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I GET ALONG VERY WELL WITH PM MODI. HE'S A FRIEND OF MINE... I LOOK FORWARD TO BEING WITH THE PEOPLE OF INDIA

Donald Trump, before leaving for India



The US President waves as he boards Air Force One

Time for Namaste Trump as India & US Mop Up Gains



Trade deal failure won't cloud visit; defence and energy provide silver lining

Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: US President Donald Trump, the fourth US President to visit India in two decades, will arrive to a historic welcome in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat amid hopes of forging closer defence and energy ties. The much sought after trade deal, however, remains elusive.

Trump, who has pursued reworked bilateral trade deals as the centrepiece of his foreign policy, did not hide his disappointment ahead of the trip, but has remained enthusiastic on the overall prospects.

His endorsement of a meme 'USA and India united' on Sunday, which portrayed him as Bahubali from the mega blockbuster, carried the message from the US President: "Look so forward to being with my great friends in India."

From an Indian standpoint, the visit is another opportunity for the prime minister to strengthen his personal chemistry with Trump.

Both sides have a congruence of views on having a stable Indo-Pacific region, expand the energy basket and build a coalition.

While attempts to clinch a trade deal have not fructified, defence and energy ties in particular are expected to get a leg up when the two leaders meet in New Delhi on Tuesday for the summit meet.

Key energy deals and defence purchases are expected to be concluded. Ways to deepen the partnership to counter China will also be a key conversation among the two leaders.

Trump will cover three cities in his short visit – Ahmedabad, Agra, where he will see the Taj Mahal; and Delhi.

In Ahmedabad, he is expected to address an audience of more than 100,000 people in the "Namaste Trump" event.

This follows the "Howdy, Modi!" extravaganza in Houston last year, where Modi and Trump addressed an audience of 50,000 Indians living in the US.

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➤ PAGE 2