

# Key takeaways from PM Modi's U.S. visit: F-35 deal, Tahawwur Rana extradition, trade deals, and more

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THE HINDU BUREAU



Prime Minister Narendra Modi signs the visitor's book in the presence of U.S. President Donald Trump, at The White House in Washington. | Photo Credit: ANI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump discussed a wide range of issues ranging from weapons sales and extradition of 26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana to trade deals when they met in Washington.

Mr. Modi arrived in the U.S. from France on Wednesday (February 12, 2024). He was hosted by Mr. Trump on Thursday (February 13, 2024) for their two-day bilateral talks since the Republican leader assumed the U.S. presidency for a second term last month.

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During the talks, India and the U.S. decided to have strategic ties in various critical areas including defence, energy security, technology, and trade. They also discussed their views on current international developments of mutual interest.

During this two-day visit to the U.S., Mr. Modi also met key American officials, including National Security Advisor Michael Waltz and Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard.

He also interacted with prominent business leaders, including SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, who leads the newly formed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), and Indian-American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy.

Here are some of the key takeaways from the high-stakes meeting.

## **U.S. will sell F-35 stealth fighter jets to India**

Mr. Trump offered to sell state-of-the-art fighter jets to India as he and Mr. Modi vowed to ramp up trade, rekindling a bond that defies the new U.S. administration's punitive approach to much of the world. Successive U.S. administrations have seen India as a key partner with like-minded interests in the face of a rising China, and Mr. Trump announced that the new administration was ready to **sell one of the top U.S. military prizes — F-35s.**

“Starting this year, we’ll be increasing military sales to India by many billions of dollars,” Mr. Trump told a joint news conference with Mr. Modi.

“We’re also paving the way to ultimately provide India with the F-35 stealth fighters,” Mr. Trump said.

## **Defence partnership**

A new ten-year framework for the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership is set to be signed this year. The U.S. will also expand defence sales and co-production with India to strengthen interoperability and defence industrial cooperation. A review of International

Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) will be done in order to streamline defence trade, technology exchange and maintenance, spare supplies and in-country repair and overhaul of U.S.-provided defence systems.

## **Tahawwur Rana extradition**

Mr. Trump has announced that his administration has approved the extradition of “very evil” Tahawwur Rana, wanted by Indian probe agencies for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, “to face justice in India”.

He said, “Today I am pleased to announce that my administration has approved the extradition of one of the plotters and very evil people of the world, and having to do with the horrific Mumbai terrorist attack, to face justice in India. So, he is going back to India to face justice.”

The extradition of Rana was cleared by the U.S. Supreme Court in January as it rejected his review petition in the case. India last month said it was working with American authorities for the early extradition of Rana.

## **\$500 billion bilateral trade as part of ‘Mission 500’**

In an ambitious move, India and the U.S. agreed to conclude the first phase of a mutually beneficial ambitious trade pact by this year and set a target of \$500 billion in annual bilateral trade by 2030 even as President Donald Trump asserted that Washington will not spare New Delhi from reciprocal tariffs.

“To this end, the leaders set a bold new goal for bilateral trade – ‘Mission 500’ – aiming to more than double total bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030,” a joint statement said.

## **Energy security**

Mr. Trump announced that he and Mr. Modi agreed on a deal that would facilitate India to import more US oil and gas to bring down Washington’s trade deficit. The U.S. will also support India to join the International Energy Agency as a full member.

“fully realize the U.S.- India 123 Civil Nuclear Agreement — by moving forward with plans to work together to build U.S.-designed nuclear reactors in India through large scale localization and possible technology transfer.” the statement said.

## **People-to-people initiatives**

Mr. Modi said India is willing to **take back its nationals if they live illegally in the United States** and emphasised on the need to finish the “ecosystem” of human trafficking. It was also decided that India will strengthen collaborations between the higher education institutions through efforts such as joint/dual degree and twinning programs, establishing joint Centres of Excellence, and setting up of offshore campuses of premier educational institutions of the U.S. in India. Law enforcement cooperation will be strengthened to take decisive action against organized crime syndicates, including narco-terrorists, human and arms traffickers as well as other elements who threaten public and diplomatic safety and security, and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both nations.

## **India’s position on peace**

Mr. Modi welcomed the efforts made by Mr. Trump towards **resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict** and reiterated India’s position that the conflict should be resolved on the negotiating table. He also reiterated that India’s stance in the conflict is not neutral, but rather it is on the side of peace. The Prime Minister emphasised that he has himself met leaders of both Russia and Ukraine and also pointed to his ‘this is not an era of war’ remark that he made in the presence of Russian President Putin.

## **India to host Trump in Quad Summit**

**Mr. Modi invited Mr. Trump to India for the upcoming Quad Leaders’ Summit. According to the statement, both leaders have “reaffirmed commitment to Quad and Indo-Pacific.” Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) is an alliance between India, U.S., Australia and Japan.**

## **Opportunities in tech and space collaboration**

**Mr. Modi discussed opportunities in space, mobility,** technology, energy and exchanged notes on efforts at good governance in India and the U.S. with SpaceX CEO Elon Musk.

“Had a very good meeting with @elonmusk in Washington DC. We discussed various issues, including those he is passionate about such as space, mobility, technology and innovation,” Mr. Modi said in a post on X.

“I talked about India’s efforts towards reform and furthering ‘Minimum Government, Maximum Governance’,” he added.

“Prime Minister Modi and Mr Musk discussed strengthening collaboration between Indian and US entities in innovation, space exploration, artificial intelligence, and sustainable development. Their discussion also touched on opportunities to deepen cooperation in emerging technologies, entrepreneurship and good governance,” the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

**Narendra Modi**    
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