

Sky not the limit for India-US ties: Modi

Biden says partnership among most consequential in world; two nations strike new deal for shared future

ARCHIS MOHAN & SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY
New Delhi, 22 June

India and the US upgraded their strategic partnership by a few crucial notches on the second day of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "state visit" to Washington, DC, with the signing of agreements spanning mega defence deals, semiconductors, critical minerals, cooperation in critical and emerging technology, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, telecommunications and space cooperation on Thursday.

The US could introduce in-country renewable H-1B visas, and it will open consulates in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad, while India will establish a mission in Seattle.

In reply to a question on human rights in India at the joint press conference after their delegation-level talks, US President Joe Biden said: "Prime Minister (Modi) and I had a good discussion on democratic values. There is an overwhelming respect for each other because we are democracies. It is a common democratic character of both our countries — our diversity, culture and open, tolerant debate. We believe in the dignity of every citizen."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said government benefits reached every citizen without any discrimination in India. "Democracy is in our DNA, and we live it ...There's no discrimination on the basis of caste, religion or region," he said.

In an interview to a US private channel, former US president Barack Obama said that India might start "pulling apart" if the government did not protect the rights of minorities. Biden said bilateral trade had doubled over the past decade to more than \$191 billion, supporting tens of thousands of good jobs in India and the United States.

Additionally, the US President said that 1 million American jobs across 44 states would be supported by the purchase of more than 200 American-made Boeing aircraft by Air India.

"With this visit, Indian firms are announcing more than \$2 billion in new investment in manufacturing and solar in Colorado, steel in Ohio, optic fibre in South Carolina and much more, proving that manufacturing in America is back," Biden said.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivers remarks on the South Lawn of the White House as US President Joe Biden looks on during a welcome ceremony on Thursday

PHOTO: REUTERS

PM visit prompts a flurry of deals

Micron to set up chip plant in India; GE, HAL to make fighter jet engines

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY
New Delhi, 22 June

On the second day of his four-day state visit to the United States (US), Prime Minister Narendra Modi held one-on-one meetings with top CEOs in Washington DC on Thursday and called upon them to boost investment and manufacturing in India.

Hours later, General Electric's aerospace arm announced that it had entered into a partnership with India's state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) to make advanced fighter jet

engines for the Indian Air Force. US semiconductor giants Micron Technology and Applied Materials, on the other hand, announced investments totalling \$1.22 billion in India's semiconductor value chain.

The memorandum of understanding between GE Aerospace and HAL was announced shortly after a meeting between Modi and General Electric CEO H Lawrence Culp Jr. The US firm said the partnership would include potential joint production of F414 engines in India for the second generation light-

combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk2, which is currently at design stage.

The advanced engines are already in use by two fighter jets of the US Army. The first of these, the Super Hornet, entered service in 1999. It is also used in the JAS 39 Gripen, a lightweight, single-seater fighter jet made by Sweden's Saab AB.

Modi also held separate meetings with Sanjay Mehrotra, CEO of Micron Technology, and Gary E Dickerson, president and CEO of semiconductor toolmaker Applied Materials.

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US to ease visas for skilled Indian workers

The Biden administration will make it easier for Indians to live and work in the United States, using this week's state visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help some skilled workers enter or remain in the country, according to people familiar with the matter. Indian citizens are by far the most active users of the US, H-1B program. They made up 73 per cent of the nearly 442,000 H-1B workers in fiscal year 2022.

India to launch Isro-Nasa space mission to ISS

India has decided to join the Artemis Accords, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) and Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) have agreed to a joint mission to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2024, the White House said on Thursday.

Upanishad to diamond: PM's gifts for Bidens

From the first edition of *The Ten Principal Upanishads* for US President Joe Biden, to an eco-friendly lab-grown diamond for First Lady Jill, Prime Minister Narendra Modi went to the White House on Thursday bearing gifts showcasing the diverse cultural and scientific heritage of India.

NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

"Democracy is in our DNA and we live it... There's no discrimination on the basis of caste, religion"

JOE BIDEN, US President

"The challenges and opportunities facing the world in this century require that India and the US work and lead together"

Chip plant, fighter jets: A flurry of deals as Modi, Biden meet

Later, Micron announced its plans to build a new assembly and test facility in Gujarat to build and export random-access memory DRAM and flash memory products.

The \$825 million plant has been approved under the modified Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) component of the Centre's production-linked scheme for semiconductor manufacturing and may support up to 20,000 direct and indirect jobs. Set to be developed over two phases, it will see construction beginning in 2023 and will turn operational in late 2024, the company said in a release. "Micron will receive 50 per cent fiscal support for the total project cost from the Indian central government and incentives representing 20 per cent of the total project cost from the state of Gujarat. The combined investment by Micron and the two government entities over the course

of both phases will be up to \$2.75 billion," it said.

The plant will meet long-term demand for memory and storage across markets as Asian shipments surge. Last year, Micron announced plans to invest a whopping \$100 billion over the next 20-plus years to build a semiconductor fabrication plant in New York state.

Meanwhile, Applied Materials announced it would invest \$400 million over the next four years in a new engineering centre in India. To be located near the company's existing facility in Bengaluru, it is likely to support more than \$2 billion worth of potential investments and create 500 new advanced engineering jobs, the company said. Also on Thursday, the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative said it had signed an agreement with California-based Kapoor Enterprises Inc for export of nano liquid urea.

Sky is not the limit for India-US ties: Modi

Modi said India had decided to end all pending trade issues with the US and termed the transfer of technology to manufacture fighter jet engines in India a "landmark" agreement. He said India's decision to join the Artemis Accord proved that "even the sky is not the limit" for India-US ties. Biden said the US would put an Indian in space in 2024.

On the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Biden said, "Today we also talked about our shared efforts to mitigate the humanitarian tragedies unleashed by Russia's brutal war in Ukraine and to defend the core principles of the UN Charter on sovereignty and territorial integrity." In both form and substance, the PM's visit has rivalled any undertaken by his predecessors, officials said. US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill hosted him at an intimate dinner on Wednesday at the White House. Modi received a colourful White House South Lawn arrival ceremony, including a 21-gun salute, attended by 7,000 guests, held one-on-one talks with Biden, and subsequently the bilateral delegation-level talks.

At the start of his talks with the US president, Modi said: "India and the US are walking shoulder-to-shoulder from the depths of the ocean to heights of the sky, from ancient culture to artificial intelligence," adding that Biden's commitment to their bond has inspired his country to take "bold

and audacious" steps. With the US trying to wean India from relying on Russia for its military equipment needs, imploring it to take an unambiguous stand on the Ukraine conflict, and play a more empowered role as a strategic counterweight to China, Biden described the India-US relationship as one of the most defining relationships in the 21st century.

"With your cooperation, we have strengthened the Quad for a free, open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Decades from now, people will look back and say that the Quad bent the arc of history for the global good," Biden said.

The US President said the two countries are working "together" to eliminate poverty, expand access to healthcare, address climate change, and tackle food and energy insecurity triggered by the Russian war on Ukraine. He said the exchange of critical and emerging technology would be the pillar of the India-US next-generation partnership, which comes at a once-in-a-generation inflexion point in world affairs. Biden stressed the two countries could showcase the greatness of democratic values with their example and commitment to equality of law, freedom of expression, plurality, diversity of people, tolerance and opportunity for all.

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