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PM comes out in defence of Pachauri

■ Praises IPCC chief for 'far sighted leadership' ■ Says current controversy cannot wish away threat from climate change

■ Bureau

New Delhi, Feb 5: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday came out in defence of Rajendra Pachauri, the chief of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Singh praised Pachauri for his "far sighted leadership" of the organisation and said the current controversy over the accuracy of the IPCC reports on the Himalayan glacier did not wish away the threat from climate change.

Singh's comments were made at the inaugural session of a three-day long international summit on sustainable development on Friday. The statement comes at a time when the minister for environment, Jairam Ramesh has said the government will set up its own organisation to advise on climate issues instead of



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depending on the IPCC, as a fall out of the controversy. But speaking in support of the climate science projections of IPCC, Singh said: "India has full confidence in the IPCC process and its leadership and will support it in every way that it can." Going forward, he also said the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has to be

"the centerpiece of global cooperation on climate change".

IPCC and its chairman, RK Pachauri, have in recent weeks been criticised for an IPCC assessment report that claimed the Himalayan glaciers could melt away by 2035. The report is apparently based on an interview conducted by a UK magazine with an Indian

glaciologist in 1999 and has been rebutted by most scientists. It has also led to calls for the overhaul of IPCC including resignation by Pachauri.

Pachauri set the stage for the comments by Singh, in his address earlier in the same session where he congratulated environment minister Jairam Ramesh on the launch of the national climate change assessment research network. He said: "For quite some time now I have commented on the lack of scientific research on climate change in this country. I am delighted that (Jairam Ramesh) has taken a deep interest in the subject and lost no time in initiating a network of research institutions and researchers to fill up the gap".

Singh also said the Indian National Institute of Himalayan Glaciology and other scientific institutions will devote more re-

sources to the impact of climate change in the Himalayan region. He said the Copenhagen Accord was not a substitute for international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol, but must be seen as being complementary to them.

Delineating some of the challenges ahead for climate negotiators, Singh said consensus must be reached on two areas—the science of climate change, and on common but differentiated responsibility—to successfully reach an international agreement.

The session was also attended by environment minister Jairam Ramesh, external affairs minister SM Krishna, new and renewable energy minister Farooq Abdullah and foreign dignitaries including Prime Ministers of Norway and Greece Jens Stoltenberg and George Papandreu.