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**US SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON CALLS ON PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE; BOTH LEADERS DECIDE TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN INDIA  
US STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP**

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Union Finance Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee has said that India gives high importance to India US Strategic and Economic Partnership. He was speaking on the occasion when an official US delegation led by the US Secretary of State, Ms. Hillary R. Clinton called on him, here today. He stated that India is carrying its reforms agenda further by making major change in the tax sector – involving both direct and indirect taxes. Shri Mukherjee said that in the field of direct taxes, efforts are on to make Direct Tax Code (DTC) effective w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2012. In field of indirect taxes, efforts are also on to build a consensus among all the stakeholders including state governments to make Goods and Services Tax (GST) effective at the earliest. He said that Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) are expected to finalize the guidelines of Infrastructure Debt Fund soon which would help in expediting investment by the US companies in India.

Speaking on the occasion, US Secretary of State Ms. Clinton hoped that the relationship between India and US in the field of trade, infrastructure investment, business, defence and strategic matters would be further strengthened. She said that US India have excellent working relationship especially in field of economic and financial partnership. She said that India can play a major role in enhancing regional economic cooperation and optimizing the large potential available in this region. She specifically mentioned that India can play a major role in the economic development of Afghanistan. Responding to that Shri Mukherjee said that India is already engaged in economic development of Afghanistan and helping it in building roads and improving power generation among others.

Shri Pranab Mukherjee said that India would make efforts to ensure that the India US participation in trade, investment, agriculture and education further expand in future. The US delegation consists of Mr. Robert O' Blake, Asstt. Secretary, Mr. Daniel B. Poneman, Deputy Secretary, Energy, Ms. Elizabeth Littlefield, Head of Overseas Private Investment Corporation among others. The Indian delegation included among others Ms. Meera Shankar, India's Ambassador to US, Shri R.S. Gujral, Revenue Secretary and Dr. Kaushik Basu, Chief Economic Advisor.

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