

The President. I know. I would have liked it if they were up front. I'd like that. I wanted to see them.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 5 p.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks in Agra at the Signing Ceremony for the Indo-United States Joint Statement on Energy and the Environment *March 22, 2000*

Thank you very much, Foreign Minister Singh, Chief Minister Gupta, Mayor Maurya, District Commissioner Chowdhury, and, especially, Professor Mishra. We admire you so much for your efforts to save the Ganges. We admire you because for you it is a matter of science and faith.

I want to thank all of you for welcoming me and my daughter and my wife's mother, many Members of the United States Congress, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Commerce, distinguished members of our administration, and our Ambassador here today. I want to thank all the environmental leaders from India who have come here today.

One month from this day, we will celebrate across the world the 30th anniversary of Earth Day, a day set aside each year to honor our natural environment and to reaffirm our responsibility to protect it. In a unique way, in India the Earth has been celebrated for more than 30 centuries. This, after all, is a nation named for a river, a place where the Earth and its waters are worshipped as divine.

With good reason, the people of India have spent centuries worrying far less about what we might do to nature and far more about what nature can do to us through floods, hurricanes, droughts, and other calamities. But as the experience of the beautiful Taj Mahal proves and as the struggle to save the Ganges proves, we can no longer ignore man's impact on the environment.

Pollution has managed to do what 350 years of wars, invasions, and natural disasters have failed to do. It has begun to mar the magnificent walls of the Taj Mahal. Since 1982, protection of the monument has been a major priority, and the fight has yielded significant advances. But still, a constant effort is required to save the Taj Mahal from human environmental degradation, what some scientists call marble can-

cer. I can't help wondering that if a stone can get cancer, what kind of damage can this pollution do to children?

It took the United States a long time to face up to these serious environmental questions. Not so many years ago, one of our rivers was so polluted, it actually caught on fire. Bad air has made breathing very difficult in many of our cities. Acid rain from our cars and our factories made it unhealthy to eat the fish from many of our lakes and rivers. Over the last generation we have worked very hard to restore our natural treasures and to find a way to grow our economy in a way that is in harmony with the environment.

We know that India's remarkable growth has put that same kind of pressure on your environment. And the costs of growth are rising every year, even along with your prosperity.

We also know that more and more, the environmental problems of the United States or India or any other nation are not just national problems. They are global ones. More than any time in history, the environmental challenges we face go beyond national borders, and so must our solutions. We must work together to protect the environment. That is the importance of the agreement Mr. Singh and Secretary Albright have signed today.

There are few areas where that cooperation is needed more than on the issues of climate change and clean energy. Here in Agra, you have taken important strides since the early 1980's to protect the Taj Mahal by using cleaner energy and improving the quality of the air. In particular, I commend the work of M.C. Mehta for working to establish a pollution-free zone around your national treasure. This is local action with global consequences.

The overwhelming consensus of the world's scientific community is that greenhouse gases

from human activity are raising the Earth's temperatures in a rapid and unsustainable way. The 6 warmest years since the 15th century—200 years before the Taj Mahal was built—the 6 warmest years in all that time were all recorded in the 1990's.

Unless we change course, most scientists believe that the warming of the climate will bring us more storms and more droughts; that diseases like malaria will be borne by mosquitoes across more borders and at higher and higher altitudes, threatening more and more lives; that crop patterns will be severely disrupted, affecting food supplies; and the sea level will rise so high that entire island nations will be threatened and coastal areas around the world will be flooded.

Now, of course if that hit, it is the developing nations that will be hurt the most. And India, because of its geography, is one of the most vulnerable.

Today your Government is taking an historic step to move us further in the right direction toward both clean energy and reducing climate change. I applaud the leadership of Prime Minister Vajpayee for affirming today that India will embrace specific national goals for energy efficiency and renewable energy. In so doing, India is exercising leadership for the entire world. It will clean the air; it will reduce greenhouse gas pollution and global warming; and it will be good for your economy.

As the world's leading producer of greenhouse gases today, the United States and the rest of the developed world have a special responsibility. With this historic agreement, our two nations will work hand-in-hand to help turn India's environmental goals into a reality that also supports your economic growth. There are a number of ways in which the U.S. will support these efforts.

First, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, whose administrator is here today, we are committing \$45 million to promote more efficient energy production and use in India and \$50 million to promote clean energy throughout South Asia. Our Departments of Energy and Environmental Protection will resume their programs of technical assistance to India to develop cleaner air and cleaner water. We will make available \$200 million for clean energy projects through the Import-Export Bank. And we will take special steps to work with private enterprise to address these challenges. I thank the United States Energy Asso-

ciation and the Confederation of Indian Industry for agreeing to work as partners to meet these goals.

All told, we believe this historic agreement will help to reduce air pollution, to diminish health risks, to fight global warming, to protect and preserve the natural beauty of India.

And while we work to cooperate between our nations, we must also remember our obligation to realize the promise of the landmark Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. For if we act wisely, this agreement can help both the developed and the developing nations to harness the power of the market to build a clean energy future. We must complete the work begun in Kyoto so that the United States and other nations can ratify the protocol and it can enter into force.

Now, let me say that there are some people who don't believe anything can be done about global warming because they don't believe the economy can grow unless energy is used in the same way it has been used for 100 years in the industrialized countries. They do not believe that India can grow wealthy unless you put more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere by burning more oil and coal, in the same way the United States and Europe and Japan did. And in the industrial age that might have been true, but that is no longer true.

Many members of our delegation today rode over here in electric buses that you use here to keep from promoting air pollution. In no time at all we will have electric vehicles or vehicles that use fuel from farm products or from simple grasses that will not pollute the atmosphere. In no time at all we will be using solar power wherever it is feasible. We will be building buildings with materials that keep heat and cold out and are far more efficient.

We can, in short, do something today that could not be done 50 years ago. We can promote more economic growth in India by using less energy and keeping the environment cleaner. In other words, the economic conditions today are precisely the reverse of what they were 50 years ago.

The United States will never ask India or any other developing nation to give up its economic growth in order to reduce pollution. But we do ask you to give us a chance to work with your scientists to prove that you can achieve even greater economic growth and make the environment even cleaner.

I must say that we even have some people in the United States who believe the Kyoto Protocol is some sort of plot to wreck our economy and who unfortunately, some of them, have a good deal of influence. They continue to deny that global warming is real.

All I know is, the overwhelming consensus of scientists and the evident lessons of the weather patterns of the last few years all say the climate is warming at an unsustainable rate. We know it takes at least 50 years to turn it around. Why would we take a risk in not doing it when we know we have the technology today, with alternative energy sources and conservation, to chart a different future? I hope that in my country and yours and throughout the world, we will have the sort of partnership to which we have committed ourselves on this day.

Finally, let me just say that we don't have to choose—we don't have to choose—between economic opportunity and environmental protection. But we do have to choose between a future of sustainable development for all of our children, with clean water and sanitary conditions and energy efficiency and clean air, and a future in which we give it up simply because we refuse to take the necessary decisions to preserve them.

On this Earth Day this year and on this historic day today of partnership between our two nations, when we stand in the shadow of the Taj Mahal, we remember that it is a monument built in love. All the most important monuments are built for love. The most important monument today we can give our children and our children's children is the preservation of the Earth that was given to us. We should give that monument in the spirit of love.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the Taj Khema overlooking the Taj Mahal. In his remarks, he referred to Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India; Chief Minister Ram Prakash Gupta of Uttar Pradesh; Mayor Baby Rani Maurya and Commissioner Nita Chowdhury of Agra; Hindu priest Veer Bhadra Mishra, civil engineering department head, Banaras Hindu University, and founder, Sankat Mochan Foundation; the President's mother-in-law, Dorothy Rodham; and M.C. Mehta, co-founder, Indian Council for Environmental Legal Action. Prior to the President's remarks, Foreign Minister Singh and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright signed the joint statement.

Statement on Senate Action on Social Security Reform Legislation *March 22, 2000*

I am pleased that the Senate has followed the House in passing a measure to eliminate the retirement earnings test for seniors. In my 1999 State of the Union Address, I asked Congress to work with me to end this confusing and outdated policy that discourages healthy senior citizens from continuing to work past 65 if they choose to do so. I look forward to opening a new era of opportunity for older Americans by signing this measure into law.

Eliminating the earnings limit is an important first step in undertaking comprehensive Social Security reform this year. The work on the re-

tirement earnings test shows that Congress can work together to further the people's business. We should build on this bipartisan spirit to make further progress on Social Security. Last fall I sent Congress legislation that would use the benefits of debt reduction to extend the life of Social Security to the middle of the next century. Today I call on Congress to work with me on this simple plan to extend the solvency of Social Security while strengthening benefits to reduce poverty among elderly women.