



EAM's Visit to US

Why in News

Recently, India's **External Affairs Minister (EAM)** on his visit to the US met **American lawmakers, National Security Advisor, Defense Secretary, [U.S. Trade Representative \(USTR\)](#) and representatives from the private sector.**

- Earlier, the Prime Minister of India and US President **had a conversation** on issues **[related to supply chains](#)** for **[vaccines for Covid-19](#)**.
- India also participated in the **[Leaders' Summit on Climate](#)** which was convened by the US President virtually.

Key Points

▪ Major Discussions:

- Regional (**[Indo-Pacific](#)**) or global issues, Afghanistan and on **further developing the India-US strategic and defence partnership.**
- **Vaccine cooperation, contemporary security challenges, support for efficient and robust supply chains, among others.**
- The **U.S. India Business Council (USIBC)** meeting included a discussion on how the private sector, working via a consortium of 40 companies called the '**Global Task Force for Pandemic Response**', could **"support India's health infrastructure and further ways to continue relief efforts.**
- The USIBC was **formed in 1975** as a business advocacy organization to enlighten and encourage the private sectors of both **India and the US to enhance investment flows.**

▪ India's Stand:

- The **US military has played a key role** in the US's efforts to **assist India as it battles a devastating wave of Covid-19.**
- **Trade, technology & business cooperation are at the core** of strategic partnership which must be enhanced further for **post-Covid economic recovery.**
- Welcomed US's **positive stance on [Intellectual property rights \(IPR\)](#) issues & support for efficient & robust supply chains.**

▪ US' Stand:

- Both are **united in confronting Covid-19 together**, in dealing with the challenge posed by **[climate change](#)**, to partner together directly, through **[QUAD \(Quadrilateral Framework\)](#)** and other institutions in the **[United Nations](#)** in dealing with many of the challenges of the region and around the world.

▪ Mutual Stand:

- **People-to-people ties and shared values are the foundation of the U.S.-India strategic partnership** that is helping to end the pandemic, supporting a **free and open Indo-Pacific**, and providing **global leadership on climate change.**

- Welcomed **cooperation that has resulted in the delivery of over USD 500 million in relief materials** (state, federal and private sector sources) from the U.S. to India.

Current State of India-US Ties

▪ Defence:

- India and US inked important defence pacts in the last few years and also **formalised the four nation alliance of QUAD**.
 - The alliance is seen as an **important counter to China in the Indo-Pacific**.
- The **Malabar exercise in November 2020 portrayed a high point in Indo-US strategic ties**, it was the first time in 13 years that all four countries of QUAD came together sending a fir message to China.
- India now has **access to american bases from Djibouti in Africa to Guam in the Pacific**. It can also access **advanced communication technology used in US defence**.

▪ Trade:

- The previous US government ended India's special trade status and also imposed several bans, India also retaliated with bans on 28 US products.
- Current **US government has allowed all the bans by the previous government to expire**.

▪ Indian Diaspora:

- There is a **growing presence of Indian diaspora in all spheres** in the US. For example the current Vice-President (Kamala Harris) of the US has a strong Indian connection.
- There are **several Indian origin people holding strong leadership positions** in the current US administration.

▪ Covid-Cooperation:

- When the US was reeling under a deadly Covid wave last year, **India rushed important medical supplies and eased export restrictions** to help the country.
- Initially the US showed hesitancy in returning the favour when India needed it, however the US quickly changed its stance and **rushed supplies to India**.

Way Forward

- There is a **huge potential to boost bilateral trade** between the countries especially on account of **increasing anti-China sentiment in both the nations**.
- Thus, the **negotiation should focus on the resolution of various non-tariff barriers** and other market access improvements as early as possible.
- In **order to counter China in the maritime domain, India needs to fully engage with the US** and other partners in the Indo-pacific region, in order to preserve the freedom of navigation and the rules-based order.
- In international politics, **there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies, only permanent interests**. In such a scenario India must continue to pursue its foreign policy of **strategic hedging**.

Source: TH