



PM calls for global action for energy security

Addressing the global challenge of energy security, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh called for concerted global action at the St. Petersburg G-8 Summit on 16th July, 2006. India and other developing countries face formidable challenges in meeting their energy needs. India needs to sustain 8-10% economic growth to eradicate poverty and meet its economic and social development goals. To deliver a sustained growth of 8% through 2031, India would need to increase its primary energy supply by 3 to 4 times and electricity supply by 5 to 7 times of today's consumption. Per capita energy consumption in India is currently only one-fifth of that in OECD countries. For electricity, the proportion is skewed even further, with per capita consumption being only one-twentieth of the OECD figures. The realization of India's development goals cannot be possible without a significant increase in energy consumption.

In the short term, Prime Minister recommended that there should be focus on adoption of energy efficiency

technologies for which international financial institutions should provide a separate concessional window for developing countries. In the medium to longer term, a strategy to diversify the energy impacts and shift from fossil fuel to cleaner, environment-friendly alternate fuels and renewables was necessary. In the non-paper presented to the G-8 countries and the outreach countries at St. Petersburg, India emphasized the need for a global R&D network to promote this strategy.

Train Bomb blasts in Mumbai

There were series of bomb blasts in Mumbai on July 11, 2006 that killed 200 people and injured over 600. World leaders including those participating on July 17, 2006 at the G-8 meeting at St. Petersburg condemned the barbaric terrorist outrage.

In a statement issued by the G-8, the leaders expressed solidarity and reiterated "We are united with India in our resolve to intensify efforts to fight terrorism which constitutes a threat to each of our country, as well as to international peace and security."

US House approves India nuclear deal

Dealing a stunning blow to critics of the Indo-US nuclear accord, the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted on July 27, 2006 for a legislation providing greater access of sensitive nuclear technology to India after defeating potential deal breaker amendments. The legislation, cleared the 435-member House, by a 359-68 vote in favour, must now be approved by the Senate before being signed into law by President George W Bush.

India signs MoU with UNESCO

India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCO for setting up a regional centre for education and training in the field of biotechnology, the first of its kind in the country. The centre will conduct research activities in the field of social relevance like nano-technology, stem cell research, biosensors, agriculture and environment related biotechnology. It will be funded by India and other member countries in the Asian region.

Economic News

Border trade agreement with China – step forward

India and China signed an agreement on July 6, 2006 to resume border trade through the Nathu La Pass after 44 years. The decision, which is the outcome of an agreement reached between the Prime Ministers of the two countries in 2003, has significant strategic and economic implications for Sino-Indian relationship. So far, the two

neighbours conducted border trade only through Lipu Lekh Pass in Uttaranchal and Shipki La Pass in Himachal Pradesh. The opening up of the third border trade post, therefore, suggests a step forward in the bilateral relationship and would help to expand economic engagement between the two countries.

Jet ties up with Swiss Airlines

On July 14, 2006 Jet Airways entered into a reciprocal frequent flyer programme tie up with Swiss International Airlines that will allow frequent flyers on both the airlines to earn and redeem miles. The partnership would also extend to members of Lufthansa's 'Miles and More', members on Jet's 48 domestic and international destinations and 69 destinations of the Swiss carrier.

International hotel brands to raise toast to India

The Indian hospitality sector is all set to witness a flood of the world's leading hotel brands. New brands such as Amanda, Satinwoods, Banana Tree, Hampton Inns, Scandium by Hilt and Mandarin Oriental are planning to enter the Indian hospitality industry in joint venture with various Indian hotel developers like ITC, EIH, Bharat Hotels, Viceroy, DLF, Unitech and Royal Palms. Currently, over 142 luxury hotel projects are coming up in India with an investment of Rs 7,300 crore (US \$ 1.62 billion). International tourist arrivals in India rose 13.2% in 2005 to 3.9 million. It is expected that tourists arrivals would grow even further in 2006.

Foreign Direct Investment

Farm sector open to 100 per cent FDI

Agriculture sectors such as horticulture, floriculture, development of seeds, animal husbandry, pisciculture, aquaculture, cultivation of vegetables, and services related to agro and allied sectors are open to 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) through the automatic route.

Food sector's FDI pie to hit US\$ 3 billion mark

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India's food sector is poised to hit US\$ 3-billion mark. In last one year alone, FDI approvals in food processing have doubled.

Eurocopter plans US\$ 1 billion investment in India :

Eurocopter, the world's largest civil and military helicopter manufacturer, will invest over US\$ 1 billion in India over the next two years.

Intel stepping up investments in India

Intel is finalising its expansion plans in India and is expected to invest US\$ 50 million in Bangalore. The firm is adding a third building to its R&D centre.

Barclays to invest US\$ 70 million in India :

London-based bank Barclays Plc would invest US\$ 70 million to strengthen its corporate banking business in India.

Computer Sciences Corporation to invest US \$ 40 mn

Global IT services company Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) will invest US\$ 40 million to set up a new integrated facility at Noida. The first phase of construction at the facility is expected to be completed by March 2007.

Fisher to invest US\$ 21 million in Cadila SEZ

Fisher Scientific International (FSI), a Fortune 500 company, will invest more than US\$ 21 million for a 100 per cent export-oriented unit in the Cadila-promoted special economic zone (SEZ) at Changodar near Ahmedabad.

Indians abroad

Kerala to get a Global Village

World Malayalee Council (WMC), founded in USA in 1995 is set to embark on a unique project expected to cost Rs. 1 billion (US \$ 22.2 million). To provide a meeting point for Malayalees from all over the world, WMC is expected to showcase its plan to build a Global village in Kuttinannam in Idukki District, Kerala at the global conference in Kochi from August 1-7, 2006. The global village will include residential complex, educational institutions, resorts and medical facilities.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

17 Indians get Italian knighthood

Seventeen Indians, including filmmakers, Gautam Ghose and Ramesh Sharma, fashion designer Tarun Tahiliani, restaurateur Ritu Dalmia and entrepreneur VN Dalmia were among those conferred Italian knighthoods on July 7, 2006 for significantly contributing to the development of friendly relations with Italy in language, culture and socio-economic activities. Visiting Italian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Gianni Vernetti conferred the awards

Top French Honors for four Indians

On the occasion of French National Day on July 14, 2006, the French Government honoured prominent Indians for their contributions to society in various areas. Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, founder and president of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation was honoured with the Commander of the Agricultural Merit in recognition of his service in the field of agriculture; Dr. R.K. Pachauri, Director General of the Tata Energy Research Institute, was named Officer of the Legion of Honour for his contribution in the field of environment; Mrs. Ela Bhatt, founder of the Self Employment Women's Organisation, was also named Officer of the Legion of Honour in recognition of her social work; and Father Cedric Prakash director of 'Prashant', Centre for Promotion of Human Rights, Justice and Peace, was named Knight of the Legion

of honour in recognition of his selfless social work and his actions in favour of human rights.

Dr. Amitabh Bachhan

Super star of Bollywood Amitabh Bachchan was awarded the Doctor of Arts by the De Montfort University of Leicester, UK on July 19, 2006 in recognition of his film career. He is the first Indian to receive this honour.

Yash Chopra: King of romance

The septuagenarian director has added another laurel to his name. Yash Chopra was chosen for a lifetime membership to British Academy of Film and Television Arts for his contribution to the Indian film industry. He is the first Indian in the 59 year history of BAFTA to have received such an honour. This is just another indication that Bollywood has taken the West by storm.

Jalandhar school team heads for NASA

A group of 13 space architect students and their two advisors from Jalandhar's Apeejay School have been selected for the international space settlement design competition at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Johnson's Space Centre in Houston. The competition, organised by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics in collaboration with NASA, took place between July 14 and 17. The Apeejay School team is paired with California-based Whitney School for the space design competition. They will be required to create the settlement design

with full costs of the actual project within 42 hours and give a presentation to NASA judges.

BILATERAL

INDO-SWISS BILATERAL TRADE

The positive trend in bilateral trade is set to continue through 2006. In the first two quarters of 2006, there is an increase of 39.9% in the two-way trade with SF. 1238.1 million up to

June 2006 as compared to SF. 887.2 million for the same period in 2005. During the same period India's exports to Switzerland showed an increase of 20.3% at SF.379.5 million for the first six months of 2006 as compared to SF. 315.4 million up to June 2005. There is a 50% increase in Swiss exports to India during the first half of 2006 – SF. 858.6 million as compared to SF. 571.8 million for the same period of 2005.

EMBASSY OF INDIA, SWITZERLAND
KIRCHENFELDSTRASSE 28, CH-3005 BERNE
TEL : 031-351 11 10 Fax : 031-351 15 57
E-mail : india@spectraweb.ch
Website : www.indembassyberne.ch

