

India stands firm against binding emissions limits

July 19 2009, By ROBERT BURNS , AP National Security Writer



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, right, and India's Junior Minister for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh, share a light moment upon the former's arrival at the ITC hotel chain's Green Building in Gurgaon, on the outskirts of New Delhi, India, Sunday, July 19, 2009. Clinton, who is on a three-day visit to India, said Sunday India and U.S. can jointly devise a breakthrough plan to fight climate change, and in the process spark massive new investments and millions of jobs. (AP Photo/Mustafa Quraishi)

(AP) -- India stood firm Sunday against Western demands to accept binding limits on carbon emissions even as U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton expressed optimism about an eventual climate change deal to India's benefit.

"There is simply no case for the pressure that we - who have among the lowest emissions per capita - face to actually reduce emissions," India's

minister of environment and forests, Jairam Ramesh, told Clinton and her visiting delegation in a meeting.

"And as if this pressure was not enough, we also face the threat of carbon tariffs on our exports to countries such as yours," he added.

U.S. officials had expected the discussions to focus more on cooperation in related areas of energy efficiency, green buildings and clean-burning fuels.

The minister distributed copies of his remarks to reporters in a gesture aimed at underlining India's tough stance. The comments showed the political sensitivity in [India](#) of one of the Obama administration's foreign policy priorities.

Clinton said Ramesh presented a "fair argument." But she said India's case "loses force" because the fast-growing country's absolute level of carbon emissions - as opposed to the per capita amount - is "going up and dramatically."

Later, at an agricultural research site in a farm field outside the capital, Clinton told reporters she is optimistic about getting a [climate change](#) deal that will satisfy India.

"This is part of a negotiation," she said. "It's part of a give-and-take and it's multilateral, which makes it even more complex. But until proven otherwise, I'm going to continue to speak out in favor of every country doing its part to deal with the challenge of global climate change."

Clinton planned talks on Monday with Indian government officials on other issues, including curbing the spread of nuclear weapons.

In an interview with the TV station NDTV, Clinton said she wants to

discuss what she called India's more benign interpretation of Iran's intentions, particularly regarding Iran's disputed presidential election and its nuclear program. Clinton was pressed to say whether she is worried that India has a different view of Iran, which is seen by the U.S. as a supporter of terrorist groups, an obstacle to Mideast peace and a threat to build a nuclear bomb.

"I'm not concerned yet. I want to understand why it is and why it is held," she said, referring to India's view.

Clinton's trip to India, which began with a two-day visit to Mumbai, reflects a push by the Obama administration to keep U.S.-India relations on the improving path they have followed for more than a decade. For example, two-way trade has doubled since 2004.

The two sides are working out the details of agreements that would give U.S. companies exclusive rights to sell nuclear reactors to India and to facilitate U.S. defense sales. Clinton could sign agreements Monday on one or both, as well as announce a broadening of U.S.-Indian cooperation on education, agriculture and counterterrorism.

India is widely viewed as an indispensable partner on climate change, along with China and Brazil. Those three countries and others in the developing world argue that the industrial world produced most of the harmful gases in recent decades and should bear the costs of fixing the problem.

At a joint news conference with Ramesh, Clinton said the U.S. understands India's determination to resist measures, as part of a proposed international treaty on climate change, that unduly would restrict its economic growth.

"No one wants to stop or undermine the economic growth that is

necessary to lift millions out of poverty," she said, adding that the U.S. "will not do anything that would limit India's economic progress."

Accompanying Clinton to India was the special U.S. envoy for climate change, Todd Stern. He is coordinating administration efforts to negotiate a climate change treaty by December, when nations from around the world are to gather in Denmark to negotiate a successor to the 1997 pact that expires in 2012.

Countries such as China and India - the next generation of big polluters - want the industrial countries to pledge to reduce their carbon emissions by 40 percent over the next decade before they promise any reductions of their own.

Stern told reporters that it's clear that the U.S. and other developed countries will be asked to accept absolute reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from a specific baseline number, whereas India and other developing nations would be expected to accept a slowing of the upward trajectory on which their emissions are now headed. Details are to be negotiated.

Clinton said that devising a comprehensive and strategic approach for achieving a clean energy future is an important topic of her India visit.

"I am very confident the United States and India can devise a plan that will dramatically change the way we produce, consume and conserve energy and in the process spark an explosion of new investment and millions of jobs," she said, without elaborating.

Associated Press writers Ashok Sharma and Vijay Joshi contributed to this report.

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