



## **Indo/U.S. Panel Discussion: Building a Youth Agenda for the Future of US-India Relations**

**H.R. College, Churchgate, Mumbai on October 26, 2010**

Dear President Obama,

In view of your visit to India, young American and Indian students and professionals in Mumbai have vigorously debated and discussed the policies they hope will be tabled when you meet with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on November 7.

The high priority issues affecting the youth of India and America are not, as expected, terrorism or the 2008 civilian nuclear deal, but rather, climate change, education, technology, and business. Better to let business, education, trade and technology link our two nations. The exchange of money, students, and ideas is currently more valuable to the 'indispensable' nature of the Indo-US partnership.

Gateway House: The Indian Council on Global Relations, an independent foreign policy think tank in Mumbai, hosted a panel discussion between three American and three Indian young adults on October 26, 2010 to learn about the issues that are of mutual concern to them, and offer some solutions. These are the results of that discussion.

### **Top Four Youth Priorities:**

1. Climate Change
2. Education
3. Technology
4. Business

### **Bottom-of-the-list issues for Youth:**

1. Terrorism
2. The US-India Civil Nuclear Deal
3. UN Security Council seat for India
4. Outsourcing

### **Climate change:**

The issue cannot be left solely to governments. Climate change needs global solutions developed by countries acting as equal partners in processes like reducing carbon emissions. There must also be clear and tangible benefits for adherence to global rules. Since the Copenhagen Accord has no binding legal contracts, the lead in climate change initiatives can then best be taken by the private sector. Though not cost-efficient in the short run, the investment in research and development and innovative technologies will pay off commercially and benefit both countries.

Government involvement in climate change should be indirect, by rewarding green companies in more significant and meaningful ways.

### **Education:**

Knowledge needs to be more accessible to both Americans and Indians from all socio-economic strata. According to a study by Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen, 50% of all high school education in the US and much of the west will be done online by 2019. The youth of India and America are not afraid of this. While they still believe strongly in the personal interaction between a student and teacher, there are significant possibilities to invest in, strengthen, and broaden school curricula.

For instance, the U.S. system supports liberal learning and humanities while students in India are encouraged to study engineering or technical sciences. There is no necessity to replace either country's education system, but technology can be used to supplement and broaden the curricula of both, helping students of both nations to deepen their knowledge base.

Both can learn from each other: US parents and schools should involve their youth in math and science early on. Indian parents and schools should encourage a healthy skepticism in the classroom, develop analytical tools, language skills, the ability to question and an emphasis on liberal arts. Using technologies to put education online will only make learning more in-depth, more self driven, and more interactive.

Finally, US schools should introduce India studies programmes, which will encourage a larger number of US students to come to India on exchange and other extended learning programs.

### **Technology:**

The US has a high PC penetration; India has greater mobile phone access. Collaborating on these two strengths can create new devices and capabilities for quicker global dissemination of knowledge, regardless of socio-economics.

Technology should also be the base for joint research in disease-control, and help increase access and affordability to healthcare.

**Business:**

The Indo-US corridor between government and big business already exists and is busy. What's needed is to include small and medium enterprises. This will help deepen the strategic partnership. These businesses can lead the collaboration for new technologies and adherence to climate change laws.

**Terrorism:**

Common problem, different solutions. Both US and Indian students believe there will be no cooperation on the issue of terrorism while the US works closely with Pakistan and provides it military aid. It will block India and the US from becoming close partners.

If there is to be cooperation, better to cooperate on the increasing use of sophisticated technology for intelligence-gathering.

**Nuclear Deal:**

The 2008 Civil Nuclear Deal did not excite the audience or panel. They concede it is a good diplomatic and political victory, but will take a long time to materialize. It is far better for the U.S. to focus its efforts on pushing cooperation with the Indian Space and Research Organization. Removing ISRO and other like institutions from the banned list and watch lists of countries engaged in practices impeding U.S. exports, will be a good start. It will go much further to build trust between Indian and US governments and businesses than any other cooperation.

**UN Security Council; Outsourcing:**

At the bottom of the agenda was endorsing India as a permanent member of the UN Security Council – and outsourcing.

While these issues remain sensitive, they did not generate as much excitement or debate among the young audience. Indians feel that the U.S. is hypocritical about outsourcing because the trade of ideas and labor benefits both sides. Americans, living and working in India on the panel and audience explained why outsourcing is a political affair in the US. Both Indian and US youth understand the issues of unemployment, but also feel outsourcing can effectively create greater interaction between the two countries.

Overall, there is a general feeling of uncertainty regarding your visit. We sincerely hope that you will consider the issues we have highlighted and table them with Prime Minister Singh. These are the areas of compromise and contention that will drive the future of the U.S.-India relationship. Please weigh them with the consideration and caution they rightfully deserve.

Thank you for your time and interest. We, the students and young professionals of India and America, look forward to bringing this relationship to new stage and continuing to strengthen ties between our two nations.

Sincerely,

**For Gateway House**

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