

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and an Exchange With Reporters

June 22, 2023

President Biden. Well, Mr. President—Mr. President—Mr. Prime Minister—[inaudible]—Modi. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for being here, and welcome back to the White House.

Almost exactly 10 years ago, when I visited Mumbai as Vice President, I emphasized how important it was for India and the United States to continue building a partnership small steps—small steps—at a time.

Over that past 10 years, those small steps have transformed into large progress. And today, the partnership between our countries is stronger than it has ever been.

We see it in our major defense partnership, now a pillar in the Indo-Pacific peace and security structure. We see it in our economic ties and efforts to promote inclusive economic growth for our people and, quite frankly, people all around the world.

And we see it in our growing cooperation on a whole range of issues: in space, emerging technologies, clean energy, global infrastructure.

And I want to thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your decision to—and hosting the G–20 this year and focusing the world on the challenges that matter not just to you and I and our countries, but to all of us.

And I look forward to discussing how we can strengthen our partnership and build a future together worthy of both our peoples, one grounded on democracy, human rights, freedom, and the rule of law.

So welcome again, Mr. Prime Minister. We have a big agenda, I think, to continue to build our progress, again, step by step, but continue to build.

Thank you for being here.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. Your Excellency, President Biden, I once again express my heartfelt gratitude to you and to Dr. Jill Biden for the hospitality and the respect that you have shown to me and my delegation and, more importantly, because you opened the doors of the White House today for the Indian American people, and they were there in thousands to witness the future of our strategic partnership.

Your Excellency, you've always been India's friend and a well-wisher for a very long time. And whenever you have gotten an opportunity, you have always given force and strength to our bilateral relations.

Excellency, 8 years ago, while addressing the U.S.-India Business Council, you had said, "Our goal is to become India's best friend." And it is this personal commitment of yours towards India that is inspiring us to take many bold and ambitious initiatives.

Today, India and the U.S. are walking shoulder to shoulder in every field, from the depths of the oceans to the heights of the skies, from ancient culture to artificial intelligence.

Excellency, whenever there is talk of relations between any two countries from a diplomatic point of view, people often talk about some formal joint statements, working groups, MOUs. All of these definitely have their own importance, but the real engine of the India-U.S. relationship is our strong people-to-people ties. And we just heard a spirited roar of that engine out on the White House lawns.

Your Excellency, as you said—and I would like to reiterate that—in today's rapidly changing global situation, all eyes are on the two largest democracies of the world: India and America.

I believe that our strategic partnership is important for welfare of the humankind, global peace and stability, and for all countries believing in democratic values. And this is important than ever before. I'm confident that, working together, we will be successful in enhancing the strengths of the whole world.

We will talk about many such issues today, and we will add new dimensions to our strategic partnership. I once again express my heartfelt gratitude to you for your friendship.

Thank you, Mr. President.

[Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.]

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you, press. *[Laughter]*

Q. Mr. President, was it a mistake to call Xi a "dictator"?

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, can you speak to the treatment of Muslims in India right now?

Q. Do you regret calling Xi a "dictator"?

R. Hunter Biden

Q. Mr. President, how's Hunter feeling?

[President Biden gave a thumbs-up.]

Q. Still? Hunter's feeling good?

[President Biden nodded in the affirmative.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A reporter referred to President Xi Jinping of China.

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