

## Manmohan Singh heads to US, France Monday

Armed with an NSG waiver that has brought India back from the nuclear cold, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Monday leaves on a 10-day tour to the UN, the US and France - a trip that is likely to see [New Delhi](#) reviving the initiative for expanding the Security Council.

The trip could prove to be historic as India is likely to sign bilateral nuclear pacts with both the US and France - defining documents that will formally mark the return of New Delhi to the nuclear business after a 34-year hiatus.

Manmohan Singh will address the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Sep 26 after a gap of three years. He skipped the UNGA meet in 2006 and 2007 due to other engagements.

He will meet several world leaders on the sidelines of the UNGA in New York, including Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.

Manmohan Singh will meet US President George W. Bush in Washington Sep 25, Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon told reporters here Friday during a curtain-raiser briefing ahead of the prime minister's visit.

Menon, however, did not confirm reports that suggested that India and the US could sign the enabling 123 agreement Sep 25.

The prime minister's address to the UN will focus on issues like democratization of the UN, terrorism, food security, poverty eradication and promoting universal and verifiable disarmament, Menon said.

'We need to make the UN genuinely representative to enable it to play a constructive role,' Menon said, indicating that the languishing campaign for the expansion of the UN Security Council was likely to get fresh impetus during the current UNGA session. Inter-governmental negotiations on UN reforms are likely to begin early next year.

On Sep 25, the prime minister will attend a meeting on The Achievements of the Millennium Development Goals that British Prime Minister Gordon Brown will chair. He will also meet leaders of the influential Indian American community in New York.

Manmohan Singh will leave New York for Marseilles Sep 28 to attend the India-European Union Summit scheduled there for the next day.

A day later the prime minister will go to Paris for a meeting with French President Nicolas Sarkozy and senior members of his government.

A India-France nuclear cooperation pact is ready for signing, but it is not yet clear whether it will be formally inked during the prime minister's visit.

'We are working towards signing the agreement,' was all that Menon would say.

The signing of this pact will depend on the fate of the 123 agreement, which will become clear by

the time Manmohan Singh heads to Paris.

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