

INDIA SPEAKS

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BILATERAL ISSUES

a. EGYPT

1. “Glimpses of India” Painting Competition attracts more than 4,000 school children, Cairo, 2 November 2014

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC), Embassy of India, Cairo, in cooperation with Ministry of Education will conduct the prize distribution ceremony of the Glimpses of India Painting competition on 10 November at 5.30 pm at the Gomhuria Theatre. The famous actress Leila Elwi will be the Chief Guest of the event.

The 20 annual “Glimpses of India” painting competition was conducted on 13-15 October at four venues across Cairo, attracting around 4,000 schoolchildren from more than 400 schools. The competition was held at India House (residence of the Indian Ambassador), Al Azhar Park, Children’s Creativity Centre, and Misr Public Library. Each of the venues received more than a thousand children who spent their time drawing various images and impressions about India.

Speaking about the importance of the competition, the Indian Ambassador said: ‘I think that the Glimpses of India contest is one of the finest activities of our cultural centre. It gives us a chance to encourage the development of artistic talent amongst the youth; but equally important, it creates a unique bond that will hopefully endure as these kids grow older and will continue to nurture the special friendship between the people of Egypt and India for years to come.’

The competition is an annual feature in Cairo and is to held commemorate the birthdays of Mahatma Gandhi, father of the nation, Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, independent India’s first Education Minister. This year, more than 4,000 children from the age groups 6-12 years (Primary), 13-15 years (Preparatory) and 16-18 years (Secondary) including children with special needs from various government, private and

national institute schools in Cairo and Giza governorates participated in the competition. A 3-member specialist jury has select 100 winners from 15 different categories. In addition, all 75 participating children with special needs will be given prizes. A catalogue carrying all the winning paintings of the children will be distributed at the ceremony.

For regular updates and information follow us on Facebook at Indian Embassy Cairo or write to us atmacic@indembcairo.com or info.cairo@mea.gov.in

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=42156

2. The First Senior Officials Meeting of the India-Arab Cooperation Forum, Cairo, 7 November 2014

The First Senior Officials Meeting of the India-Arab Cooperation Forum took place in Delhi on 7 November 2014, during which Senior Officials from member States of the League of Arab States met with their counterparts from the Ministry of External Affairs and representatives from other Ministries of the Government of India to discuss a broad range of bilateral, regional and global issues.

A Joint Statement issued at the end of the meeting recalled the “historic and civilization ties between India and the Arab world and expressed their commitment to work together to tackle common political and economic challenges.” Apart from a review of preparations for major events on the bilateral front, the statement called for greater cooperation in the field of energy, environmental protection, trade and investment, food security, science and technology and human resource development. On regional issues, the Statement called for a ‘comprehensive, just, and lasting settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli issue,’ and also touched upon other areas of concern in the region. The statement condemned ‘terrorism in all its manifestations’ and called for negotiations towards an early conclusion of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).

The Indian side was headed by Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs while the Arab side was headed by Ambassador Widadi Ould Sedi Heiba, the Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the Arab League. The delegation from the Secretariat of the League was headed by Ambassador Fadel Mohamed Gawad, Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs.

The Senior Officials Meeting marked a significant milestone in the implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) and the Executive Programme (EP) signed between the two sides in December 2013. In August 2014, the first Arab-India Media Symposium was held in Delhi which saw senior journalists from the Arab world interacting with their counterparts in India. The Senior Officials Meeting will be followed by the 4th India- Arab Partnership Conference on 26-27 November 2014 in Delhi and the second India Arab Cultural Festival in

Algeria on 20-27 November 2014. A Conference of University Presidents and an Energy Symposium are other events on the anvil.

The Senior Officials Meeting was assessed as providing an important fillip to the growing partnership with the Arab countries. As a follow-up to this, there is an agreement to hold the Ministerial session of the India-Arab League in one of the Arab countries in 2015.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=42156

3. A high level delegation from India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) visited Egypt, Cairo, 11 November 2014

A high level delegation from India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) visited Egypt from 7- 9 November 2014. The delegation was headed by Director General of DRDO, Avinash Chander, who is also the Scientific Adviser to Indian Defence Minister and Secretary of Defence R&D in the government of India.

The delegation held various meetings with senior officials from Ministry of Military Production, Arab Organization of Industrialization and Ministry of Defence, Arab Republic of Egypt. The delegation also paid a visit to Military Technical College in Cairo. During the meetings, potential avenues of defence cooperation between the two nations, especially pertaining to Defence R&D, were discussed. DRDO is a premier organization in India which dedicatedly works towards enhancing self-reliance in defence systems. The organization undertakes design and development, producing world class weapon systems and equipment for the Indian Armed Forces.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=42160

4. Prize Distribution Function of "Glimpses of India" Painting Competition on 10 November 2014, Cairo, 12 November 2014

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC), Embassy of India, Cairo, in cooperation with Ministry of Education organized a prize distribution ceremony for the 'Glimpses of India' Painting competition on 10 November at the Gomhuria Theatre in Cairo. The occasion was graced by renowned actress Laila Elwi who gave away prizes to the young participants along with Ambassador and his wife Navdeep Suri and Mani Suri. Dr. Rabab Abdel Mohsen, Art Education Counsellor, Ministry of Education was also present on the occasion.

This year the twentieth edition of the annual painting competition "Glimpses of India" from 13-15 October was held in four different locations: India House (residence of the Indian Ambassador); Al Azhar Park, Children's Creativity Centre and Misr Public Library. Over 4,000 children between the age-group 6-18 years from 400 schools of the Cairo and Giza Governorate enthusiastically participated in the event, the largest participation ever in the history of the competition. The theme of this year's competition was 'India: Tradition and Modernity'.

The prize-winning entries were selected by a three-member independent jury and 75 different students were awarded in 15 different categories. Prizes were also awarded to twenty five children with special needs. Laila Elwi inaugurated an exhibition of the award-winning paintings at the venue and also released a catalogue carrying the entries. She expressed her appreciation for the high artistic ability and creativity of the winning entries and for the Indian embassy for organizing the event.

The competition is an annual feature and is held to mark the birth anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Indian Nation, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first Minister of Education in independent India. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Suri said that the competition was a unique example of nurturing the special friendship between the people of Egypt and India for years to come. He added that the objective of this year's theme was to make students aware of the latest developments taking place in India. The competition and the enthusiasm with which Egyptian children participated in it bear strong testimony to the deep ties between both nations.

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Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=4216

b. ISRAEL

5. Union Home Minister Visits Israel, New Delhi, 6 November 2014

The Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv on 6 November 2014 during his official visit to Israel. The Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh later had a meeting with the Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon at the defence headquarters in Tel Aviv.

Source: Press Information Bureau (See MHA Twitter), New Delhi, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=114106>

6. Prime Minister Receives Former Israeli President Shimon Peres, New Delhi, 6 Nov 2014

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received His Excellency Shimon Peres, Former President of Israel.

Shimon Peres congratulated the Prime Minister on his victory in the elections. He expressed deep appreciation for the ambitious programmes launched by the Prime Minister for India's economic and social transformation which, he said, struck the right balance between respect for tradition and use of modern technology. He said that India's development and growth will be beneficial to the entire world. He conveyed Israel's readiness to partner with India in its development efforts and, in this context, called for greater collaboration in the areas of new and

higher technologies. He also shared his own vision of the way the introduction of new technologies would transform the human lives and the system of governance.

The Prime Minister said that it was a great honour for him to meet Shimon Peres, whose life was a source of inspiration for the entire world. He lauded the immense contribution of Shimon Peres to the world polity and the development of India-Israel relations, in particular. The Prime Minister recalled his visit to Israel as Chief Minister of Gujarat following which he had promoted use of drip / micro irrigation in the State and also set up an incubation centre to support start-up companies with Israeli collaboration.

The Prime Minister reiterated the strong desire of India to further expand and strengthen its relations with Israel both in traditional areas as well as in new areas of cooperation.

Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/pmreleases.aspx?mincode=3>

7. The Home Minister visited the Israeli outpost, New Delhi, 6 November 2014

The Home Minister visited the Israeli border outpost and met the female soldiers who keep a vigil at the international border.

Source: MHO India Twitter, New Delhi,
<https://twitter.com/HMOIndia/status/530987377649405952>

8. Ordinance Factory Project at Nalanda (Bihar), New Delhi, 25 November 2014

Will the Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether Government has stalled the work of setting up of the Ordinance Factory at Nalanda, Bihar?
- (b) If so, the reasons for delay in setting up of the project?
- (c) The present status of work of the project along with its completion schedule?
- (d) The steps taken by Government for time bound commissioning of all the major plants of the Ordinance Factory Project, Nalanda?

Answer

Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence Rao Inderjit Singh

(a) No, Sir.

(b) The project was originally sanctioned by the Government in 2001 to create the production facilities for Bi-Modular Charge System (BMCS) for 155mm Artillery Gun at Ordnance Factory, Nalanda.

The contract for Transfer of Technology (ToT) of BMCS was signed with M/s Denel (Pty) South Africa by the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), Kolkata on 15 March 2002. The contract became effective from 15 March 2003 after successful trial by Army. The ToT documents were received in March 2003 and subsequently the updated documents were received in April 2004. However, dealing with M/s Denel was put 'on hold' by OFB, because of its debarment in April 2005 on account of its alleged indulgence in illegal gratification.

Despite tendering twice, OFB's efforts to get the BMCS plant in place could not materialize since foreign firm M/s IMI, Israel, on whom the contract was placed to supply, erect and commission BMCS Plant as per ToT documents provided by M/s Denel, got debarred, in March 2012, for a period of ten years due to breach of Integrity Pact.

After cancelling the contract with M/s IMI, Israel for main BMCS plant, OFB has initiated the procurement action for five individual plants through indigenous sources for manufacture of BMCS.

(c) & (d): Nitro-glycerine (NG) Plant, Nitrocellulose (NC) Plant and Sulphuric Acid Concentration / Nitric Acid Concentration (Acid Concentration) Plant have been erected.

BMCS Plant: Consequent to cancellation of contract with M/s IMI, Israel for main BMCS plant, Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) initiated the procurement action for five individual plants (NC-NG Paste, Single Base Propellant, Triple Base Propellant, Combustible Cartridge Case, and Charge Assembly) through indigenous sources for manufacture of BMCS.

Meetings of Project Management Board (PMB) at the level of the Ministry of Defence and the Steering Committee at the level of OFB are being held at regular intervals to monitor the progress of the project.

As on date, no timeline has been fixed by the Government for completion of construction of this factory because of uncertainties in procurement / fabrication of BMCS plants through indigenous route.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 214, asked by Renuka Chowdhury <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

9. Indo - Israel Agricultural action plan, New Delhi, 25 November 2014

Will the Minister of Agriculture be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether the Government is satisfied with the progress of the Indo-Israel Agricultural Action Plan?
- (b) If so, the details thereof?
- (c) Whether the Government proposes to expand the scope of this Action Plan by involving other States including Madhya Pradesh?
- (d) If so, the details thereof?
- (e) If not, the reasons therefore?

Answer

Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture Dr. 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.

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 (CoE) 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, Uttar Pradesh 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 these CoEs under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture are annexed.

(c) to (e): No such proposal is under consideration. At present, Centre of Excellence for Horticulture has been included under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) and assistance to the extent of Rs. 10.00 crore/centre i. e. 100 percent of cost to public sector. This can be established through bi-lateral cooperation also.

Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 244, asked by Jyotiraditya Madhavrao Scindia, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=6973>

c. KUWAIT

10. Incredible India - a Journey through States, Kuwait, 11 November 2014

An “Incredible India - a Journey through States” presented through a vast variety of dance forms as well as fascinating display of handicrafts was organized under the guidance of Dr. Gargi Jain, Spouse of Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, in the 350-seat Indian Embassy Auditorium on Saturday, 8 November, 2014.

The 16 Indian Schools in Kuwait participated in this mega event. The objective of which is to highlight the rich cultural heritage of India. Number of Indian companies showcased their products, including Malabar Gold, Sanskriti Fashion, Girnar Tea, Rasna Juice, and India Heritage.

The Raffle Draw and the Door prize distribution at this event was done by Spouses of Ambassadors of USA, China, Japan, Russia and UNDP. The first prize in the competition, which was a tie, was bagged jointly by the Indian Community School, Amman Branch and Carmel School, Khaitan. The Second Prize went to the United Indian School, Abbasiya, and the Third Prize to the Gulf Indian School, Fahaheel. The Dance Troupe from Jabriya Indian School, Jabriya had novel participation of students from Lebanon, Iran and Bangladesh, in addition to Indian students. Salmiya Indian Model School entered the competition at a short notice even without a music teacher. The Indian Community School, Junior Branch merited special praise for

a splendid performance despite being very young in age. The National Anthems of India and Kuwait were played by the band of the Gulf Indian School.

The event was a stupendous success as it was attended by a wide cross-section of prominent Kuwaiti ladies and other Embassies and International Organizations accredited to Kuwait.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=658>

11. Interactive Session on Heart Related problems, Kuwait, 11 November 2014

In view of high rate of heart attacks in Kuwait among the Indian Community, the Indian Doctors Forum will hold an interactive function on heart related problems and issues on Thursday, 20 November 2014 at 7 PM in the Indian Embassy Auditorium. A leading team of Indian Cardiologists will be present on this occasion.

All members of the Indian Community are cordially invited to attend. Light refreshments, tea/coffee etc. will be served on payment basis.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=657>

12. Clarification regarding Bank guarantee for hiring Indian maid, Kuwait, 17 November 2014

There seems to be some misunderstanding in a section of media in Kuwait regarding the Government of India's decision to implement with effect from 11 September 2014 the bank guarantee provision of KD 720 (equivalent to US\$ 2,500) by every employer in Kuwait wishing to employ an Indian female domestic worker.

The Embassy wishes to clarify that this welfare measure has been taken by the Government of India as there have been some cases of maltreatment of and abuses suffered to by the Indian female domestic workers in Kuwait. By safeguarding the interests of Indian women domestic workers in Kuwait, the authorities in India consider it a necessary step towards strengthening the historically close and friendly ties between India and Kuwait.

It may be added that based on the recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial meeting held in the year 2007, the Government of India had decided to make it mandatory the bank guarantee provision of US\$ 2,500 from the sponsors employing Indian female domestic workers in the GCC countries. This bank guarantee provision has long been implemented by Indian Embassies in other Gulf countries (viz., Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain).

The Embassy would like to stress that the submission of KD 720 bank guarantee by a sponsor in Kuwait is not a commercial transaction as the Embassy is only asking for a bank guarantee, not a bank deposit. The bank guarantee measure would render benefits to both parties (i.e., employer and employee), as small issues of disagreements/ disputes will not have to go to legal authorities and instead be sorted out locally. The bank guarantee will be returned to the sponsor in Kuwait,

once Indian female domestic worker has returned to India, with his/her sponsor in Kuwait fulfilling his/her contractual obligations.

The Embassy seeks understanding of the media in Kuwait on this issue for strengthening further friendly relationship between India and Kuwait

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=678>

d. LEBANON

13. Indian Culture on Display in Tripoli, Beirut, 07 November 2014

The Embassy of India, in collaboration with the Solidere Foundation, organized a photographic exhibition on Islamic Monuments in India as also an Exhibition on Indian Saris in Tripoli on 7-8 November 2014.

Both exhibitions were sent from India for display in Lebanon by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi.

Both exhibitions attracted a large audience who were very appreciative not only of the artistry and grandeur of Indian heritage which was on display but also of the Embassy's efforts to organize an event in Tripoli in the current climate of political tension in the area.

See more at: <http://indianembassybeirut.org/notice/display/38#sthash.2L1NSkB6.dpuf>

Source: Embassy of India, Beirut, <http://indianembassybeirut.org/notice/display/38>

14. Solidere and the Embassy of India in Lebanon Hold "dastkari", Beirut, 20 November 2014

Solidere and the Embassy of India are taking a step forward towards strengthening cultural exchanges between Lebanon and India by organizing Dastkari, an exhibition-cum-sale of Indian handicrafts at Souk El Arwamin, Beirut Souks.

Dast in Urdu means hand and kari means skill, so Dastkari literally means "skill of the hand".

The exhibition was inaugurated on 20 November 2014 in the presence of the Indian Ambassador in Lebanon, Her Excellency Anita Nayar and high ranking officials from Solidere.

Dastkari will exhibit different traditional Indian artworks and crafts, from textiles (including curtain cloths, table cloths, cushion covers, bedspreads, stoles, scarves, shawls, etc.), carpets, jewellery, furniture, and decorative items for the home. Dastkari aims to showcase the high-end craftsmanship, vibrant colours and creative designs that represent Indian culture and its artisanal products.

Represented in the exhibition are exhibits from Pramukh Overseas Pvt. Ltd. (an export-import firm from India), Namah- Asteria (a start-up based in Tyre), Amer Tartoussi Est. (based in Tripoli) and from Beirut, Maktabi-at- the-Park and Taj Handicrafts.

The exhibition will continue on 21- 23 November 2014, from 10.00 AM to 10.00 PM.

See more at: <http://indianembassybeirut.org/notice/display/39#sthash.opt0uWbw.dpuf>

Source: Embassy of India, Beirut, <http://indianembassybeirut.org/notice/display/39>

e. QATAR

15. Embassy of India will hold an Open House on Friday, Doha, 28 November 2014

Embassy of India will hold an Open House on Friday, 28 November 2014, to address any urgent consular and labour problems of Indian nationals in the State of Qatar.

The Open House will be held from 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm. written information on issues/cases proposed to be discussed with the Embassy may please be given from 5.30 pm to 6 pm. This will be followed by meeting with Embassy officials from 6 pm to 6.30 pm.

Salient information would be sent to the media after the Open House.

Source: Embassy of India, Qatar,

<http://www.indianembassyqatar.gov.in/pages/importantannouncements.php>

f. SAUDI ARABIA

16. Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India proposes to organize the 3rd Study India Programme, Riyadh, 17 November 2014

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India proposes to organize the third Study India Programme (SIP) to enable overseas youth of Indian origin i.e. foreign citizens of Indian origin in the age group of 18-26 years to undergo short term course of 4 weeks to familiarize them with the art, culture, heritage, history, social and economic development of India. The programme will be organized from 22 December 2014 –14 January 2015. Detailed guidelines and the application form is available at http://moia.gov.in/writereaddata/pdf/3rd_sip.pdf

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

g. UAE

17. Official visit of External Affairs Minister to United Arab Emirates (10-12 November, 2014), Abu Dhabi, 07 November 2014

Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs and Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs is paying an official visit to the United Arab Emirates(UAE) on 10-12 November 2014 at the invitation of her UAE counterpart, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. This is her first official visit to UAE, during which she will interact with the top UAE leadership. The two sides will discuss bilateral, regional and other issues of mutual interest. She will also interact with the Indian community in UAE.

India enjoys close and multifaceted comprehensive partnership with UAE. Our well-balanced bilateral trade amounted to US\$ 59 billion in 2013-14. UAE was our largest trading partner in 2012-13. It is the eleventh largest investor in India in terms of foreign direct investments. It

contributes significantly to India's energy security and is the sixth largest supplier of crude oil to India.

About 2.6 million strong and vibrant Indian community forms the largest expatriate group in the UAE. Their positive and well-appreciated contribution in the development of their host country has been an important anchor of our excellent bilateral engagement.

India has vital stakes in the security and stability of the Gulf region, which hosts over seven million Indians. This region is also the source of nearly two-third of India's crude oil requirements and is our largest trading partner.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24203/Official visit of External Affairs Minister to United Arab Emirates 1012 November 2014](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24203/Official%20visit%20of%20External%20Affairs%20Minister%20to%20United%20Arab%20Emirate%20s%201012%20November%202014)

MULTILATERAL ISSUES

18. First session of the India-Arab League Senior Officials Meeting, 5 November 2014

The first session of the India-Arab League Senior Officials Meeting will be held in New Delhi on 7 November 2014. This is an important event under the Memorandum of Cooperation between the two sides signed in December 2013, which mandates invigorated cooperation in a variety of sectors.

The Indian side will be led by Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), in the Ministry of External Affairs, while the Arab side will be led by Widadi Ould Sedi Heiba, Ambassador of Mauritania to the Arab Republic of Egypt and Permanent Delegate to the Arab League.

During the meeting, the two sides will deliberate on the whole gamut of bilateral issues, covering trade and investment, energy, environment protection, agriculture and food security, human resource development, culture, education and media. Additionally, consultations will be held on a broad range of regional and international issues of mutual interest.

India and the Arab countries historically enjoy close relations. The Senior Officials Meeting will provide a new platform for elevating the engagement to a high level for realizing the true potential of the relationship. This will be followed by two other important events within this month, namely the India-Arab Cultural Festival in Algiers on 20-27 November, 2014 and the India-Arab Business Partnership Conference in New Delhi on 26-27 November, 2014.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24200/First session of the IndiaArab League Senior Officials Meeting](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24200/First%20session%20of%20the%20IndiaArab%20League%20Senior%20Officials%20Meeting)

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The Senior Officials Meeting was assessed as providing an important fillip to the growing partnership with the Arab countries. As a follow-up to this, there is an agreement to hold the Ministerial session of the India-Arab League in one of the Arab countries in 2015.

Source: *Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi*, http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24208/The_First_Senior_Officials_Meeting_of_the_IndiaArab_Cooperation_Forum

20. Exploitation of Indian workers abroad, New Delhi, 27 November 2014

Will the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Indian workers abroad are being exploited and harassed; if so, the details thereof?

- (b) The number of cases of exploitation of Indian workers working abroad during the last one year and this year, till date, country-wise, year-wise?
- (c) Whether assistance is being extended to those workers in distress; if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefore?
- (d) The steps taken by Government to make their lives secure abroad?

Answer

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Sushma Swaraj

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to the Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 77 for 27-11-2014 regarding 'Exploitation of Indian workers abroad'

(a) & (b) : Complaints received from Indian workers, from time to time, are generally in the nature of non-payment/ delayed payment or underpayment of salaries, long working hours, inadequate living conditions, physical harassment, non-renewal of visa and labour card on time, refusal to pay for the medical treatment, denial of leave and air-ticket to the hometown on completion of contract period, forcible custody of Passport and Visa, refusal of leave or 'exit/re-entry permits'/'final exit visa' etc.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, deals with according emigration clearance to Emigration Check Required (E.C.R.) passport holders going to E.C.R. countries. Country-wise and year-wise number of complaints received by the Missions of Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries during the last one year and current year year-wise is as under:

S.N	Name of the ECR Countries	No. of Complaints Year 2013	No. of Complaints Year 2014
1	Afghanistan	Nil	Nil
2	Bahrain	838	745
3	Indonesia	Nil	Nil
4	Iraq	Nil	9
5	Jordan	11	13
6	Kuwait	2887	2721
7	Lebanon	5*	
8	Libya	1*	
9	Malaysia	253	1650
10	Oman	1781	1146
11	Qatar	3221	2991
12	Saudi Arabia	2608	2973

13	Sudan	4*	
14	South Sudan	Nil	Nil
15	Syria	Nil	Nil
16	Thailand	Nil	Nil
17	UAE	1104	1346
18	Yemen	17	6

* for both 2013 & 2014

(c) & (d): Whenever a complaint is received from any Indian worker abroad, action is initiated by the Ministry by asking the concerned Indian Mission to look into the matter. If the complaint is received by the Indian Mission, the Indian Mission also initiates action to resolve the issue by getting in touch with the foreign employer/local authorities and emigrant worker concerned and visiting Indian labour camps, if required, and actively pursuing until their logical

In Conclusion, whenever necessary, the complainant is also provided counselling and accordingly referred to concerned labour office/court, Immigration and Police authorities etc. The Missions also provide interpreting services to the Indian complainants.

Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) has been established in all the Indian Missions for on-site welfare of emigrants, which include offering food and accommodation like Shelter for short term to Indian workers in distress, air-ticket at Government cost for repatriation to India, transportation of the mortal remains, initial legal assistance and emergency medical help and organizing awareness camps at prominent worker's accommodation sites.

For redressal of grievances of emigrants, Indian Workers Resource Centre (IWRC) at Dubai, UAE, has been established which is a 24X7 toll free multilingual helpline and also provides free legal, psychological and financial counselling to distressed Indians. Other Missions also have helpline/help desks to attend to grievances of Indian nationals.

The Emigration Act 1983 and Rules thereof as amended from time to time and executive instructions provide framework to facilitate safe and legal emigration, check irregular emigration and for providing protection and welfare to the Indian emigrants.

To ensure that only credible persons are enrolled as recruiting agents, various eligibility criteria are imposed, like Police verification of character and antecedents, minimum Educational Qualification of graduation or 2 year Diploma, financial soundness of the applicant and submission of Bank Guarantee of Rs 20 lakhs etc.

Every application for emigration clearance should accompany the requisite documents like Demand from the Foreign Employer, Power of Attorney given by the Employer to the Recruiting Agent, Employment Agreement to be signed by the foreign employer and the intending emigrant

and to be countersigned by the Recruiting Agent (RA) having a provision of Minimum Referral Wages (to ensure reasonable salary), various other conditions of employment (like free accommodation, food, allowances, leave salary, fixed working hours) , valid Visa, Insurance Policy under Parvasi Bhartiya Bima Yojna (PBBY). Pre-attestation of employment documents is mandatory in vulnerable cases (unskilled) and Domestic Sector Workers (DSW). In case of women emigrants below 30 years of age, emigration clearance is not accorded, besides attestation of documents by the respective Mission, depositing a security of US\$ 2,500 in the Indian Mission by the Foreign Employer has been made mandatory to protect the interests of women emigrants.

Violation of provisions of the Emigration Act /Rules is dealt with seriously. Complaint against unregistered R.As are referred to concerned State Governments/Police Authorities for investigation and action for violation of Section 10 and 24 of Emigration Act 1983, and other laws of the land, as appropriate. The Police authorities, in turn, after investigating the case and securing adequate evidence, seek approval from Protector General of Emigrants, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs/ competent authority for prosecuting the accused in the appropriate court of law, under section 27 of the Emigration Act, 1983. Request for such prosecution sanctions are processed and prosecution sanction issued on priority by the office of the Protector General of Emigrants, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. The penal provisions for violation of the Emigration Act, 1983 such as cheating, overcharging, furnishing false information {Section 24(1) and (2)} are punishable with imprisonment up to 2 years and with a fine up to Rs. 2,000/-.

In case of complaints against registered RAs, action as stipulated under the Emigration Act 1983 and Emigration Rules 1983, by way of issuing Show Cause Notice (SCN), suspension/cancellation of license and forfeiture of Bank Guarantee, are taken.

In case the Foreign Employer (FE) is found to be indulging in exploiting an emigrant, the FE is blacklisted in consultation with the Indian Mission. A blacklisted, FE cannot recruit any Indian worker.

Other measures taken for protection and welfare of emigrants include computerized system for emigration clearance. The complete status of the Registered Recruiting Agent is also available for online checking on the website www.poeonline.gov.in.

The Ministry has established Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC), under which, a 24 hour toll free helpline in eleven listed languages namely, English, Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil and Telugu and to enable Emigrants/prospective Emigrants to seek information and file complaints against Registered/ Unregistered Recruiting Agents/Foreign Employers.

The Ministry has also established Migration Resource Centres (MRCs) at Cochin and Hyderabad with facility for walk in counselling/consultation.

To protect the intending emigrants from being duped by the unscrupulous elements, the Ministry conducts a massive nationwide Awareness & Publicity campaign through print and electronic media to inform intending migrants the do's and don'ts of the recruitment and the emigration procedure.

Diplomatic initiatives are also taken with host countries to extend the protection of labour laws to the workers in the informal sector. India has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Labour with the major emigrants receiving Countries like Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Malaysia, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (for Domestic Sector Workers).

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 77, asked by Sasikala Pushpa, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

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 Websites <http://rajyasabha.nic.in/> of Rajya Sabha and <http://loksabha.nic.in/> of Lok Sabha.

Crore: 10 Millions; Lakh: 100,000.

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