

Silicon Valley awaits selfies with tech-friendly PM Modi

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San Francisco: Google, Apple, MicroSoft, Facebook, Qualcomm, Cisco... these are some topnotch companies, the chief executives of which will chat up Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he arrives to a packed itinerary on Saturday to push his pet project "Digital India" at the global high-tech epicenter of Silicon Valley in California.

The first Indian prime minister to visit the West Coast of the United States in over 30 years, Modi will also use the two-day visit here to get support for two other pet initiatives - "Startup India", under which he wants to promote entrepreneurship, and renewable energy.

The prime minister has also lined up site visits, notably to Tesla Motors, Facebook and Google.

"This is the first time our prime minister is visiting California after 30 years. So, I think it will be an important occasion for the Indian community to listen to the prime minister and his vision for India," Foreign office spokesperson Vikas Swarup said.

In San Jose, Modi begins his visit with an engagement with the Indian community, followed by an interaction at Tesla Motors. "The prime minister will be visiting Tesla Motors to have a look at some of their path-breaking inventions, particularly in the renewable energy sector," Swarup said.

Outlining the prime minister's interactions with tech honchos, he said they include Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, Apple's Tim Cook, MicroSoft's Satya Nadella, Google's Sundar Pichai, Qualcomm's Paul Jacobs, Cisco's John Chambers, Adobe's Shantanu Narayan and Venk Shukla of TiE.

The prime minister is also participating at India-US Startup Connect 2015.

San Francisco and the surrounding Bay Area -- the southern quarters of which is referred to as Silicon Valley -- is itself home to thousands of start-ups, many co-founded by people of Indian origin.

"Again this is a very important event," said Swarup, adding: "Some of the leading startups from India will be present there. The idea is, how do we kick start the Indian startup ecosystem and how do we connect the Indian ecosystem with the Silicon Valley ecosystem."

At Google, the hosts have lined up a glimpse into some inventions that the company is making in healthcare and smart-grid space and how it is using technological innovations to help power India's "Skill India" and "Digital India" programmes.

The officials said US Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz is also coming in personally for a high-profile round table with the prime minister on renewable energy, that is being coordinated by the US Department of Commerce and Stanford University.

The grant finale is at the SAP Centre.

"The big ticket event obviously is the address to the Indian community. We expect about 20,000 people there," Swarup said about the engagement at SAP Center -- an indoor arena located in San Jose that is also called Shark Tank and home to San Jose Sharks of the National Hockey League.

Officials here hope this engagement at SAP Center will be akin to Modi's grand event last September at Madison Square Garden in New York, where he had a rapturous welcome from the Indian community. The prime minister flies back to New York on Sunday evening.

- IANS