

# India, US renew ever closer strategic ties



AFP, Washington

The world's largest democracies, India and the United States, agreed measures to deepen their security and economic cooperation on Tuesday, part of an ambitious drive to boost trade between them five-fold.

After the talks, US Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker admitted that the idea of increasing exchanges from \$100 billion to \$500 billion a year was "a big audacious goal," but said the meeting had left her very optimistic.

The "US-Indian Strategic and Commercial Dialog," was launched in January by President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and on Tuesday US and Indian economic and diplomatic officials came together in Washington.

"The president and the prime minister set out a goal for us ... and I think there's a lot of opportunity," Pritzker told AFP.

The talks came as President Xi Jinping of India's Asian rival China arrived in the United States, two days before Modi was due, but US officials insisted there was no plan to build up India as a counterweight to Beijing.

Instead, they celebrated what Obama has dubbed the "defining relationship of the 21st Century" with agreements to fight terrorism and climate change and to bolster cooperation in energy, hi-tech and defense.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said: "The US-India relationship is a bright spot on the international landscape and is one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world."

Indian officials had said that their priority for the talks was reinforcing commercial ties and securing access to US inward investment and technology, but also hailed a joint determination to fight terrorism.

"A main take away from our discussions includes our shared view that we need to keep the big picture, the strategic framework of the relationship in mind," Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj told reporters.

On Tuesday, India cleared a \$2.5 billion dollar deal to buy 22 Apache helicopter gunships and 15 heavy-lift Chinooks from US planemaker Boeing.

The talks set up a meeting in New York next week on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly between Obama and Modi, whose four-day visit begins September 24.

"And then we have a very robust discussion regarding counterterrorism, the Indian Ocean, maritime security, the South China Sea, the South Asian challenges of the moment," Kerry said.

Kerry, Swaraj and Pritzker were joined by India's minister of state for commerce and industry Nirmala Sitharaman and US Energy Secretary Eries Moniz for the talks.

Aside from China, the other looming issue is that of climate change. As India's economic rise drags more of its huge population of 1.3 billion people into the middle class and the industrialized world, its historically low emissions levels are set to rise -- just as the world is seeking cuts.

Indian officials made it clear before the talks that they will resist any pressure ahead of the Paris climate summit to act quickly, but came to Washington keen to work with US firms on renewable energy technology.

# Xi Jinping urges less 'suspicion'

Warns conflict between the countries would lead to 'disaster'

China's president yesterday called for less "suspicion" in ties between the world's top two economies, ahead of landmark talks later this week with US President Barack Obama.

Xi Jinping's comments, at a keynote speech in the commercial hub of Seattle, came as US aerospace giant Boeing reportedly clinched a deal with Chinese firms to sell 300 aircraft.

"We want to see more understanding and trust and less estrangement and suspicion," said Xi, whose country has seen somewhat strained ties with the United States on several issues.

"Conflict and confrontation" between the two powers "would lead to disaster for both countries and the world at large," stressed Xi.

Ahead of talks with the Obama administration later this week on hot-button issues

like China's expanding presence in the South China Sea, cyber theft and human rights, Xi sought to convince an audience of mostly businessmen and US state officials that China was a positive force in the global economy and was pushing forward with reforms based on rule of law and market principles.

China's foreign policy priority was to build what he described as a "new model" of relationship with Washington based on "non-confrontation, non-conflict, mutual respect and willing cooperation," said the president.

"We must read each other's strategic intentions correctly."

Xi vowed to treat US investors in China fairly and fight against commercial cyber theft, a growing complaint against China by American businesses.

On the hacking issue, he said China itself is a victim and was ready to set up a "high-level"

mechanism with the United States to discuss the problem.

At the same time, he suggested that US threats to sanction Chinese officials over the alleged hacking were out of line, saying cyber theft was a crime that had to be prosecuted



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"in accordance with law." He also stressed that China's economic downturn was temporary and that the government was on top of recent market turmoil.

Xi is spending two days in

Seattle meeting with the governors of US states with substantial trade and investment ties to China, and the businesses themselves, sending a message to the White House that US companies need China.

Yesterday he was to visit Microsoft's huge campus and Boeing's huge assembly facility, following reports of the deal for 300 aircraft and a "completion center" in China for the firm's narrow-body 737 airliners.

Xi was introduced by legendary US diplomat Henry Kissinger, who made the first secretive effort in 1971 to restore long-broken relations with China and who praised Xi as the man able to take the relationship to a new level.

The Chinese leader charmed his audience with quotes from Martin Luther King, recollections of former visits to Seattle and knowing references to popular US culture, including the romance comedy "Sleepless

# NEWSIN brief

## New Greek cabinet sworn in

REUTERS, Athens  
Greece's new cabinet was sworn in yesterday, bringing in few new faces as re-elected Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras sought continuity in pushing through economic reforms under the watchful eye of international lenders. Tsipras appointed two bailout negotiators to head his economic team, reappointing Euclid Tsakalotos as finance minister and making George Chouliarakis deputy finance minister.

## FBI recovers deleted Clinton emails: reports

AFP, Washington  
Personal and work-related emails that Hillary Clinton said had been deleted from her email server have been recovered by the FBI, US media reported. Clinton, the frontrunner for the 2016 Democratic Party presidential nomination, has been dogged for months by revelations that she used a private email account and home server in lieu of the official government email system while she was secretary of state from 2009 to 2013.

## 'Smoking, drink, obesity shorten European lives'

AFP, London  
"Alarming" rates of smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity in Europe could mean the next generation live shorter lives, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned yesterday. While Europeans are living longer than ever before, increases in life expectancy and declines in premature mortality may "flatten off" if the three big lifestyle risk factors are not dealt with, a senior WHO director said.

## Egypt to buy Mistral warships: France

AFP, Paris  
Egypt has agreed to buy two Mistral warships which France built for Russia before scrapping the sale over the Ukraine crisis, the French presidency said in a statement yesterday. The deal comes a little over six weeks after France and Russia reached an agreement to fully reimburse Moscow for the scrapped 1.2-billion-euro (\$1.3-billion)

## Syria intensifies raids on ISIS-held Palmyra

AFP, Beirut  
The Syrian regime has intensified its air strikes on the jihadist-held ancient city of Palmyra, killing more than 100 people including civilians in recent days, a monitoring group said yesterday. Dozens more were wounded in the strikes against targets including a militant headquarters in the city, which the Islamic State group seized along with its UNESCO-listed world heritage site in May.



## Hadi returns to Yemen to seal authority

AFP, Aden

Yemen's President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi yesterday worked to restore his authority after returning from six months of exile with a vow to liberate the country from Shia Huthi rebels.

Hadi's first act was to chair a meeting of cabinet members already back in the southern port city of Aden, which had been the embattled leader's last refuge before he fled to Saudi Arabia in March.

He instructed the ministers to focus on basic services such as water, electricity, housing, healthcare and security for ordinary Yemenis in the impoverished and war-battered country.

On the security front, the 70-year-old president stressed the need to integrate members of the Popular Resistance pro-government militia into the regular army, the government-run Saba news agency reported.

Hadi, who is recognised by the international community, flew in late Tuesday aboard a Saudi military aircraft that landed at an airbase adjoining the civilian airport in Aden.

The president promised the Yemeni people that the Huthis, who hailed from the mountainous north, would be driven from the capital Sanaa. The presidency said Hadi would remain in Aden for a few days before heading to New York to attend the UN General Assembly which runs until October 6.

# Court deals blow to 'invalid' US-EU data sharing deal

AFP, Luxembourg

A major data-sharing deal between the EU and US is 'invalid' given the spying revelations in the Edward Snowden scandal, the top EU court's main legal advisor said Wednesday in a case brought against Facebook.

The case stems from a complaint against Internet giant Facebook lodged at Ireland's data protection authority by Austrian law student and right-to-privacy activist, Max Schrems.

The complaint focused on a landmark deal reached by the European Commission with Washington 15 years ago that allows thousands of businesses operating in the EU to send the private data of Europeans to servers in the US.

That 2000 data sharing deal, known as Safe Harbour, "is invalid", said the advocate general's recommendation.

The Irish Data Protection Commission, which oversees privacy law compliance by web companies based in Ireland, had

argued that Safe Harbour protected such transfers.

But the advisor, lawyer Yves Bot, said EU member states have the power to probe and even suspend the transfer of information with the United States if the privacy of European citizens is undermined.

His recommendation singled out the US government for the "large scale" hoarding of European citizens private data.

It now goes to the court for a final ruling, but judges often follow the findings of their legal advisor.

Schrems argues Safe Harbour is too weak to guarantee the privacy of European residents and the advocate general overwhelmingly backed the accusations.

Snowden's revelations showed that the US National Security Agency used Silicon Valley giants Apple, Google and Facebook to gather user data.

In the wake of the Snowden scandal, the EU and Washington began talks to revamp "Safe Harbour" and Wednesday's opinion will certainly complicate those talks.

## Sisi pardons 2 Jazeera journalists



AFP, Cairo

Egypt's president yesterday pardoned Al-Jazeera's jailed Canadian journalist Mohamed Fahmy and his colleague Baher Mohamed, who were sentenced last month to three years in prison, the presidency said.

A spokesman for President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Alaa Youssef, told AFP the Al-Jazeera journalists were among a group of inmates pardoned, as state news agency MENA said the pardon covered 100 prisoners, including women activists Sana Seif and Yara Sallam.

Fahmy and Mohamed were sentenced in a retrial to three years in August for allegedly fabricating "false" news in support of the blacklisted Muslim Brotherhood movement, which the army removed from power in 2013 and outlawed.

Australian reporter Peter Grete was also convicted, although he had been deported by presidential decree. It was not immediately clear if he was included in the pardon.

Their detention and trial sparked global criticism towards Sisi, who has said he wished the journalists had been deported from the outset rather than put on trial.

The United States and the United Nations had led calls for the journalists' release.

Their arrest in December 2013 came at a time of heightened unrest and a deadly crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood following Islamists president Mohamed Morsi's overthrow by the military. At the time, Qatar, which owns Al-Jazeera, had been

# Civilian rule returns in Burkina after coup

BBC ONLINE

Burkina Faso's interim President Michel Kafando has said he is back in charge and civilian rule restored after last week's military takeover.

His announcement came as coup leader Gen Gilbert Diendere went to welcome several African leaders arriving to oversee the transfer of power.

His presidential guard agreed to a deal overnight with the regular army to avoid violence. They pledged to return to barracks and the army to withdraw from the capital.

The presidential guard (RSP) is loyal to Blaise Compaore, the country's long-time ruler who was ousted in a popular uprising last year.

The elite troops installed Gen Diendere as the leader last week - a month before elections had been due in the landlocked country.

The army on Monday ordered the coup leaders to step down or be ousted by force, raising the spectre of a civil war.

At least 10 people have been killed and more than 100 injured in clashes between the RSP and protesters.

However, he said he was not fully committed to the plan, put together on Tuesday by West African presidents at an emergency meeting of the regional bloc Ecowas.

It is not clear whether the mediators' peace plan includes key RSP demands for an amnesty for the coup leaders and the lifting of an electoral ban on those connected to Compaore.



PHOTO: REUTERS

A Syrian refugee lifts his daughter from an overcrowded dinghy after crossing part of the Aegean Sea from Turkey to the Greek island of Lesbos, yesterday.

# Obama, pope unite for action on migrants, climate

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama and Pope Francis married their political and spiritual power to urge action on immigration and the environment Wednesday, during the pontiff's maiden White House visit.

America's first black president offered the first Latin American pope a stately and effusive welcome on the South Lawn, praising his moral leadership on issues that politics has struggled to address.

Speaking in fluent but accented English, the 78-year-old Argentine pontiff returned the warm blessings of his host.

"As the son of an immigrant family, I am happy to be a guest in this country, which was largely built by such families."

Similarly, as many US conservatives question the very existence of man-made climate change, Francis and Obama made a de facto joint appeal for action on the issue.

"It seems clear to me also that climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation," Francis said.

The pontiff will make two key speeches during his US visit, the address to Congress and another to the United Nations on Friday. Appeals on behalf of immigrants and climate change will be running themes, according to Vatican sources.

He will wrap up his historic six-day US trip on Saturday and Sunday in Philadelphia at an international festival of Catholic families.

# Mind your own business

BBC ONLINE

India's reaction to Nepal's new constitution and the violence preceding and following it has been criticised by Nepal's media and Twitter users.

The Indian government expressed "concern" over the constitution and on Monday recalled its ambassador to Nepal for urgent consultations.

Since then, leading Nepalese newspapers have been criticising what they see as interference. More than 40 people have been killed in protests in areas adjoining India.

"Certainly, while drafting the constitution serious problems have erupted in our country," says the prominent Nepali paper Kantipur, but goes on to add that "it is for us to solve these problems".

"A neighbouring country's coming into the picture, or its being invited to solve our internal problems and challenges, is not acceptable at all," the paper says.

The English-language Kathmandu Post says in an editorial that "Delhi would do well not to be seen as crossing the red line to meet its objective. It could box itself in a difficult position and see it lose its diplomatic leverage against certain parties and

sections of the polarised society". My Republica, another English daily, carries a prominent story on how former Nepalese diplomats find Delhi's response "inappropriate".

Another paper, The Rising Nepal, adds: "In all, India has not yet supported the new constitution, which many fear would



invite trouble in the shape of rousing disturbances in the Terai region which borders India."

Meanwhile, the response from Nepalese Twitter users has been even stronger, with the hashtag #backoffindia trending worldwide till late on Tuesday, with more than 180,000 tweets posted on the day. Twitter users in Nepal are concerned about this, with some accusing India of