

Ministry of External Affairs

Major Achievements, Significant Developments and important events for the month of May 2019

Important policy decisions taken and major achievements during the month:

Australia:

1. The 11th Meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism was held in Canberra on 2 May 2019.
2. Mr. Simeon Gilding, Deputy Director General of Australian Signals Directorate visited India from 27-29 May 2019 to discuss Australia's approach to telecommunication and network security and rationale behind rejection of Huawei from 5G Networks. The delegation met Secretary (Telecom), Secretary (MEITY), Deputy NSAs and Special Secretary (Border Management) MHA.
3. A three-member delegation from ISRO visited Yatharagga, Western Australia from 8 -28 May to support PSLV C46 RISAT-2B Satellite launch mission in coordination with SSC Space Australia Pty Ltd.
4. A two-member team from the Election Commission of India visited Canberra from 16 to 19 May 2019 to participate in the Australian Electoral Commission's International Election Visitor Programme during Australian federal elections held on 18 May.

Bhutan:

Annual Tarayana Fair

5. The Annual Tarayana Fair concluded on 4 May 2019 in Thimphu. This year Tarayana Foundation also brought a fruitful closure to the Rural Economy Advancement Program funded by the Government of India, implemented in partnership with Gross National Happiness Commission, that benefitted 981 households in 49 villages across 11 districts.

Credentials Presented by Ambassador of India to Bhutan

6. Ambassador of India, Smt Ruchira Kamboj presented her credentials to The King of Bhutan on 17 May 2019. After the presentation, Ambassador called on Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering, Foreign Minister of Bhutan, Dr. Tandi Dorji and Foreign Secretary Mr. Dasho Sonam Tshong.

Visit of PMLT to India

7. Prime Minister of Bhutan, Dr. Lotay Tshering visited India from 30 May – 1 June 2019 to attend the swearing in ceremony of the new Government. During his bilateral meeting, PM Tshering congratulated Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and conveyed the felicitations of the King of Bhutan and the goodwill and wishes of the people of Bhutan. PM Tshering said that he looked forward to continuing working closely with PM Modi and the Government of India. He reiterated the invitation for PM to visit Bhutan at the earliest. PM Modi thanked PM Tshering for attending the swearing-in ceremony and for his good wishes. He conveyed that India deeply values its development partnership including co-operation in the hydro-power sector with Bhutan. He reiterated Government of India's firm commitment to partner Bhutan steadfastly in its quest for greater prosperity and well-being. PM accepted the invitation to visit Bhutan on mutually convenient dates.

Canada:

Congratulatory Statements by Dignitaries from Canada in Connection with PM's Victory in the 2019 General Elections

8. On 23 May 2019, Canadian PM Justin Trudeau in a statement said: "On behalf of the Government of Canada, I congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his re-election. Over 39 days of polling, a record number of Indian citizens cast their votes and more women voted than ever before in the world's largest democracy. Canada and India share tremendous people-to-people ties, with over one million people of Indian descent calling Canada home. Our longstanding friendship, together with our shared values, will continue to bring our two countries closer and help create new opportunities for our people. I look forward to continuing to work with Prime Minister Modi to improve the lives of Canadians and Indians

alike through education and innovation, investing in trade and investment, and fighting climate change.”

9. Canada’s Conservative Party Leader and Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Andrew Scheer, tweeted on 23 May 2019: “On behalf of Canada’s Conservatives, congratulations @narendramodi on winning a strong majority in India’s election. The world’s largest democracy is in good hands and I look forward to working with you more in the future.”

10. Apart from the senior leadership, a large number of Canadian political and business leaders also conveyed their congratulation messages to PM Shri Modi on his party’s big victory in the 2019 general elections.

Canada to Join Consultations under WTO Dispute Settlement

11. Canada along with Singapore have expressed their interest to join consultations with Japan under the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) dispute settlement body in a case filed by Japan on 14 May 2019, against India’s import duties on certain Information and Communication Technology (ICT) products, including mobile phones.

India and Canada set up Renewable Energy Trust

12. Mumbai-based Piramal Enterprises Ltd on 7 May 2019, said that it had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Canada’s biggest public pension fund to co-sponsor a \$600 million infrastructure trust focused on renewable energy.

13. The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board will initially contribute \$360 million to the fund with Piramal adding \$90 million. And, the remaining amount will be raised from other investors.

Promoting Technical Education and Start-ups Partnership

14. A high level delegation led by Chairman Dr. Anil Sahasrabudhe of All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) visited Toronto, Waterloo, Ottawa and Hamilton in May 2019.

15. The objective of the visit was to promote partnerships in the field of technical education and start-ups between India and Canada.

Indonesia:

16. A 15-member delegation from National Defence College visited Indonesia as part of Foreign Country Study Tour from 26-31 May 2019.

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Nepal:

Participation of PM of Nepal in Swearing-in Ceremony

17. At the invitation of PM of India, Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli participated in the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in New Delhi on 30 May 2019.

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2nd Joint Project Monitoring Committee meeting of Terai Roads

18. The 2nd meeting of Joint Project Monitoring Committee (JPMC) of Postal Highway Project (Terai Roads) was held on 06 May 2019 in Kathmandu. The meeting was co-chaired by Joint Secretary (North), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and by Joint Secretary, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Government of Nepal. The meeting was followed by a joint site inspection of the Terai roads project on 7 & 8 May 2019.

13th meeting of the Joint Committee on Inundation and Flood Management

19. The 13th meeting of the Joint Committee on Inundation and Flood Management (JCIFM) was held on 27-31 May 2019 in Kathmandu. The meeting was co-chaired by Member, Ganga Flood Control Commission (GFCC), Patna, Government of India and by Joint Secretary, Ministry of Energy, Water Resources & Irrigation, Government of Nepal.

35th meeting of the Board of Directors of India-Nepal B.P. Koirala Foundation

20. The 35th meeting of the Board of Directors of the India-Nepal B.P. Koirala Foundation was held on 04-05 May 2019 in Nagarkot, Nepal. The meeting was co-chaired by Ambassador of India to Nepal and by Ambassador of Nepal to India.

Singapore:

21. Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and Indian Navy (IN) conducted the 26th edition of India-Singapore Maritime Bilateral exercise (SIMBEX) from 16-22 May 2019 at Changi Naval base and sea phase in South China Sea. India Naval ships participated in 12th edition of International Maritime Defence Exhibition Asia 2019 (IMDEX Asia-2019), from 14-16 May 2019.

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Thailand:

22. Thai Agriculture Minister attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 30 May 2019 as the Special Envoy of Prime Minister of Thailand.

United States of America:

Congratulatory Statements by Dignitaries from the US in Connection with PM's Victory in the 2019 General Elections

23. President Donald Trump tweeted on 23 May 2019: "Congratulations to Prime Minister @NarendraModi and his BJP party on their BIG election victory! Great things are in store for the US-India partnership with the return of PM Modi at the helm. I look forward to continuing our important work together!" On 24 May, President Trump tweeted: "Just spoke to Prime Minister @NarendraModi where I congratulated him on his big political victory. He is a great man and leader for the people of India - they are lucky to have him!"

24. Vice President Mike Pence tweeted on 23 May 2019: "Congrats to an American ally & friend PM @narendramodi, on his party's win in India's parliamentary election. This was a strong display of the Indian people's commitment to democracy! We look forward to continuing to work with India for a freer, safer, & more prosperous region."

25. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted on 23 May 2019: “Congratulations to @narendramodi and the NDA for their victory in India’s election, and to the Indian people for casting their votes in such historic numbers. As the world’s largest exercise in democracy, #India’s election is an inspiration around the world.”

26. The US Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster tweeted on 23 May 2019: “Congratulations to @narendramodi and the #NDA on your sweeping victory! The United States looks forward to working closely with our strategic partner #India in the years to come. #USIndia”

27. Apart from the senior leadership, a large number of US Congressmen, members of State legislatures and business leaders also conveyed their congratulatory messages to PM Modi after his party’s victory in the 2019 general elections.

India’s designation under the GSP Programme Terminated

28. President Donald Trump in a proclamation issued on 31 May 2019 terminated India’s designation as a beneficiary developing country under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme with effective from 5 June 2019.

29. The US side has determined that India has not assured the US that it will provide equitable and reasonable access to its markets. Accordingly, it should be appropriate to terminate India’s designation as a beneficiary developing country effective from 5 June 2019.

30. On 4 March 2019, President Trump had notified the Congress of his intention to terminate India’s designation as a beneficiary developing country under the GSP programme.

India-US Trade Meetings

31. Commerce and Industry Minister Shri Suresh Prabhu met US Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Wilbur Ross in Delhi on 6 May 2019. In the meeting, both sides “appreciated the strong, robust and growing bilateral ties” between the two countries “across the entire spectrum of trade and commerce.” They also expressed satisfaction over the progress of bilateral trade in Goods and Services which registered “a growth of 12.6% from US\$ 126 billion in 2017 to US \$142 billion in 2018.”

The Quad Meeting held in Bangkok

32. Senior officials from the US, Australia, Japan, and India met in Bangkok on 31 May 2019 “for consultations on their collective efforts to advance a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.” JS (AMS) and JS (EA) from MEA represented India in this meeting. In the meeting, the four countries “reaffirmed their shared commitment to preserving and promoting the rules-based order in the region” and, “underscored their intent to continue close coordination and collaboration in support of sustainable, private-sector led development, maritime security, and good governance.”

33. The officers also “discussed initiatives undertaken by each country to encourage transparent, principles-based investment in quality infrastructure in accordance with international standards and leverage the potential of the private sector.” They reviewed recent developments in the region and “welcomed ASEAN’s efforts to develop an Indo-Pacific Outlook”. They “further affirmed their strong support for ASEAN centrality and ASEAN-led regional architecture, as well as their support for other regional institutions, including the Indian Ocean Rim Association and Pacific Islands Forum”.

US Welcomes JeM chief Azhar’s Designation as a ‘Global Terrorist’

34. On 1 May 2019, the US welcomed the designation of Jaish-e-Mohammad Chief, Masood Azhar, as a proscribed terrorist under the 1267 Sanctions Committee of the United Nations after China lifted its technical hold on a recent proposal moved by the US, the UK and France. The US State Department Spokesperson, Morgan Ortagus in a statement on 1 May said, “Today’s designation is an important step in promoting a peaceful and stable South Asia. In line with this vision, we appreciate Pakistani Prime Minister Khan’s stated commitment that Pakistan, for the sake of its own future, will not allow militant and terrorist groups to operate from its territory.”

Trade Winds Indo-Pacific 2019 held in New Delhi

35. The Trade Winds Indo-Pacific, the largest annual US Government-led trade mission, was held in New Delhi from 8-10 May 2019. It was led by US Secretary of Commerce, Mr.

Wilbur Ross and the US Ambassador to India, Mr. Kenneth Juster. The 2019 Trade Winds programme included additional trade mission stops in Ahmedabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Bangladesh. At each mission stop, attending companies met directly with government leaders, market experts, and pre-vetted potential business partners.

36. Addressing at the Trade Winds Conference, Commerce Secretary Mr. Ross said, “Our goal at the U.S. Department of Commerce is to use every available resource to ensure fair and reciprocal trade for U.S. businesses selling their products and services all over the world”. “Trade Winds is an important component of these efforts.” He added, “With its strong and growing economy, India is key to the Administration’s approach to the Indo-Pacific region”. Highlighting growing US-India trade relationship, he pointed out that “Trade relationships should be based and must be based on fairness and reciprocity. But, currently, U.S. businesses face significant market access barriers in India. These include both tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as multiple practices and regulations that disadvantage foreign companies.” He said, “Our goal is to eliminate barriers to U.S. companies, operating here (in India), including data-localization restrictions that actually weaken data security and increase the cost of doing business.” Ambassador Juster said at the Trade Winds Forum that “The (Indian) government understands what our position is on trade issues”.

Special Representative Ambassador Khalilzad’s visit to India

37. US Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad visited New Delhi on 6-7 May 2019 for consultations with Indian government officials and other stakeholders on the Afghan peace process. During his visit, Ambassador Khalilzad met with EAM, NSA, and FS.

Implications of Buying S-400 from Russia on India-US Defence Ties

38. A Senior State Department Official told reporters on 30 May 2019 that India’s decision to buy the long-range S-400 missile defence system from Russia will have serious implications on bilateral defence ties. The official disagreed with the view that India’s decision to buy S-400 missile defence system might not have an impact as long as it increases its military purchase from the US. The official said, “I disagree. The S-400 is significant because of

CAATSA sanctions. It's also significant because of what it precludes, in terms of future high-tech cooperation". The official further said, "Those concerns we hold high". "You can look at the very serious conversation that's taking place with our NATO partner Turkey and the same concerns will apply should India proceed with an S-400 purchase."

US Removes India from Its Currency Monitoring List

39. On 28 May 2019, the US Department of the Treasury released the semi-annual report to the Congress on "Macroeconomic and Foreign Exchange Policies of Major Trading Partners of the United States" in which it removed India from currency monitoring list of major trading partners. The Report points out that "India has been removed from the Monitoring List in this Report, having met only one out of three criteria – a significant bilateral surplus with the United States – for two consecutive Reports."

India Stops Buying Oil from Iran

40. While addressing reporters in Washington on 23 May 2019, India's Ambassador to the US, Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla said that India has already stopped importing oil from Iran after the US waivers granted to eight buyers including India expired on 2 May 2019. Shri Shringla said, "We do understand that this has been a priority for the US administration, although it comes at a cost to us because we really need to find alternative sources of energy". He added, "We would not like to see any move towards any escalation in that area... For the simple reason that we depend very heavily on stability in that part of the world. Their supplies are a major part of our energy requirements. A very large number of Indians also work in the Gulf. So obviously peace and stability in that area is very very critical." Meanwhile, responding to a question on India's decision, the US State Department Spokesperson Morgan Ortagus said, "We want the whole world to comply with these sanctions, and we're grateful for our partners and allies that are respecting them."

Multilateral Naval Exercise in South China Sea

41. Two Indian Navy ships Kolkata and Shakti carried out 'Group Sail' with naval ships of Japan, Philippines and the US in the South China Sea (SCS) from 3-9 May 2019. The six-day long 'Group Sail' had participation of six combatants from the four participating countries.

The 'Group Sail' was aimed to deepen the existing partnership and foster mutual understanding among participating navies.

Boeing formally hands over Apache Helicopter to IAF

42. Apache Guardian helicopter was formally handed over to the Indian Air Force (IAF) at Boeing production facility in Arizona, US, on 10 May 2019. The addition of Apache helicopter is a significant step towards modernisation of IAF's helicopter fleet. IAF had signed a contract with the US Government and M/s Boeing Ltd in September 2015 for 22 Apache helicopters.

Admiral Richardson's Visit to India

43. Chief of Naval Operations, US Navy, Admiral John Michael Richardson, paid an official visit to India from 12-14 May 2019. Admiral Richardson met with Chairman COSC and Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Sunil Lanba on 13 May 2019. During the visit, the two sides discussed major issues of bilateral interest including operations and exercises, training interactions, information exchange, capacity building and capability enhancement. The visit was intended to consolidate bilateral naval relations between the two countries and also to explore new avenues for naval cooperation.

Vietnam:

44. Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President of India, visited Hanoi from 9-12 May 2019 on an official visit at the invitation of Vietnamese Vice President Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh. Shri Naidu attended the UN Day of Vesak 2019 and delivered a keynote address at the invitation of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha on 12 May 2019. He held bilateral talks with his counterpart in Hanoi on 10 May. He also met with National Assembly Chairperson Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan and Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc on 11 May. VP Shri Naidu presented Jaipur Foot Artificial Limb Fitment to the beneficiaries of Quang Ninh and Yen Bai Provinces under India for Humanity initiative undertaken to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

India, Brazil & South Africa (IBSA):

45. The IBSA (India, Brazil & South Africa) Sherpas' Meeting, following the 9th IBSA Trilateral Ministerial Meeting, was held in Cochin from 3-5 May 2019. Shri T.S. Tirumurti, Secretary (Economic Relations), MEA, led the Indian delegation. Prof. Anil Sooklal, Sherpa of the Republic of South Africa, and Ambassador Norberto Moretti, Sherpa of the Federative Republic of Brazil led respective delegations at the Meeting. In the meeting Sherpas deliberated on the functioning of IBSA working groups and the new areas of Cooperation.

46. The 6th IBSA Academic Forum was held in Cochin on 3 & 4 May 2019. On 4 May 2019 Academic Forum members from three IBSA countries met IBSA Sherpas and presented their recommendations on IBSA Cooperation.

Consular, Passport & Visas (CPV) Division:

47. Various Passport Offices organised 26 Melas at the Passport Seva Kendras under their jurisdiction, in order to provide passport services during the weekends. 10,597 applications were processed at these Melas. In total, 412 POPSK were functional as on 31 May 2019. In all, 10,83,465 passport related applications were processed during the month by the Passport Offices in India.

Counter-Terrorism Division:

India Australia Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism

48. The 11th Meeting of the India Australia Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism was held in Canberra on May 2, 2019.

49. The bilateral Joint Working Group deliberated upon the terrorist threats worldwide and in their respective regions including the problem of cross-border terrorism. Both sides welcomed the listing of Masood Azhar, leader of the Jaish-e-Mohammad, as a Global Terrorist by the UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee.

50. They also discussed contemporary counter terrorism challenges such as financing of terrorism, the use of the internet for terror purposes, radicalization and Foreign Terrorist Fighters.

51. The two sides agreed to further deepen counter-terrorism cooperation through mutual capacity building efforts, mutual legal assistance, regular exchange of information, sharing of best practices on countering extremism and radicalization. Cooperation in multilateral fora was also discussed.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

52. FATF had put Pakistan in its grey-list in June 2018. A 27-point Action plan was framed for Pakistan to take actions to curb terrorist financing from its soil with definite timeline including from terror organisations such as Daesh (Islamic State), Al Qaeda, Jamaat ud Dawa, Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Haqqani Network and persons affiliated with the Taliban.

53. A recent review of Pakistan's progress on its Action Plan on 15-17 May 2019 by the FATF Asia Pacific Joint Group (APJG) revealed that Pakistan has not completed a substantial number of Action items which were due to be completed by May 2019. Out of 21 Action items which had deadlines in May 2019 only 2 items have been largely completed and rest remains either partially complete or wholly incomplete. Six items have deadlines in September 2019.

54. The next FATF plenary is scheduled to be held in Orlando, USA from 17-21 June 2019. As per the FATF procedures, if a country has not made sufficient progress on its action plan one year after its adoption, the FATF plenary would determine the next steps which may include moving such jurisdiction to public statement (black list) calling upon its members to apply enhanced due diligence measures against such jurisdiction.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

55. A Training Programme was organized from 30 April-04 May 2019 for Directors of ICCR posted in various Indian Cultural Centres abroad. The training programme served as an

orientation and familiarization for the Directors with various aspects of administrative, financial, protocol, security including cyber security as well as India's rich culture and heritage. The programme was organized by the ICCR in collaboration with the Foreign Service Institute of India and attended by 34 Directors already posted or designated for deployment in Indian Culture Centres abroad.

56. Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay International Memorial Oration by former Chief Justice of India Shri R.C. Lahoti at JNB, New Delhi held on 21 May 2019.

57. Sponsored one scholar for participation in "Tagore Festival" in Ankara, Turkey from 7-10 May 2019.

58. Supported one scholar with TG to participate at the book launch of her book of poems in Swedish translation in Stockholm from 26 May to 17 July 2019.

Foreign Service Institute

- A Training Programme for Directors of Indian Cultural Centres abroad was conducted from 1-2 May 2019 at FSI. The programme was attended by 34 participants.
- The Induction Training Programme of IFS OTs of 2018 Batch was conducted from 1-31 May 2019.
- The 1st Special Course for Diplomats from Angola was conducted at FSI from 6-18 May 2019. The Course was attended by 6 participants.
- The 1st Special Course for Diplomats from Botswana was conducted at FSI from 6-18 May 2019. The Course was attended by 18 participants.
- The 1st Special Course for Diplomats from Liberia was conducted at FSI from 6-18 May 2019. The Course was attended by 20 participants.
- The 1st Special Course for Diplomats from Equatorial Guinea was conducted at Foreign Service Institute from 6-18 May 2019. The Course was attended by 4 participants.
- The 1st Special Course for Diplomats from Sao Tome & Principe was conducted at Foreign Service Institute from 6-18 May 2019. The Course was attended by 4 participants.

- Call on President of India was organized for IFS OTs of 2018 Batch on 14 May 2019.
 - Valedictory function of Induction Training Programme of IFS OTs of 2018 Batch was organized on 16 May 2019.
 - Call on Prime Minister of India was organized for IFS OTs of 2018 Batch on 20 May 2019.
 - Call on Vice President of India was organized for IFS OTs of 2018 Batch on 28 May 2019.
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