

रिसर्च आई कि सिगरेट और tobacco से कैंसर नहीं हो रहा है, सिगरेट के पेपर से हो रहा है। हमें यह भी सोचना चाहिए कि जिन्होंने यह स्टडी की, जो evidence आया, वह किस ग्रेड का है। नहीं तो ऐसे गलत रिजल्ट्स लाना बहुत आसान है। यह समझना बहुत जरूरी है कि उनको sponser कौन कर रहा है? उसे रिसर्च के लिए पैसे कौन दे रहा है? यह जानना भी जरूरी है कि वह किस तरीके से किया गया है। मुझे लगता है कि हम अपने यहाँ का evidence समझें। Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) ने भी evidence दिया हुआ है। उन्होंने बताया और सलाह दी, जिसके ऊपर सरकार तुरंत एक्शन ले रही है। यूएसए के एफडीए ने, जिसके बारे में हम समझते हैं कि वह सबसे अच्छा...

श्री उपसभापति: डा. विकास महात्मे जी, मुरलीधरन जी कुछ कहना चाहते हैं।

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): Sir, since the Business of the day includes a Statement by the External Affairs Minister and the House should have the time to seek clarifications also, I propose that the hon. Member's speech, which is going on now, may be stopped at present. He may be requested to continue it tomorrow, perhaps, if he has not finished it, and we can now take up the Statement by the External Affairs Minister.

श्री उपसभापति: डा. विकास महात्मे जी, आपका भाषण आगे जारी रहेगा। The Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement) Bill, 2019 पर यह चर्चा आगे जारी रहेगी, उस वक्त आप बोलेंगे। Now, the Statement by Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Regarding Government's efforts to promote foreign policy by focusing on high level visits that have taken place recently

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S. JAISHANKAR): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I rise to make a statement to this -August House on the Government's efforts to promote our foreign policy since the last Session of the Parliament. In doing so, I will focus on high-level visits that have taken place recently. In order that their full significance is properly appreciated, allow me, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, to briefly share with the House the larger context in which they have been organized.

This Government has a comprehensive foreign policy outlook that reflects both the state of the world and India's growing role in it. We see a multipolar landscape that has been unfolding over the last decade, although its pace has been hastened in recent years. Our own growing capability and influence is, of course, one part of this change. This

[Shri S. Jaishankar]

requires us to strengthen multilateralism even while engaging in more intensive bilateral interactions. It also means looking beyond orthodox diplomacy and arriving at issue-based understandings with different combination of nations. To shape the global agenda more effectively, India has to engage countries large and small across all regions. It is not only a matter of advancing our own national interest. The expectations that the world has of us is also very much higher. In our own region, this is visible in the Neighbourhood First approach as well as in the SAGAR doctrine. We have pursued the Act East Policy vigorously while building an effective bridge to the Gulf in the West. Our Indo-Pacific outlook has steadily gained understanding. Our commitments to Africa and other nations of the South are well under implementation. Regional summits speak for the growing salience of India in the perception of the world.

The cumulative impact of all this is therefore a combination of greater diplomatic activity, more intensive development partnerships, stronger security engagements and growing global profile. Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas is the guiding principle of our foreign policy as well. That is visible, Mr. Deputy Chairman, in the high-level visits since the last Session. Hon. Rashtrapati ji has paid state visits to Iceland, Switzerland and Slovenia in September, and the Philippines and Japan in October 2019. The hon. Vice President has visited Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in August as also to Comoros and Sierra Leone in October. The Vice President also headed the delegation for the 18th Non-Aligned Summit and went to Azerbaijan in October, 2019. Prime Minister visited Bhutan and then France, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in August; Russia and the United States in September on a trip that included a visit to the United Nations; Saudi Arabia in October and Thailand for the East Asia Summit and Brazil for the BRICS Summit in November. Raksha Mantri represented India at the Heads of Government Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in November. Their diplomatic initiatives have been supported by my own visits and that of Minister of State to various other countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the America.

Through these endeavours, we have sought to cover a variety of regions and a broad range of partners. They have helped to shape the global agenda, bringing India's interests and perspectives to the table. They have advanced our national interests by strengthening bilateral partnerships and creating favourable plurilateral and multilateral outcomes. These range from big ideas on climate change to policy measures on counter-terrorism and anti-corruption, as well as practical steps on trade, investment and labour opportunities besides ensuring the welfare of the diaspora. And together, they have helped raise the image of India in the world.

Visits by hon. Rashtrapati*ji* and hon. Vice-President have enabled us cement our bilateral partnerships. Rashtrapati*ji*'s visit to Slovenia was the first ever Presidential visit from India to that country. During his various visits, Rashtrapati*ji* had a chance to interact with the vibrant Indian community in those places, gave lectures at universities, unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Switzerland in Villeneuve, a city which Mahatma Gandhi had visited in 1931, and signed important MoUs such as those on white shipping and tourism with Philippines and on science and technology with Slovenia. Rashtrapati*ji* also addressed business forums in Iceland, Slovenia, Switzerland and the Philippines. His visit to Japan for the enthronement of the Emperor underscored the importance that we attach to this important partner.

All the six countries visited by hon. Vice-President during this period marked the first high level visit from India to those countries. Hon. Vice-President's visits have enabled us to further our economic relations with the Baltic States and highlighted our cultural and linguistic ties with those countries. His visits to Comoros and Sierra Leone were widely appreciated for they reiterated our commitment to friendship with African countries. The visits also resulted in tangible outcomes including cooperation in the field of defence with Comoros and an MoU for US\$ 30 million Line of Credit with Sierra Leone.

Hon. Vice-President's visit to Azerbaijan for the NAM Summit highlighted India's continued commitment to the NAM. It had added significance as it came just before the 65th anniversary of the Bandung Principles in 2020 and the 60th anniversary of the establishment of NAM in 2021. During the visit, hon. Vice-President also had bilateral meetings with the Presidents of Afghanistan, Cuba, Venezuela and Iran, the Vice-President of Vietnam and the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and Nepal.

Since the last session of the House, Prime Minister paid a state visit to Bhutan from 17-18 August, 2019. This visit, early in the second term, underscores the Government's continuing commitment to our "Neighbourhood First" policy. India's unique and special friendship with Bhutan is evident from the fact that the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Dr. Lhotay Tshering, received our Prime Minister at the airport and accompanied him throughout his visit. Prime Minister had warm interactions with His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the King of Bhutan, as well as with His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth King. In his talks with the Prime Minister of Bhutan, the latter conveyed Bhutan's appreciation for India's continuing assistance to Bhutan's socio-economic development, including in the hydro-power sector. The two Prime Ministers also jointly inaugurated the 720 MW Mangdechhu Hydro-Power Project and the Ground Earth Station for the South-

[Shri S. Jaishankar]

Asia Satellite and launched the RuPay Card. They agreed on the establishment of an Indo-Bhutan Super Speciality Hospital in Thimphu. The visit was also an opportunity for both countries to re-emphasise the common and indivisible nature of our security interests.

Prime Minister was invited by the President of France to participate in the G7 Summit Outreach Session held in Biarritz, France on 25-26 August, 2019. The invitation is an acknowledgment of the importance that G-7 countries attach to India's leadership on matters related to Climate, Biodiversity and Oceans, and on Digital Transformation. Prime Minister's call for a mass movement against single-use plastic was welcomed by the other leaders. At the Digital Transformation Session, where Prime Minister was invited to be the lead speaker, he highlighted the initiatives being taken by his Government for empowerment and inclusive social development. We will continue to work with G-7 countries on such issues, and also on the reform of the multilateral system in order to make it more representative of current realities. Prime Minister held bilateral meetings on the sidelines with President Donald Trump of the U.S., Prime Minister Boris Johnson of UK, President Macky Sall of Senegal and the UN Secretary General. He separately paid a bilateral visit to France and held wide-ranging talks with President Macron on ways to further deepen our strategic partnership with France including, *inter alia*, in the areas of defence and security, energy including civil nuclear cooperation, space, counter terrorism, and trade and investment. In pursuance of Government's determination to build even closer relations with the Gulf States, Prime Minister visited Bahrain and United Arab Emirates between August 22-24, 2019, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 29 October, 2019. Prime Minister's visit to Bahrain is the first ever by any Prime Minister, and was welcomed by the King and other leaders as a signal of our commitment to strengthen all-round relations. With the leaderships of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with whom we have witnessed a qualitative transformation of our relations since 2014, Prime Minister's visit afforded another occasion to advance our shared interests in the areas of energy, trade, investment and security, as well as to take up matters of interest to our large diasporas in this region. RuPay card was also launched in Bahrain and UAE. The King of Bahrain and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi conferred their nations' highest awards on Prime Minister as a gesture of close friendship and affinity. We have also established a Strategic Partnership Council with Saudi Arabia that will oversee the trade and investment, energy as well as security-related cooperation, which is expected to further strengthen our strategic relations. Prime Minister delivered a key-note address to the Future Investment Initiative Forum on India's economic prospects and investment opportunities.

The Prime Minister's visit to Russia from 4-5 September, 2019, for both the Annual Summit with President Putin and to participate as the Guest of Honour at the Fifth Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, was also a new milestone in our bilateral relations. Prior to Prime Minister's visit, a high-level delegation, led by the Commerce and Industry Minister, accompanied by the Chief Ministers of four States and over 100 business persons, had visited Vladivostok to scope out possibilities for cooperation with the Russian Far East in sectors like energy, mining and agriculture. The energy agenda that envisaged a five year programme of cooperation was also prepared in advance by a visit of the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas. To support Indian companies to do business in the Russian Far East, Prime Minister has announced a special Line of Credit for USD 1 billion, specifically for this part of Russia. The Annual Summit with President Putin was utilized to review and progress our multifarious activities and cooperation in defence and security, space (Gaganyaan programme), civil nuclear cooperation, trade and investment and people-to-people contacts. President Putin highly appreciated Prime Minister's participation in the EEF in Vladivostok as a mark of India's firm commitment to the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation.

Prime Minister's presence at the High Level Segment of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York from 22-27 September, 2019, underscored our Government's firm commitment to multilateralism during a period of global uncertainty. Prime Minister called for making the UN more effective and purposeful through fundamental reform. Prime Minister participated in three important events - the Climate Action Summit, at which he announced the launch of our new initiative, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and also reiterated our decision to end the use of single use plastic; the High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage, where he highlighted the Ayushman Bharat initiative taken by our Government and joined in the commitment by all Governments to "A Vision for Universal Health Coverage by 2030"; and the Leaders' Dialogue on Strategic Responses to Terrorist and Violent Extremists Narratives, where he spoke of the urgent collective need for all nations to join hands in combating the scourge of terrorism. Prime Minister's participation was welcomed by the general membership of the UN as a clear iteration of India's support to the United Nations Organization as it enters its 75th year.

In his address at the General Debate of the UNGA, Prime Minister focussed on the development agenda. He highlighted India's initiatives, such as Swachh Bharat, Jan Dhan Yojana, etc. as inspiration for the world. The Prime Minister said that India's development

[Shri S. Jaishankar]

provides hope to the world and offered to share our experience and expertise with other developing countries in addressing their developmental challenges. He emphasised Mahatma Gandhi's message of truth and non-violence for peace, development and prosperity, and Swami Vivekananda's message of harmony and peace on a model for multilateralism.

A highlight of Prime Minister's engagements in New York included, for the very first time, a Leaders Meeting with the Pacific Small Islands Developing States and a Leaders Meeting with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). This outreach was greatly appreciated by all the leaders of these two regions. Prime Minister's offer of financial assistance for high impact community development projects and concessional Lines of Credit, was welcomed. Prime Minister also had bilateral meetings with 16 others Heads of State and Government, including with US President Trump, Iran's President Rouhani, President Solih of the Maldives, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the incoming President of the European Council, Mr. Charles Michel of Belgium, on the sidelines of UNGA. To mark the 150th Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Prime Minister presided over a special commemorative event on 21st September, in the presence of the U.N. Secretary General, the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh, Jamaica, Singapore and the President of South Korea. A commemorative stamp was issued by the U.N. to mark the 150th Anniversary. The Prime Minister also dedicated the Solar Panels installed on the roof of the U.N. building with an Indian grant of US\$ 1 million, in memory of Gandhiji.

Prime Minister visited Thailand from November 2-4 to participate in the Annual India-ASEAN and India-East Asia Summits and related meetings. He emphasized the centrality of ASEAN in our Act East Policy and our initiatives to enhance this partnership, including our offer of the Ph.D. fellowship programme for up to 1000 Asian students at our IITs. This is the largest single capacity building project by India for ASEAN. The ASEAN leaders were deeply appreciative of our vision of the Indo-Pacific. At the East Asia Summit, we proposed an Indo-Pacific Oceans initiative as an open, free and inclusive platform for cooperation. At the 3rd RCEP Summit, Prime Minister conveyed that India had participated in the RCEP negotiations with sincerity and in a spirit of cooperation, but was unable to associate itself with the RCEP Agreement since the agreement in its present form does not satisfactorily address all our outstanding issues and concerns. The Government remains firmly committed to upholding our interests in all such negotiations.

Prime Minister has just returned from the 11th BRICS Summit in Brasilia from 13-14 November, 2019, where he also had bilateral meetings with the Presidents of Brazil, China and Russia. The Summit focused, *inter alia*, on national sovereignty, intra-BRICS coopera-

tion for economic development, terrorism, multilateralism, digital transformation, and Science, Technology and Innovation. There are important deliverables in many of these areas. Five sub-working groups on terrorism have been set up to focus on practical cooperation. Prime Minister made announcements of several BRICS initiatives which India proposes to pursue in the coming years, including the hosting of the BRICS Digital Health Summit in keeping with our “Fit India Movement”, the hosting of the first BRICS Water Ministers Meeting, a BRICS Film Technology Symposium, as well as a BRICS Youth Summit. During the visit, PM had a productive meeting with President Bolsonaro of Brazil. PM invited the President of Brazil to India as the Chief Guest for Republic Day and he has accepted the invitation.

As is customary, our leaders met with Indian communities in many of the nations that they visited. Rashtrapati ji had such interactions in all the five countries he visited, and the Vice-President during his visits to Europe and Africa. Prime Minister addressed the Indian diaspora in Bahrain, Houston and Bangkok, respectively. The Houston event was notable for the presence and participation of President Donald Trump.

In the past three months, Prime Minister also received several world leaders in India. Reflecting the excellent state of our bilateral relations with Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit on October 5th. Several important agreements were concluded during this visit, including on the use of Chattogram and Mongla ports. This will greatly enhance connectivity to our North East. An Agreement for supply of drinking water in Sabroom town in Tripura from the waters of the Feni River was another notable outcome. Prime Minister and President Xi Jinping continued their in-depth discussion overarching, long-term and strategic issues of global and regional importance at their second Informal Summit in Chennai on 11-12 October. The 5th Biennial Inter-Governmental Consultations were held with Chancellor Merkel of Germany on 1 November at which the two sides agreed to step up cooperation in New and Advanced Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Skills Development, Railways modernization and cyber security.

In sum, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, in the first six months of this Government’s tenure, we have re-emphasized our Neighbourhood First policy, re-inforced our relationships with all the major countries at the highest levels, worked to expand our relations with the Gulf, South East Asia and African regions, launched a new international initiative known as the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and also expressed our strong interest in fulfilling our commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals and in reforming the multilateral system so as to make it responsive to the current requirements. In pursuing

[Shri S. Jaishankar]

these objectives, our Government has always maintained its independence and autonomy in the exercise of our foreign policy, and ensured that the national interest determines our foreign policy objectives. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, kindly be precise in your clarifications. In the end, the hon. Minister will reply. You can send your names.

SHRI VAIKO (Tamil Nadu): Sir I am happy that our hon. Prime Minister got the privilege of meeting top level leaders and very useful and purposeful discussions took place with Mr. Putin, Mr. Donald Trump, Mr. Xi Jinping and other leaders. When I was a Member of Parliament here, the practice was, after every visit the Prime Minister used to make a statement here about his visit and his experience and what inputs he got from there and the Members used to seek clarifications from the Prime Minister himself. Our Prime Minister has gone and met almost all important leaders of the entire world. So, it is the prerogative of every Member here to know from the Prime Minister himself about the experience. I have got respect for the External Affairs Minister. He has got the capability; he has got all the qualities. I know everything about him.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Vaikoji.

SHRI VAIKO: Sir, why was the practice given up?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, you have to put your clarifications. Be brief.

SHRI VAIKO: Do we make statements on the Government's efforts to promote foreign policy focusing on high level visits that have taken place recently. The External Affairs Minister also is a high level Minister. He has gone to Colombo to give a bouquet to a person who is responsible for the ©of Tamils. What has happened?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: This is not the occasion for making a speech here.

SHRI VAIKO: Sir, this is democracy. Don't try to strangle my voice.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will call other Members also.

SHRI VAIKO: Sir, you may call. The practice here, I have seen, was not like this.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You have already put your clarifications.

SHRI VAIKO: My question is, now the two Tamil newspapers have been closed by intimidation of the President of Sri Lanka, Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa. He has stated, 'I am

elected only by the Sinhalese.' Our mothers and sisters were raped and lakhs and lakhs of people were killed. He is the root cause for genocide of Tamils and you have gone there to invite him.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri P. Bhattacharya. It must be very pointed questions. I will not allow... *(Interruptions)*... No, your speech will not go on record now.

SHRIVAICO: *

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It will not go on record now. I cannot give time for speeches. Shri P. Bhattacharya.

SHRI P. BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal): Sir, the hon. Foreign Minister has distributed this matter to us. It is a statement, but I say it is a matter. It is like a Press note. We read everything, every inch, every line in different newspapers at different times when President visited, when Prime Minister visited, but we would like to know a very simple question. After visiting all these dignitaries, what was the profit of Indian Government? We would like to know from you. Are you going to settle the Teesta River Agreement very soon or not? I would just like to know about it.

SHRI T. K. RANGARAJAN: Sir, you can extend the time.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is not a debate.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH (Karnataka): Sir, I congratulate the External Affairs Minister for a very comprehensive and a very competent summary of all Press Releases issued after the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister's visits. My questions are on para 9, para 11 and para 16. As for para 9, I would like to know from the hon. External Affairs Minister, negotiations have been going on with the French Government now for ten years on civil nuclear cooperation. I would like to know from him what the current status of negotiations with France is. In para 11, again, I would like to know from the hon. External Affairs Minister that 2X1000 MW reactots have already been installed in Kudankulam. Negotiations have started for four more reactors. I wanted to know the status of negotiations on expansion of Kudankulam beyond 2000 MW.

I come to para 16. Sir, till the RCEP Summit took place, spokesmen for the Government were saying that joining RCEP was essential for India's economic interest. At Bangkok, we welcomed the hon. Prime Minister discovering the talisman of Gandhji and withdrew, for

*Expunged as ordered by the Chair.

[Shri Jairam Ramesh]

the time being, from the RCEP Agreement. I wanted to know from the hon. Minister what is the roadmap for the next few months that India has with regard to the RCEP Agreement and whether any commitment has been made to review the Indo-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Kindly be pointed in your questions. Dr. Sasmit Patra.

DR. SASMIT PATRA (Odisha): Sir, I, firstly, like to congratulate the hon. External Affairs Minister for the good work that has been done over the last three months. I just wish to add, before I come to my clarification, that I had the privilege of being on the Inter-Parliamentary Union Delegation to Serbia. This, actually, opened my eyes to the challenges lie in international diplomacy which I was not aware of till then.

Having understood that and being a rapporteur in the Climate Agreement at the IPU in Belgrade, my specific question would be regarding COP25 in Chile. Considering that there are specific paras at which it has been mentioned that the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Vice-President had been to various Summits which have relevance to climate and climate change and also considering that we are engaging in discussions with like-minded countries moving towards COP25 which seems to be one of the major areas of concern, how are you really preparing for it? Are we ready with our roadmap for COP25 in Chile? A lot of issues between developing and developed countries are going to come up in terms of disaster mitigation and disaster management.

SHRI RAKESH SINHA (Nominated): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, we all know, leadership plays a very vital role in international politics. It is not unobvious that Modi Doctrine has been making impact in international politics. I congratulate the hon. Minister of External Affairs for focused presentation on our international relationships. I have two queries for him.

The Modi Doctrine has two important elements. The first one is: After becoming the Prime Minister, Shri Modi has emphasized on relationship with the Buddhist countries. It is very significant for India's economic and political relationship. So, I would like to know what progress we have made in that regard.

Secondly, the Modi Doctrine has emphasized on non-political issues like poverty alleviation, health issues, terrorism, etc. And, we are getting support on these. So, my small query is: Are we going to reorient ourselves now in the new international situation? It is a major challenge for India to reorient itself and give a new life to the NAM, so that we play a significant role in a multi-polar world.

DR. SANTANU SEN (West Bengal): Sir, I am really delighted to see that our hon. Prime Minister was so busy visiting so many countries and finding little time to stay back in his own country.

Sir, with all humility, I would like to know that we all have seen in the USA he was holding the hand of Mr. Donald Trump and was campaigning before lakhs of people that agli baar Trump sarkar. Sir, my question is: If Modi magic does not click there, as it did not click in the recently held three by-elections in our West Bengal, then, don't you think that this is going to hamper the Indo-American relationship? Thank you.

SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also join him and say that hon. Prime Minister, normally, gives us a report of what happened in his tour. It is going on right from Pandit Nehru. Pandit Nehru used to address both the Houses. Why is hon. Prime Minister ignoring this august House? I thank the hon. External Affairs for his detailed statement. My point is: What is the sum Total? How much India gained? How much investment we got? We need to know that one.

Secondly, are you going to continue with the RCEP negotiations with ASEAN and other countries?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Rangarajanji. Okay. You already sought two clarifications.

SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN: Thirdly, we are proposing to add four more reactors in Kudankulam. Sir, the people of Tamil Nadu are afraid. So, you have to clarify about the safety of reactors. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Swapan Dasgupta. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI SWAPAN DASGUPTA (Nominated): Sir, we should have had a larger debate on Foreign Policy. ...*(Interruptions)*... Sir, Mr. Rangarajan is not allowing me to speak.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It will not go on record. Please. ...*(Interruptions)*.. Shri Swapan Dasgupta.

SHRI VAIKO: *

SHRI SWAPAN DASGUPTA: Sir, I thank. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vaiko, this is not going on record.

SHRI SWAPAN DASGUPTA: Sir, I concur with the other Members who say that a larger discussion on Foreign Policy should have taken place. But, however, since the Minister has generously given the Statement, I would just like to quote one particular portion from it, which mentions about one of the objectives of our Foreign Policy. “To shape the global agenda effectively, India has to engage with countries large and small across all regions. It is not only a matter of advancing our own national interest.” In this context, it is known that for the past six or seven years, we have not entered into a single FTA in this country. Again, this time, we turned our back at the last minute, for whatever reasons, from the RCEP Agreement. Does this suggest that our present economic approach is in harmony with our Foreign Policy?

SHRI BINOY VISWAM (Kerala): Sir, I am grateful to the hon. Minister of External Affairs. He is a seasoned diplomat who has taken pains to brief us about the visits. On three paras, I have some queries. My first query is on Para no.4. It mentions about big ideas on climate change. I would like to know a bit more about that. What is this big idea on climate change?

Then, Para 16 is about RCEP. Many Members have raised an issue here. As an Indian, I feel proud. At the last moment, our Prime Minister remembered Mahatma Gandhi and his talisman. ...*(Time-Bell rings)*... Sir, I have three questions only. I am not making any speech. It is my right, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Put your pointed questions only.

SHRI BINOY VISWAM: Sir, I have asked only questions. But, there are apprehensions that in the Vietnam next session, there may be compulsion from many quarters including the Ministry of Commerce to dilute that position. I want you to clarify it.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

SHRI BINOY VISWAM: My third question is,...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, no. ...*(Interruptions)*... There are other Members also. I won't allow this. Shri K.J. Alphons. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI BINOY VISWAM: No, no, Sir. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri K.J. Alphons. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI BINOY VISWAM: *

*Not recorded.

6.00 P.M.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It will not go on record. You have already sought one clarification. ...(Interruptions).. I will allow only one clarification. ...(Interruptions)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You have already sought one clarification.

SHRI BINOY VISWAM: *

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shall I move on? ...(Interruptions)... I have limited time.

SHRI BINOY VISWAM: *

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Alphons, you speak. It will go on the record now. ...(Interruptions)... Only your clarification will go on record. ...(Interruptions)...

SHRI K.J. ALPHONS (Rajasthan): Sir, I thank the hon. External Affairs Minister for a very comprehensive report on where India is travelling and what has been achieved. I think the achievements during the past five years have really put India on the center stage. I think it is a great achievement. The simple question is: I know we have certain problems with acquisition of the S-400 missile ship from Russia. How are we navigating it because I know the US has objections? At what stage is it?

श्री रवि प्रकाश वर्मा (उत्तर प्रदेश): उपसभापति जी, आपका बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद। आदरणीय मंत्री जी ने बहुत ही डिटेल्ड स्टेटमेंट रखी है और सरकार ने आतंकवाद के खिलाफ जो ग्लोबल support हासिल किया है, उसके लिए वह बधाई के लायक है। आपने इसका जिक्र नहीं किया है, लेकिन मुझे पता चला है और मैं बताना चाहता हूँ कि आपकी योग्य diplomacy भी बहुत काम कर रही है। हिंदुस्तान की जो geopolitical या geostrategic सिचुएशन है, हिंदुस्तान जो सबसे बड़ा consumer base है, जहाँ आबादी सबसे ज्यादा है, जहाँ technical supply, manpower बहुत ज्यादा है, उसके हिसाब से हिंदुस्तान को साउथ-ईस्ट एशिया का natural leader बनना चाहिए था। आपकी Look East Policy चल रही है। इसका क्या ब्लूप्रिंट है, वह आज तक क्लियर नहीं हो पाया है, माननीय मंत्री जी, क्या आप इसके बारे में बताएंगे?

महोदय, नेपाल हमसे खुश नहीं है।

जो हमारी neighbouring countries हैं, उनमें भी हमसे नाराजगी है। पाकिस्तान दिवालिया हो चुका था, उसको चीन ने take over कर लिया है और उसको उसने 100 बिलियन डॉलर्स दिए हैं। आज हालत यह है कि पाकिस्तान सीधे चीन का interest safeguard कर रहा है। ...(समय की घंटी)... इन हालात में हम अपने आपको अपनी immediate surroundings में कैसे एक natural leader के तौर पर put up अकर पाएँगे, मेहरबानी करके आप इसके बारे में बताइएगा।

*Not recorded.

DR. AMAR PATNAIK (Odisha): Sir, I congratulate the hon. External Affairs Minister for this statement. This statement essentially emphasizes on the need for multiculturalism, multipolar world and therefore multilateral set-up. But what has happened to our FTAs after 2014?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Just wait for a minute. ऑनरेबल मेम्बर्स, 6 बज चुके हैं। मैं मानता हूँ कि इस पर हाउस की आम सहमति है कि माननीय मंत्री जी का जवाब होने और स्पेशल मेंशेस तक हम बैठ रहे हैं।

कुछ माननीय सदस्य: जी हाँ, सर।

DR. AMAR PATNAIK: So, my question is, what has happened to the FTAs, the bilateral FTAs, particularly? Are there any complexities with regard to the FTAs with EU and the ASEAN? What is the roadmap ahead? Thank you, Sir.

SHRI RIPUN BORA (Assam): Sir, I also compliment the External Affairs Minister for his very comprehensive report. But I want one clarification from the Minister at Para No. 8. The hon. Prime Minister has inaugurated in Bhutan a hydroelectric project but that is at the cost of the people of Assam. Bhutan leaves the entire water and the whole land gets flooded. Seventeen districts of Assam have been Totally drowned. So, I want to know whether the Government of India will take up this matter with Bhutan Government to address this issue.

SHRIMATI VIJILA SATHYANANTH (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also compliment our Foreign Minister for bringing a very comprehensive package of all the bilateral visits as well as the State visits of our President, the Prime Minister, the Vice-President, especially. I also had the privilege of accompanying both of them. I also bring on record that our Prime Minister chose Chennai to be his best location to have the international meeting, the Informal Summit in Chennai between the Prime Minister of India and the President, Mr. Xi Jinping, of China. ...(*Time-bell rings*)... My question to the External Affairs Minister is this. What is the step forward, what is India doing and whether India will become a Permanent Member in the United Nations Security Council? How far have we gone and how many steps have we taken? As a dynamic Foreign Minister has taken over, maybe, this will be accomplished in this year. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, the hon. Minister will reply.

(SHRI S. JAISHANKAR): Sir, let me begin by, first of all, expressing my appreciation, through you, Sir, to all the hon. Members for taking interest in the development and progress of our Foreign Policy. I would like to start by saying that the Statement today was an account of the high level visits taken by Rastrapatiji, hon. Vice-President and the Prime

Minister. So, it was a comprehensive review of all the visits which have taken place since the last Session, and, let me say, Sir, that as the External Affairs Minister of India, I am completely competent to do so and these are visits, to many of which I have myself been. So, I can assure you that I speak both for the Government and for the Prime Minister on this. So, please be rest assured. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN: Sir, ... *

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please. Please. No, not allowed. ...*(Interruptions)*... You are speaking without permission of the Chair. ...*(Interruptions)*... No. No. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: Let me transfer then to Mr. Vaiko's statement. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI VAIKO: *

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, no. ...*(Interruptions)*... Mr. Vaiko, please take your seat. It is not going on record.

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: Sir, let me transfer to Mr. Vaiko's observation about the Sri Lankan President. I had visited Sri Lanka a day after he was sworn-in as President. We discussed briefly our bilateral relationship. The President of Sri Lanka is due in India for a visit. Many of our bilateral concerns will be. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You are unnecessarily. ...*(Interruptions)*... Please, Mr. Vaiko. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: Sir, the relevant point which I would like to make for the consideration of the House, and for Mr. Vaiko, is that the President of Sri Lanka assured us that he is today the President of all Srilankans. So, I think we need to look at that assurance and, obviously, whatever discussions happen during his visit would demonstrate where that assurance holds. ...*(Interruptions)*... As regards the question about what the gain is for the Indian Government, I think that is an issue that more than one Member, hon. Members across the aisle, had raised, but some other Members had also raised it and some, in a direct or indirect manner, had referred to it. I think there were a lot of gains from these visits. The gains were, as I said, on big issues. Somebody asked me, in climate change what were the big ideas. The big ideas, for example, included the International Solar Alliance. The big idea right now, which was tabled in the visit to the UN, was the Coalition for Disaster

*Not recorded.

[Shri S. Jaishankar]

Resilient Infrastructure, which was very widely welcomed by a lot of countries who are feeling the effects of climate change, but don't have the resources to cope with it. So, today they welcome a coalition of countries and they welcome the leadership from some country which has got a feeling for countries of the South, which is willing to help with capacity-building. So, I think today we have to recognize whether it is in big ideas — or, let me give more practical considerations. We have, for example, in discussions raised issues about the welfare of our neighbour. The Prime Minister has been to three countries in the Gulf. We have somewhere between 8.5 to 9 million people in the Gulf. These are really people who work under very difficult conditions, support their country and send back money to this country. Their welfare and their security are issues which have been discussed at some length and sometimes with great practicality and detail as well. We have discussed issues, again, when we are talking of outcomes, issues pertaining to security. These could be security in practical terms, in terms of technology, in terms of access to defence equipment, but these are also issues of political support on matters of our vital national interest. This is a period, for example, where Pakistan has sought to raise the internal issue of article 370 abroad. And in many of these visits, the support and understanding that we saw from conversations which the Prime Minister, the President and the Vice-President had, were all very relevant. So, I think there are a range of outcomes out here. Some of them can be put in numbers. Some of them are, as I said, in concepts and ideas, but let me assure the House that together, this is what Foreign Policy is about. It is about getting our interests advanced. It is about getting our point of view understood and it is about getting our people looked after.

Sir, let me now turn to questions which Mr. Jairam Ramesh asked. With regard to the nuclear issues where negotiations with the French are concerned, it is progressing. There are issues. There are issues regarding the techno-commercial offer. There are issues regarding the reference plant which the French have to have operating for some time. Hon. Member is fully aware that nuclear plants and nuclear contracts take years, in fact, many, many years, to negotiate and fructify. In a different way, there are also ongoing negotiations with the Russians on Kudankulam, and I can assure the hon. Members that whatever we do, whether it is in Kudankulam or Jaitapur as a future site — today you heard from my ministerial colleague, Dr. Jitendra Singh — the Government is fully committed to ensuring the safety and security of our nuclear power plants. So, I think the Members should rest assured.

SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN: Kudankulam would be the same even if you add four more reactors.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rangarajan, you are very senior Member. You may first listen to him.

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that I have a background in nuclear negotiations, not in nuclear technology. But I would go by the technologist's advice. If our Atomic Energy Commission, which is represented by the most eminent scientists and nuclear technologists of our era, takes that decision, I would respect that decision and I would urge the hon. Member to also do so. A number of Members raised RCEP. Let me say this very frankly. You have negotiations. These are not negotiations which were started under this Government; there are negotiations which have been carried on for many years. What happens in a negotiation? You negotiate till a point comes where you have to take a decision. When we reached Bangkok, we had issues and concerns. These were being negotiated. They were negotiated even when we were in Bangkok. At that point, the Government took a view that we had to assess whether our interest is adequately met in the document, in the set of outcomes that had been agreed on for the RCEP and we came to the conclusion that our concerns and interests were not sufficiently addressed. I believe, to me, it is a matter of pride and it is a positive thing that the Prime Minister actually looked at it and said that it is not in the best interest of the nation that we go forward at this time on this basis. So, I think, frankly, the House should be welcoming this as someone who stands for the interest of the country, is willing to take the tough decisions and who will not let the pressure of international diplomacy hustle him into taking a decision which is not good for the country. I think, again, Members should be reassured that this Government and this Prime Minister will do what is right for the country on trade matters as on all other matters. So, on the RCEP, what will happen in the future is speculated; it depends on whether our concerns are addressed or not. So, if our concerns are addressed, then, obviously, somebody will take whatever call needs to be taken. If they are not, then, obviously, the current call will continue.

Dr. Patra raised the issue of COP-25. I would, in all honesty, defer this matter for my colleague, Shri Prakash Javadekar. I don't have the expertise to answer your question in detail, but, again, I would like to assure the hon. Member that on Climate Change, especially in Paris and after the Paris Conference, we have played a very positive and constructive role. Today, we are seen as one of the leaders of Climate Change and a lot of countries of the South Asia today look up to us to protect their interests and ensure that their voice is heard. As I said, these initiatives like the International Solar Alliance, have been very helpful in giving a practical shape to our Climate Change Policy.

[Shri S. Jaishankar]

Shri Rakesh Sinha raised the issue of our relationship with Buddhist countries. This has been progressing; it has progressed in terms of engagements and events which we have done with many Buddhist countries. We support our regular Buddhist cultural gathering. We have also, in South-East Asia, supported the restoration of Buddhist heritage. We have, in Mongolia, supported Buddhist monasteries. In a number of other countries, we have been involved in exchanges of Buddhist heritage. So, the fact that India is the land of Buddha, this gives us a very special standing with a lot of countries where the Buddhist faith is very strong. It is something which we recognise, we value and we will nurture.

With regard to the Non-Alignment Movement, again, I can assure you, hon. Vice-President led our delegation, we took full part in that negotiation and we shaped a lot of important outcomes. We are regarded as the founder member of the NAM and, I think, today, there is still a very strong NAM constituent and I believe that it is an important aspect of our foreign policy that we nurture and maintain that support and constituency.

Dr. Singh made a reference to Houston. What I would like to say is, we heard from Houston two or three important messages. One, that today the Indian community, persons of Indian origin, stand united in support of India. They came to Houston to express their support for India, for the changes in India and for the message of India. I think, that is something that should be welcomed. As regards his concern how this would be perceived in the United States, again I can assure him that we have handled the United States in a bipartisan manner; we have good relations across the board. Before President Trump spoke in Houston, the House Majority Leader, Steny Hoyer, also spoke. He is the second ranking Democrat in the House. There were Democratic Members present in the House as well. In fact, a few days later, I was in the library of Congress and the Speaker of House of Representative, Nancy Pelosi, came and spoke again on the 150th Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. So, I would like to assure you that our relationship goes across party divides in the United States. Today, it is a very durable relationship. It is a relationship that has got very firm foundations. So, he can be assured that there can be no issues in that regard.

Again, Mr. Rangarajan raised the issue of the RCEP Negotiations, and about the safety of Kudankulam, which I assure him. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN: My point is how much trade and investment has come? ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Rangarajanji, you are such a senior Member. Please.

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: I would urge the hon. Member to actually to look at our investment figures. He will see that our investment figures have actually steadily gone up in the last few years. If he wishes to quantify visits in terms of trade outputs, and I don't completely agree with that approach, but if he wishes to see, year on year visits, on trade, I can assure him, he will find all the trade figures going up. There will be no confusion on that point.

My colleague, Shri Swapan Dasgupta, raised the issue as to how you relate economic approaches to foreign policy. I would like to assure the hon. Member that there is an in-principle opposition to doing FTAs or an in-principle acceptance to doing FTAs. Every FTA must be judged on the basis of what it offers India. Does India gain, does India lose? If India loses, we should not be hustled into it. If India gains, naturally, it is in our interest to do it. What has happened in the last few years? We signed a lot of FTAs. We are today studying what the impact of those FTAs on our economy has been. It's a very mixed picture. So, we have urged the partner countries of those FTAs to do the review. I think an hon. Member actually asked me, "Will you do a review of the ASEAN FTAs." Yes. We are doing a review of the ASEAN FTAs. We have also urged Japan to do a review of our bilateral FTA. So, if an FTA offers us gains, we are open-minded about it. For example, there is a bilateral BTIA, the bilateral FTA, with EU. We are open to resuming the negotiations. But, we don't have a doctrine approach. I can assure you again, through the Chair that hon. Member should note that there is today a great deal of synchronization between our economic policy or financial policy and foreign policy. This is a very, very cohesive Government. All of us are doing work together as one team. So, there are no mixed messages or discontinuity amongst us. As regards the issue of the S-400, which was raised by the hon. Member, we have made it very clear to everybody that India takes its decision on its merits. We will not be influenced by other countries on what we do in terms of our national security and defence. If we have committed to the S-400 Agreement, which we have, then, other countries need to respect that decision. It has been made clear to all other countries.

Then, Shri Ravi Prakash Verma raised the issue of anti-terrorism. He appreciated the support that we have got from the rest of the world on this issue. I think that is something the House should recognize that we have had actually an effort to bring up this issue in close consultation with the U.N. Security Council. An effort was made to have a special debate and a resolution at the U.N. Human Rights Council. These were all blocked. They were defeated. Today, a lot of Governments understand our positions.

[Shri S. Jaishankar]

They hear our concerns. I think that is something which the visits of our leaders have actually helped to make possible. But, the practical point he makes is how do we become a human resources leader when it comes to South-East Asia. Where South-East Asia is concerned, we have an FTA with all 10 ASEAN countries. We have three bilateral FTAs out there. We have FTAs with Japan and Korea. So, it was not that RCEP is going to make a big difference where South-East Asia is concerned. With regard to Nepal, I would respectfully differ. I think our problems with Nepal, whatever misunderstandings were there with Nepal, are behind us. I have myself gone to Nepal. In fact, there have been conversations between our Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Nepal. They have jointly inaugurated a fuel pipeline between the two countries. I can assure him that a lot of our projects, a lot of our issues with Nepal are going very smoothly, and I frankly think that our bilateral co-operation will go up.

With regard to Pakistan, I completely accept that it is a unique neighbour. It is very different from all our other neighbours. But when it comes to 'Neighbourhood First' policy, our objective today is that all our neighbours work with us. In different ways, we have connectivity with them. We have improved co-operation with them. We have more contacts with them. If you look at trade, if you look at projects, if you look at visas of people travelling, every number with every neighbour, barring Pakistan, is actually better than what it was before. So, for us, 'Neighbourhood First' is a statement of priority. It is a statement of the importance we put to them and we have made it very clear to them that we will be generous and large-hearted. I think that has been the Prime Minister's message from his first visit to Nepal in 2014. It is a message he has carried to every one of the neighbouring countries and, I think, today, they have great faith in his leadership to deliver on that.

The issue of FTAs, EU and ASEAN, was raised by Dr. Patnaik. As regards the issue which the hon. Member asked about the dam in Bhutan, it is not my understanding that the dam in Bhutan is, in any way, contributing to whatever problems there may be in Assam. I can assure you that when we look at the dams in Bhutan, all these projects are actually projects which have been undertaken bilaterally by India and Bhutan. Many of them are done by our agencies. The technical assessments are done by us. So, I am sure that our own agencies will keep our national interest very much in mind.

Finally, Sir, with regard to the two observations made by the hon. Member, Shrimati Vijila Sathyananth, first, she asked as to when we will become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Well, I would hope soon, but I am realistic enough to know that it is a long and patient effort. We are not lacking in patience, we are not lacking in our perseverance

and we are not lacking in our aspiration. We will get there one day. I am very confident and it is progressing step by step. Finally, as regards her second observation, let me conclude my reply with this. She was very happy that Xi Jinping and our Prime Minister's meeting took place in Chennai. So was I. Thank you, Sir.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

Demand to increase banking coverage in Odisha

DR. SASMIT PATRA (Odisha): Sir, I stand to raise an important issue relating to the need to increase the banking coverage in Odisha. Seventy per cent of Odisha does not have brick and mortar banking coverage. As on October, 2018, there were 4,597 unbanked Gram Panchayats in Odisha. As on 30th June, 2019, there were 2,536 urban and semi-urban bank branches, while only 2,817 branches for rural areas. Considering this grim situation, I urge upon the Union Government to take strong steps to ensure that brick and mortar banking coverage is enhanced in Odisha to cover 70 per cent of Odisha which is unbanked at the moment. Only then, true financial inclusion can be achieved as proposed by the Reserve Bank of India Committee on Comprehensive Financial Services for Small Businesses and Low Income Households in 2016.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Ram Nath Thakur, not present. Shri G.C. Chandrashekhar, not present. Shri Abir Ranjan Biswas.

Demand to improve facilities and infrastructure at the Indo-Bangladesh cross over point at Gede in West Bengal

SHRI ABIR RANJAN BISWAS (West Bengal): Sir, the Indo-Bangladesh crossover point at Gede border in West Bengal is plagued by numerous problems. It begins with the B.S.F. registration. There are long queues of several hundreds of meters, bereft of any shed to save the people from the scorching sun or torrential rain. Neither are there any basic public amenities nor are there sitting arrangements even for the old and infirm. There is insufficient female staff to handle ladies and at times, though rare, even the male B.S.F. personnel unfortunately check women. People are detained for hours together for no reason. Registration is done twice, once unofficially by the B.S.F., who in this case has no locus standi, and then by those in charge at Immigration Check Post. Redundant double checking is only done at this border and nowhere else.