

# ‘Will work with India on import of laptops’

Despite the tensions in West Asia due to conflict between Israel and Hamas, the United States wants to make sure that the India Middle– East Europe Economic Corridor moves forward as much as possible, **ARUN VENKATARAMAN**, US Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Global Markets and Director General of the US and Foreign Commercial Service, told Shreya Nandi in an interview in New Delhi during his India visit. Edited excerpts:

## **What brings you here? What has been the key highlight of your visit to India?**

I’m here to take advantage of a historic opportunity and a historic moment in US-India bilateral relations. Given the challenges we are facing in the world today, given some of the vulnerabilities we discovered during the pandemic, there has been no better time for US-India economic partnership. More importantly, for the US and India, leading the world in emerging from the pandemic and shaping a new global economic future are benefits to all.

## **The US government had earlier raised concern over India’s decision to impose curbs on laptops and other IT hardware imports. Now, the government has said there will be an import authorisation system. Do you think it is a better policy decision?**

As India adopts policies to advance that security and resiliency and as it works to ensure that imports come from trusted partners, we look forward to working with India to make that happen because we support India’s security.

## **In March, India and the US signed a pact to set up a semiconductor supply chain and a sub-committee was supposed to be formed before the year ended. What has been the progress on that front? Can you give the timeline of the meeting and what’s on the agenda?**

We are making progress. On that pact, we have been working closely with the Indian government to help identify ways in which American companies can really contribute to the Prime Minister’s semiconductor mission that he launched. We are looking forward to the subcommittee meeting shortly to advance those initiatives.

The meeting will be happening very soon but I don’t have a date to give you.

What you will see in that subcommittee is identifying ways in which we can better shape the ecosystem to attract more investment here.

We and the Government of India are fully aligned in the opportunities presented by the Indian market for US semiconductor firms and want to find tangible ways to advance that progress. You’ll see that the subcommittee will be having discussions on specific topics relating to that.

## **How do you see the current conflict in West Asia impacting global trade? Do you see an adverse impact on the plan for the proposed economic corridor — India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor — due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia?**

Hamas has single-handedly caused this war in Gaza and the harms that are being inflicted on people in Gaza are a direct result of Hamas’ actions.

The US condemns terrorism in all its



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### **ARUN VENKATARAMAN**

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forms, without exception. As our government supports efforts to address that situation, we are focused on supporting India and our work in the corridor, which was announced during the G20 summit. We see incredible opportunities for India, for our Middle East partners, and for the US to collaborate in a way that will produce benefits for all of our citizens.

## **How have negotiations on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) progressed? Since India wants to protect its interests and as of now has not joined all the four pillars, is the US (along with other nations) willing to offer India more flexibility under the trade pillar?**

We have been clear that the IPEF is designed to be flexible. As each of our partners decides when and where and how they participate with respect to each of the pillars, that is a decision for them to make, based on their interests. What you have seen — regardless of specific participation and individual pillars — is a concerted effort by everyone to achieve high-standard outcomes that will benefit not only industries in all of our economies but bring gains directly to people.

## **Will Tesla’s investment mark a new era in US-India relations? Has the US government been in touch with the Indian government on this front?**

I should not really speak on the specifics of the Tesla discussions, wherever they may be. We are always committed and supportive of American companies contributing to the Indian growth story.

Whether it’s Tesla or Micron, we are proud of how American companies are contributing, and have already created a million jobs in India and are going to create many more going forward as we deepen that collaboration.

