

# Biden's 'pipe-line' of priorities

By Dr Neelam Batra Verma



The 46th President of United States of America, Joe Biden got down to business immediately after inauguration on January 20th, 2021 and signed a record breaking 17 executive orders, beating a previous record of just one executive order signed on the day of the inauguration.

## **Cancellation of Keystone XL oil pipeline**

However, the most important decision, which the President Joe Biden took immediately after swearing in, has been the cancellation of Keystone XL oil pipeline, which impacts Canada the most.

The project was expected to transport up to 830,000 barrels of oil from Alberta to Nebraska through 1,930 kilometres of pipelines and the Alberta government had agreed to invest about \$1.5 billion as equity along with billions more in loan guarantees.

By a stroke of Biden's pen, as many as 1000 people are slated to lose their jobs, at a time when finding another job in a pandemic infested economy, is next to impossible.

The project was earlier cancelled by President Obama and then revived by Donald Trump and now once again cancelled by President Joe Biden. The ding-dong battle between incoming and outgoing Presidents has left thousands of workers jobless, with uncertain futures.

## **Economic retaliation against US!**

Alberta's premier Jason Kenny, the province in Canada, which stands to lose a billion dollars, is calling for economic retaliation or some compensation against the US.

Biden called Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to explain the reason for cancelling the permit, as an election promise, while Kenny called the decision offensive. In a letter to Trudeau, Kenny wrote, "By retroactively revoking the presidential permit for this project without taking the time to discuss it with their longest standing ally, the United States is setting a deeply disturbing precedent for any future projects and collaboration between our two nations."

First Nations from Alberta and Saskatchewan, who had promised to invest big money into the Keystone pipeline through an indigenous partnership with TC Energy, via Natural Law energy aimed at pursuing economic opportunities for the benefit of Indigenous people and have been hurt the most.

### **Keystone XL pipeline cancellation: will it impact US-Canada relationship?**

However, Kathryn Harrison, Professor of Political Science at University of British Columbia, does not find the cancellation of the pipeline as an irritant between the two countries. In an interview, she said, "There are just too many areas on which Canada and the US benefit from collaboration for Canada to let disappointment over the Keystone XL cancellation remain an irritant." **See detailed**

**interview. <https://www.asiannewsmakers.com/cancellation-of-keystone-pipeline-is-not-an-irritant-in-us-canada-relations>**

Trudeau was the first foreign dignitary Biden called after the inauguration and indicated his efforts to improve travel between the two countries and establish pandemic related travel safety measures on COVID-19.

Canada and the US have an amicable history till now, despite the travel bans between the two countries and the hiccups during Trump's Presidency like the jailing of the two Michaels in China, as a retaliation of arresting Huawei Technologies' Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver, the chief financial officer of Chinese tech giant Huawei, at the instance of US under the extradition treaty terms.

China retaliated by arresting the two Michaels who were then working in China. They just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time but today due to geopolitical issues between America and China, have becoming bargaining pawns. China has made it clear that the duo will not be released until Meng is.

Experts opine that though Meng's extradition could come to an end at the discretion of the justice minister, but the implication of resorting to giving in to hostage diplomacy situation, might be huge.

Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor have already spent two gruelling years in the jails of China while their counterpart Meng, is allowed to live like a princess in her own mansion due to Canadian humanitarian laws. Every Canadian today is pained to see the plight of the duo in Chinese prisons, where humanitarian laws are flouted with impunity.

Meng today is being pursued on fraud and conspiracy charges in the US and legal issues have just begun. For China, it is likely that she will symbolize of unfair persecution of Chinese companies in the US. It remains to be seen how far the new administration will go to improve relations between US and Canada and get the two Michaels home.

**(Dr Neelam Batra-Verma is the author of 1971: A War Story)**