

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER**Recent Overseas Visits by the Prime Minister**

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, since the last session of Parliament, I have had the opportunity to interact with a number of world leaders during my visits to London, New York, the Hague and Vientiane.

I visited London at the invitation of Prime Minister Blair on 19-20 September en route to New York for the UN General Assembly Session. Following our talks, we adopted a joint Declaration on "India-UK: Towards a new and dynamic partnership". This Declaration outlines areas of future cooperation in our strategic relations reinforcing our partnership in foreign and defence policy, on combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestation, expansion of economic ties and intensifying cooperation in the areas of Science & Technology, education and culture. Prime Minister Blair reiterated UK's support for permanent membership of India in the UN Security Council.

Sir, our relations with the UK, one of our most important political and economic partners will receive special focus in 2005, when the UK will hold the Chairmanship of the G-8. It will also hold the Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2005, when we expect to hold the 6th India-EU Summit in New Delhi.

I addressed the UN General Assembly in New York on September 23, 2004. The broad themes covered in my address were: the global and transnational character of the challenges confronting the world, the need for a global response based on consensus, and the need to impart substance and credibility to the global war against terrorism. I emphasized India's commitment to multilateralism and to its embodiment—the UN, the imperative of reforms to enable the UN to refashion itself to become relevant to our times. I outlined the reasons why we believe India should be a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

In this context, a Summit of the leaders of, what is now being termed as the 'Group of Four aspirants'—Brazil, Germany, India and Japan was held on September 21, 2004 in New York. This was a significant statement of our intent to participate in the UN reform process on the basis of a mutual understanding to support each other for permanent membership of the

Security Council. We also highlighted the need to reform the Security Council to make it more representative and effective.

While in New York, I also had bilateral meetings with the Presidents of USA, South Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

My meeting with President George Bush was very positive in setting the direction for further development of India-US Strategic Partnership. We welcomed the recent implementation of Phase I of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership. We agreed on the need for expanded economic and defence cooperation. We recognized the importance of working closely in the war against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

During my meeting with President Musharraf, I conveyed our sincere desire to pursue the dialogue with Pakistan systematically and on a sustained basis. I emphasized to President Musharraf the criticality of his fulfilling the reassurance of January 6, 2004, that any territory under Pakistan's control would not be used to support terrorism in any manner.

We agreed that confidence-building measures (CBMs) of all categories under discussion between the two governments should be implemented. This should be done keeping in mind practical possibilities, as these will contribute to generating an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding so necessary for the well-being of the people of both countries.

We also discussed bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. We agreed that possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the issue of J&K should be explored in a sincere spirit and a purposeful manner. I made it clear to President Musharraf that while we are willing to look at various options, we would not agree to any redrawing of boundaries, or another partition of the country.

Sir, the possibility of a gas pipeline *via* Pakistan to India was also discussed in context of the bilateral economic and commercial relationship. We feel such a project would have considerable mutual benefits.

On November 23, I highlighted these points of concern to Pakistan PM Shaukat Aziz who visited India as the current SAARC Chairman.

We intend to pursue the path of cooperation and dialogue with Pakistan in an atmosphere free of mistrust and terror, building upon the

support that we have received from the people of the two countries, and without compromising upon our basic national interests. Technical level meetings on various subjects are already underway. The two Foreign Secretaries would meet on December 27-28, 2004, to initiate the next round of the Composite Dialogue.

The 5th India-EU Summit was held at The Hague on 8th November 2004. This Summit represents a landmark for it launched the India-EU Strategic Partnership. This Partnership is a recognition of India's growing stature as a major regional and global player. India and the EU agreed to intensify consultations on a range of issues, including on UN reforms and major multilateral conferences, on disarmament and non-proliferation and to strengthen joint efforts in fighting terrorism. With regard to our economic relations. We also agreed to find ways to enhance our trade and investment relations. Two proposals of special interest were the decision to set up an Energy Panel to discuss cooperation in energy matters and an Environment Forum.

In order to carry forward and intensify our relations in various areas, the EU and India will prepare a Joint Agenda for Action over the next few months. We hope the Joint Agenda will be endorsed at the 6th India-EU Summit in New Delhi next year.

I visited Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, to participate in the 36 India-ASEAN Summit which was held on 30th November, 2004. Our relations with ASEAN constitute an important cornerstone of our "Look East" policy. At the Summit, ASEAN leaders and I signed the document titled "India-ASEAN Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity". This Partnership Document lays out a short to medium term road map of India-ASEAN cooperation in various sectors.

The 3rd India-ASEAN Summit gave us an opportunity to take stock of the progress made in India-ASEAN relations over the last two years and consider new initiatives and measures to further strengthen cooperation in various sectors such as economic, science and technology, information and communication technology, agriculture, health and pharmaceutical and people to people contacts. We also reviewed the progress in the negotiations of the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement in goods.

The potential of India-ASEAN cooperation is not confined just to the

economic sphere, but includes human resource development, science and technology, health and pharmaceuticals, information and communication technology and agriculture.

During this Summit I also met the leaders of Japan, People's Republic of China, Singapore, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Vietnam, Australia and Indonesia and exchanged views on issues of mutual interest. In my discussions with the Chinese Premier we reviewed the progress made in the two rounds of talks between our Special Representatives on the Boundary question and agreed that these would continue with a focus on substantive issues.

Recently we have also received several important leaders here in New Delhi. I should like to inform Hon'ble Members about these.

Russian President Putin's visit on December 3-4 was of great significance and has given considerable momentum to substantive aspects of our strategic partnership. Our discussions were marked by traditional trust and mutual confidence. Sir, cooperation in the field of energy was a particular focus; We signed 5 MOUs on cooperation in the petroleum sector. We also signed two agreements relating to cooperation in the field of space, including in respect of the Russian Satellite Navigation System GLONASS.

There was purposeful discussion on the supply of defence equipment and spares and we received a categorical assurance that recurrent issues that have arisen with the supply of spares will be dealt with.

We in turn agreed to support Russia's accession to the WTO and to treat Russia as a Market Economy for purposes of anti-dumping investigations, to which the Russian side attaches great importance.

We have also maintained a high tempo of productive engagement with our neighbouring countries and received their leaders.

I met His Majesty the King of Bhutan on November 25 and had an extended discussion with him covering the various aspects of our close and mutually beneficial cooperation. He has agreed to be the Chief Guest at our Republic Day celebrations next year.

The President of Sri Lanka, Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, visited India from 3-7 November, 2004. Discussions were held on various bilateral and international issues of mutual interest including expansion of

economic ties through early conclusion of a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, utilization of lines of credit and cooperation in areas such as power and transportation. The President also briefed us on internal developments in Sri Lanka, including the state of the peace process.

The Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba visited India from 8 to 12 September. This visit provided us an opportunity to share perceptions on current developments within Nepal as well as India's assistance to various developmental projects in that country. We emphasized our traditional policy of support for multi party democracy and constitutional monarchy as the twin pillars of the Nepalese Constitution. We are in continuous touch with Nepal with regard to the security situation in that country. His Majesty, the King of Nepal, will be coming to India on December 23.

The Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of Myanmar, Senior General Than Shwe paid a state visit to India from 24 to 29 October, 2004. This was the first Head of State Level visit from Myanmar in 24 years. An MOU on Cooperation in the field of Non-Traditional Security Issues was signed during the visit. Expansion of bilateral cooperation in Industry, energy, rural transportation, communication and S&T were also discussed. We conveyed that while India did not wish to interfere in Myanmar internal affairs, we would welcome early realization of the goal of multi-party democracy based on national reconciliation and an inclusive approach.

During this period, other important visitors we received include the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, the President of Republic of Korea, Mr. Roh Moo-Hyun, the Prime Minister of New Zealand Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, Prime Minister of Morocco Mr. Driss Jettou and the President of the Slovak Republic. The Prime Minister of Malaysia is currently on a State visit to India.

It is now seven months since our Government took office. Our objective is to focus on the centrality of National interests in the conduct of our external relations and the pursuit of our economic interests. We have taken important initiatives, keeping in mind the imperative of retaining our freedom of options, remaining alive to our concerns. Our efforts have contributed to making the international environment for India's development more secure. I am confident that our foreign interlocutors have a better appreciation of our position on issues of importance to India. We will continue to remain engaged in this endeavour.

I am placing on the Table of the House for the information of Honourable members the following documents:-

1. India-UK: Towards a New and Dynamic Partnership—A Joint Declaration.
2. US-India Partnership: Cooperation and Trust.
3. India-Pakistan Joint Statement
4. Statement by India, Brazil, Germany and Japan (G-4) Joint Press Statement of the India-EU Summit
6. ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA (Jharkhand): Thank you Mr. Chairman, Sir.

Sir, I am happy that the hon. Prime Minister has finally responded to the demand raised from this side that he takes the House into confidence on important developments at Summit-level between India and various other countries, which have taken place during the inter-Session of Parliament. I had mentioned yesterday, while participating in the debate on the Foreign Policy, that it would have been extremely useful if this authoritative statement from the hon. Prime Minister had been available to us before the debate on the Foreign Policy started. In that case, we would not have been called upon our force to depend on the newspaper reports as to what exactly was happening. However, on the statement that the Hon. Prime Minister has made, I have a few clarifications to seek. I would like to assure you that my clarifications will be brief, will be focussed and I hope the clarifications will be equally clear.

My first clarification is this. The hon. Prime Minister, in his statement, has talked about the case of India for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. There have been some newspaper reports that there has been a change in India's stand as far as the question of 'veto' is concerned. I believe that a senior official of the PMO himself had given a background briefing to the media recently, which we had an occasion to read in some newspapers, in which it was mentioned that India might accept a permanent seat in the UN Security Council without veto power, which also contradicted the statement which the hon. External Affairs Minister had made in this House. My pointed question to the hon. Prime Minister is: what exactly is the policy of

the Government of India with regard to the UN Security Council and a permanent seat for India and how does India propose to go about this? Has India been in touch, after the Blue Ribbon Report, which was submitted to the UN Secretary-General recently, with others? Has India been in touch with the other Members of the G-4 with which - the hon. Prime Minister has informed the House - he signed a joint statement? Has India been in touch with the Members of P-5 and what is their attitude? Is India in touch with other important global players in this matter? And what is the outlook as far as we are concerned with regard to this question of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council with Veto?

The second point is arising from page 2 of the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister. When he met President Bush, in New York, in September, among other things, he discussed proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. India's Nuclear Policy has been, once again, a matter of some contention even in this House. I am aware of the fact that the hon. Prime Minister had, in response to the query of the hon. Leader of the Opposition in this House, issued or said some words of clarification on the statement reported to have been made by the hon. External Affairs Minister while visiting South Korea. But it appears as if India's nuclear status, India's nuclear policy has become, or, is becoming a subject of doubt within this Government. So, I would like the hon. Prime Minister to state very clearly, once again, if necessary, what exactly is the policy of this Government as far as the nuclear issue is concerned. And, when we are talking of proliferation or non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, what is the.....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU (West Bengal): Sir, I would like to seek one clarification from you. Can we discuss, in the House, a subject which has already been discussed and on which a categorical statement has been made by the Prime Minister? (*Interruptions*)

श्रीमती सुष्मा स्वराज (उत्तरांचल): पता नहीं, बीच में क्यों खड़े हो जाते हैं? (व्यवधान)

श्री दीपांकर मुखर्जी (पश्चिमी बंगाल): आप क्यों खड़े हो जाते हैं? (व्यवधान)

श्री नीलोत्पल बसु: मैं चेयर से पूछ रहा हूँ। मेरा आपसे सवाल नहीं है। (व्यवधान)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him finish.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, on the larger question of nuclear disarmament, what is the initiative, if any, that India has taken, or, proposes to take for complete nuclear disarmament on a non-proliferation basis, non-discriminatory basis, globally? I would also like to request the Prime Minister, through you, Sir, to clarify the status of supply of nuclear fuel from Russia, about which certain doubts have arisen as a result of statement, which has come from the Russian side. I would also like to seek clarification with regard to the supply of two additional nuclear reactors for the Kooduamkulam. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, this is outside the scope of the statement.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, I would also like to know from the Prime Minister whether, when he met President Bush in New York in September, the issue of the US sale of arms to Pakistan came up. If this issue was discussed, then, what was the thought or argument that we brought on this subject? I would also like to know whether similar offer has been made by the US to India for the supply of US arms to India.

The Prime Minister has referred to his meeting with President Musharraf in New York. And, I am happy to know from his statement that he emphasised to the President Musharraf the criticality of his fulfilling the reassurance of January 6, 2004 that no territory, under the control of Pakistan, would be used to support terrorism in any manner. What I would like to know from the Prime Minister is that why this thought did not get adequately reflected in the Press briefing, which was issued after the meeting he had with President Musharraf. I proceed to say that I am raising this question because from the language of the statement, which I have in front of me, I find that in the Press briefing, the reference to the January 6 joint Press statement was only in the context of Confidence Building Measures between India and Pakistan, and not in the general context. It did not qualify all the paragraph of this Press briefing. It qualified only that part which related to the Confidence Building Measures. Sir, I would also like to know where do we exactly stand on the issue of gas pipeline with Pakistan. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please keep silence. ...*(Interruptions)*... Let him finish. ...*(Interruptions)*... Let him finish. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: On the issue of the gas pipeline which will come from Iran via Pakistan we have seen various statements. I would like

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to know, authoritatively, from the Prime Minister what exactly is the India policy now on the question of the gas pipeline from Iran. We have seen reports that we are only looking at the delivery of gas into India and that we are not concerned whether it is coming through Pakistan or anywhere else. So, this is the question, Sir, on which I would like to have the Prime Minister's clarification.

And, finally, on the question of the visit of the Senior General Than Shwe from Myanmar, I would like to know from the Prime Minister whether the issue of India insurgent groups operating out of Myanmar was discussed with him or not. And if it was discussed, what has been the action on the part of Myanmar on this very important question because national security of India is involved in this whole issue? That is why, Sir, I am raising this point seeking a clarification from the Prime Minister. Thank you.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am grateful to the hon. Member for having raised some issues because this provides me the opportunity to remove any doubts, if there are any doubts, on Foreign Policy issues. The hon. Member referred to the question of the permanent membership of India on the Security Council. Let me make it quite clear, there is no ambiguity in our stand. There is no confusion regarding our position on our candidature for a permanent seat on the Security Council. At this point, all permanent members have veto powers. We are a candidate. This issue may arise in respect of any new permanent members who may be admitted. Our fundamental position remains clear. We do not believe there should be any discrimination in the Security Council and there should be no distinction between permanent members who have the veto and those who do not have veto. This position is based on the broadest possible political consensus.

Sir, at the same time, hon. Members are aware that efforts to implement the reform of the United Nations are in progress and intense discussions are under way. At this point, there is no clarity on what recommendations in the reform will be proposed to the Member States by the U.N. Secretary General and what will be the eventual reform package adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It would be premature for the Government to say anything further on this subject. The U.N. is a complex organisation that reflects interplay of a variety of interests. Let us not pre-judge the outcome.

Sir, the hon. Member has asked whether we have been in touch with other players. Yes, we have been in touch with all those players who matter. Consultations are on, though no final conclusions can be drawn at this stage, as I said, about the final outcome of the reform exercise.

Sir, the hon. Member raised an issue about Nuclear Policy. Let me clarify it once again that there is no ambiguity what so ever, about our Nuclear Policy. India is a nuclear weapon State. And we are a responsible nuclear power. That sums up our idea. So, there should be no doubt whatsoever, at the same time, India remains committed, consistent with its civilizational heritage, to complete universal non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. We will join hands with other like-minded countries to promote this idea. Sir, as far as the third question the hon. Member has raised, the status of nuclear fuel from Russia, let me say that we have an assurance that Russia will honour all its contractual obligations. Now, there are, I think, some discussions about additional supplies; discussions are underway, and I am confident that a satisfactory solution will be found to these issues. As far as the US sale of arms to Pakistan is concerned, well, I did not discuss this matter with President George Bush, but, subsequently, when information became available, and then, Secretary of Defence was here, this matter has been discussed and our concerns have been conveyed to the US authorities. There should be no doubt about this. Now, the hon. Member has referred that we diluted the Pakistani commitment not to allow their territory in the Statement that was issued after my meeting with General Musharraf. I do not share this perception. My conviction is that we did lay emphasis on the centrality and the criticality of Pakistan honouring its commitment. We didn't talk of confidence building measures. What confidence building measures can be taken if the flow of terrorists remains without any check, without any control? So, the first and foremost check we would adopt is, what is happening to the situation on the ground? Other confidence building measures cannot move forward if the security situation remains beyond control. So, there should be no doubt whatsoever that we remain committed to what was agreed to between President Musharraf and ex-Prime Minister Vajpayeeji. I have in my very first conference in New York after the meeting emphasised this point that the whole exercise can take off only if Pakistan remains firmly committed to the commitment it made in January statement. Sir, with regard to the gas pipeline, there are several options

which are being discussed. We are discussing this matter with Pakistan. We are discussing this matter with Iran. It is my hope that we can find a solution, which can bind our two countries economically closer and our destinies, in the final analysis, are all interlinked. But, at this stage, it is not possible for me to say as to what shape these discussions will take. It is my hope that India needs larger supplies of energy, our need for commercial energies are going to grow. So, we are looking for options to meet the needs for our energy requirements by way of gas pipelines, whether it is from Myanmar, whether it is from Iran. These issues are under discussion and at this stage, it is not possible for me to say what final shape these issues will take. As regards the last question with regard to the visit of Senior General Than Shwe, definitely, my answer is, we did discuss with General Than Shwe the role of different insurgent groups operating in North-East from Myanmar territory. We have received positive assurances on this subject and the information that I have available with me shows that the Myanmar side is honouring that commitment. I suppose, Sir, this answers all the questions that the hon. Member raised.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions Bill, 2004. Shri Shunmugasundaram.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions Bill, 2004 (Contd.)

SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

एक माननीय सदस्य: सभापति जी, वोटिंग।

श्री सभापति: एक ही सदस्य हैं।

MR. CHAIRMAN: How much time will you take?

SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Sir, I will take five minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, please take two minutes.

SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Sir, I will speak later on. Let the other business go.