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# Frequent *Fliers*

**THE PERKS OF FOREIGN TRAVEL HAVE NEVER BEEN SO WIDELY UTILISED. THE MINISTERS OF THE UPA TRAVELLED AT WILL TO LOG ENOUGH MILES TO CIRCLE THE EARTH 256 TIMES.**

■ By Shyamlal Yadav

**T**his is one high-flying government. In this globalised world, it is now in the nature of official business to travel to different parts of the earth, making new friends, lesser enemies and influencing people. As a rising economic power, it is perhaps more necessary than ever before to make your presence felt at global high tables and international conference podiums. But even by that yardstick, the UPA Government would seem to be in an over-drive or rather turbo-charged, its ministerial representatives raking up frequent-flier miles at a frenetic pace, this, despite the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) supposedly cracking down on bureaucrats and ministers travelling abroad at the drop of a Gandhi topi. Whether it's a case of Democracy on the Move or the New World Order, the perks of foreign travel have never been so widely utilised.

Consider this. In the 1,287 days of the UPA Government till November 30 last year, its ministers travelled an incredible 1 crore km (10 million km)-plus on trips abroad, official and personal, but mostly official. It means that the ministers made more than 256 trips around the globe, considering the earth's circumference of 40,008 km. Among the 71 ministers (excluding the prime minister) who went on foreign trips during their tenure, 47 ministers spent over Rs 27 crore. The bill would be much higher, taking into account the fact that the other ministers did not provide details of their expenditure. This, of course, does not include the expenses incurred by Indian embassies abroad which run up substantial bills hiring limousines and providing other services to visiting ministers. At least 12 of the total 78 ministers travelled more than 2.5 lakh km each in the last three-and-a-half years.

Not that they did anything illegal or shady: none of the trips (we hope!)

Seventy-one of the 78 UPA ministers (besides prime minister) have made 786 foreign trips spending about 3,798 days and travelling 1.02 crore km in 1,287 days.





## cover story UPA MINISTERS

In his **over 2.36 lakh km** travel abroad, Fatmi's official visits are only **3** but he has spent **181 days** on his **14** personal trips.

M.A.A. Fatmi, MoS for human resource development

### Vayalar Ravi

Minister for overseas Indian affairs

**Number of trips: 18**

**Km travelled: 2,83,036**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Rs 1.14 crore**

### Mani Shankar Aiyar

Minister for panchayati raj

**Number of trips: 17**

**Km travelled: 2,09,239**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:**

**Rs 40 lakh**

*\*Some bills yet to be submitted*

### A. Raja

Minister for communications and IT

**Number of trips: 12**

**Km travelled: 1,89,994**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Not provided**

### Vilas Muttemwar

MoS for new and renewable energy (I.C.)\*

**Number of trips: 9**

**Km travelled: 1,56,025**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Rs 87.4 lakh**

*\*Independent Charge*

### Saif-ud-Din Soz

Minister for water resources

**Number of trips: 9**

**Km travelled: 65,704**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Rs 14.2 lakh**

### Prithviraj Chavan

MoS in PMO

**Number of trips: 9**

**Km travelled: 92,400**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Not provided**

### Panabaka Lakshmi

MoS for health and family welfare

**Number of trips: 8**

**Km travelled: 1,23,811**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Rs 28.6 lakh**

### E. Ahmad

MoS for external affairs

**Days as minister: 1,287**

**NUMBER OF TRIPS: 79**

**Official: 76**

**Personal: 3**

**DAYS ABROAD: 232**

Ahmad has spent **48 days** in **UAE** during his **22** transit visits though **Middle-East** comes under his ministerial jurisdiction.

**Official: 220**

**Personal: 12**

**Km travelled: 6,13,277**

**Official: 5,99,015 km**

**Personal: 14,262 km**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Rs 1.37 crore**



involved wives, mistresses or family shopping on Fifth Avenue at government (read public) expense. They do, however, show that some ministers are literally higher than others. In fact, some spent more time abroad on personal trips than on official visits.

Using the Right To Information (RTI) procedure, INDIA TODAY has obtained a de-

tailed list of ministerial travel abroad during the UPA Government's tenure and it makes for fascinating reading. It would have made better reading and comparative assessment if we had access to similar trips during the NDA regime too, but the almost 10 years that have passed since then meant that it was a far more laborious and time-consuming process. In any event, it took

over four months and 59 RTI applications to various ministries apart from PMO and the Cabinet Secretariat, before the information could be compiled and made available. The air distances have been calculated in approximation. Where the city was not mentioned, the distance from Delhi to the capital city of the destination country was considered. Expenses incurred were calculated on the basis of the per diem allowance that ministers are entitled to, since the RTI provided us information only about the number of trips and the number of days that each minister spent abroad. Here are some highlights of foreign travel by the UPA ministers.

It may come as no great surprise but Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath, last spotted in Davos, logged the maximum mileage on foreign trips and created some sort of a record in the bargain. He spent 424 days on 72 trips outside the country, of which 27 days were spent on six personal visits. A cool 14 months spent outside India. He covered 10,08,162 km up to November 30, 2007 (enough to earn frequent flier miles to make 20 free trips to the US and back, assuming he flew first class) and the Government spent Rs 1.81

crore on his official visits. As commerce minister and head negotiator for India in the World Trade Organisation deliberations, he is obliged to travel abroad fairly frequently. And with trade and economic relations assuming far greater importance, he is more visible than the external affairs minister when the prime minister goes abroad as was the case recently in Beijing. The cities he has visited most frequently, whether privately or on official work, are London, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, New York, Paris and Brussels. In comparison, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram spent a mere 118 days on overseas visits, for which the Government picked up a tab of Rs 1.45 crore.

Minister of State (MoS) for Civil Aviation (independent charge) Praful Patel made 41 trips abroad of which 16 were official. He chose to visit the US six times and the UK five times, besides France and Belgium. Records show that the cities Patel visited most frequently in his personal capacity are London, Paris, New York, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Dubai. However, being a businessman of some standing would explain why he spent more time abroad on personal visits in comparison to



**Fernandes's** previous ministry (statistics) has taken him to more foreign shores—**Australia, Geneva, Italy, South Korea, Thailand (thrice) etc**—than his present one.

Oscar Fernandes, MoS (I.C.) for labour and employment

### Kamal Nath

Minister for commerce and industry

**Days as minister: 1,287**

**NUMBER OF TRIPS: 72**

**Official: 66**

**Personal: 6**

**DAYS ABROAD: 424**

**Official: 397**

**Personal: 27**

**Km travelled: 10,08,162**

**Official: 9,33,650 km**

**Personal: 74,512 km**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Rs 1.81 crore**



Nath has covered over **10-lakh km**, which could earn him enough frequent flier miles to make **20 free trips** to the US and back assuming he flew first class.

### Kantilal Bhuria

MoS for agriculture & consumer affairs

**Number of trips: 8**

**Km travelled: 1,18,769**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Rs 80.8 lakh**

### Santosh Mohan Dev

Minister for heavy ind & public enterprises

**Number of trips: 8**

**Km travelled: 1,03,645**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Rs 52 lakh**

### Shankersinh Vaghela

Minister for textiles

**Number of trips: 8**

**Km travelled: 1,37,494**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Not provided**

### Prem Chand Gupta

Minister for corporate affairs

**Number of trips: 7**

**Km travelled: 57,388**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**

**Not provided**



## S. Regupathy

MoS for environment and forests

**Number of trips: 7**

**Km travelled: 70,416**

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

**Rs 67,000\***

*\*Only for one trip*

## Sushil Kumar Shinde

Minister for power

**Number of trips: 6**

**Km travelled: 1,47,297**

OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:

**Rs 29.2 lakh**

*\*Some bills yet to be submitted*

## Suresh Pachauri

MoS for personnel, public grievances

**Number of trips: 6**

**Km travelled: 85,932**

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

**Rs 28.2 lakh**

official—he spent 125 days on personal visits and 57 days on official visits. Patel, MoS for Human Resource Development M.A.A Fatmi and D. Purandeswari, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, Minister for Mines Sis Ram Ola, MoS for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dinsha J. Patel, Minister for Corporate Affairs Prem Chand Gupta and MoS for Steel Akhilesh Das were the ministers to have recorded more days outside the country on personal visits in comparison to official visits. Fatmi travelled 14 days on official visits but clocked 181 days on personal visits. In total, he travelled 2,36,605 km (his ministry did not provide details of the expenses), and countries he visited most frequently on his personal expense were Malaysia, Singapore, the UK, France and China. Fatmi is from Railway Minister Lalu Prasad's Rashtriya Janata Dal. The latter, incidentally, despite his new-found demand

as a speaker following the Railways success story, does not belong to the club of frequent fliers. Dasmunshi took 38 days travelling abroad on personal visits, as against the 20 days he spent overseas on official trips. He travelled 1,59,676 km in total and spent Rs 17 lakh on his official tours. His cities of preference included Kuala Lumpur, Los Angeles, London, Switzerland and Paris.

MoS for External Affairs E. Ahmad spent more time abroad than his senior minister, Pranab Mukherjee. Ahmad spent a total of 232 days on his foreign travels. He covered 6,13,277 km of which 14,262 km were on personal visits. However, Ahmad's travels and the cities most visited are in direct proportion to his official charge. His travels took him frequently to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Singapore and the Rs 1.37 crore spent on his official visits are explained by the fact that Middle-East comes under his ministerial jurisdiction.

In her **66 days** abroad on **14 official visits**, Selja's destinations include **Amman, Canada, France, Italy, Egypt, Lisbon, South Korea and Spain.**

Kumari Selja, MoS (I.C.) for housing and urban poverty alleviation



## Praful Patel

MoS (I.C.) for civil aviation

**Days as minister: 1,287**

**NUMBER OF TRIPS: 41**

Official: 16

Personal: 25

**DAYS ABROAD: 182**

Official: 57

Personal: 125

**Km travelled: 5,12,351**

Official: 2,47,674 km

Personal: 2,64,677 km

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

**Rs 66.5 lakh**

Patel being a businessman would explain why he has spent **125 days** on personal visits while his official days abroad are only **57**.



In his **670 days** in the ministry, **Maken** has undertaken personal visits to Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore spending about **12 days** in those countries last June.

Ajay Maken, MoS for urban development

Dasmunshi has spent **38 days** on his personal visits abroad against **20 days** on official tours. He has covered **1.59 lakh km** during his ministerial term.

◀ Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, minister for I&B and parliamentary affairs

The UPA regime has steadfastly refused to reform the education sector by opening it to foreign direct investment. Yet that has not prevented the ministers and the mandarins from catching flights to various corners of the world. Purandeswari in her 670 days in office made eight trips while her Cabinet Minister Arjun Singh went abroad nine times including an eight-day trip to the Middle-East. The ministry sources say that Purandeswari “presents the case of India very well at the international fora”.

In many instances, the connection between the destination and the portfolio is difficult to decipher. Why would an MoS for

commerce and textiles visit Uzbekistan thrice? Or what is the attraction of Serbia for ministers? Although there are entitlement norms for a minister travelling abroad, they are known to demand that they be lodged at the best suites and travel in the most expensive wheels. Simply because there is the peculiar political fig leaf called convention whereby ministers can justify expenditure with the profligacy of a previous regime.

While official work is a very useful alibi, it is interesting to note that certain destinations are visited by ministers regardless of their portfolio. Information reveals that 17



Mukherjee’s previous portfolio of **defence** had fetched him **12** trips abroad while he has made **21** trips being the external affairs minister.

## **Pranab Mukherjee**

Minister for external affairs

**Days as minister: 1,287**

**NUMBER OF TRIPS: 33**

Official: **33**

Personal: **Nil**

**DAYS ABROAD: 115**

Official: **115**

Personal: **Nil**

**Km travelled: 3,09,145**

Official: **3,09,145 km**

Personal: **Nil**

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:**

**Rs 86 lakh**

*\*Only for MEA’s 21 trips*





## Ministerial Entitlement Abroad

What Union ministers get on their trips abroad and the process of clearance

### Kanti Singh

MoS for heavy industries

Number of trips: 6

Km travelled: 54,756

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

Not provided

### Ram Vilas Paswan

Minister for chemicals, fertilisers and steel

Number of trips: 5

Km travelled: 58,640

OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:

Rs 25.3 lakh

\*For fertiliser ministry only

### Murli Deora

Minister for petroleum and natural gas

Number of trips: 5

Km travelled: 41,242

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

Rs 12.6 lakh

### B.K. Handique

MoS for chemicals, fertilisers and parliamentary affairs

Number of trips: 5

Km travelled: 51,819

OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:

Rs 69,000

\*Borne by parl. affairs ministry

### Akhilesh Prasad Singh

MoS for agriculture, consumer affairs, food

Number of trips: 5

Km travelled: 79,663

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

Rs 30.5 lakh

### THE RULE BOOK

For every visit by a Cabinet minister, whether official or private, initial clearance is required from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). After clearance, the file is sent to the prime minister for final approval. Only visits by the President, the vice-president and the prime minister require no sanction.

### THE TAB

In case of ministerial visits, the bills are paid by the Indian missions in the countries concerned and then settled through book transfer with the ministry concerned.

### ENTITLEMENTS

Ministers are entitled to five-star hotel junior or executive suites in the range of \$2,000-4,000 (Rs 80,000-1,60,000) a day. In cities like New York, Paris and London, their entitlement is a normal suite during the peak season, but the wow factor often leads ministers to go in for presidential suites which can cost upward of \$6,000 (Rs 2,40,000) a night. One former external affairs minister would insist on staying in a boutique hotel in Paris and the mission there had to justify that it was the only hotel

available although the tab was close to €2,000 (Rs 1,14,000) a night. A Union minister has a fetish for a luxury suite in Dorchester Hotel in London which costs £1,700 (Rs 1,31,000), plus the cost of a butler and tips, which add another £200 (Rs 15,500).

Ministers are entitled to a dearness allowance of \$75 (Rs 3,000) a day. For transport, cars are hired by the local mission or provided by the host government for the entire delegation. This can cost about \$40 (Rs 1,600) an hour for a Mercedes E-Class and \$100 (Rs 4,000) an hour for the S-Class. Meals are provided by the mission or the local hosts.

To justify the luxurious stays, the reason given is that the minister would be meeting foreign dignitaries. Since there is no upper ceiling, the suites often can cost a bomb. For instance, the two one-bedroom residential suites on the 51st floor of the Four Seasons New York cost

\$15,000 (Rs 6,00,000) a night. In Dubai, the Burj Al Arab Hotel offers a Royal Suite at \$10,400 (Rs 4,16,000) a night and a slightly smaller presidential suite at \$9,200 (Rs 3,68,000). Even though the host governments very often offer their state guest houses, our ministers prefer hotels.

Ministers are supposed to fly **Air India** only. But often they use other carriers on the grounds that A-I flights are not available or don't directly connect the destinations.

ministers visited Thailand and 14 ministers went to Malaysia at least once, either on official or on personal visits. Interestingly, junior ministers (read MoS), who more often fret about not getting enough to do, managed to show up on foreign shores. As many as 33 of the total 40 made 311 trips in total and spent 1,388 days abroad. Surprisingly, there are seven among them who did not

step out of the country at all. They include M.H. Ambarish, MoS for information and broadcasting; J.P.N. Yadav, MoS for water resources; M.V. Rajasekharan, MoS for planning; Manik Rao Gavit, MoS for home; Subbulakshmi Jagadeesan, MoS for social justice; Taslimuddin, MoS for civil supplies and V. Radhika Selvi, MoS for home.

Here's another interesting detail. Italy,

### Anand Sharma

MoS for external affairs

Days as minister: 670

NUMBER OF TRIPS: 30

Official: 29

Personal: 1

DAYS ABROAD: 114

Official: 113

Personal: 1

Km travelled: 5,30,511

Official: 5,18,226 km

Personal: 12,285 km

OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:

Rs 1.33 crore

\*Some bills yet to be submitted

Sharma has made **30 visits** abroad leaving Overseas Indian Affairs Minister Vayalar Ravi way behind at **18 trips**. Both enjoy an equal tenure.



## Curious destinations and countries

A sample of destinations travelled by ministers

<b>Bangkok</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>New York</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Manila</b>
<b>K. Lumpur</b>	<b>Paris</b>	<b>Geneva</b>	<b>Zurich</b>	<b>Germany</b>
<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Brussels</b>	<b>Dubai</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Uzbekistan</b>

Congress President Sonia Gandhi's country of birth, attracted the largest number of ministerial visits, private and official. No less than 20 ministers visited Italy, and they include Prasad, Sushil Kumar Shinde, Nath, Kantilal Bhuria, R. Velu, Santosh Mohan Dev, Ambika Soni, Subodh Kant Sahay, Shankersinh Vaghela, Vilas Muttemwar, S. Jaipal Reddy, Oscar Fernandes, P.R.

Kyndiah, Akhilesh Prasad Singh, Ashwani Kumar, Sriprakash Jaiswal and Renuka Chowdhury.

Other ministers who travelled abroad fairly frequently include Mukherjee, Anand Sharma, Sharad Pawar (more on BCCI work than representing the Agriculture Ministry), Anbumani Ramadoss, Chowdhury, Kapil Sibal, Vayalar Ravi, Rao Inderjit Singh and

### Shivraj V. Patil

Minister for home affairs

Number of trips: 4

Km travelled: 24,736

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

Not provided

### T.R. Baalu

Minister for shipping, road transport

Number of trips: 4

Km travelled: 73,429

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

Rs 14.1 lakh

### Mahavir Prasad

Minister for small and medium enterprises

Number of trips: 4

Km travelled: 60,706

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

Not provided

### Raghuvansh P. Singh

Minister for rural development

Number of trips: 4

Km travelled: 42,078

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

Not provided

### Dinsha J. Patel

MoS for petroleum and natural gas

Number of trips: 4

Km travelled: 93,512

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

Rs 15.7 lakh

### S. Jaipal Reddy

Minister for urban development

Number of trips: 4

Km travelled: 59,180

OFFICIAL EXPENSES:

Rs 43 lakh

**Purandeswari** is one of the ministers whose personal trips outnumber official ones. She has been outside India for almost **2 months** which include only **5 official days**.

D. Purandeswari, MoS for human resource development

Sahay, during his **almost 2 months'** time abroad on **13 trips**, has gone to several countries that include France, the US, Germany, Brazil, Italy and Canada etc.

Subodh Kant Sahay, MoS (I.C.) for food processing industries







Even a **portfolio** like environment and forests has afforded **Meena** a chance to officially visit **Canada**, the UAE, **the US**, Brazil, **the UK**, Czech Republic and **Korea**.

Namo Narain Meena, MoS for environment and forests

Elangovan has spent **55 days** abroad on **18 official** trips. He has visited **Uzbekistan** thrice, **Bangkok** twice, besides a number of countries.

◀ E.V.K.S. Elangovan, MoS for textiles

**M.M. Pallam Raju**

MoS for defence

**Number of trips:** 4  
**Km travelled:** 58,630  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Not provided**

**H.R. Bhardwaj**

Minister for law and justice

**Number of trips:** 3  
**Km travelled:** 47,189  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:**  
**Rs 20 lakh**

\*Some bills yet to be submitted

**Sis Ram Ola**

Minister for mines

**Number of trips:** 3  
**Km travelled:** 57,486  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 1.17 crore**

**R. Velu**

MoS for railways

**Number of trips:** 3  
**Km travelled:** 54,529  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 11.2 lakh**

**Meira Kumar**

Minister for social justice and empowerment

**Number of trips:** 3  
**Km travelled:** 39,296  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 8.1 lakh**

**Suryakanta Patil**

MoS for rural development

**Number of trips:** 3  
**Km travelled:** 30,656  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Not provided**

**Rao Inderjit Singh**

MoS for defence

**Days as minister:** 1,287  
**NUMBER OF TRIPS:** 26

**Official:** 23

**Personal:** 3

**DAYS ABROAD:** 130

**Official:** 114

**Personal:** 16

**Km travelled:**  
**4,99,438**

**Official:** 4,65,658 km

**Personal:** 33,780 km

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:**  
**Rs 33.3 lakh**

\*As MoS for external affairs

Singh's 670 days in MoD have taken him abroad **nine times** while his senior minister A.K. Antony has travelled only **twice** in his 402 days.



Ashwani Kumar. Pawar spent 97 days abroad, out of which 49 days were devoted to BCCI work and 37 days were spent on ministerial duty. Sharma, as MoS for external affairs, spent 114 days abroad on his 30 trips and his expenses totalled over Rs 1.33 crore while Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Ravi spent 125 days on his 18 visits. Both Sharma and Ravi put an equal 670 days in their tenure.

Chowdhury totalled 112 days abroad during her terms in the ministries of tourism and culture, and women and child develop-

ment. She made three personal trips to Cambodia, Chicago and Singapore, after being moved to Women and Child Development Ministry. While MoS for Labour and Employment Fernandes spent a fairly substantial amount of over Rs 2.26 crore on the 46 days he spent outside the country on official visits. The reason lies in the fact that he has to take a huge delegation that includes trade union representatives with him. After all, the Government is supported by the Left and the Left-supported trade unions add to the number of his delegates.

**Sharad Pawar**

Minister for agriculture, consumer affairs, food and public distribution

**Days as minister:** 1,287

**NUMBER OF TRIPS:** 27

**Official:** 7 For BCCI: 17

**Personal:** 3

**DAYS ABROAD:** 97

**Official:** 37 For BCCI: 49

**Personal:** 11

**Km travelled:** 2,62,597

**Official:** 86,133 km

**For BCCI:** 1,36,917 km

**Personal:** 39,547 km

**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 1.03 crore**

Pawar has travelled abroad more often as **Indian cricket board chief** than representing his **ministry of agriculture**.



**Soni** has spent **23 days** abroad on personal trips—which include Italy, the birth place of Sonia Gandhi, as a destination —of which itineraries for 11 days were not disclosed by PMO.

Ambika Soni, minister for tourism and culture



Securing access to so much information would have been impossible—considering the thickness of red tapes—had there not been the RTI Act in place. When INDIA TODAY filed an RTI application in PMO on September 27 last year requesting the details of foreign visits of ministers since the UPA Government was formed, along with the approximate expenditure incurred by each of them, the PMO provided all the details except that bit on the expenditure incurred. The response said, “The culled information does not include expenditure involved in each trip which this

office does not maintain and may be obtained from individual ministries/departments.” Subsequently, the magazine got in touch with every ministry and requested the details of foreign visits made by cabinet ministers and ministers of state along with the names of delegates and the approximate expenditure by them for each trip. Sibal's Ministry of Science and Technology came up with the expenditure incurred on the cash allowances of the minister and other officials on foreign trips but not the airfare. For airfare alone, a request was for-



**Shriprakash Jaiswal**

MoS for home affairs  
**Number of trips: 3**  
**Km travelled: 18,481**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Not provided**

**Pavan Kumar Bansal**

MoS for finance  
**Number of trips: 2**  
**Km travelled: 25,528**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 4.3 lakh**

**Dasari Narayan Rao**

MoS for coal  
**Number of trips: 2**  
**Km travelled: 32,382**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Not provided**

**Naranbhai Rathwa**

MoS for railways  
**Number of trips: 2**  
**Km travelled: 36,955**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 20.3 lakh**

**A.K. Antony**

Minister for defence  
**Number of trips: 2**  
**Km travelled: 17,004**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Not provided**

**Shakeel Ahmed**

MoS for communications and IT  
**Number of trips: 2**  
**Km travelled: 15,388**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 2.5 lakh**



warded to the Pay and Account Office (PAO), Cabinet Affairs, asking it to "furnish the expenditure incurred towards airfare etc on the visits indicated in the enclosed list of the Hon'ble Minister for Science & Technology".

Responses from some other ministries were at best elusive. The Ministry of Steel said, "Expenditures on the visits of ministers are met from the budget of Cabinet Secretariat or met by the PSU concerned." The Ministry of Power replied: "The figures indicate expenditure in respect of minister of power alone on airfare. The expenditure

incurred for minister of power on daily allowance, hotel accommodation, transportation etc on foreign visit is not available with the ministry as the same is met by the concerned Indian missions abroad and debit claimed directly from PAO, Cabinet Secretariat."

The Ministry of Environment and Forest's reply was comparatively detailed, but on expenditure, it said, "The exact expenditure incurred on these heads is met on actual basis by PAO, Cabinet Secretariat. The final claims are submitted to it after the



**Renuka Chowdhury**

MoS for women & child development (I.C.)  
**Days as minister: 1,287**  
**NUMBER OF TRIPS: 25**  
**Official: 22**  
**Personal: 3**  
**DAYS ABROAD: 112**

**Official: 101**  
**Personal: 11**  
**Km travelled: 3,17,031**  
**Official: 2,92,911 km**  
**Personal: 24,120 km**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:**  
**Rs 56 lakh**

*\*As MoS for tourism and culture only*

Nine of Chowdhury's total visits, official or personal, were to the US and the UK alone. Her personal visits also comprise Cambodia and Singapore.

Ramesh's tours have included less-frequented places like Baku, Dhaka and Manila. He has spent 15 days abroad on four official trips in his 670 days in office.

Jairam Ramesh, MoS for commerce and industry

Known for his stance against FDI in higher education, Singh has made nine official foreign trips and has spent over two-and-a-half months in several countries.

Arjun Singh, minister for human resource development ▶

During his 670 days in the ministry, Kumar has spent 75 days in countries like Kazakhstan, Egypt, France, Morocco, Italy, Japan, the UK and Canada.

Ashwani Kumar, MoS for commerce and industry



tours. The same may be collected from there directly." Similarly, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises provided all information except for expenses on the basis that "expenditure on the cabinet minister's tour is booked under head 'Council of Minister Tour Expenses maintained by Cabinet Secretariat'". The response of the Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of HRD was a masterpiece of obfuscation. It said the expenditure "information is compiled after complete information from the Embassy concerned is received in the Ministry, which takes considerable time". However, the ministry has provided the expenditure details for only three visits out of the nine made by the cabinet minister.

Finally, INDIA TODAY approached the Cabinet Secretariat for details of ministerial expenses, only to reach a dead-end. The

reply said, "Cabinet Secretariat is in no way the public authority concerned with the information relating to expenditure incurred on the salaries and allowances of ministers of Union Cabinet and the bills are settled between the ministries concerned and the Pay & Account Officer, Cabinet Affairs, and the CABSEC has no role in this regard." Significantly, ministries like railways, labour, tourism, external affairs, civil aviation, agriculture, urban development, finance and water resources parted with full and detailed information as requested. In cases where responses are still awaited, like the ministries of defence and textiles, information provided by PMO has been used.

Opaque procedures have daunted efforts to get a complete lowdown on the expenses. In a sense, the magnitude of the bill for official tourism is yet a bit of a mystery.

**Akhilesh Das**

Minister of state for steel  
**Number of trips: 2**  
**Km travelled: 31,266**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Not borne by ministry**

**Lalu Prasad**

Minister for railways  
**Number of trips: 1**  
**Km travelled: 15,826**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 40 lakh**

**Chandra Sekhar Sahu**

MoS for rural development  
**Number of trips: 1**  
**Km travelled: 12,712**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 1.18 crore\***

*\*As per official allotment*

**P. Chidambaram**

Minister for finance  
**Days as minister: 1,287**  
**NUMBER OF TRIPS: 24**  
**Official: 24**  
**Personal: Nil**  
**DAYS ABROAD: 118**  
**Official: 118**  
**Personal: Nil**  
**Km travelled: 3,60,860**  
**Official: 3,60,860 km**  
**Personal: Nil**  
**OFFICIAL EXPENSES:**  
**Rs 1.45 crore**

With six trips, the US tops Chidambaram's list of destinations, obviously for the IMF and World Bank meets.





## cover story UPA MINISTERS

Ramadoss's **117 days** abroad include places as varied as Thailand, Kuala Lumpur, Geneva, Seychelles, Canada and Singapore. His **17 jaunts** make up **2.54 lakh km**.

Anbumani Ramadoss, minister for health and family welfare

### P.R. Kyndiah

Minister of tribal affairs

Number of trips: 1  
Km travelled: 11,846  
OFFICIAL EXPENSES:  
**Not provided**

### K.H. Muniappa

MoS for shipping, road transport

Number of trips: 1  
Km travelled: 10,540  
OFFICIAL EXPENSES:  
**Rs 1.4 lakh**

### A.R. Antulay

Minister of minority affairs

Number of trips: 1  
Km travelled  
(personal visit): 6,112  
OFFICIAL EXPENSES: **Nil**

### G.K. Vasan

MoS (I.C.) for statistics and programme implementation

Number of trips: 1  
Km travelled: 9,387  
OFFICIAL EXPENSES:  
**Not provided**

### K. Venkatapathy

MoS for law and justice

Number of trips: 1  
Km travelled: 11,572  
OFFICIAL EXPENSES:  
**Not provided**

### S.S. Palanimanickam

MoS for finance

Number of trips: 1  
Km travelled: 1,370  
OFFICIAL EXPENSES:  
**Rs 2.7 lakh**

### T. Subbarami Reddy

MoS for mines

Number of trips: 1  
Km travelled (personal visit): 7,678  
OFFICIAL EXPENSES: **Nil**

## Kapil Sibal

Minister for science & technology, and earth sciences & ocean development

Days as minister: **1,287**

NUMBER OF TRIPS: **24**

Official: **23**

Personal: **1**

DAYS ABROAD: **113**

Official: **106**

Personal: **7**

Km travelled: **3,97,813**

Official: **3,93,405 km**

Personal: **4,408 km**

OFFICIAL EXPENSES\*:

**Rs 11.7 lakh**

\*Airfare not included

Sibal has toured the US **six times**, and has spent **18 days** on a trip to Malaysia, China and Brazil.



## Home Alone Netas

Ministers who didn't go to any foreign shore during their regime

### M.H. Ambareesh

MoS for information and broadcasting

### J.P.N. Yadav

MoS for water resources

### M.V. Rajasekharan

MoS for planning

### Manik Rao Gavit

MoS for home affairs

### S. Jegadeesan

MoS for social justice & empowerment

### Taslimuddin

MoS for agriculture, consumer affairs, food and public distribution

### V. Radhika Selvi

MoS for home affairs

So many peripatetic ministers spending so much of public money seems surprising considering that the PMO ostensibly scrutinises every request for official travel abroad and has been trying to be tight-fisted in its clearances. Sources in the PMO suggest that the expenditure and travel itinerary would have been longer, had the PMO not stalled some habitual travellers. Apparently, the PMO cannot do much when

faced with ministers from the coalition allies. The cynical view would be that this too is a coalition expenditure but the facts reveal that the big travellers in the UPA are seasoned Congressmen.

It was Rajiv Gandhi who had coined the phrase "Government on the move". Even he would have been surprised at the distance the UPA Government has travelled—abroad, that is. ■