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Hillary Clinton's India visit: Main Points

Following are the main points of Hillary Clinton's visit to India last week.

End Use Monitoring Pact:

Status: The pact was not signed however the two countries reached a significant agreement.

This act provides for verification of military equipment and technology acquired by India from the US. It is aimed at preventing transfer to third countries. The agreement that will pave the way for Indian procurement of US Defence technology and equipment.

Technical Safeguards Agreement

Status: Finalized but not signed

This agreement will permit the launch of civil or non-commercial satellites containing US components on Indian space launch vehicles.

Agreement on creation of a Science and Technology Endowment Board Status: Signed

Krishna and Clinton signed an agreement on creation of a Science and Technology Endowment Board.

US Nuclear Reactors India has decided to allocate two sites for US Civil Nuclear Reactors.

Indo US Trade: Negotiations for a bilateral investment Treaty will take place in August 2009.

Education: Krishna and Clinton agreed on the need to expand the role of the private sector in strengthening this collaboration even as they underscored the importance of expanding educational cooperation through exchanges and institutional collaboration.

Technology: The two sides agreed to continue the bilateral High Technology Cooperation Dialogue with the objective of facilitating smoother trade in high technology between them. Working groups would be formed to focus on new areas of common interest in Nano-technology, civil nuclear technology, civil aviation and licensing issues in defence, strategic and civil nuclear trade.

Climate Change: Both sides pledged to intensify collaboration on energy security and climate change with special focus on increasing energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean energy technologies through the India-US Energy Dialogue and a Global Climate Change Dialogue.

Some Recent Trends in US Policy

American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009

The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (ACES) is an energy bill in the United States Congress that would establish a variant of a cap-and-trade plan for greenhouse gases to address climate change.

Cap & Trade:

This is also called emission trading. Cap & Trade is an administrative approach used to control pollution by providing economic incentives for achieving reductions in the emissions of pollutants. It is sometimes called cap and trade.

In this concept Government or any other central authority sets a limit or cap on the amount of a pollutant that can be emitted.

Companies or other groups are issued emission permits and are required to hold an equivalent number of allowances (or credits) which represent the right to emit a specific amount.

The total amount of allowances and credits cannot exceed the cap, limiting total emissions to that level. Companies that need to

increase their emission allowance must buy credits from those who pollute less. The transfer of allowances is referred to as a trade.

In effect, the buyer is paying a charge for polluting, while the seller is being rewarded for having reduced emissions by more than was needed.

In this way those who can easily reduce emissions most cheaply will do so, achieving the pollution reduction at the lowest possible cost to society.

The "Cap and Trade" programs have existed in Europe as a part of the Kyoto Protocol.

Kyoto Protocol:

It is an international Environment treaty negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) with the goal of achieving "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

US Stand:

The proposed US program requires the US President to impose tariffs on selected carbon-intensive goods from countries that do not introduce caps on carbon emissions. It specifically targets India and China by requiring the US Trade Representative to annually certify that these countries are adopting emission standards at least as vigorous as those prevailing in the US.

According to the UNFCCC, which came into force in 1994 and is currently subscribed to by 192 countries, developed countries must periodically negotiate mitigation commitments to avoid "dangerous anthropogenic interference" with the climate system.

The convention explicitly exempts developing countries from similar mitigation commitments. Consistent with this provision, the Kyoto Protocol, ratified in 2005, requires only developed countries to mitigate. US insist that China and India undertake binding mitigation commitments. The reason behind this is that these countries are among the world's four largest emitters in absolute terms.

India's Stand:

India is albeit among the top four emitters in absolute terms but in per-capita terms, it ranks a low 137th. India's 40% households live without electricity & 30 crore people living in abject poverty if today India agrees to even cap its emissions at current levels, let alone mitigate, its growth process will be paralyzed. The distant dream of bringing electricity to every household & to wipe out poverty shall be lost for ever.

Rich nations are responsible for more than 70% of the emissions between 1850 and 2000. During those years India's contribution to emissions during these same years was a merely 2%. Today Canada, US, Europe, Eurasia and Japan together account for more than 50% of the current emissions. India alone accounts for 4.4%. So what is India's point that the developed countries must bring their emissions down very substantially before they demand similar reductions from the poor countries. India has already announced a National Action Plan on Climate Change which incorporates its vision of sustainable development and the steps it must take to realize it.

Healthcare:

America will work to meet health challenges facing India among other countries and will have a comprehensive dialogue to improve maternal and child healthcare services. Commitment was also in eradication of infectious diseases like Tuberculosis (TB) and Polio which are also problems in India. She visited visiting a Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)'s trade outlet in Mumbai.

About India, Pakistan & Kashmir:

She ruled out any role for the US as a 'broker' between India and Pakistan in resolving the Kashmir issue, she said 'the decision has to be between India and Pakistan and it must take into account the feeling of people of Kashmir.'

Social Security Bill: US are trying to push for Social Security Bill in India so that women can get maternity leave and other benefits. This is what she said.