

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India
June 22, 2023

President Biden. Please, be seated. Thank you.

Well, good afternoon. The Prime Minister and I have just finished a very productive meeting.

And the Prime Minister—I know you've got to get up to Capitol Hill very soon and to address the Joint Session of Congress. It's a testament to the strong and enduring and thoroughly bipartisan support that exists all across the United States for the friendship and partnership between India and the United States that the—they're anxiously waiting to hear you up on Capitol Hill.

A partnership that is among the most consequential in the world, that is stronger, closer, and more dynamic than any time in history. Mr. Prime Minister, we've met many times over the past few years, most recently in Hiroshima at the G-7 summit. And each time, I was struck by our ability to find new areas of cooperation. Together, we're unlocking a shared future of what I believe to be unlimited potential.

And with this visit, we're demonstrating once more how India and the United States are collaborating on nearly every human endeavor and delivering progress across the board, for—from designing new ways to diagnose and treat illnesses like cancer and diabetes; to collaborating on human spaceflight including sending an Indian astronaut to the International Space Station in 2024; to accelerating a global clean energy transition and tackling climate—the climate crisis we face; to harnessing our shared expertise on critical and emerging technologies like quantum computing and artificial intelligence to ensuring they are not used as tools of misinformation and oppression.

We are doubling down on our cooperation to secure our semiconductor supply chains, advancing Open RAN telecommunications networks, and growing our major defense partnership with the more joint exercises, more cooperation between our defense industries, and more consultation and coordination across all domains.

Our economic relationship is booming. Trade between our countries has almost doubled over the past decade to more than \$191 billion, supporting tens of thousands of good jobs in both India and the United States.

Add to that: One million American jobs across 44 States will be supported by the purchase of more than 200—more than 200—American-made Boeing aircraft by—that Air India is announcing earlier this year.

And with this visit, Indian firms are announcing more than \$2 billion—more than \$2 billion—in new investments in manufacturing—in solar in Colorado, steel in Ohio, and optic fiber in South Carolina, and much more. Further proof that America's manufacturing is back.

We're expanding educational exchanges for our students, building on the record 125,000 student visas for Indians to study in the United States we issued last year and opening new consulates that's going to make it easier for our people to travel, work, and collaborate together.

On the issues that matter most and that will define the future, our nations look to one another, including on critical regional and global issues.

And 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 U.N. Charter: sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We discussed our work through the Quad and how India and the United States, together with Australia and Japan, can ensure the vital Indo-Pacific region remains free, open, prosperous, and secure.

Through our new I2U2 grouping with Israel and the U.A.E., we're building regional connections to the Middle East and spurring science-based solutions and—to the global challenges, like food security and clean energy.

And this year, under India's leadership of the G-20, we're putting sustainable development at the center of the agenda. We're delivering meaningful action on low- and middle-income nations, including multilateral development bank reform, debt relief, and building resilient and equitable health systems. The bottom line is simple: We want people everywhere to have the opportunity to live in dignity.

And let me be—close with this: Indians and Americans are both peoples who innovate and create, turn obstacles into opportunities, who find strength in community and family, and who cherish freedom and celebrate the democratic values of universal human rights, which face challenges around the world and each—and in each of our countries, but which remain so vital to the success of each of our nations: press freedom, religious freedom, tolerance, diversity.

India now has the most populous country—is now the most populous country in the world. It's a democracy. And we understand that it is—has—it is the brilliance and the backbone of our people as diverse in talents and traditions that make us strong as a nation. It's democracies that do that.

We see that so clearly here in the United States where a vibrant Indian American community of more than 4 million strong contributes every single day to the writing of the future of our nation.

Indian Americans of every background and faith, representing the full diversity of India, are pursuing their American dream while maintaining deep connections for their Indian heritage and families.

That makes us all stronger. That is a cornerstone of this essential partnership between India and the United States. And that is why I know the friendship between our nations is only going to grow as we face the future together.

Mr. Prime Minister, the floor is yours.

Prime Minister Modi. Your Excellency, President Biden; delegates of both countries; friends from the media: *Namaskar.*

First of all, I thank President Biden for his warm words and for his positive views on India-America relations. Friends, today is a day that has special importance in the history of India-America relations. Our discussions today and the important decisions we have taken have added a new chapter to our comprehensive and global strategic partnership. They have given it a new direction and a new energy.

Friends, a trade and investment partnership between India and America is important not only for our two countries, but for the global economy as well. Today, America is India's biggest trade partner. We have decided to resolve long-pending trade-related issues and make a new beginning.

The Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technologies, iCET, has emerged as an important framework for our technical cooperation. By increasing our cooperation in fields such as artificial

intelligence, semiconductors, space, quantum, and telecom, we are creating a strong and futuristic partnership. The decision taken by American companies such as Micron, Google, and Applied Materials to invest in India symbolizes this futuristic partnership.

During this journey, I also had the opportunity to meet some other American CEOs. And in my discussions with them, I could feel their enthusiasm and their positive views about India. We both agree that to make a strategic technology partnership meaningful, it is very important that governments, businesses, and academic institutions come together.

In order to implement India and America's shared vision on clean energy transition, we have taken several important initiatives. These cover areas such as green hydrogen, wind energy, battery storage, and carbon capture.

We have also decided that in the midst of global uncertainties, India and America will, as trusted partners, create reliable, secure, and resilient global supply chains and value chains, as well.

The close defense cooperation between India and America symbolizes mutual trust and shared strategic priorities. Moving away from the old buyer-seller relationship we had earlier, we have transitioned today to a relationship involving transfer of technology, codevelopment, and coproduction.

The decision taken by General Electric to manufacture engines in India through transfer of technology is a landmark agreement. This also opens up new job opportunities in both countries. This will give our defense cooperation a new character in the times to come. The defense industries and startups of both countries are important partners in this cooperation. Bringing them together is the key objective of our defense industrial roadmap.

In the area of space, science, and technologies, we have had longstanding cooperation. By taking the decision to join the Artemis Accords, we have taken a big leap forward in our space cooperation. In fact, in short, for India and America partnership, even the sky is not the limit.

Friends, the most important pillar of our relations is our people-to-people ties. More than 4 million people of Indian origin today make significant contribution to the progress of America.

In fact, just this morning, the large number of Indians that gathered at the White House demonstrates that the Indian Americans, in fact, are the real strength behind our relations. In order to further deepen these relations, we welcome America's decision to open consulates in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad. Similarly, we will also open a new Indian consulate in Seattle.

Friends, in our meeting today, we discussed several regional and global issues. Peace and security in the Indo-Pacific is our common priority. We agree that the development and success of this region is important for the entire world.

We shared our views to enhance coordination with all countries in this region, along with our Quad partners. India and America stand shoulder to shoulder in the fight against terrorism and fundamentalism. We were in agreement that concrete actions are needed in order to end cross-border terrorism.

The COVID pandemic and the Ukraine conflict have afflicted the countries of the Global South in particular. We believe that in order to resolve these problems, it is absolutely imperative for all countries to unite.

From the very beginning of the events in Ukraine, India has laid emphasis on resolution of dispute through dialogue and diplomacy. We are completely ready to contribute in any way we can to restore peace.

Under India's G-20 Presidency, we are laying emphasis on the spirit of "One Earth, One Family, One Future." We are lending a voice to the priorities of the Global South. I thank President Biden that he has expressed support to my proposal of giving the African Union full membership of the G-20.

Friends, the core philosophy of all of our collective efforts is to strengthen democracy and democratic values and democratic order.

Two of the world's largest democracies, India and America, can together make an important contribution to global peace, stability, and prosperity. I'm confident that based on these values, we will be able to fulfill the expectations and aspirations of not only the people of our two countries, but of the entire world.

President Biden, thank you for the meaningful discussion today.

This year, during the G-20 summit, we are looking forward to welcoming you—this is myself—and all of India is looking forward to welcoming you to India.

And as the President has said, I do have another engagement after this. I need to address the Congress. So I do not want to take any more time. And I am going to stop here. Once again, President Biden, thank you very much.

President Biden. Well, the Congress is actually waiting to—and anxiously waiting to hear you.

I'm told there are two questioners: Sabrina [Sabrina Siddiqui] from the Wall Street Journal and Kumar [Kumar Rakesh; Press Trust of India] from the Trust of India.

And, Sabrina, you first.

China-U.S. Relations/India/Democratic Values

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I have a question for the Prime Minister. But first, a two-part question for you: Your comments at a fundraiser this week appear to be the first time in recent memory that a sitting U.S. President has called a Chinese leader a dictator. Did those comments about President Xi undermine or complicate the progress your administration has made in maintaining a relationship with China?

And secondly, on India: As you raise these broader issues of human rights and democracy, what is your message to those, including some members of your own party, who say that your administration is overlooking the targeting of religious minorities and crackdown on dissent in Prime Minister Modi's country?

President Biden. The answer to your first question is: No. You know, what—when we're talking to our allies and partners around the world, including India, we let the idea of my choosing and avoiding saying what I think is the facts with regard to the relationship with India—with China is—just not something I'm going to change very much.

I think we—I believe that—and I've said this for some time—that the hysteria about the relationship with China is collapsing and moving, et cetera, et cetera—we had an incident that caused some confusion, you might say. But President—but Secretary Blinken had a great trip to China. I expect to be meeting with President Xi sometime in the future, in the near term. And I don't think it's had any real consequence.

And what was your second question?

Q. So, as you raise these broader issues on—of human rights and democracy, what is your message to those—including some members of your own party—who believe that your

administration is overlooking the targeting of religious minorities and a crackdown on dissent in India?

President Biden. Well, look, the Prime Minister and I had a good discussion about democratic values. And there is a—there is the—that's the nature of our relationship: We're straightforward with each other, and we respect each other.

One of the fundamental reasons that I believe the U.S.-China relationship is not in the space it is with the U.S.- Indian relationship is that there's an overwhelming respect for each other because we're both democracies. And it's a common democratic character of both our countries that—and our people—our diversity; our culture; our open, tolerant, robust debate.

And I believe that we believe in the dignity of every citizen. And it is in America's DNA and, I believe, in India's DNA that the whole world—the whole world—has a stake in our success, both of us, in maintaining our democracies. It makes us appealing partners and enables us to expand democratic institutions across—around the world. And I believe this, and I still believe this.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, India has long prided itself as the world's largest democracy, but there are many human rights groups who say that your government has discriminated against religious minorities and sought to silence its critics. As you stand here in the East Room of the White House, where so many world leaders have made commitments to protecting democracy, what steps are you and your government willing to take to improve the rights of Muslims and other minorities in your country and to uphold free speech?

Prime Minister Modi. I'm actually really surprised that people say so. And so people don't say it. Indeed, India is a democracy.

And, as President Biden also mentioned, India and America—both countries, democracy is in our DNA. Democracy is our spirit. Democracy runs in our veins. We live democracy. And our ancestors have actually put words to this concept, and that is in the form of our constitution.

Our government has taken the basic principles of democracy. And on that basis, our constitution is made, and the entire country runs on that: our constitution and government. We have always proved that democracy can deliver. And when I say deliver, this is regardless of caste, creed, religion, gender. There's absolutely no space for discrimination.

And when you talk of democracy, if there are no human values and there is no humanity, there are no human rights, then it's not a democracy.

And that is why, when you say "democracy" and you accept democracy and when we live democracy, then there is absolutely no space for discrimination. And that is why India believes in moving ahead with everybody with trust and with everybody's efforts.

These are our foundation principles, which are the basis of how we operate, how we live our lives. In India, the benefits that are provided by the Government is accessible to all. Whoever deserves those benefits is available to everybody. And that is why, in India's democratic values, there's absolutely no discrimination neither on basis of caste, creed, or age, or any kind of geographic location.

President Biden. Kumar.

Climate Change/Conservation Efforts/Carbon Emission Reductions

Q. Yes, thanks a lot, sir. Sir, my question is on the issue of climate change. Both countries have spoken strongly about the need to tackle the climate change. But there's a view——

President Biden. Tackle what?

Audience member. Climate change.

Q. Both——

President Biden. Climate change. I'm sorry, I didn't hear you.

Q. Yes. Both countries have spoken about the challenge of climate change. But there is a view that ambitious targets are set, but implementation is found often lacking. And there is also a criticism of lack of technological transfer, financial transfer from the developed countries to the developing nations.

How do you both leaders see the way ahead on this pressing issue?

President Biden. Well, first of all, I think it is the existential threat to humanity: climate change. It's the most serious problem we face as human beings. We have to keep it below 1.5 degrees Celsius. We've made enormous progress here in the United States on dealing with this issue by doing three things.

Number one, by insisting that we move our—every one of our industries into a position where they can take advantage of cheaper and more extensive and more available renewable energy, whether it's solar or wind or hydrogen and green hydrogen. There's a whole range of things we've been working on.

In addition to that, we find ourselves in a position that—what we've done is that we have significantly reduced the—for example, I made a commitment that we are going to make sure that by 2030, 30 percent of all our land and sea and oceans were—are—were in conservation, could not be developed. We're well on our way to doing that. And that's also absorbing carbon from the air as a consequence of that, because of the conservation.

We are in a position, as well, by—we have provided for significant increase in funding for a whole range of issues, but not just for the United States, but for the rest of the world.

For example, we're working with the G-7 to provide for infrastructure work for dealing with global warming on the continent of Africa: in Angola, building the largest solar project; moving ourselves—having railway to go all the way across the southern two-thirds—the—from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, in Africa, to be able to transport and do it cheaper and do it with less—how can I say it?—less carbon emissions.

We're trying to work with other countries to maintain their carbon sinks so they don't have to develop them like we did and causing pollution. And we're trying to figure out how to work out to pay them not to develop certain areas, like the Amazon in Brazil.

But there's a lot of technology that's available that we're sharing, and we share with one another. We've learned how to do solar energy, which is considerably cheaper than it is to—for fuel—for fossil fuels. The same way dealing with not just solar, but dealing with wind.

And so there's a lot of the technology that we've developed. And we're well on our way, I think, to meeting the commitment we made to—that we made in Paris. And I—and we're prepared to share all of that with India, that has a desire to do the same.

Prime Minister Modi. Excellency, you said very rightly that, as far as India is concerned, the environment, climate, these are extremely important in our cultural traditions. For us, the environment is an article of faith. This is not just something that we need to do for convenience; we believe this.

We do not believe in the exploitation of nature. In order for all of creation to work, we can make nature—but we cannot have exploitation of nature, and we have always believed this.

And on the basis of these values, we are not only doing things for ourselves, but are taking some global initiatives, as well. You perhaps know that the G-20 countries, the promises they made in Paris, of all the G-20 countries, India is the only country that has fulfilled all the promises it made at the G-20.

Not just that, in the area of solar energy, in Glasgow, we had set ourselves a target to achieve 500 gigawatts of renewable energy. By 2030, we have set ourselves a target to make Indian railways net zero.

And you must understand the scale of Indian railways. When we talk about Indian railways, it means that every day the entire population of Australia travels in our wagons—in our railway wagons, on our trains. And we have set ourselves a target to achieve net zero for our railways.

We have also set ourselves targets for solar energy, for ethanol—10 percent mix of ethanol. We have completed this target before the set date.

We are also working in the area of green hydrogen. We want India to be a green hydrogen hub, and we are working towards this.

In—and the International Solar Alliance has been launched by India, and many countries have joined it and are working with India. The island countries, we have helped them in the area of solar energy so that they have now got a new confidence that we are with them in their efforts to fight climate change. And we will not only fulfill our responsibilities, but we will also help you in the area of climate change.

We have seen that due to natural calamities—people talk about the death of people, no doubt, when there are natural disasters, but there is a lot of destruction of infrastructure as well.

And therefore, because of climate change, the kind of crisis we are feeling, we need to develop infrastructure that is resilient. And therefore, we have created a global organization called CDRI. And you perhaps know that in Glasgow I presented a subject to the world. And recently, it was launched by the U.N. Secretary General and myself. That is Mission LiFE. And when I say "LiFE," I mean "Lifestyle for the Environment." Therefore, every individual must live his life in a pro-environment, pro-development way. And we are working towards this.

And I am sure that whatever work India has started in all these areas—not because India has adversely affected the environment of the world; we are doing this because we have a concern for future generations. We do not want to give our future generations a world that make life difficult for them.

And therefore, as a global responsibility, India has not caused any problems to the environment. However, we are playing a leading role in contributing in a positive manner.

As far as prosperous countries are concerned, there's always been talk about technology transfer, financial support, and there are some countries that need to have technology transfer, financial support. And we hope that as soon as we can move forward in this area, we will be able to solve this challenge of climate change. Thank you very much.

President Biden. Let me add one thing. We have caused damage in the United States the way we developed over the last 300 years. And that's why I was able to convince my colleagues in the Congress to pass legislation—the largest climate fund ever in American—in the world history: \$369 billion—\$369 billion—to deal with the climate crisis.

And we are doing it extensively now, and I think you're going to see significant progress.

Thank you all very, very much.

[At this point, several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Q. Mr. President, what's your response to Republicans who say your son got special treatment? Do we have a two-tier system of justice, President?

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:41 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, Prime Minister Modi referred to Secretary-General António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres of the United Nations. Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences, India, Prime Minister Modi.

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