



JIMMY CARTER

Trip report: India and Thailand  
October 25 - November 3, 2006

The purposes of our trip were to have diplomatic discussions with top Indian officials, to participate in an award ceremony for the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Partnership Awards, to build Habitat homes near Mumbai, India, and to visit the tsunami damaged area on the east coast of India and Thailand. Amy, Jeffrey, and Jay Kelly accompanied Rosalynn and me.

During our intermediate stop in Paris, we met with the U.S. ambassador and then made a brief tour of the Bastille, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Arc de Triomphe, Eiffel Tower, and other tourist sites. Finally in New Delhi, we received a briefing from the U.S. embassy staff where we found deep concern about the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal negotiated by President Bush last year (with terms that I have publicly opposed since I was president). It provides for a supply of nuclear technology and fuel to India with no real restraints on reprocessing of spent fuel into plutonium, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection of only civilian reactors (after all other existing restraints are lifted), and no requirement for India to accept terms of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or the nuclear test ban treaty. Prime Minister Singh has pledged that no restraints that might be imposed by the U.S. Congress will be permitted.

Later, I had a media roundtable discussion with about a dozen journalists followed by a television interview during which I explained my contrary opinion about the nuclear deal by pointing out my long-standing generic insistence on NPT membership, compliance with test-ban treaties, and a prohibition against the processing of spent nuclear fuel into explosive material.

Rosalynn and I then met with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, a gentle and admirable scholar who became PM after Mrs. Sonia Gandhi was, in effect, elected and then turned down the position. We discussed a wide range of issues including our various projects, our desire to monitor the possible constituent assembly elections in Nepal, and India's joining us in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February for discussions regarding offering our public health curriculums to other countries. There are no public health schools in India now. I was grateful that Dr. Singh did not bring up the subject of nuclear agreements. He had visited with me while I was president, in the entourage of PM Desai. I promised to send him an invitation to Addis and a copy of my new book on the Middle East.

Rosalynn and I participated with Sue Sehgal in a fancy ceremony to present the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Partnership Awards to colleges that have reached out to local communities most effectively. These have now been made in 17 American states (soon to be 25), and will next go to Germany and other European countries.

The next day we flew to Mumbai and then drove to Vikhroli Village, where my mother served in the Peace Corps. It was a fascinating and emotional visit, meeting doctors, teachers, servants, and other people about whom Mama had written us, some of whom she had revered and who, collectively, had changed her life. The little girl on the cover of my mother's book was the gardener's daughter, earned a PhD, and is now president of a nearby college. The Godrej family still owns the village, where they produce an impressive variety of products including space vehicle electronics, massive bank vaults, refrigerators, stoves, cutlery, home furnishings, soaps, and foodstuffs.



We then drove to Northpoint, a mountaintop resort, where we resided with Habitat leaders during our work week. Sunday (10/29) we inspected the site in Malavli, near Lonavala, where we would work with 2,500 other volunteers (half Indian and half foreigners from 26 nations) to build 100 homes. The area always flooded during the monsoon season, and a heroic effort resulted in a well-drained and attractive place.

Monday morning we began laying concrete block, our task to complete ten courses of the wall, and to lay the end gables the next day. The concrete mortar makes the work very difficult. Each separate 700 square foot structure houses two families with six persons each. The steel support beams were installed for the corrugated roof on Wednesday, and Thursday all the roofs were completed. The remaining task was a two-hour job of placing a layer of clay tiles on top of the corrugated sheets to provide insulation, which we completed on our last day. In this monsoon region, where almost six inches of rain falls daily for four months, the exterior walls must then be plastered. Each family has saved up a 25,000 rupee down payment and will pay the remaining 50,000 rupees over eight years. This is a total of about US\$1,700 for a 350 square foot home.

We were pleased when movie star Brad Pitt, Miss World, and a top Indian star named Abraham came and worked with us, which brought additional publicity to Habitat. Brad did 1 ½ days of hard work.

During the week Rosalynn and I traveled to the tsunami areas of Southeast India and to Phuket, Thailand, with Citigroup leaders and Jonathan Reckford, CEO of Habitat. Habitat is now finishing 4,700 of a targeted 10,000 homes in India and has completed our goal of 1,000 in Thailand. Almost all the families served are fishermen who lost their boats, motors, and houses, so we are not charging them for the new homes. In the village of Anumanthai Kuppam, about 2 ½ hours south of Chennai, the villagers claim that they have received no help from their government and have replaced only 96 of the 220 needed boats. In Tha Chat Chai Village in Thailand the people have shown great initiative and done much of their own work. They take extra pride in beautifying their villages with ornaments and flowers.

The fishermen catch large prawns, an average of 10 per day that are worth about 65 cents each. From this, they have to furnish their own boats and motor and support an average of five people per family. A squid fisherman had extraordinary luck the day before we arrived, having caught 10 at \$1.10 each. We had emotional public and private meetings with the beautiful and grateful families.

Back in our worksite, with my frequent inspections and moving skilled workers around, we made sure that all houses had completed their corrugated roofs on November 2, before we had to leave to return home on Delta's inaugural flight from Mumbai to New York. After a few hours at home I'll be on the way to Nicaragua, where The Carter Center will be observing their election on November 5, 2006. We feel that we accomplished all our goals in India.

