

Sir,

The article ‘‘The Austerity of the Affluent’’, which appeared in the Hindu edition of 21<sup>st</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> November to 3 <sup>rd</sup> 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 <sup>st</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> May, 2010	Manama, Bahrain	Nil	Rs.1,02,701.00/-	Official
11.	31 <sup>st</sup> March to 1 <sup>st</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> July to 1 <sup>st</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> 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

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, Republic 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 <sup>st</sup> 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 <sup>st</sup> October to 7 <sup>th</sup> November, 2011	Cannes, France and Cambridge, USA	Rs.11,79,725/-	To attend pre-Summit meetings of Deputy's on the 31 <sup>st</sup> October and Sherpas and Finance Ministers' meeting of G-20 Countrion 01 <sup>st</sup> and 02 <sup>nd</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> November, 2011 To attend pre-Summit meetings of Deputy's on the 31 <sup>st</sup> October and Sherpas and Finance Ministers' meeting of G-20 Countrion 01 <sup>st</sup> and 02 <sup>nd</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> 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.