic improvement, extension services, training and visiting facilities in respective countries.

(c) to (e) As part of this work plan, an Indo – Israel Agriculture Action Plan was initiated during 2008 – 2010 which was subsequently extended for implementation till 2015. Under this Action Plan Centres of Excellence for fruits, vegetables and flowers have been sanctioned with the technical support of Israeli experts in the states of Haryana, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Bihar, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The Centres of Excellence are for demonstration of latest technologies for increasing the production and productivity of horticulture crops in the country.

The details of funds allocated to various States for establishment of these CoEs under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture are annexed.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of State), Unstarred Question No. 3597, asked by P. C. Mohan, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/OREsult.aspx>

a. KUWAIT

11. Open House for Consular services, Kuwait, 6 August 2014

It has been the endeavour of the Embassy to make its services prompt, courteous and easily accessible to all Indian nationals in Kuwait. As part of these ongoing efforts, the Embassy has already in place the following mechanisms:

- a) “Open House” for consular services (passport, visa and attestation) held every working day, once in the morning from 1000-1100 hrs and again in the afternoon from 1430-1530 hrs. During the “Open House”, any member of the Indian community can interact with the officer on duty in the Meeting Room without prior appointment.
- b) “Open House” by Ambassador on every Wednesday from 1500-1600 hrs. During this “Open House”, any member of the Indian community can interact with Ambassador without prior appointment.
- c) Mobile numbers of all officers are given on the Embassy’s website. All Indian nationals may use this facility to call the concerned officer as per the need.
- d) An emergency contact number 22530600 is available on 24/7 basis for all Indian community members residing in Kuwait.

In order to provide even greater avenues for interaction with the Indian community, following officers of the Embassy will also be available from 1000 hrs-1200 hrs to all members of Indian community without prior appointment. Their areas of responsibilities are mentioned below:

- a) J.S. Dangi, Second Secretary (Consular), Mobile No. 97229947 for Consular matters, including passport issues, attestation, family disputes.
- b) Ashok Kumar, Attaché (Labour-I), Mobile No. 97229946 for individual labour issues apart from company labour disputes.
- c) Sunila Krishnan, Attaché (Labour-II), Mobile No. 97264247 for company labour disputes.
- d) Arvind Srivastava, Assistant (Visa), Mobile No. 65127918 for visa related issues.
- e) B.K. Sinha, Assistant (Community Welfare), Mobile No.97164067 for jail & detention cases and Emergency Certificates.
- f) Deepak Seth, Local Clerk, Mobile No. 66565703 and Shakeel Ahmad, Local Clerk, Mobile No. 99793382 for death cases.

Comments, suggestions etc. from Indian community in Kuwait are most welcome to further improve the Embassy services.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=572>

12. Advisory for Indian Nationals in Kuwait on Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), Kuwait, 7 August 2014

World Health Organization has reported 1,603 cases, including 887 deaths (as on 4 August 2014), of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in West Africa from 4 countries, namely, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. It is recommended that non-essential travel to these countries be deferred till such time that the EVD outbreak situation is brought under control.

Unfortunately, there is no vaccine or curative therapy for EVD, though it can be contained through early detection and isolation of cases, contact tracing and monitoring, and following rigorous procedures for infection control.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=573>

13. Advisory to Indian Community, Kuwait, 11 August 2014

The Ebola Virus Disease is being reported from 4 countries namely Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria in West Africa. Ebola is caused by lethal strain of Ebola virus with an incubation period of 2-21 days and there is no vaccination or curative therapy and only supportive therapy is available for the disease. For those travellers visiting/returning after visiting West African countries, please take note of the following:

- i) Ebola virus disease is rare. Disease is spread by contact with body fluids of a diseased person or a diseased animal or by coming in contact with person or a diseased animal or by coming in contact with contaminated objects.
- ii) The disease is characterized by symptoms such as fever, weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat, followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash and in some cases bleeding. Persons who come in direct contact of body fluids of diseased persons or infected animals are at risk.
- iii) During the stay in the affected areas, it is advisable to avoid all contact with suspected/confirmed cases of EVD and blood and body fluids of infected people or animals.
- iv) On return from where EVD have been reported, monitor occurrence of symptoms (like fever, weakness, muscle pain, headache and sore throat, stomach pain, rash and red eyes) and avoid close contact with other family members/visitors for 30 days. If any of these symptoms occur, it should be immediately reported to designated health facility for prompt management.

2. The travellers to India may be on vigil for development of any symptom up to a period of 21 days upon arrival and report to health facility in India.

3. It is once again recommended that non-essential travel to these countries be deferred till such time that the EVD outbreak situation is brought under control.

4. For further information, advisories issued by the Director General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, on ELOBA virus disease (EBD) may be seen at the following URL:

<http://mohfw.nic.in/index1.php?lang=1&level=1&sublinkid=4198&lid=2767>

The information is also accessible at :

Home » Organizations » Directorate General Health Services » International Health » MERS-CoV

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=570>

14. Ambassadors Message for Independence Day of India, Kuwait, 15 August 2014

On the joyous occasion of our 68th Independence Day, I extend my warm greetings to all members of Indian community in Kuwait and thank our Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti friends alike

for their sincere good wishes. On this historic day we pay homage to all who selflessly and courageously fought for India's freedom, and remember with deep gratitude the brave sentinels of our frontiers and our compatriots who have over the years sacrificed their lives for the safety and security of our Nation.

As we celebrate, we rejoice at our achievements since our independence in 1947, and rededicate ourselves to build an India in which every citizen will be able to realize his/her full potential and be full of happiness. The largest, most diverse democracy in the world, buttressed by a free media and an independent and impartial judiciary, India is committed to tolerance, harmony, equality, justice, and the rule of law. It is deeply satisfying to see our country of 1.2 billion people, characterized by vast linguistic, religious, ethnic and cultural diversity, confidently and unitedly marching ahead as one Nation. This year in April-May, we held our 16th General Elections to our Lok Sabha where people have given a huge mandate to the new government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for growth, progress and development of the country.

Since her independence, India has secured a unique and respected place in the comity of nations. And our successes have been significant and praiseworthy. With a large skilled workforce, dynamic and innovative entrepreneurs, plentiful scientific and technical manpower, diversified industrial base, rich natural base, a rapidly growing middle class with a strong market, India has emerged as an attractive business and investment destination. It is a software powerhouse and a global sourcing hub, especially, for IT-enabled services and business process outsourcing. The world has recognized India's intellectual, technical and engineering skills.

Indian economy is poised to achieve annual GDP growth of 7-8 per cent in next 3-4 years. In terms of Purchasing Power Parity, India has become the 3rd largest economy in the world. Indian Rupee which had depreciated in late 2013, regained lost ground and has been gradually strengthening in recent months owing to measures taken by the Government and the Reserve Bank of India. India's Foreign exchange reserve has increased to US\$ 320 billion. With these developments on external account, the Indian economy is better prepared to confront the challenges of global economic policy.

Infrastructure is critical for India's economic development. With a view to removing infrastructure bottlenecks, in the current Five Year Plan (2012-17), we aim to invest US\$ 1 trillion in infrastructure sector alone with a special focus on energy as an imperative for sustaining high growth. India stands out as one of a few countries where substantial growth is taking place and profits are being made; and it has one of the most liberal, transparent and investor-friendly Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policies among emerging economies. Significant changes have been made in the FDI policy regime in recent times to ensure that India remains an increasingly attractive investment destination. India is also a major source of investment abroad, in both developing and developed countries, so as to access high-growth markets, technologies and knowledge, attain economies of size and scale, and leverage

international brand names. Since January 2014, total investment flows to India reached US\$ 25 billion. The Government has proposed the setting up of an institution to provide support to mainstream Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), called 3P India, with a corpus of Rs 500 crore to rejuvenate the entire universe of PPP. To stop the migration from rural areas to urban areas, the Government has proposed the development of 100 “smart cities” in India, which will be developed as satellite towns of larger cities and by modernizing the existing mid-sized cities.

Agriculture remains central to India’s economy. The livelihood security of an incredibly large number of farm families is linked to agriculture. We are today a leading producer of several food commodities - cereals, fruits, vegetables, milk, eggs and fish. We have produced 255 million tons of food grains in 2012-13 after setting a record of 259 million tons in the previous year. Healthy agricultural growth has improved food security along with nutritional security.

India has achieved “near universal education” at the primary school. Today, our higher educational infrastructure consists of over 650 universities and 33,000 colleges. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the largest welfare scheme of its kind in the world and has reduced the migration from rural areas. Direct benefit transfer and Aadhaar card are giving people access to direct benefit transfer. Right to information and e-governance has helped in ensuring transparency and accountability in the Government functionaries. Among the anti-corruption measures, the Government has brought Lokpal Act, as also the Whistle Blowers Protection Bill, Grievance Redressal Bill, and Amendment to Prevention of Corruption Act.

Over the years, India has made significant advancements in various spheres of science and technology. India's achievements in the field of IT and software are acknowledged all over the world; and it has positioned itself among the top five nations in the world in the field of space exploration. It has also become the fourth country to launch a spacecraft to Mars with ‘Mangalyaan’. The Mars orbiter spacecraft which is scheduled to enter the Mars orbit by September 2014.

On the foreign policy front, India will continue to work with other countries to tackle issues of common concern, such as international terrorism, climate change, energy security, food security, and the reform of multilateral institutions to reflect contemporary realities. India has consistently been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism. India has had long-standing friendship with the countries of the GCC, which is India’s largest trading partner, the dominant source of our energy requirements (about 70 per cent) and home to about 7 million Indians.

India and Kuwait have close, historical and multifaceted ties which have been consolidated by the close people-to-people contacts. Our relationships extend beyond historical and cultural linkages to encompass political, trade and economic interests. Kuwait is an important partner in India’s quest for energy security and the bilateral trade was about US\$ 18.21 billion during the financial year 2013-14. Regular High-level exchanges present an opportunity to reaffirm

friendships and explore new avenues of cooperation. The visit of His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister of Kuwait to India in November 2013 imparted a new momentum to the growing bilateral ties. Prominent visits from India in 2014 included those of Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed, Yashwant Sinha, and Minister of Minority Affairs K. Rahman Khan. Intergovernmental Joint Working Groups on Hydrocarbons; and on Labour, Employment and Manpower Development were convened in Kuwait in June 2014. The Foreign Office Consultations between the two countries is slated to be held in September 2014.

The presence of a strong and vibrant Indian community in Kuwait adds a vital dimension to our friendship. Our work-ethic, peace loving nature, professionalism and sincerity have been appreciated by one and all in Kuwait and our community is contributing to socio-economic development of Kuwait. We are very grateful for the care and benevolence bestowed on our community by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince of Kuwait and His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister of Kuwait.

It has been the constant endeavour of the Embassy to improve the quality of its services given to the community. Responding to growing demand arising from enhanced bilateral interaction, as well as long-pending demand from the Indian community, the new service provider of the Embassy for outsourcing of passport and visa services M/s Cox and Kings Global Services, working in collaboration with its local partner M/s Al Qabas Assurex General Trading and Contracting Company W.L.L., has opened an additional centre for passport services at Jleeb Al Shuyoukh (Abbasiya) from 3 August 2014, in addition to centres at Sharq and Fahaheel. Our “Indian Workers Welfare Centre” which includes a help desk to guide Indians on immigration, employment, etc, the labour complaints desk, a free legal advice clinic and an employment contract attestation system are working well. To improve access of Indian community to the officers of the Embassy and reach us on 24X7 basis, we have provided our office telephone and mobile numbers on the Embassy’s website. We are helping from our Community Welfare Fund everyone who is in financial distress by providing free air ticket to return to India. It has been our commitment to provide top-quality consular services and welfare support for all Indians in Kuwait. To facilitate travel of Kuwaiti nationals as well all expatriates residing in Kuwait to India, the Embassy provides multi-entry business visas (5-year and 1-year), tourism visas (6-month), medical visas (1-year) and visas for study purposes. The Embassy is issuing visas the same working day with promptness and in a courteous manner.

On this happy occasion of India’s independence, as we commit ourselves anew to serve our beloved Nation, I would like to wish good health, progress and prosperity to all Indians in Kuwait. Long live India-Kuwait friendship!

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=580>

15. Independence Day celebrations in Kuwait, Kuwait, 15 August 2014

In an unprecedented presence of about 10,000 Indian nationals in the Embassy premises, the 68th Independence Day was celebrated by the unfurling of the tri-colour National Flag by Ambassador Sunil Jain, the singing of the National Anthem and the reading out of the Hon'ble President's Address to the Nation. The Bohra Community band played a variety of marching tunes to the delight of the assembled gathering. This was followed by the singing of Patriotic songs by Indian Associations.

Kuwait being home to 7.62 lakh Indian nationals, a large section of Indian community from all walks of life representing businesspersons, doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, technicians in oil & gas sector, construction workers, nurses and domestic workers, etc., participated in the Independence Day celebrations with great joy and enthusiasm, reflecting India's rich ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity in Kuwait.

The Ambassador emphasized that India-Kuwait relations have been historically close, warm and friendly. He commended the contribution of the Indian community in Kuwait's socio-economic development and in nurturing India-Kuwait ties. He extended his warmest greetings to all members of the Indian community in Kuwait. The Ambassador highlighted several measures taken by the Embassy for the welfare of the Indian community, e.g., opening of an outsource centre at Abbasiya, "Open House" in the Embassy on all working days and availability of Embassy auditorium to various Indian Associations for social and cultural activities.

Refreshment, tea, juice, and mineral water was served to all present.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=58>

16. 9th Summer Cultural Festival in Kuwait, Kuwait, 19 August 2014

Indian Embassy in Kuwait is taking part in the 9th Summer Cultural Festival from 24 August to 4 September 2014 at the Kuwait National Museum (opposite Kuwait National Library on Arabian Gulf Street) being organized under the auspices of Kuwait National Museum and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) of the State of Kuwait. The participation of the Embassy in the above festival signifies cultural cooperation between the two countries.

The Embassy will exhibit photographs showcasing arts and cultural heritage of India at Kuwait National Museum. The opening ceremony of the exhibition is on 24 August 2014 at 10.00 AM. There will be a live dance performance by Thrissur Association of Kuwait on the inaugural day as well as daily non-commercial screening of famous Bollywood films (Chennai Express, Agent Vinod, Talash, Ek Tha Tiger and Three idiots) from 25 August 2014 onwards. The timings for screening of the above films would be from 5 P.M to 8 P.M in the evening on all days mentioned above at the auditorium of the Kuwait National Museum.

The timings of the cultural exhibition are from 8.30 A.M. to 12.30 P.M. and again from 4.30 P.M. to 8.30 P.M during the above period.

The entry to the Exhibition as well as Films is free.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=583>

17. NCCAL hosts Indian Cultural Heritage exhibition in Kuwait, Kuwait, 24 August 2014

The National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) inaugurated the Indian Cultural Heritage exhibition, held at Kuwait National Museum (KNM) on Arabian Gulf St., Kuwait City, in cooperation with the Indian Embassy, as part of the cultural summer festival. At a simple opening ceremony at the museum gallery, Mohammad Al-Asousi, Deputy Secretary General at NCCAL, cut the ribbon to officially open the festival in presence of Indian Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Shubashis Golda, A K Srivastava, Second Secretary (Press, Information and Culture), Dr Susheel Kumar, Second Secretary (Political, Economic & Commercial) and other top NCCAL officials and dignitaries.

The 12-day event would help the audience be acquainted with the diversity of India's cultural heritage. Al-Asousi affirmed the Council's keenness on bringing musical and artistic shows of these countries to enrich such a festivity, and give the audience an opportunity to see an aspect of the Kuwaiti-Indian cultural ties.

He also expressed pleasure of hosting the Indian exhibition which highlights Indian culture through photographs, handicrafts, and musical shows from different Indian regions, including the traditional Indian dance performances. Five Indian cinematic films will be shown during the festivity as well, Al-Asousi noted. For his part, A K Srivastava, Second Secretary of Press, Information, and Culture at the Embassy of India, spoke about the depth of relations between Kuwaiti and Indian people, which dates back to centuries-long. Hosting such an event is an embodiment to this solid and historic relation, he said. The opening ceremony included performance of three Indian folklore dances. The performance was carried out by highly-skilled dancers who displayed harmony between their moves and the expressional music.

The ceremony also included various collections of famous Indian classic music, as well as various musical instruments played by distinctive players. The festival will be held till 4 September 2014 at the Kuwait National Museum (opposite Kuwait National Library on Arabian Gulf Street). The timings of the cultural exhibition are from 8.30 A.M. to 12.30 P.M. and again from 4.30 P.M. to 8.30 P.M during the above period. The entry to the Exhibition as well as Films is free.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=596>

b. MOROCCO

18. Flag Hoisting Ceremony on Independence Day 2014 at the Embassy of India, Rabat, 15 August 2014

On the occasion of the Independence Day 2014, a Flag Hoisting Ceremony will be held at the Embassy of India, Rabat (Address: No. 88, Rue Ouled Tidrarine, Souissi, Rabat) on 15 August 2014 at 10 A.M. All Indian nationals along with families are cordially invited.

Source: Embassy of India, Rabat, <http://www.indianembassyrabat.com/announcements.html>

c. OMAN

19. 68th Independence Day celebrated in the premise of embassy of India, Muscat, 15 August 2014

The 68th Independence Day of India was celebrated on 15 August 2014 in the premises of the Chancery of the Indian Embassy in Muscat where a large number of members of the Indian Community gathered in the morning, with patriotic fervour.

H.E. J.S. Mukul, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, unfurled the Indian National Flag and read out the Address of the Hon'ble President of India to the Nation. Students from the Indian School Al-Wadi Al-Kabir led the gathering in singing of the National Anthem, followed by other patriotic songs befitting the occasion. Earlier in the morning, Ambassador also unfurled the Tri-colour at Indian School Al-Ghubra in the presence of students, teachers and parents.

In his remarks on the occasion, Ambassador congratulated the Indian Community in Oman whose diligence, sincerity and professionalism is well recognized by all, and complimented them for their outstanding contributions in strengthening our friendly relations with Oman and in its march of progress, and also being valued partners in the economic development of their land of adoption. Ambassador reiterated that the historical maritime links between India and Oman have since grown to a strategic partnership and thanked the Government and people of Oman for their warmth and the continued support for the Indian community in the Sultanate.

Ambassador also announced that the 'Open House' at the Embassy which was thus far being held once a month, will now onwards be held on all working days between 1000-1200 hrs and can be availed of by members of the Indian community resident in Oman.

He took this opportunity to announce to the gathering the extension of 'Open House' facility to meet senior officers of the Mission with regard to Consular and Community Welfare issues, to all working days of the week during 10 a.m. to 12 noon. A documentary "One Thousand and One Nights Under the Arabian Sky" on the Indian diaspora in Oman and the UAE was also screened.

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0>

d. PALESTINE

20. Indian Stand on Palestine, New Delhi, 6 August 2014

Question:

Will the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Government has made any changes in its stated position on Palestine and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) Whether India has condemned the killing of civilians including children in Gaza; and
- (c) If so, the details in this regard?

Answer

The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (Gen. Retd. V. K. Singh)

(a) There has not been any change in India's stated position on the Palestinian issue. We have consistently extended strong support to the Palestinian cause, while maintaining good relations with Israel. This was stated categorically by Hon'ble External Affairs Minister in her reply to the Short Duration Discussion in Rajya Sabha on 21 July 2014.

(b) & (c) In our official statement issued on 10 July 2014, we expressed deep concern at the tragic loss of civilian lives in Gaza resulting from the steep escalation of violence in the region. This was reiterated by EAM in Rajya Sabha on 21 July 2014. Our concern for the killing of civilians in Gaza was also articulated in India's statements made at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on 22 July 2014 as well as at the United Nations Human Rights Council on 23 July 2014.

Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 4008, asked by M.B. Rajesh, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/OResult16.aspx?qref=3093>

e. SAUDI ARABIA

21. Flag Hoisting on Independence Day, Riyadh, 10 August 2014

On the occasion of 68th Independence Day of India, His Excellency Hamid Ali Rao, Ambassador of India, will hoist the National Flag on 15 August 2014 at 08:30 am, at the Embassy of India, B-1, Diplomatic Quarter, Riyadh.

All members of Indian Community in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and friends of India are cordially invited.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh, <http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

22. India Pavilion at Saudi Agro Food Fair, Riyadh, 21 August 2014

India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO), a premier trade promotion agency of the Government of India and Agriculture and Processed Food Export Development Authority (APEDA) are organizing participation of Indian companies in the Saudi Agro Food Fair 2014 being held at Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Centre (RICEC) from September.

A total of 48 Indian companies, largest ever, covering a wide range of food, processed food and food packaging industry will participate in the event and highlight India's export potential in these sectors. The Fair will provide an excellent opportunity to the Indian companies to showcase their products and the prospects of agriculture and processed food industry in India.

India's participation aims to provide new impetus to the India Saudi Arabia trade relations. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the fourth largest market for global exports of Indian agro food products. India's agro food exports to Saudi Arabia in 2013-14 reached US\$ 2.05 billion, registering an increase of 43 per cent over 2012-13.

The Indo-Saudi bilateral trade has been witnessing a steady growth in the last few years and reached US\$ 48.75 billion during 2013-14 from US\$ 21 billion in 2009-10, showing a remarkable growth of 132 per cent over this period.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

23. Deadline for non-machine readable passports, Riyadh, 28 August 2014

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has set deadline of 24 November 2015 for globally phasing out all non-machine readable passports and foreign government may deny visa or entry on such passports.

The following Indian passports are considered as non-machine readable:

- (i) All handwritten passports;
- (ii) Short validity passports revalidated by handwritten entry;
- (iii) Any particulars added or deleted with observation;
- (iv) All 20 years validity passport.

All printed passports issued by Embassy of India, Riyadh are machine readable passport. Indian citizens are advised to change their passport to machine readable passport at the earliest opportunity and positively before the due date to avoid inconvenience while travelling.

An application for new passport in Form I accompanied by self-attested copy of passport and Iqama is required to be submitted with the requisite fee for the purpose.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

f. Tunisia

24. Evacuation of Indian nationals from Libya through Tunisia, Tunis, 7 August 2014

Since 1 August 2014, Indian nationals leaving Libya are transiting through Tunisia en route to India. The Embassy of India in Tunis has worked closely with the Government of Tunisia, which has facilitated this evacuation on humanitarian grounds. A special flight of Air India was operated out of Djerba on 6 August 2014 on which many Indian nationals were evacuated. The Embassy of India in Tunis is grateful to the Government of Republic of Tunisia for the assistance it has consistently provided in the evacuation of Indians from Libya.

Source: Embassy of India, Tunis,

<http://www.embassyofindiatunis.com/pdf/Press%20Release%20evacuation%20of%20Indian%20nationals%20from%20Libya%20through%20Tunisia.pdf>

25. Second special flight of Air India departs Djerba with 226 Indians evacuated from Libya, Tunis, 8 August 2014

About 226 Indian nationals, evacuated from Libya, transited through Tunisia and flew out of Djerba in eastern Tunisia on 8 August 2014 by the second special flight of Air India. There were three children and two infants in the group. They had entered Tunisia through the Ras Jedir border crossing on 7 August 2014 and were facilitated by officials of Embassy of India in Tunis.

The group was seen off at Djerba Airport by Nagma M. Mallick, Ambassador of India to Tunisia.

Source: Embassy of India, Tunis,

<http://www.embassyofindiatunis.com/pdf/Press%20Release%202nd%20flight%20of%20AI%20departs%20Djerba%20with%20Indian%20nations.pdf>

26. Celebration of the 68th Independence Day of India, Tunis, 15 August 2014

The 68th Independence Day of India was celebrated this morning at the Embassy premises in Tunis with good cheer. The Ambassador of India to Tunisia, Nagma M. Mallick unfurled the tri-colour and read the President's Address to the Nation to the small assembled audience of the Indian community and friends of India. The national anthem was sung by all with fervour. Patriotic songs were sung and light refreshments were served.

Source: Embassy of India, Tunis, <http://www.embassyofindiatunis.com/pdf/Press%20Release-ID%2015%20August%202014.pdf>

g. U.A.E

27. 68th Independence Day Celebration, Abu Dhabi, 15 August 2014

Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi celebrated India's 68th Independence Day. Ambassador of India H. E. T. P. Seetharam hoisted the national flag at 8:00 A.M. which was followed by singing of national anthem. Ambassador read out the address of Hon'ble President of India Pranab Mukherjee to the nation delivered on the eve of Independence Day. Cultural program including patriotic song and dance were performed. This was organized by India Social Centre Abu Dhabi. An exhibition of photograph was also organized on the occasion. About 500 guests attended the event.

Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, http://indembassyuae.org/PR_16_08_2014.html

28. A high-level delegation from Madhya Pradesh visits UAE, Abu Dhabi, 2 August 2014

A high-level delegation from the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP), led by Hon'ble Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, accompanied by three other Cabinet ministers and senior bureaucrats from GoMP, visited UAE from 20 to 22 August, to promote the upcoming Global Investors Summit 2014, scheduled to be held in city of Indore, Madhya Pradesh, from 8 - 10 October 2014.

On 20 August the delegation, along with the Consul General, Anurag Bhushan, visited the Emirates Airlines' Headquarter where a MoU was signed between GoMP and Emirates Airlines regarding commencing of cargo carriers from Indore. The delegation was also briefed about the upcoming mega infrastructural projects for Dubai Expo 2020 and the world's first aerotropolis, under-construction, in Dubai. Later on, the delegation visited the Nakheel Properties at Palm Jumeirah where they were given a presentation regarding Nakheel's 'Palm project'. This was followed by a meeting between the delegation and high-level authorities at SMART city wherein the two parties explored the scope for development of similar such clusters in India. In addition,

the delegation interacted with leading investors in Dubai in two separate meetings over lunch and dinner organized by Gulf Petrochem and IBPC respectively.

On 21 August, the delegation, accompanied by Ambassador of India to UAE, T.P. Seetharam, visited Masdar City in Abu Dhabi wherein they received a comprehensive briefing about the establishment and ongoing development of Masdar city and its role in advancing renewable energy adoption from senior members of Masdar city's management. During the meeting, and subsequent tour of Masdar city, the two sides explored the scope of cooperation in the development of such city in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The Masdar city visit was followed by a brief presentation to the visiting delegation on development and operation of Abu Dhabi-based Ferrari World's indoor park by its General Manager in the Indian Embassy premises. During interaction-cum-lunch, hosted by Indian Ambassador, the delegation met with leading investors of UAE and explored the opportunities of investments in MP. Later on, in the interactive session with members of Indian Businessmen and Professional Group and representatives from UAE's leading financial institutions and ICAI, Abu Dhabi chapter, held in the Indian Embassy, the delegation gave a brief presentation on investment opportunities in MP and provided information on upcoming Global Investors Summit 2014 in the State.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister and the delegation not only held the growth story of UAE in high regard but also appreciated the warm hospitality they received from the several authorities in UAE and the affection shown by the Indian community.

Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, http://indembassyuae.org/PR_22_08_2014.html

I. Yemen

29. Independence Day celebrations in the Mission, Sanaa, 15 August 2014

The 68th Independence Day of the Republic of India was celebrated at the Embassy of India, Sana'a on 15th August 2014.

Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, <http://eoisanaa.org/independence-day-celebrations-in-the-mission-on-15-august-2014/>

SPECIFIC ISSUES

m. The First India-League of Arab States Media Symposium

30. Opening remarks by External Affairs Minister at the First India-League of Arab States Media Symposium, New Delhi, 21 August 2014

Distinguished friends from the Arab & Indian media, representatives of the League of Arab States, Ladies and Gentlemen Ahlan We sahlan.

I welcome you media personalities, opinion-makers and thought leaders from India and the Arab world to this dialogue of ideas that seeks to widen the arc of knowledge and understanding between our two regions, our respective societies and cultures.

In engagements between nations and regions, nuanced knowledge and understanding of each other is critical to nurturing ties. Governments and international organizations hold talks, take decisions and initiate policies. However, in today's wired world, the media has a vital role in collectively shaping how these decisions and policies are seen by the people. I am, therefore, happy to be inaugurating this idea-exchange forum amongst media practitioners seeking to build an enduring knowledge bridge between India and the Arab world.

At the outset, let me stress that India and the Arab world are not new friends and partners; our relations go back centuries. I am not a scholar or historian, but I am a student who enjoys reading history because the past gives us a sense of connectedness and tells us who we are and where we come from.

The idea of India has figured in the Arab imagination for centuries, and the Arab civilization, with its philosophical depth and entrepreneurial energy, has effortlessly intersected with Indian civilization all these years.

Our thinkers, scholars, philosophers, and traders have interacted across centuries. The Arabian Sea washes the shores of our two regions, and this has created a rich intermingling of ideas, beliefs, customs and language. Arab scholars like Alberuni have, in their writings, documented Indo-Arab cultural links including Indian contributions to Arab thought and culture.

Archaeologists have found evidence of trade links between the Harappan civilization and that of Dilmun in the Gulf. Some archaeological sites in Sharjah show the ancient links between the Indian sub-continent and the Arabian Peninsula. I am told that many illustrious Arab families have the surname al-Hindi. 'Hind' is still a popular name being used by many Arab women. The very famous Indian sword in the Arab world was called 'Hinduana' and 'Mohannad'. It gained a great reputation these for being very flexible and sharp. Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry refers to it in many poems.

The decimal number writing system of India is said to have spread to India through Arab Civilization. In agriculture we in India still describe the cycle of crop 'Kharif' and 'Rabi' which I understand are Arabic words. On the other hand Astronomy was introduced in the Arab world in 8th century through the Indian Sanskrit book 'Surya Sidhanta'. The famous Indian works translated in to Arabic were Charaka Samhita, Mahabharata, Susrud etc.

Continued business and trade between the two peoples enriched the two cultures. For example, Indian Cinema, Cuisine, music and Education is very famous in Arab World. Bollywood films are widely watched in the Arab world Many of the Indian films are now shot in Oman, UAE and Egypt.

Even during their National independence movements Indian and Arab nationalists maintained close relationship. When Gandhi passed by the Suez Canal on the way back from the Round

Table Conference in 1931, Ahmed Shawki, the famous Egyptian poet wrote an entire poem praising him. He said:

"Oh sons of Egypt Raise the Laurel and salute the Indian hero He is like the apostles in defending right and virtue He called on Hindus and Islam to intimacy and friendliness."

These are but a few examples of the flow of ideas, words and experiences between the people of India and the Arab world.

As this is the first interaction many of you are having with the new Government of India, let me outline briefly how we in India look at this age-old relationship, which is pivotal to our national development goals as well as regional peace and stability.

First, let me underline my government's unflinching commitment to sustaining and expanding relations with the Arab world that is bound to us by centuries-old cultural and civilizational ties.

Second, we see West Asia as a vital part of India's extended neighbourhood. The region, situated at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and Europe, is crucial to our national interests in myriad ways.

It accounts for over 60 per cent of India's oil and gas requirements, making the region a sturdy pillar of our energy security.

Over 7 million-strong Indian diaspora has made the region its work place, and has enriched the region with their enterprise, untiring energy, and dedication. In the Indian idiom 'Bharat' is their 'Janm Bhoomi', the Gulf is their 'Karm bhoomi'.

These 7 million Indians have formed a powerful bridge-builder and economic connector, and send home more than US\$ 40 billion in remittances annually.

Collectively the Arab world is India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade increasing to over US\$ 180 billion in 2012-13.

Oil dominates India's imports from the region, but recent trends show the trade basket becoming more diverse across the region ranging from Oman to Egypt, Sudan and beyond. The Maghreb region is a major source of phosphatic and other fertilizers, a significant factor in our food security. New economic areas have been identified in that region such as pharmaceuticals, automobiles, infrastructure, power and renewable energy.

In essence, economically, relations are expanding by the day. The possibilities of growth are virtually limitless.

Economic ties are being complemented by enhanced two-way flow of people between the two sides. Travel and tourism have taken wings – there are 700 flights a week between India and the UAE alone!

Looking ahead, one can identify India's infrastructure sector as a major growth area for Arab investments. Our government has made infrastructure upgrade and the creation of smart cities major national priorities. In this context, the sizable Sovereign Wealth Funds of Gulf countries can offer significant platform for operations of Indian companies and prove to be a game-changer in India's quest for world-class infrastructure.

Third, with this web of win-win opportunities emerging in multiple areas, continued peace and stability in the region is in our mutual strategic interest. India has been watching post-"Arab Spring" developments very closely. India continues to be guided by the principles of being non-interfering, non-prescriptive and non-judgmental. In other words, India remains ready to provide any support, but strongly believes that it is for the Arab countries to decide their destiny, without any external interference or diktats from outside. Being a longstanding partner of the Arab world, we in India are also deeply concerned with the rise of fanaticism, extremism and terrorism in parts of the region. We are concerned for the stability of these countries where terrorism and fanaticism are tearing apart the fabric of societies and also concerned over the spill-over effects on regional stability. This concern is but natural as the fates of our two regions are intertwined in many ways. Our national and energy interests are certainly important; but more important is the human bond. The continued captivity of 40 innocent Indian workers in Mosul and the holding of 7 Indian sea farers in prolonged custody by pirates in Somalia have brought home to ordinary Indians searing impact of regional instability in parts of the Arab world.

Fourth, let me clarify India's position on the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict that has created conflicting interpretations in sections of the media. On such a sensitive issue, there is no room for confusion or misunderstanding. Let me repeat, and underline, once again: There is no change in India's policy of extending strong support to the Palestinian cause, while maintaining good relations with Israel. India is deeply concerned at the loss of large number of civilian lives in Gaza. We have called on both sides to exercise maximum restraint and work towards a comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian issue. Apart from strong political support to the Palestinian cause at international, regional and bilateral levels, India has been contributing budgetary, economic and developmental assistance to Palestine and its people.

Friends, our government is committed to advancing the relationship with all countries in the region to our mutual advantage. To make this possible, we need to make a conscious effort to understand each other's positions and sensitivities. In these times of challenge and ongoing transitions happening in various Arab countries, the need for a constructive dialogue has never been greater.

India's media landscape is vibrant, diverse and multi-layered. We have more than 90,000 registered publications; 850 registered TV channels of which more than 400 are focused on news and current events; nearly 400 FM Radio stations broadcast news; more than 100 million social media users whose number is growing exponentially by the day.

It is therefore essential for practitioners from this segment of civil society to brainstorm on ways and means to cooperate and collaborate closely in creating mutual awareness. The India-Arab Media Symposium is a laudable step to keep each other informed and engaged about crucial political and socio-economic developments taking place in our two regions and their implications for the present and future stability and prosperity of each other. As an Arabic saying goes ” wujuuduna fee haaza al ala sharaaka, wa asharaaka annajiha allati tubnaa ala atta'aawun” meaning ”Our presence in this world is a partnership and a successful partnership is built on cooperation.” I wish this flagship event of India-Arab League Partnership all the very best.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/23944/Opening+remarks+by+External+Affairs+Minister+at+the+First+IndiaLeague+of+Arab+States+Media+Symposium+August+21+2014>

Note: The Exact web links for the questions in the Indian Parliament are non-functional due to technical reasons. They can be searched through the question number or the name of the Member of Parliament concerned at the website of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha.

Compiled by Jatin Kumar

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