

16.20 hrs

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER
RE. HIS RECENT VISITS ABROAD

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to apprise the House of my visits abroad since the last session of Parliament.

On my way to the Commonwealth Summit in Canada, I made a brief transit halt in Tokyo on the 12th October for an exchange of views with Prime Minister Nakasone. We discussed matters of mutual interest. A soft untied Japanese credit equivalent to \$200 million was announced. The Prime Minister expressed Japan's full support to the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement.

The commonwealth Summit was held in Vancouver from the 13th to the 17th October.

The Summit took place amidst growing speculation that the Commonwealth had run out of steam in its campaign against apartheid in South Africa. This was proved wrong. All the Commonwealth countries, with the exception of Britain, agreed that sanctions were beginning to have the desired effect. We, therefore, decided to intensify the pressure and expand the scope of sanctions. We undertook to work for wider international acceptance and better implementation of the Commonwealth sanctions programme.

Several new suggestions, including those made by us, were accepted. We agreed to undertake, on a continuing basis, an evaluation of the impact of sanctions. We also agreed that any effort to frustrate these sanctions should be identified and brought to light. We concurred on the need for an expert study to examine the implications of Pretoria's relationship with the international financial system for the maintenance of the apartheid regime. We will take further action, including additional sanctions, in response to the situation as it evolves. The Programme of Action relating to sanctions on South Africa was adopted by all Commonwealth countries, with the solitary exception of Britain.

All of us initiated a programme of coordinated Commonwealth assistance to

the Frontline States. A Special Fund was established to provide technical assistance to Mozambique. Commonwealth assistance to the victims and opponents of apartheid will be expanded. We agreed to give high priority to efforts aimed at removing censorship in South Africa, because it is such censorship which hides the truth about South Africa from world public opinion. To provide high level impetus and guidance for achieving these objectives, the Summit set up an eight member Committee of Foreign Ministers. The Committee will be chaired by Canada and includes India.

The events in Fiji figured prominently in our discussions in Vancouver. In my Statement at the inaugural session, I expressed our serious concern about the racist overtones of recent developments and the undermining of democracy in that country. Fiji has ceased to be a member of the Commonwealth. The Summit decided that the question of Fiji's readmission would be taken up only when circumstances so warrant and in keeping with the basic principles that have guided the organisation. We also agreed that the Commonwealth would be ready to offer its good offices to contribute to a solution of the problems in Fiji.

The Vancouver Commonwealth communique contained a strong endorsement of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. The Agreement was acclaimed as an act of the statesmanship.

An important achievement of the Summit was the Vancouver Declaration on World Trade, which brings together on a common platform representatives of developed and developing countries drawn from all continents. The Declaration expressed our concern at rising global protectionist practices and calls for the implementation of the Punta-de-Este commitments on "standstill" and "roll back" of protectionist measures. The Declaration recognises the disadvantaged position of the developing countries in international trade and, in view of this asymmetry, the need to give special consideration to their interest in the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations.

We launched the Commonwealth programme to promote distance education,

[Shri Rajiv Gandhi]

that is, the use of new communications technologies to bring learning within the reach of large numbers through a system of non-formal education. India is well placed to both contribute to this initiative and to benefit from it.

Within the parameters of the differing perceptions of the sovereign government represented in the Commonwealth, the agreements reached at the Vancouver Summit confirmed the dynamism and relevance of this organisation in international affairs. Notwithstanding the single discordant note on the issue of sanctions, the Summit welded together a large section of world opinion on key issues of peace and stability in the world. I would like to record our appreciation of the meticulous care with which arrangements were made by the Government of Canada. I would also like to commend the important and imaginative role played by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada, in steering the Conference to a successful conclusion.

While in Vancouver, I had bilateral discussions with Prime Minister, Mulroney, I also had meetings with a number of other leaders including the Presidents of Bangladesh, Guyana, Maldives, Tanzania and Zambia, the Sultan of Brunei and the Prime Minister of Australia, Britain, Malta, New Zealand, Singapore and Zimbabwe, and the leader of the Nigerian delegation.

On the 18th October, at Harvard University, I delivered the Jodidi Memorial Lecture on India and Democracy.

The following day I participated in a special debate in the United Nations General Assembly on the Report on environment and development presented by the Commission headed by the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundland. The President of Maldives and the Prime Ministers of Denmark, Norway and Zimbabwe also participated in the debate.

I addressed a luncheon meeting jointly organised by the Foreign Policy Association, the Asia Society and the Indian Chambers of Commerce in New York.

I spoke about India's Foreign Policy and the contemporary political scene.

I undertook a working visit to Washington at the invitation of President Reagan. We attach great importance to our relations with the United States. We believe that a continuing dialogue between our countries is indispensable for a better understanding of each other and to expand mutually beneficial cooperation in bilateral and international affairs.

I had a breakfast meeting with Congressional leaders, including the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate Majority leader. As a result, there is now a greater recognition in the United States of the gravity of Pakistan's unrelenting quest for nuclear weapons.

President Reagan and I had a wide-ranging and useful exchange of views on regional and international matters. The US reaffirmed its full support to the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement. I reiterated our serious concern over Pakistan's weapons oriented nuclear programme.

Our discussions covered other vital issues of the day. I welcomed the prospect of the agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States to eliminate short and medium-range nuclear forces.

We discussed the strengthening of bilateral ties. The agenda drawn up during my 1985 visit has largely been completed, and a new agenda has now been put in place. We agreed to extend the Science and Technology initiative, which has shown positive results, for another three years beyond 1988. We also decided to extend the scope of cooperation to the frontiers of science and technology.

Projects have been identified for cooperative research in ocean science development, in water management, and in arid-zone agriculture. Development fellowships are being instituted to place our scientists in premier American institutions for research in areas of specific interest to both countries.

We agreed to increase our cooperation in trade and investment. We will expand our work in curbing drug abuse and drug

trafficking. We will strengthen our ties in culture and education. We are exploring avenues of cooperation in defence-related technologies. Members will be glad to learn that we agreed on the importance of greater interaction between legislators of two countries.

On my way back to Delhi, I met Prime Minister Lubbers at Amsterdam airport.

From the 2nd to the 4th November, I was in Kathmandu for the Third Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

In my statement to the House after the 2nd Summit in Bangalore I had said that during India's Chairmanship we would endeavour to consolidate and diversify regional cooperation.

At Bangalore, we had put forward new ideas for closer people-to-people interaction. We also took several steps to give regional cooperation more meaningful substance. We decided to set up a Group of Legal Experts to work out a framework for co-operation in combating terrorism. We discussed idea of a SAARC Food Security Reserve. We sought to extend regional cooperation in new fields such as the prevention of drug trafficking and drug abuse, disaster management, forestry and ecology, and trade, industry, money and finance. We agreed to draw up common principles, procedures and rules for establishment of regional institutions. And finally, we decided to take action to make the SAARC Secretariat functional.

I am glad to inform the House that we have achieved these objectives and discharged our obligations.

During our Chairmanship, as many as 100 events—almost two per week—were held. Out of these, India alone hosted 45.

All the new ideas agreed upon in Bangalore have now been translated into projects. The SAARC audio-visual exchange commenced with the direct telecast of the inaugural session of the Kathmandu Summit. The programme of SAARC fellowships, chairs and scholarships is scheduled to begin in the academic year of 1988.

At Kathmandu, the SAARC Food Security Reserve was established. This is the first time that countries of the region have decided to pool resources to help one another in an emergency.

The SAARC Regional Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism was signed at the Summit. The stage had been set when experts from SAARC countries met in Delhi in March this year and identified extraditable offences which are terrorist and not political in nature. The Convention is a break-through. It demonstrates the desire of all countries in our region to come together to fight the menace of terrorism.

PROF. N.G. RANGA (Guntur) : Including Pakistan ?

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : Deep concern was expressed at the recurrence of drought, floods and tidal waves in our region. Following our initiative to bring disaster relief management within the scope of South Asian Cooperation, we agreed at Kathmandu to commission a study on the protection and preservation of the environment and on the causes and consequences of natural disaster in our region.

India believes that South Asian co-operation should move towards incorporating the core economic sectors of trade, industry, money and finance. The view is gaining acceptance. At Kathmandu, we decided to undertake studies in this direction. We hope these studies will encourage countries in the region to move confidently towards cooperative ventures in these areas. During the Summit, I visited the SAARC Secretariat and saw it at work. It is creditable that within a year of its establishment the Secretariat is well on the way to discharging its functions fully.

The Kathmandu Summit gave me the opportunity of having an informal exchange of views on bilateral and international issues with other leaders present.

Before concluding, I would like to express our appreciation of the excellent arrangements made for the Conference by His Majesty's Government of Nepal. The success of the Summit owed much to the distinguished leadership of our Chairman, His Majesty the King of Nepal.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura):
We should have a discussion on this.

MR. SPEAKER: As usual, no problem.

16.35 hrs.

AIR (PREVENTION AND CON-
TROL OF (POLLUTION) AMEND-
MENT BILL—*Contd.*

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER : Shri R.P. Das may speak.

SHRI R.P. DAS (Krishnagar) : Sir, certain Members on this side have pointed out that rapid industrialisation and urbanisation are the major causes of pollution—air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution and noise pollution. There are also other factors for pollution. The deforestation is one of the major causes for the ecological imbalance and soil erosion also contributed its part to the environmental pollution.

Sir, as the hon. Member on the other side rightly pointed out, our system is a federal system. There was need for cooperation from all the Government and non-governmental agencies to solve our problems and I should say that the Bill has crossed the scope.

I would like to point out one of the provisions. It is at page 3, sub-section (2) of section 8 :

“Where the Central Government is of the opinion that any State Board has defaulted in complying with any directions given by the Central Board under sub-section (1) and as a result of such default a grave emergency has arisen and it is necessary or expedient so to do in the public interest, it may, by order, direct the Central Board to perform any of the functions of the State Board in relation to such area, for such period and for such purposes, as may be specified in the order.”

I should say, this very provision which is made in this Bill is beyond the scope of

the air pollution scheme. Under the democratic set up, the relations between the State and the Centre, the relations between the Central Board and the State Board should be cooperative and it is not that the Central Government or the Central Board should direct the State Board to wind up some of the functions that they are doing in their own State.

16.37 hrs.

[SHRI SHARAD DIGHE *in the Chair*]

In this Bill, it has been said that the Central Government can direct the Central Board to perform some of the functions of the State Board. It affects the relation between the State and the Centre. This provision goes against the good relation that should be between the State and the Centre and it will not help much in bringing about cooperation between the Centre and the State. In the scope of the Bill, much cooperation is needed at all levels, namely between the State and the Centre and between other agencies for the proper implementation of the Act.

It has also been pointed out by certain Members that many legislations have been enacted in the country but most of the legislations could not be put to effect to and could not be implemented properly. In this case also, we find that there are two Pollution Acts, one is Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and another is Air (Pre-vention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. This Bill is an improvement upon the 1981 Act. In each and every case, we find that the agencies could not properly implement the schemes, the plans of the Centre or the State. It is not due to the short-comings or lacunae in the legislation or due to administrative or practical difficulties as has been pointed out in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, but it is mostly due to lack of funds. Sometimes, we find that State Boards could not do their job properly because of the fact that they do not have much funds. I can quote the example of the State Board of West Bengal. It is spending not more than Rs. 2 crores. It is just below Rs. 2 crores. This amount is not adequate for the State Board to spend on different plans and schemes. Take the