

Sir,

The article ‘‘The Austerity of the Affluent’’, which appeared in the Hindu edition of 21st May, is so misleadingly distortive on two points, that I feel compelled to respond to clarify the position for the readers. I have high regard for your newspaper, and subscribe to the notion that there should be full transparency in government. It is in this spirit that I hope these clarifications will be published by you, for the benefit of your readers.

The first error is comparing the daily cost of foreign trips undertaken by me with the Tendulkar poverty line, which incidentally is not on a daily basis, but on a monthly budget basis for a household. This comparison is intended to suggest gross extravagance. Air travel and hotels in major capitals are very expensive and the class of air travel and the class of hotels is not determined by me, but by Government rules applicable to all Ministers, MPs and senior officials. There is no denying that foreign travel is expensive, but it is often necessary for the discharge of official duties. I should add that each day spent abroad is filled with 14 hours of meetings, and is a day spent away from family and not exactly holiday. We should, of course, attempt to reduce costs, but we need to consider whether and to what extent this would affect our ability to enter into negotiations immediately on arrival, or have delegation meetings in the hotel room. One needs to carefully weigh the costs and benefits before taking a considered decision, and in any event, this is a decision that would need to be taken by the appropriate authorities.

The second error in the Article is to suggest that the frequency of my travels is unnecessary, as the functions of the Deputy Chairman do not require such foreign travel. I agree that the role of Deputy Chairman itself does not, per se, require *extensive* foreign travel. But the article omits to note that most of the foreign trips made by me were in the capacity of Sherpa for the G-20, or as Member of the Prime Minister’s delegation. I am the co chair of the Indo US Energy dialogue and the co chair of the India China economic dialogue. These are special assignments and not part of my duties as Deputy Chairman. The decision on who should undertake these tasks is not taken by me, but when chosen to perform these tasks, I consider it an honour, and do the best I can. As in the case of all persons of cabinet rank, each trip is cleared by MEA and PMO.

I should add that G 20 meetings were especially frequent between 2008 and 2010, because of the global financial crisis. In fact each Summit was preceded by two or three preparatory meetings of sherpas. One could, of course, argue that India should not have been represented at these meetings. That would certainly have saved some money, but the question to ask is whether the country would be better served by not being represented. Finally, in the interest of full transparency on foreign travels I have decided to put all my foreign trips on the website of the Planning Commission so that all those interested can find out where I am going and why.

Sincerely,

Montek S Ahluwalia

**STATEMENT SHOWING FOREIGN VISITS OF THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN WITH EFFECT FROM
2004 TILL DATE**

| Sl. No. | Dates of Visit | Countries/cities visited | Names of Companions | Expenses made | Purpose of Visit (Official/Personal) |
|---------|--|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | 24-30 January 2011 | Davos, Switzerland | Nil | Rs.718,625/- | Official |
| 2. | 12-13 December, 2010 | Muscat, Oman | Nil | Rs.1,28,750.00/- | Official |
| 3. | 26 th November to 3 rd December, 2010. | Australia | Nil | No expenditure on the part of Planning Commission. | Official |
| 4. | 9-12 November, 2010 | | Visited as member of delegation led by PM | Rs.2,96,260.00/- | Official |
| 5. | 06-15 October, 2010 | New York and Washington DC, USA, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Incheon, South Korea | Nil | Rs.16,82,555.00/- | Official |
| 6. | 26-28 September, 2010. | Kuala Lumpur | Nil | Rs.3,88,150.00/- | Official |
| 7. | 17-20 July, 2010 | Washington DC, USA: | | Rs.7,54,000.00/- | Official |
| 8. | 20 June – 1 st July, 2010 | New York and Washington DC, USA; Toronto, Canada and Stressa, Italy | Visited as member of delegation led by PM for the Canadian Tour leg. | Rs.13,06,745.00/- | Official |
| 9. | 27 May - 3 June, 2010 | Rabat, Morocco, London, UK and Washington DC, USA | Accompanied External Affairs Minister for the US Tour leg. | Rs.10,71,486.00/- | Official |
| 10. | 14 th May, 2010 | Manama, Bahrain | Nil | Rs.1,02,701.00/- | Official |
| 11. | 31 st March to 1 st April 2010 | UK | Nil | Rs. 4,31,830.00/- | Official |
| 12. | 26-31 January 2010 | USA | Visited as member of delegation led by PM | Rs.6,06,155/- | Official |
| 13. | 21-26 November 2009 | USA | Visited as member of delegation led by PM | Rs.3,60,000/- | Official |
| 14. | 22-27 September 2009 | Pittsburgh, USA | Nil | Rs. 4,51,816/- | Official |
| 15. | 9-12 September 2009 | New York and Washington DC, USA | Nil | Rs.6,54,550/- | Official |
| 16. | 29 th July to 1 st Aug. 2009 | New York and Washington DC, USA | Nil | Rs.6,54,550/- | Official |
| 17. | 29-30 June, 2009 | Washington DC, USA | Nil | Rs.6,83,000/- | Official |
| 18. | 16-26 April, 2009 | Toronto, Canada and Cambridge and Washington DC, USA | Nil | Rs.10,87,900/- | Official |
| 19. | 31 March – 4 th April 2009 | London, UK and Muscat, Oman | Nil | Rs. 5,93,525 | Official |
| 20. | 12-16 October, 2008 | New York, USA | nil | Rs. 7,42,625/- | Official |
| 21. | 23-25 September, 2008 | New York, USA | Visited as member of delegation led by PM | Rs. 5,45,350/- | Official |
| 22. | 15-18 September, 2008 | Singapore and Tokyo, Japan | Nil | Rs. 4,92,655/- | Official |
| 23. | 3-4 May, 2008 | Saudi Arabia | Nil | Rs. 1,39,000/- | |
| 24. | 4-15 April, 2008 | USA, Washington DC | Nil | Rs. 12,82,000/- | Official |

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|-----|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|----------|
| 25. | 10-14 Nov., 2007 and 15-16 Nov., 2007 | Suzhou, China & Singapore | Nil | Rs. 4,13,000/- | Official |
| 26. | 24-28 September, 07 | New York, USA | Nil | Rs. 7,50,375/- | Official |
| 27. | 21-29 April, 2007 | Japan and China | Nil | Rs. 3,36,875/- | Official |
| 28. | 9-13 April, 2007 | USA | Nil | Rs. 6,31,295/- | Official |
| 29. | 9-15 March, 2007 | South Africa | Nil | Rs. 3,19,775/- | Official |
| 30. | 24-27 January, 2007 | Davos, Switzerland | Nil | Rs. 3,70,125/- | Official |
| 31. | 24 Oct. to 02 Nov. 2006 | USA and UK | Nil | Rs. 6,87,250/- | Official |
| 32. | 15-18 Sept, 2006 | Singapore | Nil | Rs. 2,21,800/- | Official |
| 33. | 10-13 July 2006 | Singapore | Nil | Rs. 1,97,900/- | Official |
| 34. | 15-23 June, 2006 | Washington D. C. & Italy | Nil | Rs. 9,04,674/- | Official |
| 35. | 18-28 April, 2006 | USA & UK | Nil | Rs. 6,79,565/- | Official |
| 36. | 25-29 January, 2006 | Switzerland | None from Planning Commission | Rs. 3,56,892/- | Official |
| 37. | 18-23 September, 05 | Australia | Nil | Rs. 3,01,125/- | Official |
| 38. | 16-22 July, 2005 | USA | Visited as member of delegation led by PM | No expenditure on the part of Planning Commission. | Official |
| 39. | 24 May to 7 June, 2005 | Japan & USA | Nil | Rs. 9,19,160/- | Official |
| 40. | 12-14 April, 2005 | USA | Nil | Rs. 5,24,900/- | Official |
| 41. | 19-23 April, 2005 | UK | Nil | Rs. 3,41,500/- | Official |
| 42. | 19-27, September, 2004 | UK & USA | Nil | Rs. 3,03,050/- | Official |

Details of foreign visits undertaken by Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission during last six months (May-October, 2011).

| Sl. No. | Dates of Visit | Countries/cities visited | Approximate Expenses | Purpose of Visit |
|---------|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1. | 20-21 June, 2011 | Seoul, Republic of Korea. | Rs. 2,96,570/- | To attend the Global Green Growth (3GI) Summit to be held in Seoul, Rcpublic of Korea. |
| 2. | 21-22 July, 2011 | Paris, France | Rs. 4,94,940/- | To attend the meeting of the G-20 Sherpas |
| 3. | 22-30 September, 2011 | USA/China/France | Rs.16,68,905/- | To visit USA to participate in the India-US CEO Forum meeting and other meetings with US officials ; to visit China to attend the 1 st Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) to be held in China; and to visit France to attend the next meetings of the G-20 in Paris, France. |
| 4. | 31 st October to 7 th November, 2011 | Cannes, France and Cambridge, USA | Rs.11,79,725/- | To attend pre-Summit meetings of Deputy's on the 31 st October and Sherpas and Finance Ministers' meeting of G-20 Countrion 01 st and 02 nd November, 2011 and to accompany the Prime Minister during his visit to France to attend the G-20 Leaders Summit to be held during 2-5 November, 2011 in Cannes, France and to deliver the 2011 Tsai Lecture at the Asia Centre on 07 th November, 2011 To attend pre-Summit meetings of Deputy's on the 31 st October and Sherpas and Finance Ministers' meeting of G-20 Countrion 01 st and 02 nd November, 2011 and to accompany the Prime Minister during his visit to France to attend the G-20 Leaders Summit to be held during 2-5 November, 2011 in Cannes, France and to deliver the 2011 Tsai Lecture at the Asia Centre on 07 th November, 2011 |

Note: 1. All the visits listed below were undertaken after obtaining due permission of the Prime Minisster and following the prescribed procedure.

2. Deputy Chairman, in addition, to his responsibilities in Planning Commission is also the G-20 Sherpa for India.