

US President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden to lead high decibel US engagement with India

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Washington: US President Barack Obama along with Vice President Joe Biden and several of his Cabinet ministers are all set for a high-level engagement with the Indian leadership in a series of meetings later this month.

This would be the highest level of engagement between the two countries after Obama's trip to New Delhi in January to attend the Republic Day parade as the chief guest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Obama and Modi are expected to meet in New York on September 28.

While no official announcement has been made yet, the proposed meeting itself is a reflection of the seriousness and commitment of the two leaders to this bilateral relationship.

On a day, which is said to be one of the busiest days for the US President given his address to the UN General Assembly on the first day of the annual session, Obama's schedulers had a tough time in creating space for his meeting with Modi.

Modi, on the other hand for all practical purpose would be taking an overnight flight - although it would be Air India One - from Silicon Valley on September 27 after addressing the Indian-Americans at the SAP Center in San Jose to be back to Big Apple for his likely meeting with Obama.

Notably in the January joint statement, the two leaders had committed themselves for a more regular meeting.

Modi-Obama meeting in New York would cap more than a week of high level India-US engagement - most of which would be held in Washington DC.

It is learnt that Vice President Biden is himself keen to be part of this highest level of India-US engagement. It was Biden who, during his visit to India a few years ago, had set the ambitious goal of increasing the bilateral trade from the current USD 100 billion to USD 500 billion per annum.

It is in this backdrop, it might not be surprising that Biden is seen taking a lead once again when it comes to the economic dimension of the India US relationship.

Several cabinet ranking officials along with corporate leaders from both the countries are expected to be present at the 40th Anniversary Leadership Summit of the US-India Business Council (USIBC) on September 21.

Among others it would be attended by Energy Minister Piyush Goyal and Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and US Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker along with who's who of corporate leaders from the two countries. The next day TERI North America would host the 6th India-US Energy Partnership Summit.

Goyal would meet his US counterpart Ernest Moniz.

However, it is the first ever India-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue hosted by Secretary of State John Kerry at the Foggy Bottom would be the center of attraction.

While, the dates of this dialogue has not been announced yet, it is most likely to be held on September 22.

Given the upcoming State visit of the Chinese President and that of the Pope to Washington, officials of the two countries are still giving a final shape to the program.

The decision to expand India-US Strategic Dialogue to Commercial one was taken during Obama's January visit to India.

Kerry along with Pritzker would lead the US delegation, while the Indian delegation would be led by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Sitharaman.

Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar will also be expected to be part of the Indian delegation. Indian Ambassador to the US Arun K Singh and his American counterpart in India Richard Verma would also be part of their respective teams.

- PTI