

Trump asks Modi to procure more security equipment from the US

BOLSTERING TIES. Seeks fair trading relationship; threatens India, China and Brazil with tariffs at Florida retreat

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US President Donald Trump has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to move towards a fair bilateral trading relationship and buy more American-made security equipment in tune with his much-publicised grouse against India for charging "tremendously high" import tariffs on American products.

Shortly after his telephone conversation with the Indian PM on Monday, Trump issued a tariff threat to India, China and Brazil calling them "terrible tariff makers" in his address to House Republicans at a Florida retreat. "The President emphasised the importance of India increasing its procurement of American-made security equipment and moving toward a fair bilateral trading relationship," per a readout of Trump's interaction with Modi shared by the White House.

This was Modi's first interaction with Trump after he officially took over as US President on January 20. Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar had attended Trump's inaugural function in Washington DC at the in-



LOOKING AHEAD. Modi and Trump also discussed plans for the Indian PM to visit the White House and for India to host Quad leaders for the first time later this year. REUTERS

vitiation of the US government. Modi and Trump also discussed plans for the Indian PM to visit the White House and for India to host Quad leaders for the first time later this year.

"The leaders discussed plans for Prime Minister Modi to visit the White House, underscoring the strength of the friendship and strategic ties between our nations," the readout noted.

TARIFF THREAT

The bonhomie notwithstanding, Trump spewed fire upon India, China and Brazil on Tuesday, accusing the countries of meaning harm to the US. "We're going to

put tariffs on outside countries and people that really mean harm to us. Well... they mean us harm but they basically want to make their country good. China is a tremendous tariff-maker and India, Brazil, and so many other countries. (But) we're not going to let that happen any longer... because we're going to put America first," Trump declared to cheering fellow Republicans at the Florida retreat.

Trump's emphasis on a fair bilateral trading relationship in his call with Modi was in line with his focus on reducing America's trade deficit with partner countries. He had described India as "tariff king" during his elec-

tion campaign and warned of reciprocal tariffs on products exported by the country.

In his America First Trade Policy brought out shortly after his swearing in earlier this week, Trump said the US Department of Commerce should recommend appropriate measures, such as a global supplemental tariff or other policies, to remedy the US' trade deficits.

TOP EXPORTER

The US is India's top export destination with exports to the country valued at \$77.5 billion in FY24, leading to a trade surplus of about \$35 billion.

The US has been long urging India to buy more defence and security equipment from the country and also simultaneously source less from Russia, which is facing economic sanctions from the Western world for its war against Ukraine.

The White House described the call between Trump and Modi as productive, where the two discussed expanding and deepening cooperation. "They also discussed a range of regional issues, including security in the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and Europe," it stated.

India's exports to the US

include engineering goods, electronic goods, gems and jewellery, pharmaceutical products, ready made garments, light crude oil and petroleum and electrical products.

India's imports from the US include mineral fuels and oils, pearls, precious and semi-precious stones, nuclear reactors boilers and machinery, electrical machinery, and others.