

Modi, French Prez to Co-launch Book on Environment

Book to emphasise urgent need for protecting environment and will help make the point that India is looking to play a more high-profile leadership role on the global stage

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Paris: Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to assert India's green credentials ahead of a key global summit on climate change in Paris later this year, signalling a shift in the government's approach. The French will be lending strong support to the effort.

Modi will co-launch a book on the urgent need for protecting the environment with French President Francois Hollande to make the point that India is looking to play a more high-profile, leadership role on the global stage in this regard.

The idea is said to have been mooted by the Indian prime minister when he visited France earlier this year, raising it with foreign minister Laurent Fabius, who then pursued it with leaders of his government.

The idea was received enthusiastically by the French, officials of that country said, with a special launch planned before climate change talks at the 21st Conference

of Parties (COP21) in Paris in December.

The move also fits in with vigorous French efforts to ensure that an agreement is arrived at in COP21 or the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, which will see

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196 countries attending. As part of its outreach to countries, the France-India book plan will be unique, said the officials, who didn't want to be named.

The aim of the conference is to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate, in order to limit global warming to below 2°C.

The Modi government is taking a strong and clear position on climate change, emphasising India's commitment to the cause, its voluntary initiatives on solar and wind power and indigenous, environ-

ment-friendly lifestyle choices. At the same time, it has also pointed out repeatedly that developed nations cannot escape their responsibility for greater action to check climate change.

Modi had said during his visit to Berlin earlier this year that "India will set the agenda for the upcoming Conference of Parties".

He had also expressed surprise "that the world is scolding us even though our per capita gas emission is the lowest... The whole world is posing questions to us. Those who have destroyed climate are asking questions to us. If anybody has served nature, it is Indians".

Environment minister Prakash Javdekar has emphasised the need for developed countries to take enhanced mitigation measures before COP21 targets take effect if an agreement is achieved. He was speaking last month at the sixth Petersburg Climate Dialogue in Berlin.

With the COP meeting just months away, France is working hard to ensure an agreement can be reached and is in-



NARENDRA MODI

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vesting considerable energy in bilateral engagements with the political leadership of all major economies to this end. It may be recalled that COP15 in Copenhagen descended at times into chaos and seemed to make little progress amid lack of a meeting ground between developed and developing blocs.

As part of efforts to avoid a recurrence, France is pushing heads of state and gov-

ernment to attend the summit opening. Modi is expected to be present.

"We might look for some political input so we can move forward on negotiations... We might have meetings with heads of state in advance so as not to wait long for the agreement," Pierre-Henri Guignard, COP21 secretary general, told ET in Paris. "There are 196 countries involved and some of them

will have to introduce some political thinking to get things going."

France will also be calling a special ministerial meeting in October this year to deliberate on the finance aspect of COP negotiations. Finance ministers from across the globe are expected to participate in the conference planned in Lima where contentious issues such as a structure for climate funding will be taken up.

India is one of the key stakeholders in the upcoming COP meeting and its stand on the subject of cutting greenhouse gas emissions is being keenly observed. Also, India will soon be submitting its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In its INDCs, India will spell out its emission reduction targets and emphasise its increased commitment to renewal energy projects such as the ambitious solar energy mission.

(The writer was in Paris at the invitation of the French government)