

Modi, Obama to ponder upon ties twice over

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi is going to hold two comprehensive meetings with US President Barack Obama, to address the roughness that has crept into the ties between both countries, which also refer to each other as "natural allies".

Both leaders will meet face-to-face first on September 29 and then on September 30 in Washington, after the PM's series of meetings with other world leaders, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 26-27, a top official told *Business Standard*, on condition of anonymity.

Modi was once formally barred from entering the US, after the Gujarat riots of 2002. Partly due to this background, the US government has worked out a "special gesture date" for Modi because according to the protocol, the President does not meet any heads of government separately during the UN general assembly.

Since Modi has come to power with a big victory, the US government has tried to build bridges with him. On September 28, Modi will be addressing the Indian community in New York City's Madison

Square Garden, the first Indian PM to do so there.

Some of the issues that will top Modi's agenda during his meeting with President Obama are the US immigration Bill clamps, intellectual property rights (IPR) issues, standoff at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on trade facilitation, expanding of two-way trade, the series of WTO disputes and other strategic and defence issues.

On September 29, Modi will first take up some issues with Obama that include exploring ways to increase diplomatic harmony after the row concerning Indian diplomat Devyani Khobragade. This will be followed by a full-fledged India-US Strategic Dialogue, with a special focus on trade and investment. India and the US have been at loggerheads recently over issues concerning India's trade and industrial policies.

The US, on its part, is expected to push IPR and WTO matters with India. The US is especially irate with India's IPR regime in the pharmaceuticals sector, that has a provision for compulsory licensing. The US administration is worried that other developing countries might follow, adversely impacting the margins of its multinational pharmaceutical firms.

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