

## Speech by EAM at the Indian Community function at Melbourne

January 20, 2011

Members of the Indian community, my friends, ladies and gentlemen,

I have met many of you when I visited Melbourne in August 2009 and it is a pleasure to meet you again.

In August 2009, you will remember, the issue of the attacks on Indian students and members of the Indian community was at its height. I had assumed charge as EAM barely three months earlier, when I visited Australia then.

My discussions then with the Australian Government, both at the State and the Federal levels, focused on issues of concern to the students, such as security, availability of accommodation and other support services, transport concession, greater financial assistance, regulation of rogue agents and dodgy institutions and introduction of effective orientation and assimilation processes both in India and Australia.

Since then both the federal Government of Australia and the Government of Victoria Province have introduced many measures to improve the safety and security of the students and these measures have had a positive effect.

However, I do note that revised immigration policies have had an adverse impact on Indian students. Here, while we must realize that being a student does not automatically mean entitlement to permanent residency, I have requested for consideration to be given to our affected students. Foreign Minister Rudd has assured me that he will keep our concerns in mind.

I have also just met with the new Premier of Victoria Province, who had made the law and order situation in Melbourne as one of the major issues of his election campaign. Premier Ted Baillieu has assured me that the safety and security of the Indian community will continue to be addressed pro-actively and that he has already initiated moves to increase the number of police and guards on the transport system, introduce tougher sentencing, improve the system of compensating victims of crime etc.

The Government of India has also taken quite a few measures to address the concern of our communities living abroad. We have introduced bills seeking to punish those who have provided false or misleading information to student and make it mandatory for all education agents to register themselves. We have also proposed that all Indian students proceeding abroad for studies enter their details with GOI.

We have recently introduced the Indian Community Welfare Fund to provide financial assistance to Indian citizens in need and have used this to assist several needy citizens and students in Australia.

The Indian community in Australia is playing an important and constructive role here in building bridges of friendship and understanding between our two countries. All the Australian Ministers I have met, including the Victoria Province's Premier have had very good and positive things to say about the Indian community in Victoria and its positive contribution to Australia.

The purpose of my visit to Melbourne was the for annual framework dialogue held between the Foreign Ministers of India and Australia. I had very good and constructive discussions with Foreign Minister Rudd. We covered the entire range of bilateral issues as also regional and multilateral issues.

Besides the students issue, we discussed all the bilateral issues. We also discussed the uranium issue; I drew attention to our requirements, particularly in the context of climate change and India's energy and development requirements. We have agreed to continue to discuss this matter.

Our discussions revealed considerable areas of convergence where both of us together could play a constructive role in multilateral institutions such as the East Asia Summit, the Indian Ocean and the IOR-ARC. To sum up, I believe this was a constructive meeting that has contributed towards a fuller realization of our strategic partnership. Foreign Minister Rudd has accepted my invitation to visit India this year, where this dialogue shall be continued.

I also interacted with the Governor of Victoria Province, the federal Minister for Resources Energy and Tourism, and senior members of the Victorian Government.

Before I conclude, I would like to reiterate our sincere condolences and sympathy for losses suffered by Australia and Australians in the recent floods, including here in Victoria. On behalf of the people and Government of India, I express the hope that the situation will not deteriorate further and we pray for speedy recovery for all those affected.

Thank you for taking the time to be present here today. Please do continue the good work that you are all doing. I now look forward to moving around meeting with you individually.

**Melbourne**  
**January 20, 2011**