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US may weaken export controls for India before Obama visit

By PTI Jun 08 2010 , Washington

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The US is working on an India- specific export control regime and it could be announced before the November visit of US President Barack Obama to India, a top State Department official said Monday.

Noting that there is a wider review on the part of the administration of the overall export control regime, the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Robert Blake told reporters that a India-specific review is under way.

"In fact we will probably split off from the wider review," Blake told reporters at a news conference here.

"We have made a great deal of progress over the last six years or so in reducing the export controls that apply to India. Now less than one-half of 1 per cent of all exports require any sort of a licence at all," he said.

"There's been a lot of progress, but there still are some controls. So there's a reciprocal process under way to seek the necessary assurances from the Indians about the strengthening of their own export control regime that would enable us to relax our restrictions," Blake said, adding that he anticipates that there's going to be further good progress on this.

"We had a good exchange during the strategic dialogue in which we shared ideas about how we can achieve that good progress. So I expect that there will be some positive announcements to be made before the president's visit, hopefully well before," he said.

Blake said the US is having a close look at the entities list. "And many entities have already come off it over the last several years. But now there's a focus on entities like ISRO and DRDO -- the Indian Space Research Organisation, the Defence Research and Development Organisation," he said.

"So again, we think that there are enormous opportunities for American companies to do more and work more with their colleagues in the space area and also in the defence area. So these are steps that would serve both our countries. We shared ideas about how we could make progress on that. And we to see progress on that in the fairly near future," Blake said.