

## Fighting terrorism a key focus of Manmohan-Obama summit

Countering terrorist attacks and intelligence sharing may emerge as a key focus of the new framework of India-US relationship that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Barack Obama are set to forge at their summit Tuesday.

The first substantial engagement between the two leaders is expected to take a relationship transformed under the Bush administration by a nuclear cooperation deal, increasing trade and investment, educational exchanges and unprecedented security collaboration to a yet higher third level.

The four-day state visit beginning Sunday gives Manmohan Singh and Obama an opportunity to outline their vision of how they intend to take their future relationship to what Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called 'India-U.S. 3.0', a reference to changing ties under three administrations starting with her husband Bill Clinton.

Intelligence sharing has emerged as key focus area in the context of US Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) help in tracking the perpetrators of the 26/11 [Mumbai](#) terror attacks and in the foiling of a plot for another Mumbai type attack by two Pakistani origin Chicago based Lashkar-e-Taeba (Let) operatives.

Indian Home Minister P Chidambaram's visit to Washington last September has strengthened collaboration in sharing of information and developing new mechanisms to help prevent attacks and laid the initial groundwork for 'an enduring US-India partnership in counter-terrorism,' according to US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, William Burns.

A Memorandum of Understanding on counter terrorism initiative outlining the scope of cooperation including supply of more hi-tech equipment to trace the location of mobile telephones giving Indian security agencies a new weapon in the fight against terrorism is on the cards.

The two leaders are also expected to discuss progress in the 26/11-attacks case, amid India's disappointment that Pakistan is not showing the required seriousness and urgency in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Exchanging views on the Afghanistan-Pakistan situation, Manmohan Singh concerned about the rise of terrorism in Pakistan is expected to urge Obama to use all US influence with Islamabad to stop using terror as an instrument of state policy.

As Manmohan Singh noted in an interview with Newsweek-Washington Post ahead of his state visit to the US, 'We have been the victims of Pakistan-aided, -abetted and -inspired terrorism for nearly 25 years.'

Manmohan Singh is expected to impress upon Obama, who is due to announce his new Af-Pak strategy shortly, the imperative of acknowledging India's stakes in any US strategy in the region.

US has expressed appreciation of India's role in providing over \$1.2 billion in development assistance to Afghanistan and as also acknowledged New Delhi's reluctance to provide troops saying the involvement of forces of neighbouring countries would only complicate matters.

Besides counter-terrorism, cooperation in areas of defence, climate change, green technology, education, health, agriculture and trade and commerce too are expected to be part of the new framework ties with India that the Obama administration calls one of Washington's most important strategic partnerships.

As Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake said this week in Washington, 'We are putting in place now a wide range of bilateral cooperation to really reflect the new level of engagement.'

The summit could also provide a springboard for deepening Indo-US cooperation in the economic arena, according to Indian Ambassador Meera Shankar. 'Even as we strengthen our growing cooperation in security, counter-terrorism and defence, we will give high priority to deepening economic ties,' she said.

Obama will host a state dinner for him Tuesday night after a formal welcome at the White House and their summit earlier in the day. Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will host a lunch for Manmohan Singh at the State Department Monday.

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