**Text 4**

NEW DELHI: India's veteran Foreign Minister S.M Krishna announced his resignation on Friday in a move that clears the way for a long-awaited reshuffle of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's beleaguered government.

The gaffe-prone Krishna, whose political career stretches back nearly half a century, said he wanted to make way for a younger generation while a senior member of the main ruling Congress party said he would be playing a leading role in an upcoming election campaign in his traditional fiefdom of Karnataka.

"I am a loyal party worker. I will continue to work for the Congress party. I am making way for younger people." the 80-year-old Krishna said in brief comments on the NDTV news channel.

The resignation takes effect immediately and a senior official in the prime minister's office said Krishna has cancelled a scheduled visit to Laos, where he was to have accompanied Singh, who is also aged 80.

Krishna was appointed foreign minister in 2009 after Singh was re-elected prime minister. It was his first position in cabinet after having held a host of senior positions in the state government of Karnataka since the 1960s. He served as chief minister of the southern state from 1999 to 2004.

Polls in Karnataka are due to be held in May next year and the battle for control of one of India's largest states is expected to be fierce.

"He wants to go back to his home state and work for the Congress party. He has a stronghold in state politics and the Congress can win the election if he works for the party in the state," said a senior Congress leader in New Delhi.

Krishna hit the headlines in 2010 when he read out parts of the Portuguese foreign minister's speech at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council in New York. His impact on foreign policy was seen by analysts as being marginal, with Singh and his senior advisers taking the lead on crucial issues such as relations with Pakistan.

He was severely embarrassed in 2010 at talks in Islamabad with his Pakistan counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi who accused him during a press conference of having to take his orders by phone from New Delhi during their negotiations.

"Krishna never had a grip on diplomacy. All the policies had to be spoon-fed. He is not a natural when it comes to diplomacy," said S.R. Rajan, a professor of international relations at Delhi University.

Widespread reports have said that Singh is on the verge of shuffling his ministerial team with Rahul Gandhi, son of the slain Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, widely tipped to be given a seat in cabinet.

However the reshuffle, which reports say could be as early as this weekend, is seen as an opportunity for Singh to bring in new blood and thus revive his party's prospects in the countdown to national polls due in the spring 2014.

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