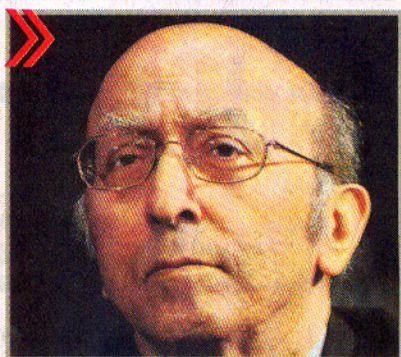


Indo-US ties: A 26-Point Agenda

Tarun Das, former chief mentor of The Confederation Of Indian Industry (CII), suggests a charter of action on the eve of PM Manmohan Singh's visit to US

Over five decades of distance and mistrust have been gradually replaced by an evolving friendship and partnership, cooperation and collaboration between India and the US. There is still much distance to travel because mutual suspicions still remain in different corners of the bilateral relationship. The visit of PM Manmohan Singh to the US could be the right time to move ahead, together. Here's an A to Z roadmap for going forward



Aviation: Going beyond the few direct, non-stop flights connecting India and US, there should be 20 non-stop flights daily connecting different cities on both sides.

Business: The target for this, taking trade and investment, should be \$100 billion (to move forward to \$200 billion). We should have a bilateral investment treaty and an online portal for small enterprises on both sides to connect. The India-US CEO forum must make these happen.

Climate: There should be collaboration in energy and environment beyond where it is today. A private sector-led Indo-US Climate Change Centre would make sense, adding to the Green Business Centre (GBC) in Hyderabad which focuses on Indo-US cooperation in energy efficiency. C is also for capital markets, for cooperation in financial regulation, corporate governance, insider trading issues, etc.

Defence: A beginning has been made but progress is slow because of concerns and insecurities. This cooperation is critical for international security and must go beyond expanding dialogue, defence purchase by India, joint exercises and a somewhat flexible offset policy against US defence sales to India.

Education: The 100,000 plus Indian students in US could be raised by 50%; Indian investment in top American universities is desirable. American institutions also need to open in India. There should be cooperation in disabilities training, vocational education, curriculum flexibility and student-level exchanges.

Food: With 60% of India in the villages, the Green Revolution with US partnership in the 60s needs revisiting. This time, the focus should be on R&D, technology, productions, storage, warehousing, distribution, nutrition and high value agriculture. An industry-led Indo-US Institute of Agribusiness Management and Technology makes sense.

Going Green: Green factories, green homes, green schools, green buildings all of this should drive our environment agenda. The Indian Green Building Council and the US Green Building Council partnership is the foundation for this.

Healthcare: This is beyond medical tourism. India's challenges to provide quality healthcare to a billion-plus

means upgrading hospital standards, expanding training, developing R&D, NGO collaboration, all of which represent a massive joint agenda for strong mutual benefits.

Infrastucture: With India set to spend \$500 billion on building infrastructure like roads, ports, railway, airports, etc, US participation through investments, sale of equipment, consultancy, and training, is crucial. A joint group on infrastructure needs to go beyond the macro and work on the micro and implement projects.

Judiciary: The American judicial experience, technology and systems would help immensely to clear the backlog of cases and usher in best practices.

Knowledge: This includes technology transfer; intellectual property rights (IPR) protection, innovation, nanotechnology, standards, all of which result in deep exchanges and mutual development at lower costs.

Leadership: Partnerships such as the one between Aspen Institute, USA and Aspen Institute, India, should be replicated to help build value-based young leaders using a unique methodology and encompassing all segment of society.

Media: And, of course, entertainment. The film industries of the two countries are the biggest in the world and cooperation is just about beginning. The potential here is huge.

Nuclear: The civil nuclear agreement dominated the bilateral landscape for over three years. It's now time to implement and establish, jointly, nuclear power plants that will promote clear energy.

Omnipatient: Or to endure all things, including to listen to each other and not to lecture each other. It will be a new experience for both Indians and Americans. To be patient. To try to understand. To learn to trust.

People: People to people links have happened long before the two governments developed links or did businesses. It needs to be enlarged. India centres in American cities are required.

Quest: For R&D, space exploration, underwater exploration, ocean development technology, weather forecasting and much more that need to be central to the bilateral agenda.

Reforms: Both nations need these to happen, in a calibrated way and through consultation and collaboration. It should happen across economy and society. Two open democracies can support each other in minimizing mistakes and help make the future more stable.

Security: It's an essential cooperation to deal with terrorism. It involves sharing intelligence and technology, training and equipment.

Training: Good training of both young and the old would empower people of the both countries. It's an enormous area of potential partnership.

United Nations: History shows years of differences between India and US at UN. It's time now to bridge the gap and help frame consensus on global issues. US support for India for a permanent seat on the UNSC would help move the process.

Visas: Actually, it's more than just visas; it's about freer travel both ways, especially since more and more Americans are relocating to India for work. The vision should be to converge on systems and standards and aim to reach a visa-free regime.

Water: The key to security of people, especially the poor; is access to safe drinking water. In the US, even tap water is safe to drink. Indians must have the same facility and the US can assist.

Xenagogue: This means guide. The two countries must evolve their strategic partnership to a level where, mutually, the role of guide is performed by each for the other.

Youth: That's the future. The next generation. To harness the young Indians network and build connectivity with US counterparts and chart out future.

Zenith: Or the peak. President Obama and PM Manmohan Singh can take the Indo-US relationship to a new peak. This is the real possibility. The A to Z is just a broad framework. The nitty-gritty has to be filled in. That's the task before us.