



INDIA-SWEDEN STRATEGIC COMPASS

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER BY ISDP'S STOCKHOLM CENTRE FOR SOUTH ASIAN AND INDO-PACIFIC AFFAIRS

March-April 2023 • Vol.2 • No.2

SPECIAL FEATURE

Strengthening the EU's Engagement with the Indo-Pacific: Foreign Minister's Visit to Sweden

In a significant development, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Sweden for three days (May 13-15) to attend the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum (EIPMF). During the visit, the External Affairs Minister (EAM) of India held various meetings with Swedish government ministers, officials, and leaders. A number of issues pertaining to India-Sweden, India-Nordic, and India-EU relations were discussed. This visit was crucial for the overall progress of India-EU and India-Sweden ties when Sweden holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.



Dr. Jaishankar's remarks focused on the growing synergy between the EU and Indo-Pacific. At the EIPMF, Dr. Jaishankar made six points that are crucial to the overall progress of the EU's presence and engagement with the Indo-Pacific: (1) The EU has major stakes in the Indo-Pacific region, primarily in the area of trade, finance, connectivity, and technology; (2) non-market economics



are offering a credible challenge where the established or conventional thinking is being challenged to which both the EU and Indo-Pacific communities must take a strong note of; (3) there is a need for diversification amidst the problem of economic concentration, and there is an urgent requirement of trust and transparency in order to promote and strengthen reliable and resilient supply chains; (4) backing a multipolar Asia is critical to a multipolar world and the EU's engagement with Indo-Pacific would strengthen multipolarity in world politics; (5) India is currently undergoing a transformation through green growth initiatives and digital public delivery that the EU must consider and stay engaged with India's rising global footprint; and (6) the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)

is an initiative that must interest the EU, and the Quad as a platform for global public good must be factored into the EU's engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. Dr. Jaishankar advocated strongly for regular, comprehensive, and candid dialogue between the EU and the Indo-Pacific. During the visit of the EAM to Sweden, foreign ministers representing the G20, EU, ASEAN, AU, and G7 gathered in Stockholm to discuss various global issues.

Source: *The Hindu*, May 14, 2023; @DrSJaishankar.

India-Sweden Partnership Moves Ahead

The EAM's visit to Sweden confirmed the growing political synergy between India and Sweden. During his visit to Sweden, Dr. Jaishankar met with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson. While conveying personal greetings from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the EAM appreciated the values and commitment of the Swedish Prime Minister to advance India-Sweden bilateral relations. Dr. Jaishankar also had a cordial meeting with his counterpart Tobias Billström. He also met Pål Jonson, the Defence Minister of Sweden, Dr. Andreas Norlén, the Speaker of the Riksdag of Sweden, and Henrik Landerholm, the National Security Advisor of Sweden.



The EAM discussed wide-ranging issues covering the Indo-Pacific, India-EU, de-risking the global economy, and the European security situation with the Swedish leadership. Dr. Jaishankar also participated in the India Trilateral Forum with the Swedish Foreign Minister. The India Trilateral is a collaborative forum organized jointly by the Swedish Foreign Ministry, German Marshall Fund, and ORF America. Additionally, the EAM addressed the growing and vibrant Indian diaspora in Stockholm and acknowledged

how the Indian communities living in Sweden are crucial to the progress of India-Sweden ties. The year 2023 comes as the occasion to celebrate the 75th anniversary of India-Sweden relations. An overall progressive ministerial-level engagement is noticed on both sides. For India-Sweden/India-EU relations, this is a crucial period since India holds the G20 Presidency, and Sweden holds the EU Presidency.

Source: *United News of India*, May 14, 2023; *First Post*, May 15, 2023.



First EU-India TTC Ministerial Meeting

The First EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC) meeting was held on May 16, 2023, in Brussels. This Council meeting is aimed to advance cooperation between India and the EU on a range of issues such as digital technology, connectivity, clean and green energy technologies, and resilient value chains including strategic technologies. Third-country cooperation also emerged as a key area of discussion. This mechanism is aimed not only at further cooperation between India and the EU but also at India's relations with individual EU member-states. TTC as a coordinated platform between India and the EU will address critical matters relating to



trade, trusted technology, and rules-based approaches to innovation. Both India and the EU have agreed to focus more and more on a “rules-based” approaches to trade and technology which is a key development.

The official report suggests that the TTC will help boost bilateral trade contact between India and the EU. Bilateral trade between India and the EU was worth 120 billion euros in 2022. Such a mechanism will reinforce the EU’s and India’s common interest in ensuring global security, prosperity and strengthening partnerships in sustainable development. The first EU-India TTC was co-chaired by a high level political representatives on both sides. From the Indian side, three senior ministers- Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Mr. Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Electronics and Information Technology attended this inaugural meeting. From the EU side, Executive Vice-Presidents Margrethe Vestager and Valdis Dombrovskis were present along with High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry Breton. It is



planned that the Ministerial TTC meeting between India and the EU will be held at least once a year, and the next meeting is planned for early 2024. Importantly, the EU-India TTC is the second such bilateral forum that the EU has established with any country.

Source: EU Commission, May 16, 2023.

Focus on Infrastructure Cooperation

India-Sweden business cooperation in the field of infrastructure development is witnessing a steady upward trend. On the occasion of 20 years of the Sweden-India Business Council, experts, representatives, and business leaders from India and Sweden engaged in discussion on how to advance the partnership further. The occasion was graced by the Swedish Minister for Infrastructure Andreas Carlson. Amb. Tanmaya Lal, Amb. Jan Thesleff, and Mr. Marcus Wallenberg attended the event. The Sweden-India Business Council was established in March 2003 to advance relations between the Swedish and Indian business communities.

Source: @IndianinSweden.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Swedish Foreign Minister’s Visit to India

Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström was in India in early March to attend the Raisina Dialogue. He held bilateral talks with India’s External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar. Several issues important to both India and Sweden were discussed, such as economic cooperation, sustainable development, science and technology, and the positive directions in India-EU relations. Mr. Billström was keen to reaffirm that the new Swedish government remains committed to the historic Swedish friendship with India and building their relations. Speaking on the ORF podcast during the Raisina Dialogue, Mr. Billström explained that he “feels that India and Sweden are so very close in minds”. Swedish companies are being encouraged to manufacture in India, and strengthening supply chains was a key concern for the Foreign Minister when he had met with Dr. Jaishankar earlier. Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt was also in the country to attend the Dialogue as a guest speaker.

Source: The Hindu, March 1, 2023; ORF, March 13, 2023.

Indian Senior Official Visits Sweden

The Secretary (West) of the Ministry of External Affairs in India, Sanjay Verma, visited Denmark and Sweden in early April. This visit was to engage more with the EU officials, and in particular to stay engaged with political directors of the EU via dialogue concerns arising on common global (dis)order. This visit created a positive ambience in India-Nordic engagement at the official level too. Mr. Verma met Jesper Møller Sørensen, Secretary of State



for Foreign Policy, Denmark, and discussed how to advance the Green Strategic Partnership between India and Denmark. During his visit to Sweden, Mr. Verma also met with State Secretaries Jan Knutsson, Håkan Jevrell, SG IIDEA, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sweden to discuss how to strengthen India-Sweden relations.

During the visit of Mr. Verma, a number of critical issues like trade and economics, clean technology, renewable energy, and infrastructure development were discussed among many other regional and global issues. Talks were held in the backdrop of the 75th year of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Both India and Sweden currently hold the Presidencies of G20 and the EU, respectively. During his visit to Sweden, Mr. Verma also visited various think tanks in Stockholm such as the ISDP and UI.

Source: ISDP; *India in Sweden*, @SanjayVermalFS, April 3, 2023; @SanjayVermalFS, April 5, 2023; @nkvarnstrom, April 4, 2023.



Progress in Military Engagement

In March, several Indian Air Force pilots and officers were in the United Kingdom (UK) for a joint air force exercise under the name 'Exercise Cobra Warrior'. Swedish and Finnish delegations were also in attendance at the multilateral event. Five Mirage 2000 Fighter Jets, 2 C-17 Globemaster IIIs and an IL-78 Mid Air Refueller Aircraft were on display from the Indian contingent. Despite harsh conditions, and even periods of snow, the flight experience and an opportunity for Swedish, Finnish, and Indian pilots and officers to collaborate was valuable. The event was held at the RAF Waddington Air Base in the UK. There was a positive trend visible in India-Swedish military engagement with the visit of the Army War College (Mhow in Madhya Pradesh) delegation to Sweden. This delegation visited SWEDINT and NCGM to exchange views and stay informed about military and other official activities.

Source: @IndiainSweden, March 2, 2023; *The Hindu*, March 22, 2023; @swedintcentre, March 17, 2023.

Holi Celebration Strengthens Cultural Linkages

In March, people came together to celebrate Holi, the Indian festival of colors. In Stockholm, animated participants were seen in decorative traditional outfits, dancing and laughing. Celebrants could also be found as far afield as Helsingborg in Southern Sweden. Moreover, the Embassy of Sweden in New Delhi also held celebrations, sharing multicolored and bright images on social media.

Around the same time as the Holi celebrations, State Secretary Håkan Jevrell wrote a special piece in *The Indian Express* hailing the successes of a bilateral partnership that has come so far over the last 75 years. Technologically, Swedish companies such as Volvo, Ericsson, SKF, and Alva Laval to name a few, have had great success in setting up industry in India. For Mr. Jevrell, a significant part of the India-Sweden relationship lies in their unity and commitment towards transitioning to more sustainable, greener forms of energy, combatting climate change and meeting other international environmental targets. He also stressed Swedish support for an EU-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Source: @SwedeninIndia, March 8, 2023; @IndiainSweden, March 21, 2023; *Indian Express*, March 11, 2023.

Research and Academic Collaboration Progressing Ahead

A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) and the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) of India on March 13 to advance research and academic collaboration in the field of science and technology. SERB Secretary, Dr. Akhilesh Gupta and the Executive Director of STINT, Dr. Andreas Göthenberg signed the memorandum. It was signed in the presence of high-level Swedish and Indian representatives—Dr. Erik Forsberg (Representative in APAC, STINT), Mr. Håkan Jevrell, State Secretary to Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, and Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST), Dr. S. Chandrasekhar. This memorandum will enable Indian and Swedish institutions to engage in collaborative research cooperation by applying grants in various fields. Special importance will be given to the field of smart cities, artificial intelligence, futuristic technologies, quantum computing, transportation, etc. Mr. Jevrell called this as a “milestone” for India-Sweden collaboration.

Source: Ministry of Science & Technology, March 13, 2023; @SwedenOSI_India, March 13, 2023.

Business Engagement Takes Lead

The visible, continuous official engagement between India and Sweden led to an advance in business ties and cooperation in the field of sustainable development. In a significant boost to bilateral relations, the Sweden-India Business Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Maharashtra government to cooperate in the field of transportation and sustainable infrastructure, waste management, energy, defense manufacturing and investment, etc. Maharashtra is the preferred state in India for Swedish companies and is known as ‘Second Home’ to the Swedish companies. Such an MoU is supposed to advance cooperation in the field of green and clean energies, solar energy, technology, manufacturing, and innovation. Following the success of this event, a Sustainable Dialogue event was held virtually in April for further collaboration between Indian and Swedish businesses. The event specifically examined innovation and transitioning to greener methods of energy production in India. The Indian Ambassador to Sweden & Latvia, Tanmaya Lal virtually joined with the Swedish Ambassador to India, Jan Thesleff.

Head of Lead-IT Secretariat Per Andersson addressed on the occasion. This was supported by the Sweden-India Business Council and the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in India. The emphasis was on green transition in the field of industrial cooperation.

Source: @Dev_Fadnavis, March 11, 2023; @IndiainSweden, April 21, 2023; The Economic Times, March 12, 2023.

INDIA-NORDIC

Water Summit Enhances India-Nordic Ties

The SPRING Water Summit was held in New Delhi on March 9-10, 2023, and it was hosted by the Indo-Nordic-EU Forum and the Finnish Water Forum. The summit provided a platform for companies from both India and the Nordic region to converse on the topics of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and energy efficiency. Improving global water security is an important consideration for both India, and the Nordics. Bharat Lal, Director General at the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), delivered a thoughtful keynote speech. Speaking on the vast opportunities of providing clean and safe water around the world, he said India must continue to build water infrastructure and demonstrate how much it values water security. SPRING is a funded project by the EU Commission under Horizon 2020 and the Government of India to forge cooperation in the water sector among Indian, EU and Nordic institutions and bodies. The March summit offered a context for high-level experts and stakeholders from both the Indian and Nordic sides, particularly at the B2B level, to discuss cooperation in the field of water conservation and water harvesting.

Source: @FinWaterForum, March 14, 2023; @Vidurji, March 13, 2023; @NorwayAmbIndia, March 10, 2023.

India-Iceland Hold Official Consultation

The third round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) was held in New Delhi between India and Iceland. This consultation meeting was held between Mr. Martin Eyjolfsson, Permanent Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, and Mr. Sanjay Verma, Secretary (West) at the Ministry of External Affairs in Government of India. Both officials discussed and reviewed the progress made in areas such as trade and investments, the India-EFTA-TEPA negotiations, capacity building, people-to-people contacts, fisheries, geothermal cooperation, etc.

Other global issues such as the Ukraine crisis, the Arctic and gender development also figured in the discussion. The year 2022 was the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between India and Iceland.

Source: Embassy of India, March 6, 2023; NewsOnAIR, March 6, 2023.

Nordic Centre Conference on the Future of Work

The Nordic Centre in India held a conference on March 1, in New Delhi on 'The Future of Work'. Three different panels were held on topics ranging from higher education, how working conditions will be shaped by the future, and the flexibility of social security systems in India and Nordic. As global economies are shaped by the digital age, the Nordic Centre in India is concerned with the impact that automation will have on work and worker's rights, particularly in technology sectors. Automation and the development of advanced technologies herald great benefits, but understanding the associated challenges is an important consideration for India as well as the Nordic states. Guest speakers included academics and experts from universities, think-tanks, and NGOs from India, Finland, Denmark, and Norway.

Source: @NordicCtrIndia, February 21, 2023; Nordic Centre in India, March 1, 2023.

family values have been upheld whilst rapidly developing into one of the most promising economies in the world. French companies have been invited to visit India during India's G20 tenure. In Mr. Goyal's view, French business can enable Indian development efforts to reach greater heights.

Source: Invest in France, April 12, 2023; The Economic Times, April 12, 2023; @PiyushGoyal, April 11, 2023; Piyush Goyal, April 11, 2023.

Swedish Presence at the EU-India Aviation Summit

The aviation industry has made huge leaps in India in recent times, and it seeks to collaborate with the EU to make global aviation more effective and climate friendly. A positive moment in this collaboration is the EU-India Aviation Summit, which was held on April 20-21. At present, almost 2.3 million people travel directly on flights to and from India and the EU, but a larger number of travelers make these journeys through different locations of foreign or third country-zone connections. The potential between the two partners is still to be fully grasped. India still has limited access to direct lines with many EU member-states. Therefore, direct flight link

INDIA-EU

India-France Business Summit Cements Partnership

Indian Minister of Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and Textiles, Piyush Goyal attended the India-France Business Summit held in Paris. The friendship between India and France as world leading democracies is significant to Mr. Goyal, who spoke at length on strengthening their partnership. Expansion in trade, technology, tourism, and investment are key areas of interest. He explained that over the last two years, Indian exports of goods and services have grown by over 50 percent. Now, in unison with France's current roadmap, India's ambition is to build on the trajectory of its exports of goods and services so that it will triple by 2030. Therefore, the current total of exports valued at \$765 billion, would reach over \$2 trillion. Mr. Goyal called on French businesses to realize just how much India's image has changed in recent times. For India, art, tradition, and



expansion was a key area of interest during the summit. As Sweden has the current presidency for the Council of the European Union, Swedish Minister for Infrastructure & Housing, Andreas Carlson was in New Delhi for the summit. Mr. Carlson met with General V.K. Singh, India's Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Road Transport and Highways, and Union Minister for Housing & Urban Affairs, Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri. Amongst the topics of discussion were information sharing on infrastructure development and housing, including aviation industrial cooperation.

Source: @hardeepspuri, April 21, 2023; European Commission, April 21, 2023.

India Signs MoU with Croatia

Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar met with Croatian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlić Radman in early March. A Memorandum of Understanding on defense cooperation was signed. India has been making efforts to deepen collaboration with the other European partners and cooperation with Croatia is on the rise.

Source: @DrSJaishankar, March 4, 2023.

EU In India: Trade Meeting During Holi Celebrations

The EU hosted a trade meeting between EU and Indian businesses around Holi celebrations. EU-India trade is valued at over €120 billion with over 4,500 European business companies or enterprises operating in India. The meeting brought over 100 EU companies to the table. Meanwhile, negotiations on the India-EU Free Trade Agreement are ongoing and this meeting was a step in the right direction towards facilitating an agreement.

Source: @EU_in_India, March 7, 2023.

Latvian Secretary Discusses Women's Empowerment

On a visit to India, Parliamentary Secretary for the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr. Gunda Reire had the opportunity to meet and build bilateral ties with Mr. Utpal Kumar Singh. Mr. Singh is Secretary General of the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of Indian Parliament. Her time in India was also spent collaborating in an event on "Women's Empowerment in the Digital Age". Positive discussion on gender equality and women's representation

in society and politics was held, examining ways to raise awareness for gender disparity and to change perceptions about the value women have in today's society. She also participated in the Raisina Dialogue.

Source: MFA.gov.lv, March 2, 2023; @GundaReire, March 3, 2023.

INDIA-GLOBAL

The Raisina Dialogue 2023

The 8th edition of the annual Raisina Dialogue was held in early March with current foreign ministers, former heads of state/government, academics, scholars, and leading think-tanks from over 100 countries participating in the event. Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt and scholars from Swedish think-tanks participated in the event. Since 2016, the Raisina Dialogue has established itself as a mainstay on the geopolitical calendar. The dialogue offers a less Eurocentric/Western-centric platform for global security discussions and India frequently drew upon the Global South throughout the session. Around 50 panels of discussion were held on a large variety of topics, most notably on Indo-Pacific security, the debt crisis, climate change and environmental security, technology sharing, and the Ukraine War.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni were present to inaugurate the Raisina Dialogue. The event provided a valuable opportunity for dialogue with the EU and Sweden. On the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue, the Quad foreign ministers had an opportunity to meet. They concluded their meeting with a statement reaffirming the core values they share: a rules-based order in the international system, and a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, notably in maritime diplomacy and cooperation.

Source: The Diplomat, March 8, 2023; Ministry of External Affairs, February 28, 2023; The Hindu, March 3, 2023.

U.S. Appoints Ambassador to India

Eric Garcetti, previously mayor of Los Angeles, arrived in March in New Delhi as the new U.S. Ambassador to India. The Embassy of the United States in India was without an envoy to India since early 2021. This is a poignant moment given the diplomatic importance of this post. In a latest interview to the media, Ambassador Garcetti has said that the India-U.S. ties need to be expanded

and strengthened in areas such as military, energy, and technological cooperation. He has emphasized on enhancing people-to-people ties through a better “human connection” between India and the U.S. to take forward this partnership.

Source: Spectrum News, April 17, 2023; The Hindu, March 16, 2023; The Guardian, March 15, 2023.

India: No.1 Populous Country in the World

As per the latest United Nations estimates, India has overtaken China as the most populous country in the world. By the end of April, India’s population was expected to reach a total of 1,425,775,850, overtaking gradually the population of China. The UN estimates indicate that before the end of the century, the Chinese population could drop below 1 billion. This moment should come as a sign of the huge potential that India has as a demographic world leader. The economic advantages of having such a large, young population are numerous as India continues on an upward trend of growth. India’s growth will enable it to continue its pursuit of addressing poverty experienced domestically and around the world. In many estimations, India is poised to become the second largest economy by 2050.

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs: United Nations, April 23, 2023; Financial Times, April 19, 2023.

Advancing Global South Priority

As the G20 host, India has conducted more than 100 events aiming to enhance the G20 agenda. The slogan of ‘Global South’ is a huge consideration for India. Much is being done within the G20 framework as well as outside of it to reduce the disparity in both power and wealth between G20 members and the Global South. Over 12,000 delegates have participated in different events that India has hosted on G20. India’s G20 vision involves far more than just the 20 member-states. On debt, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi directly called for more attention when addressing G20 Foreign Ministers at their first meeting in early March. “Many developing countries are struggling with unsustainable debt while trying to ensure food and energy security for their people,” he said. Countries such as Sri Lanka, Ghana, and Zambia have recently failed to make debt payments. Moreover, climate change predominantly affects Global South nations that do not have the necessary infrastructure to react. In this case, the South and Southeast

Asian region is particularly vulnerable.

Outside of the G20 mandate, India is steadily expanding its outreach with the Global South partners. Dr. Jaishankar travelled to Africa, covering Uganda, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. He has also been on a tour of Central and South America. Visits to Guyana, Panama, Colombia, Dominican Republic, the 4th India-CARICOM Ministerial Meeting, and a meeting with the President of Panama, Nito Cortizo, are just some of the diplomatic endeavors to enhance India’s engagement with Global South partners and countries in Central and South America. India advocates for a stronger multipolar world and listening to the Global South’s numerous voices is an important part of creating such a world. The Global South is increasingly becoming a serious consideration for India as it continues to pursue the role of ‘leader of the Global South’. India’s G20 2023 theme is ‘One Earth, One Family, One Future’.

Source: Hindustan Times, April 21, 2023; Asia Nikkei, April 25, 2023; @DrSJaisankar, April 25, 2023.



India’s Focus on Quantum Technology

Promoting green hydrogen in a bid to reduce dependence and cut carbon dioxide emissions has become a prime policy framework in India. As part of the government measures, India aims to offer green hydrogen fuel producers a credible incentive of at least 10 percent of their total costs while generating or promoting green hydrogen projects or missions. Moreover, with the lead of Prime Minister Modi, the Union Cabinet has recently approved the National Quantum Mission (NQM) to boost and enhance research and development in quantum technology. With such an initiative, India ranks among the leading countries—the U.S., France, Finland, Canada, China, Australia—to have

a dedicated quantum mission. Department of Science & Technology (DST) under the Ministry of Science and Technology will be the main nodal agency in executing the NQM. The first EU-India TTC ministerial meeting in Brussels in May is a key development to facilitate and promote technological cooperation between India and the European world.

Source: Reuters, April 6, 2023; @IndiainSweden, April 24, 2023.

UK-India Free Trade Talks Progress

India's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiation with the United Kingdom is progressing well. Initial talks for a UK-India Free Trade Agreement began on June 17, 2022. After almost a year of deliberation, senior leaders involved in the talks are optimistic that an agreement will soon be reached. In the last two months, two rounds of talks have been held. Most recently, the 9th round of talks took place during the week of April 24. UK-India trade is currently worth £34 billion and has grown by £10 billion in the last year.

Source: @sidhant, April 10, 2023; GOV.UK, March 1, 2023; Economic Times, March 25, 2023.

Push for Greener Cities around India

In recent months, there has been a greater push for greener cities and infrastructure. This message has come from the top with Prime Minister Narendra Modi aiming to make Indian cities free from waste and to be climate resilient. Water supply to these cities must also be ensured. Developing new cities and making improvements to existing cities based on these criteria is part of the government's recent budget, with ₹15,000 crore being invested. Another consideration in making greener cities is transport. Prime Minister Modi has appreciated the improvements to metro/train systems in Indian cities. However, transport infrastructure still has a long way to go, especially given the infamous smog and pollution that hangs over so many Indian cities. European embassies have made public their solidarity with the Indian people and the Indian Government on climate resilience and improvements to transport.

Source: Hindustan Times, March 1, 2023; @EU_in_India, March 20, 2023.

New UK Tech Envoy in India

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly was in India for the G20 Foreign Ministers' meeting at the beginning

of March. Whilst in New Delhi, he also held bilateral talks with Dr. Jaishankar. Their meeting brought the announcement that the UK will appoint a tech envoy to the Indo-Pacific who will be based in India. India is only the second country that the UK has appointed a tech envoy to. This follows the success of the UK's envoy to the U.S., Joe White, who is based in California. India has the third highest number of tech unicorns in the world: 108. This is clearly a consideration for the UK in building tech connections with India. Also, a Young Professionals Scheme was unveiled as part of the UK-India announcement. This scheme will give 3,000 young people from each country the opportunity to live and work for up to two years in another country. Such a move will hugely complement the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC). The UK and many European partners are clearly foreseeing potential for cooperation with India on future technology and are actively pursuing strategies to invest in it.

Source: The Hindu, March 1, 2023; GOV.UK, March 1, 2023.

India-Australia PM's Meet; Close to Signing CECA This Year

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted the Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in a high-profile visit in March. The visit began with both leaders attending the 4th test match in the latest India-Australia cricket test series at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. India and Australia are two of the best teams in cricket and it was a fitting opportunity to bond over such an essential part of both nations' sporting culture. Following the cricket, the 1st India-Australia Annual Summit was held between the two Prime Ministers. Trade relations were a priority of discussion. Currently, the two sides have been working towards a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). During his visit to India, the Australian Prime Minister was optimistic that agreement will be reached before the end of 2023. The CECA would build on the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA). The ECTA has had a great impact on India-Australian trade with 96 percent exports from India and 65 percent of exports from Australia not having to pay duties.

Source: @MEAIndia, March 10, 2023; Reuters, March 10, 2023; Aljazeera, March 9, 2023.



EDITOR'S NOTE

India-Sweden bilateral relations have continued to show strong growth with several interactions between the two sides over the past couple of months. A visit by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to Sweden has set the course of India-Sweden ministerial level interactions. The visit of the Secretary (West) of the Ministry of External Affairs of India to Sweden also paved the way for serious and high-level official interactions between the two sides. Such interactions in the foreign policy domain were complemented by positive discussions on development, economy, and technology (among others), with the Swedish Minister for Infrastructure & Housing visiting India. In the defense sector too, progressive moments were noticed with the delegation of the Indian War College visiting Sweden.

Both sides are continuously seeking to build better understanding and set their relations on course for consistent growth and upgradation towards a strong, comprehensive, and strategic partnership. This growth in India-Sweden relations is not an isolated development but rooted in India's growing focus on the EU—and the Nordic region in particular—as critical partners moving forward. India is quickly settling into its more active role on the international stage, visibly so with its G20 Presidency. Yet, much remains to be achieved. The clear convergence between the agendas and priorities of India and Sweden (and the EU) must now be taken forward through working level and high-level political interactions that pave the way for practical cooperation. Only then can both sides strengthen trust, build mutual capacity, and achieve a deeper partnership.

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