India- EU Strategic Partnership

India and EU have been strategic partners for over two decades, since 2004. EU has also emerged as a top trading (Euro 120-135 bn) and investment partner for India . The relationship and institutional mechanisms including the Troika dialogue have continued to reinforce and deepen for mutual benefit . Even though in several areas like Bilateral Trade Agreement the progress has been slow and painful , the current disruption in the Trans-Atlantic alliance engineered by Trumpian unilateralism has created a certain urgency to close the Trade deal at the earliest . It is expected that during January 2026 , the gaps will be addressed and FTA could even be signed on January 27 or before when the India-EU Summit takes place in New Delhi. India has also conferred a distinct honour on the EU leadership by inviting them as the Chief Guests on the Republic Day -January 26. European Commission President Ursula Von der Loyen and European council Chief Antonia Costa are expected to be the Chief Guests this year .

This gesture on the part of India and the fact the under the changed global circumstances and volatility the EU have begun to attach greater importance to one another by cementing and frequenting high level interactions ,despite certain political differences with certain members over the Russia-Ukraine war and India's continued imports of crude from Russia .However , pragmatism and the fact that India has become the fastest growing major economy surpassing UK and Japan in a space of one year to be the fourth largest one and India's clear articulation of its national interests , have made them realise the need to dispense with rigid positions for their own interests. Besides , India and UK as well as several others have already signed the FTAs . The EC-FTA with some European countries with investment commitments has also become operational. All these factors , along with the ever threatening Trumpian tariffs and disenchantment with US policies , has caused a reasonable ground to identify and overcome any irritants in India-EU trade and economic relations including the trade agreement.

High level contacts have been exceptional in recent past . It was for the first time that twenty two EU Commissioners travelled to India . German Chancellor Metz just concluded a state visit signing over two dozen agreements. French President is also expected to visit early this year as several hundred Rafael fighter aircraft's and other equipment's are being negotiated and finalized by India and France . Shri Ajit Doval, National Security Adviser to the Prime Minister of India and H.E. Emmanuel Bonne, Diplomatic Adviser to the President of the Republic of France co-chaired the 38th India-France Strategic Dialogue in New Delhi on 13 January .During the Strategic Dialogue, India and France reiterated their commitment to the strategic partnership.

Earlier Minister of External Affairs Dr S Jaishankar started of the New year with the first visit to Europe -France and Luxembourg . Apart from conferring with his counterpart he also called on French President Macron . In the India-France Year of Innovation, they explored ways to diversify ties in areas of innovation and technology, startups, health, education and mobility, as well as discussed growing cooperation in strategic areas of defence, security, space, civil nuclear and maritime security and economy. An India -Weimar Foreign Ministers meeting was also held . dr Jaishankar , appreciated his counterpart and President Macron's comments on both sides being the Chair of G7 and BRICS respectively during 2026 would aim to work together to

find synergies rather than working at cross purposes. He also said that ‘ our two nations committed to multi-polarity, I believe that working together is important for ourselves, also for stabilizing the global politics at this stage.” Italian PM Meloni has invited PM Modi to visit Italy . The IMEC corridor and multidimensional route has tremendous connectivity and capacity potential Al between India and, Middle East and Europe , which both sides are serious to exploit despite immediate roadblocks .

The comprehensive trade and investment deal has dragged on for over two decades . But fortunately the differences on market access , agriculture , automobiles ,technical and non-technical barriers to trade including GIs and Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism of EU are nearing redressal or being narrowed to the mutual satisfaction . The Trade deal will provide smoother access to each other’s markets especially for the Indian labour intensive products .

The remit of bilateral engagement has expanded to various other strategic domains including climate change , counter-terrorism , defence , security including cyber , AI Quantum and new communication technologies 6G and Indo-Pacific , and human resource , education and skill development and innovation and renewables . India and EU had established a Trade and Technology Council in 2023 to enhance cooperation in digital governance , semiconductors, clean energy technologies and resilient supply chains . Migration and Mobility remain a major priority for India . How to immunise the global and value supply chains (GVCs) from utter dependencies on a certain country to arbitrary behaviour of certain others remain a major area of concern and congruence for both sides . India reiterates that relationship can be reinforced only if their Mutual Respect; Mutual Interests; Mutual Sensitivity.

India and the EU have a matured strategic mindset driven by mutual interests and can lead to a productive and rewarding strategic partnership with shared values and democratic architecture , for the 21st century. Both support the rules based order and multilateral global governance and institutions which provides a fulcrum for the shape of things to come .

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