

## **Modi's visit to US signals strengthening of bilateral relationship, say experts**

**NEW DELHI, 28 June 2017:** Even as images float on TV channels and the print media of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump in expressive embrace when the two leaders met in Washington DC on Monday, **a panel discussion here under the aegis of FICCI in partnership with Brookings India took stock of Mr. Modi's visit to the US.**

The panelist were **Mr. Constantino Xavier, Fellow, Carnegie India; Dr. A. Didar Singh, Secretary General, FICCI and Ms. Indrani Bagchi, Diplomatic Editor of The Times of India.** The discussion was moderated by **Mr. Dhruva Jaishankar, Fellow, Foreign Policy, Brookings Institution India Center.**

Mr. Xavier pointed out that after a decade of a formidable relationship between India and the US, Mr. Modi's visit was a success in view of the low expectations post the ascendancy of Mr. Trump as the US President. The democratic and liberal nature of the two countries would cement the relationship further. This is exemplified by the fact that during the first six months of the Trump Presidency, India has reached out to 13 US Senators and several Congressional delegations have visited this country in a bid to strengthen bilateral ties, Mr. Xavier said.

Over the longer term, the strong advocates on both sides would establish the strength of the India-US relationship, among them being over 500 US companies operating in India and the strong business-to business connections that this brings in its train.

Dr. Didar Singh, on his part, affirmed that the India-US relationship was now back on track and was multi-dimensional as it had a strong bearing on ties relating to defence, security, trade, investment, education, and tourism. He said that the two countries mattered significantly to one another and this was borne out by the jobs created in the US through its investment and exports to India. The current level of export activities create 2.6 lakh jobs in the US. If the investment spinoff is considered, the job figure gets doubled, he said.

He alluded to the 50 bilateral dialogues that are currently on between the Indian and US governments on topics ranging from defense and trade to energy, education, health, space, and science. Six US presidents have made a total of seven trips to India since relations were established, while nine Indian prime ministers and one president have made a total of 30 trips to the US. He said that the US-India Entrepreneurship Summit, slated for November this year in India, was a step forward in the bilateral ties.

On the issue of H1B visa, Dr. Singh said that the issue was important but far too much was being made out of it. While human resource mobility is important, economic engagements are multifaceted and diverse.

Ms. Bagchi felt that the sharpest language in the joint statement issued at the conclusion of Mr. Modi's visit was reserved for Pakistan and terrorism. She said that the description of Pakistan as a safe haven for terrorism was a welcome stance from India's standpoint and the labelling of Syed Salauddin as a global terrorist was a signal for the larger Kashmir narrative.

She said the relationship between the two countries was transformational and was reflective of the dramatic changes taking place in India on the economic and social fronts.

## **FICCI MEDIA DIVISION**