Canada formally withdraws from Kyoto Protocol

OTTAWA: Canada became the first country to formally withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol, saying the pact on cutting carbon emissions was preventing the world from effectively tackling climate change.

"We are invoking Canada's legal right to formally withdraw from Kyoto," environment minister Peter Kent said on Monday following a marathon UN climate conference in South Africa, at which nations agreed to a new roadmap for worldwide action.

The landmark pact reached in 1997 is the only global treaty that sets binding targets for developed countries to curb their greenhouse gas emissions, with those guidelines not being put forward for developing nations.

But those curbs apply only to rich countries, excluding the United States, which has refused to ratify the accord.

"Kyoto is not the path forward for a global solution to climate change," Kent said. "If anything, it's an impediment." Kent also cited major impacts on Canada’s economy that will be avoided by withdrawing from the treaty.

Saying the targets agreed to by a previous Liberal administration were unattainable, Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government last year unveiled its own measures aimed at curbing emissions, in line with US efforts.

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"Under Kyoto, Canada is facing radical and irresponsible choices if we're to avoid punishing multi-billion-dollar payments," Kent said, noting that Canada produces barely two percent of global emissions.

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Canada agreed under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce CO2 emissions to 6.0 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012, but its emissions of the gases blamed for damaging Earth’s fragile climate system have instead increased sharply.

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