

# India, U.S. ties entering a new chapter: Biden



President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi meet in the Oval Office of the White House on September 24, 2021. | Photo Credit: [Sriram Lakshman](#)

## Indian talent to be a full partner in this relationship: Modi.

Sitting in the Oval Office, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Joe Biden kicked off their bilateral talks, with comments on the promise of the India-U.S. relationship, the areas they would work on like COVID-19 and climate and the importance of the diaspora. Their opening remarks were sprinkled with jokes and laughter, interspersed with a serious outlining of the discussions ahead.

Both leaders suggested that the countries were at an inflection point in their relationship. Mr. Modi spoke of a “transformative” decade ahead and Mr. Biden spoke about a “new chapter” in ties.

Mr. Modi said that under Mr. Biden’s leadership the seeds had been sown for India-U.S. relations to expand and that they were entering a “transformative phase”. In this context, he mentioned the growing importance of people-to-people ties, and said Indian talent would be a “full partner” in this relationship.

Narendra Modi in U.S. | [Live updates](#)

Mr. Biden, who spoke first, said the two countries were launching a “new chapter” in bilateral ties, taking on some of the toughest challenges, starting with COVID-19. He also said climate and ensuring stability in the Indo-Pacific, including with Quad partners, would be on the agenda for talks.

The U.S.-India relationship could help solve an “awful lot” of the world’s challenges, he said. “I think that the relationship between India and the United States, two of the largest democracies in the world, is destined to be stronger, closer and tighter, and I think it can benefit the whole world,” Mr. Biden added.

Mr. Modi’s remarks also made reference to the bilateral relationship having a more global positive impact.

While there were overlaps in their remarks, there were some asymmetries as well. Mr. Modi alone raised the topic of trade, saying it would continue to stay important and that trade between the two countries was complimentary.

“There are things that you have and there are things that we have, and then we in fact complement each other. And I find that the area of trade during this decade is also going to be tremendously important,” he said. Mr. Biden did not bring up trade.

The President said the India-U.S. partnership was rooted in democratic values. “Our partnership is more than just what we do. It’s about who we are. It’s rooted in our shared responsibility to uphold democratic values, our joint commitment to diversity, and it’s about family ties, including four million Indian Americans who make the United States stronger every single day,” he said.

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Mr. Modi, during his remarks, said both countries were committed to democratic values and traditions. “I find that importance of these traditions will only increase further,” he said.

Mahatma Gandhi was invoked by both sides – but in different contexts.

The Prime Minister talked about Gandhi’s idea of trusteeship of the planet and how that idea would be especially important in the decade ahead, globally and also for the bilateral relationship.

The President spoke of Gandhi’s values of tolerance and the Prime Minister of his idea of trusteeship of the planet.

“As the world celebrates Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday next week, we’re all reminded that his message of non violence, respect, tolerance, matters today maybe more than it ever has,” Mr. Biden said.

There were lighthearted moments as well.

Mr. Biden told Mr. Modi that the seat the Prime Minister was sitting on is used almost daily by an Indian-American (Vice-President Kamala Harris). Mr. Biden talked about Ms. Harris’ mother being from India, adding that she was a “remarkable” woman.

The President said he had been contacted by a Biden from Mumbai and was not able to follow up whether they were related. On a visit to India, somebody informed him that there were five Bidens in the country, he said, mentioning a Captain George Biden of the East India Tea Company [sic].

“That’s hard for an Irishman to admit. I shouldn’t be so casual,” Mr. Biden said looking, partly at the press, and said he hoped his humour was being understood.

The Prime Minister later said , to laughter, that he had brought along some genealogy papers for Mr. Biden to take a look.