

India will continue to forge close relations with its neighbours

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Our partnership with Japan continues to expand on the basis of the Road Map signed when the Prime Minister of Japan visited India in August last year.

In recent conversations that Prime Minister and I have had with our new Japanese counterparts, they have expressed their desire to work towards further strengthening our bilateral relationship.

Hon'ble Members would also be aware that we are currently engaged in negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency to arrive at an agreed text of an India-specific Safeguards Agreement. The conclusion of such an agreement will enable the Nuclear Suppliers' Group to amend its guidelines for civil nuclear com-

merce in favour of India.

This will open the door to civil nuclear cooperation with various countries, including Russia, U.S.A., France, U.K., etc., with many of whom the necessary enabling bilateral agreements for such trade have been discussed and are in various stages of finalisation. This development will signify, finally, an end to the unfair technology denial regimes and sanctions that India has been faced with for over three decades. We will continue to seek broad political consensus within the country to take forward our engagement on this issue with other countries.

In this context, Members' attention may have been drawn to some statements by U.S. officials regarding the applicability of the Hyde Act to Indo-U.S. civil nuclear

cooperation. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate that the Hyde Act is an enabling provision that is between the executive and the legislative organs of the U.S. Government.

India's rights and obligations regarding civil nuclear cooperation with the U.S. arise only from the bilateral 123 Agreement that we have agreed upon with the U.S.

To sum up, I would emphasise that the government will continue its efforts to develop close political, social and economic relations with the countries of our region and with all the major powers of the world, so as to add to our ability to pursue our independent foreign policy as dictated by our national interest.

For the complete text of the EAM's speech click on <http://meaindia.nic.in/> ■

Jayant Prasad takes over as new Ambassador



The new Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Jayant Prasad, presenting credentials to President Hamid Karzai in Kabul.

Mr. Jayant Prasad was born on June 5, 1952 and educated in Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University.

After teaching modern Indian history for two years at St. Stephen's College, Delhi University, he entered the Indian Foreign Service in 1976.

In Indian Missions abroad, he has served as India's Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva;

Ambassador to Algeria; Counsellor for Trade Access and Development Cooperation at the Indian Mission to the European Union in Brussels; First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, Geneva; and Second Secretary at the Embassy of India in Paris.

In the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi, he served as head of the Americas Division, head of the unit on

Multilateral Economic Relations, Staff Officer to the Foreign Secretary, Deputy Secretary for Disarmament Affairs, and Desk Officer for Bangladesh.

He was member of the U.N. Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters (2005-07), Fellow at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University (1998-99), and Rapporteur of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, Geneva (1986-87). ■