

India deserves higher global role: PM

Modi to meet Musk, over two dozen thought leaders from diverse fields in his three-day state visit to the US

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Billed by his party and government as a visit to the US richer in form and substance than any undertaken by his predecessors or even his previous half-dozen visits to that country, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi left for New York on Tuesday morning for a three-day state visit.

It is the PM's first State visit to the US, only the third of the Biden administration, and the second accorded to an Indian PM after Manmohan Singh in 2009. With the US and India wary of China and Washington DC keen that India take a more unambiguous stand on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the visit would focus on deliverables in critical and emerging technology, including telecommunications, space, and manufacturing; progress on the India-US defence industrial cooperation road map — a jet engine technology transfer — is in the works; and skilling and mobility.

In a pre-departure interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, Modi said he was the first PM born after India's Independence. "And that's why my thought process, my conduct, and what I say and do are inspired and influenced by my country's attributes and traditions. I derive my strength from it," he said. "I present my country to the world as my country is, and myself as I am," he said. He said: "India deserves a much higher, deeper, and wider profile and role."

The PM spoke of the importance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas as essential for normal bilateral ties with China.

On the Ukraine conflict, Modi said, "Some people say that we are neutral. But we are not neutral. We are on the side of peace." He said

disputes should be resolved with "diplomacy and dialogue", not war.

After landing in New York, the PM will meet over two dozen thought leaders from diverse fields, including Tesla Chief Executive Officer and Twitter owner Elon Musk. Modi last met Musk in 2015 while visiting the Tesla Motors factory in California, but this would be their first meeting after Musk acquired Twitter in 2022.

In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, Musk said that Tesla would likely finalise a location to set up its India factory by the end of this year. Currently, over half of Tesla's global production takes place in China.

According to sources, the PM would meet astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, senior World Bank official Paul Romer, Lebanese-American essayist Nassim Nicholas Taleb, investor Ray Dalio, American singer Falu Shah, former US diplomat Daniel Russel, physician Peter Agre, Nobel Laureate, musical artist Chandrika Tandon, statistician Nicholas Nassim Taleb, and defence expert Elbridge Colby.

In the interview, the PM said there was "unprecedented trust" between the leaders of India and the US, ties were stronger and deeper than ever, and the growing defence cooperation between the two countries is "an important pillar" of their partnership, which extends to trade, technology, and energy.

Questioned about the criticism India received in the US for not taking a more firm stance against Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Modi said: "I don't think this type of perception is widespread in the US. I think India's position is well-known and well-understood in the entire world. The world has full confidence that India's topmost priority is peace," he added. "India will do whatever it can" and supports "all genuine efforts to bring an end to the conflict and ensure enduring peace and stability," he said.



ON UKRAINE-RUSSIA CONFLICT

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ON CHINA

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On relations with China, he said: "We have a core belief in respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity, observing the rule of law, and peaceful resolution of differences. At the same time, India is prepared and committed to protecting its sovereignty and dignity."

Modi called for a reform of global institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and spoke about India's ambition to be on the UN Security Council. "Look at the membership of key institutions — does it truly represent the voice of democratic values? A place like Africa — does it have a voice? India has such a huge population and is a bright spot in the global economy, but is it present? Let me be clear that we do not see India as supplanting any country. We see this process as India gaining its rightful position in the world," Modi said. He recently called for the African Union to have a seat in the Group of Twenty. "The world today is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before," he said.

He sought to portray New Delhi as the natural leader of the Global South, in sync with and able to give voice to developing countries' long-neglected aspirations.

USISPF: US-India relationship is critical, pivotal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is able to build relationships with various stakeholders in the US and his visit sends a strong message that the bilateral relationship is pivotal and the most defining partnership of the 21st century, the leadership at a leading India-US advocacy group, US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) have said.

"It is an honour to have Prime Minister Modi back in the United States. He has been a role model for many of us around the world with Digital India and how he brings those benefits to every citizen across the country," USISPF Chairman John Chambers said in a statement.

"Modi is able to build relationships with various stakeholders in the United States and focuses on the win-win aspect," Chambers said.