

US advancing ties with India to meet global challenges: Clinton

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Indo-Asian News Service (India)

April 22, 2009

Washington— Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says the US is advancing its relationship with India as part of a wide-ranging diplomatic agenda to meet today's "daunting challenges" topped by the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"As daunting as they are, these challenges also offer new arenas for global cooperation. And we are taking steps to seize these opportunities," she said appearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Wednesday at a hearing on "New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration".

"In today's world, we face new challenges that have no respect for borders. Not one of them can be dealt with by the United States alone," Clinton said.

"None can be solved without us. All will have a profound impact on the security of our citizens."

Thus, the US was pursuing a wide-ranging diplomatic agenda "premised on strengthening its alliances with democratic partners in Europe, Asia, Africa and our hemisphere, cultivating partnerships with key regional powers, and building constructive relationships with China and Russia".

"And we are advancing our relationship with India, the world's largest democracy," Clinton said noting she made her first overseas trip as secretary of state to Asia, "to signal that we are not just a trans-Atlantic power, but a transpacific power, and that Asia will be an indispensable partner in years to come."

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, President Barack Obama, she said, "has outlined a strategy centred on a core goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda, and to prevent their return to safe havens in Afghanistan or Pakistan".

"We combined our strategic review with intensive diplomacy, and nations from around the world are joining together to address this urgent challenge," Clinton said.

Earlier in his opening statement, the committee's Democratic chairman Howard L. Berman said that he and several other Congressional colleagues who had just returned from a trip to India and Pakistan were happy at the dramatically improved ties with India, but deeply concerned about the security situation in Pakistan.

"I think I can speak for all of them in saying that we were encouraged by the dramatically improved US ties with India, but deeply concerned about the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Pakistan."

As the US has an enormous stake in the stability and security of Pakistan, Berman said: "We cannot allow Al Qaeda or any other terrorist group that threatens our national security to operate with impunity in the tribal regions (of Pakistan).

"Nor can we permit the Pakistani state - and its nuclear arsenal - to be taken over by the Taliban or any other radical groups, or otherwise be destabilised in a manner that could lead to renewed conflict with India," he said.

"So it is very alarming that we are now hearing predictions from a number of leading experts that Pakistan could collapse in as little as six months, he said.