

Well, [so much for that](#):

Faced with resistance from within and outside to his advocacy for a dramatic change of stand on climate change negotiations, environment minister Jairam Ramesh was in a damage control mode on Tuesday.

The minister retraced his steps against the backdrop of clear signs that the country's climate negotiators, including Prime Minister's special envoy Shyam Saran and C Dasgupta, were unhappy with his controversial proposition. Dasgupta, a veteran of many battles with the developed countries — the leading polluters — had considered quitting in protest against the attempt to shift gears. The senior negotiator was reassured only after the PMO clarified that Ramesh had, in his letter to the PM, merely reflected his personal views.

[Some observers had leapt prematurely](#) on the disclosure of a private note from Ramesh to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, which had argued for reorienting India's climate policy closer to the G-20 and away from the G-77 — in other words, attempting to reach a compromise with developed nations.

In his letter, Ramesh had suggested, rightfully in my view, that although India could not accept binding emissions caps, it could adopt a "schedules approach," which would allow different countries to pledge a variety of actions for cutting emissions such as renewable electricity standards and provisions to avoid deforestation rather than relying on economy-wide caps on emissions as the indication of a country's commitment. I believe that this is the best way to approach New Delhi on the issue, [as I wrote earlier this year](#).

Ramesh is an intelligent and sophisticated advocate, but it seems to me that he was clearly suckered here: he may have intended to start a new conversation within Indian government circles, but a well-placed leak destroyed it. And really, he should have anticipated that. The fact of the matter is that in India, the Environment Ministry is very weak, and attempts to interfere in these negotiations represented a challenge to Singh's climate advisor Shyam Saran and Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, a key member of the Prime Minister's climate team.

But after Copenhagen, the United States and India are going to have to pick up the pieces, and the schedules approach is a promising way to start.