

## Transcript of Media Briefing by Foreign Secretary on Prime Minister's meeting with Vice President of USA during his visit to Singapore

November 14, 2018

**Official Spokesperson, Shri Raveesh Kumar:** Good afternoon and thank you for joining us for this special briefing. This briefing is only on Prime Minister's meeting with the Vice President of the United States which just concluded before we joined here for this press interaction. I have with me the Foreign Secretary of India, Shri Vijay Gokhale who will brief us on that meeting.

Later in the evening we will have another briefing on the other aspects of the Prime Minister's visit i.e. East Asia Summit as well as ASEAN. Sir the floor is yours.

**Foreign Secretary, Shri Vijay Gokhale:** Thank you. I am here to share what I can on the meeting which has just concluded between our Prime Minister and Vice President Pence of the United States.

It was a very good meeting, I can tell you it was a very positive meeting. There was a great deal of positive energy in the room. Vice President Pence was gracious enough to recall his meeting with the Prime Minister in Washington in 2017 and Prime Minister in turn appreciated very much that Vice President Pence took out some time from his busy schedule to meet our Prime Minister.

Prime Minister also conveyed great appreciation that President Trump had organized a meeting in the White House yesterday to celebrate the Indian festival of Deepawali. The discussions touched both upon bilateral relations as well as on regional and international issues and our Prime Minister referred to new opportunities for our bilateral relations under the Trump Administration since President Trump took office.

Vice President Pence specifically acknowledged that India has made substantial progress economically as well as diplomatically in regional and international affairs. He appreciated the strong leadership that Prime Minister Modi has shown, he felt that India is a positive factor in regional and international relations and he said that United States looks forward greatly to working with India on various issues both on political side and economic side to ensure that we have a fair rules based international order and Prime Minister reciprocated that sentiment.

Both of the leaders also of course also referred to the shared values we have, shared commitment to democracy, our shared commitment to a rules based order, our

shared commitment to constitutional processes. The leaders felt it was important to emphasize such issues at this point in time. It was the basis, the very foundation of a new partnership between the India and the United States and we also therefore agreed that in international forums we should be on the basis of our shared values, we should build up possible cooperation in a number of areas.

Obviously the Indo-Pacific did come up for discussion. Prime Minister referred to his speech here in Singapore in June at the Shangri-La Dialogue in which he had outlined India's vision of the Indo-Pacific. We conveyed to Vice President Pence that this vision of Indo-Pacific was gaining acceptability and that we should utilize the upcoming East Asia Summit to further build up on that.

Vice President Pence also spoke of a free and open Indo-Pacific. He felt that India's contribution in ensuring this would be important and we then discussed how both sides can strengthen cooperation in this area to ensure that this is an area of growth, of prosperity, of development and of benefit for the countries of the region in the future.

On bilateral issues, we had a brief discussion on trade related matters. That is important for both sides and we agreed that in a new relationship that we are building with the United States where trade is expanding we need to find ways in which we can help that process to take place.

Prime Minister remarked in the last two years, i.e. the two years when President Trump assumed office American exports to India have grown by 50%. It is perhaps one of the countries, perhaps the only one, of the top ten countries with which the United States has a trade deficit where the deficit has actually reduced last year and is on course to further reduce this year and this is important from the perspective of the United States.

There was a lot of discussion on energy, this is a new sector in the Indo-US relations. We have begun importing oil & gas from United States. It is expected to be valued about \$4 billion this year and we expressed our readiness to import more oil and more gas from the United States as a way of expanding our trade.

Another area which we felt also would be important on the economic front would be the defense sector. There of course both sides agreed that there had been a substantial enhancement in our defense relationship, in our imports of equipment from the United States but Prime Minister in particular stressed that there was a great opportunity for United States in India in making defense equipment and setting

up defense industry in India. Not only that India is a substantial market but because the way we are placed regionally we can become a hub for exports to the rest of the region.

So he conveyed to the Vice President Pence that he hoped that Trump Administration would recognize this as a new opportunity, as a new economic opportunity as well. There were some discussions on how we should enhance this sort of trade in addition of course there was appreciation of the outcomes of the recently held Ministerial 2+2 and on the follow up to the 2+2, both on the foreign policy side and on the defense side.

There was some discussion on the issue of terrorism and Vice President Pence referred to the coming 10th anniversary of the Mumbai Terror Attacks, which is 26/11. In this context he greatly appreciated the cooperation which has been built between the United States and India on counter-terrorism and in response, the Prime Minister, while thanking him for these words also reminded him that in one way or another all the traces or all the leads in global terror attacks ultimately leads to a single source, a single place of origin and in that context he did point out that the mainstreaming of the people involved in Mumbai Terror Attacks in a political process which had taken place in a recent election in Pakistan should be a matter of serious concern not just to the two countries i.e. India and United States but to the International community.

So there was some good understanding on the area of how we move forward in building cooperation on counter-terrorism and both countries recognized that this is a challenge which we will have to fight together and to fight along with the rest of the international community.

There was also some discussion which originated from the appreciation Prime Minister expressed on President Trump's hosting the Diwali event on the contributions that have been made by the Americans of Indian origins, the Indian-American community for the last three decades economically, culturally, in terms of integration, in terms of building or helping the building of democracy and in this context Prime Minister conveyed to the Vice President that Indians when they come to the United States not only bring their talent and capacity to innovate, capacity to excel but also they are imbued in democratic values. That is a tradition in India which they carried to the United States and therefore the value addition is in economic terms but also in building the political and social fabric of United States. And in that context the Prime Minister therefore expressed the hope that this would be the approach that United States might take when it looks at the whole issue of the H1B

visa and this was appreciated by Vice President Pence.

Finally the Prime Minister reminded Vice President Pence then that he had invited him to visit India and Vice President Pence has conveyed that he is ready to accept that invitation and that he will make a visit to India at a mutually convenient time in 2019. So overall I think it was a very positive meeting, it was an important meeting for both sides. There was a sense of convergence both on bilateral issues and on global issues and we look forward to taking the relationship now in the coming months and in 2019. Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

**Official Spokesperson, Shri Raveesh Kumar:** Thank you very much. We are rushing against time so we cannot take any questions right now. There is a meeting and after that we have to go to another one. Please reserve your questions for the briefing which will take place this evening. Thank you very much for joining.

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