

Eye on Indo-Pacific: Modi kicks off Oz tour with landmark pacts

Deal on civil nuclear energy facilitates commercial supply of uranium to India's nuclear power projects

MELBOURNE

INDIA and Australia on Thursday sealed a raft of landmark pacts spanning civil nuclear energy, maritime security and critical minerals sectors, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese reinforced the vital role of the bilateral partnership in ensuring a peaceful Indo-Pacific.

Modi held wide-ranging talks with the Australian leader, a day after landing in Australia from Indonesia in the second leg of his three-nation tour that is aimed at boosting trade and defence ties against the backdrop of an increasingly fractured geopolitical environment.

Following the Modi-Albanese meeting, the two sides unveiled an India-Australia joint declaration on defence and security, a joint statement on energy ties and a roadmap for collaboration in cyber, critical technologies and supply chains.

The pact on civil nuclear energy will facilitate the commercial supply of uranium from Australia to India to help New Delhi's nuclear power projects.

The two sides also decided to work expeditiously on the proposed Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement as well as on a bilateral investment protection pact.

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important agreement in the field of nuclear energy. This will open the way for uranium supplies from Australia to India and give new impetus to our clean energy objectives," Modi said in his media statement.

"Our cooperation in critical minerals is vital to our strategic security and clean energy transition. With this in mind, today we have launched the Australia-India Partnership on Cyber, Criti-

cal Technologies, and Supply Chains," he said. Modi said both sides will also work together on a critical minerals corridor.

The prime minister also mentioned growing engagement between the two countries in the defence domain and emphasised the importance of a free and stable Indo-Pacific. The new initiatives to bolster defence ties came amid growing concerns over China's increasing mili-

tary muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific.

"The Indo-Pacific is not just the confluence of two oceans. It also symbolises the shared aspirations of like-minded democracies like India and Australia," he said.

"Today, we have issued an important Joint Declaration to enhance cooperation in defence and security. Through the India-Australia Defence Innovation Corridor, we will work to connect defence startups and industries," he said.

The prime minister said the India-Australia Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap will give new impetus to shared efforts in the Indo-Pacific.

"We will also move forward together in shipbuilding, ship repair, and maintenance," he said.

Modi also said that India and Australia recognised that terrorism poses a serious challenge not just to any one country, but to all of humanity.

"Therefore, our fight against terrorism is shared, our resolve unwavering, and our cooperation continues to strengthen," he said.

"We also believe that the tensions and conflicts raging in many parts of the world can only be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. Together, we will further strengthen peace, stability, freedom of navigation, and a rules-based order throughout the Indo-Pacific region," he said.

In his remarks, Albanese said Australia's relationship with India has never been more consequential than it is today.

The Australian prime minister said the pact on nuclear energy will facilitate uranium exports from Australia to India for peaceful purposes.

"The arrangement facilitates Australian uranium exports to India to help increase the share of non-fossil

Modi calls for early conclusion of India, Australia bilateral trade agreement

MELBOURNE

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday pitched for early finalisation of the proposed India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), saying it will propel bilateral economic ties to a "new level".

In an address at a business forum, Modi also invited Australian companies to invest in India, saying it offers "unmatched opportunities" for growth in sectors such as aviation, financial services, critical minerals, technology and food processing.

The prime minister landed in Australia on Wednesday on a three-day visit that is largely aimed at boosting defence, energy and trade ties.

Modi addressed the Aus-



tralia-India CEOs Forum and the Economic Roadmap Business event ahead of his talks with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. Leading Indian and Australian CEOs and business leaders, representatives of major Australian superannuation funds and institutional investors, and Vice-Chancellors of leading Australian universities participated in the two events.

Modi welcomed an an-

ouncement by Chief Executive of AustralianSuper Paul Schroder, that the company will invest 500 million Australian dollars in India.

"This is yet another glimpse of the global confidence in India's growth and reform trajectory. It also reflects the immense opportunities that our dynamic economy offers global investors," Modi said.

AustralianSuper is Australia's largest super fund

and it manages over USD 410 billion of retirement savings on behalf of over 3.6 million people, according to the company.

In his remarks, Modi expressed satisfaction over the growth of trade and investment between the two countries following the sealing of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) in 2022. To expand the business ties to a new level, Modi called for early conclusion of the proposed CECA. Both sides are working towards a mutually beneficial CECA.

In the CEOs Forum, the prime minister highlighted that India's strong economic growth, policy reforms, digital transformation, and expanding innovation ecosystem were creating new business opportunities for Australian partners.

fuel power capacity, providing an additional market for the Australian resources sector," he said.

Albanese said the two sides are focusing on diversifying ties to grow from strength-to-strength.

"Six years into our strate-

gic partnership, Australia's relationship with India has never been more consequential than it is today. Our partnership has never been stronger," he said.

"We share a focus on deepening and diversifying our relationship between our

countries so we can continue to grow from strength to strength."

"Today, we have done exactly that across the breadth of our relationship. With new landmark agreements, we are expanding our relationship across defence and security

education, science and technology and energy security and critical minerals," he said.

Albanese said the joint declaration on defence and security cooperation will provide for deepening "practical partnership".

Australian leaders hail PM's visit, back deeper partnership with India

MELBOURNE

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Australia will further deepen the strategic and economic partnership between the two countries, former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and leading Australian business executives said on Thursday. Speaking on the sidelines of the Australia-India CEOs Forum and the Economic Roadmap Business event here, Morrison said the relationship between India and Australia had reached unprecedented levels during his tenure alongside PM Modi and had continued to strengthen under the current Australian government.

"During the time PM Modi and I served in our respective roles, we were able to elevate the Austral-



ia-India relationship to the level it is at today, and I'm very pleased that it has been maintained by the Albanese Government. This relationship is only going to get stronger, and his visit here to Melbourne is incredibly important," Morrison said.

Tania Constable, Chief Executive Officer of the Minerals Council of Australia, also underlined the close rapport between PM Modi and his Australian counterpart, Anthony Albanese. "There's an obvious strong relationship between

PM Modi and Prime Minister Albanese that has been there now for a few years. Great to see that that is occurring at the moment and it's that strength of relationship right at the top between our countries that will continue to drive a strong strategic partnership," she said.

Paul Henry, Senior Principal, Global Director and Co-Founder of Populous, described PM Modi's participation in the Melbourne events as a strong signal of India's commitment to expanding bilateral ties.

Albanese: India a top-tier security partner

CANBERRA

HIGHLIGHTING India's position as a top-tier security partner, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Thursday said that the Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation marks a significant step towards strengthening bilateral ties and reflects shared commitment to a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

Addressing a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi following their delegation-level talks in Melbourne, Albanese said, "With new landmark agreements, we are expanding our relationship across defence and security, education, science and technology, and energy security and critical minerals."

The Australian PM said that India and Australia have released a joint declaration on defence and security cooperation to "deepen our practical partnership".

"Australia values India as



Describing Prime Minister Modi as "a true friend of Australia", Albanese said it was a "great honour" to host the Indian leader for the annual leaders' summit, asserting that Australia and India are "close partners and even closer friends" whose partnership has grown stronger

a top-tier security partner, and the declaration reflects our shared commitment to a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region," he added.

"We will boost strategic coordination, increase the complexity of our defence exercises, and further build interoperability between our defence forces. We undertake to consult on defence-related developments in the Indo-Pacific that affect our shared interests. In addition, we have endorsed a joint maritime security collaboration roadmap and agreed to a new Australia-India partnership on cyber, critical technologies, and

supply chains," he added. Describing Prime Minister Modi as "a true friend of Australia", Albanese said it was a "great honour" to host the Indian leader for the annual leaders' summit, asserting that Australia and India are "close partners and even closer friends" whose partnership has grown stronger. "Six years into our comprehensive strategic partnership, Australia's relationship with India has never been more consequential than it is today. Our partnership has never been stronger," said the Australian PM.

"We share a focus on deepening and diversifying the relationship between our countries so we can continue to grow from strength to strength. Today, we have done exactly that across the breadth of our relationship," he noted. Emphasising that the conflict in West Asia has had economic repercussions worldwide, Albanese said he and Prime Minister Modi welcomed a joint statement on energy security.

INDIA TARGETS GLOBAL FTA NETWORK AFTER HISTORIC EU DEAL

WASHINGTON

FRESH from concluding its landmark free trade agreement with the European Union, India is pursuing an ambitious strategy to expand its network of trade agreements across North America, Latin America, Africa and the Gulf, with negotiations already underway or planned with several major economies, the country's chief trade negotiator has said.

Speaking at an event hosted by the Peterson Institute for International Economics, Darpan Jain, India's Chief Negotiator for the EU-India Free Trade Agreement, said New Delhi's trade strategy now aims to deepen commercial ties across virtually every major region of the world.

"Broadly, our intent is to cover the entire world," Jain said. "Hands are full. The table is full. Mind space is full. So we are all working with all efforts to try and diversify our relations, expand our partnerships, and enhance trade."

Jain said India has already covered "almost 50 per cent of global trade and 50 per cent of global economy" through the countries with which it has negotiated trade agreements over the past five years. The focus is now shift-



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ing to regions where India has relatively limited trade agreements.

In North America, India is negotiating a free trade agreement with Canada, while discussions have also been initiated with Mexico. In Latin America, New Delhi is negotiating with Chile and Peru and has begun discussions with the Mercosur bloc to expand its existing Preferential Trade Agreement.

"We intend to expand that," Jain said of Mercosur, adding that Latin America remains a key region where India wants to strengthen its trade presence.

India is also intensifying its engagement with West Asia. Jain said the country already has trade agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Oman and is now holding discussions with Qatar, the Gulf Cooperation Coun-

cil and other countries in the region. Africa is another priority. India is negotiating with the Southern African Customs Union and Kenya as it seeks to broaden its economic engagement across the continent.

Looking east, Jain said India has already established trade agreements with several important partners, including Japan, South Korea, Singapore and ASEAN member states. In Oceania, New Delhi has recently concluded agreements with Australia and New Zealand.

The comments came just months after India and the European Union concluded what has been described as one of the world's largest

bilateral trade agreements, linking economies representing nearly two billion people.

Jain described the EU agreement as one of India's most ambitious trade pacts and said it reflected a strong political commitment to expand market access and strengthen India's integration into global trade.

"There is a strong political commitment to expand India's trade relationship with other countries, expand market access to other countries, and reduce the disadvantages which our exporters face," he said.

He said the renewed emphasis on trade agreements reflects a broader shift in India's economic outlook, with greater openness to imports alongside efforts to increase exports and make Indian businesses more competitive globally.

The European Union is following a similar strategy. Christophe Kiener, the EU's chief negotiator, said Brussels has already achieved preferential trade coverage for roughly half of its trade and is now concentrating on completing agreements in the Indo-Pacific, including negotiations with Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia, while also pursuing talks with the United Arab Emirates.

New Zealand businesses set to boom with India's trade deal: PM Luxon

NEW DELHI

NEW ZEALAND Prime Minister Christopher Luxon on Thursday said that 57 per cent of the country's exports to India would become tariff-free from the first day under the free trade agreement (FTA). In a post on X, Luxon said, "New Zealand businesses are set to boom with our India Trade Deal" and 57 per cent of everything we export to India will be tariff free from day one."

The comment came ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to New Zealand from July 10 to 11.

The visit follows an invitation from Prime Minister Luxon and marks the first state visit by an Indian Prime Minister to New Zealand in nearly 40 years.

According to PM Modi, the "visit will meaningfully build upon the strong momentum in our bilateral ties pursuant to the visit of Prime Minister Luxon to India in March 2025".

"During my visit, I shall discuss with Prime Minister Luxon how to further enhance economic, trade and commercial engagements. India and New Zealand have



PM Christopher Luxon described India-New Zealand FTA as a once-in-a-generation opportunity, underscoring the scale and potential of the Indian market. Luxon also pointed to India's emergence as a rapidly expanding consumer economy

committed themselves to strengthening bilateral trade and commercial ties with the signing of the Free Trade Agreement," PM Modi mentioned in an earlier X post.

diaspora has made significant contributions to the India-New Zealand ties and he looks forward to addressing a large gathering of the Indian community "who have excelled in all spheres of life".

On April 27 this year, India and New Zealand finalised a landmark FTA, marking a pivotal moment in their bilateral relationship.

Luxon described India-New Zealand FTA as a once-in-a-generation opportunity, underscoring the scale and potential of the Indian market. Luxon also pointed to India's emergence as a rapidly expanding consumer economy. Luxon emphasised that the FTA positions New Zealand to align closely with India's economic trajectory as it transitions toward becoming one of the world's largest economies.