

INDIA-SWEDEN STRATEGIC COMPASS

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INDIA-SWEDEN

Seventh India-Sweden Foreign Office Consultations

The seventh India-Sweden Foreign Office Consultations were held in Stockholm on May 3. The event was co-chaired by the Secretary (West) of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Ambassador Pavan Kapoor and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary of State, Jan Knutsson.

The discussions included a range of regional and global issues of mutual interest, including cooperation in reforming the United Nations Security Council and enhancing India-EU bilateral relations, which have the potential to boost bilateral cooperation.

Some of the areas of the discussion included the progress made in key sectors such as innovation, sustainability, trade, and investment. Both sides emphasized the need to expand ties in emerging and sustainable technologies such as semiconductors and green batteries. The meeting highlighted the upswing in various areas of cooperation between India and Sweden in the last few years, and outlined a roadmap for future cooperation.

Sources: @IndiainSweden, May 3; DD News, May 5; Print, May 3



Swedish Prime Minister Congratulates Modi on Election Victory

Through the official account of the Prime Minister of Sweden on X, PM Ulf Kristersson congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the victory of the BJP and its allies in the general elections held in India. Besides the congratulatory message, the strong ties between the two countries were emphasized, as well as the desire to continue collaborations, especially in accelerating the industry's transition to net zero via the LeadIT initiative.



Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström not only re-posted PM Ulf Kristersson's message to PM Modi, but also extended his greetings on the NDA's election win to the External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar. FM Billström also reiterated Sweden's commitment to deepening and expanding India-Sweden bilateral relations.

The President of Latvia Edgars Rinkēvičs also congratulated PM Modi, and highlighted the developing bilateral ties between Latvia and India.

Sources: @SwedishPM, June 5; @TobiasBillstrom, June 5; @edgarsrinkevics, June 5.

Stockholm Celebrates 10th UN International Day of Yoga

On June 16, Stockholm celebrated the 10th UN International Day of Yoga. The event that was co-organized



by the Embassy of India in Stockholm, along with the organizations Art of Living and Yoga for Harmony & Peace included 800 participants and diplomats from 25 countries. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the founder of the Art of Living organization, was also present during the event. The celebrations included guided meditation practices. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar participated in a conversation on “Consciousness & AI” with members of the tech community and representatives of the AI Sweden, the Swedish center for applied AI.

Source: @IndiainSweden, June 21.

Indian National Defense College Delegation Visits Sweden

In mid-June 2024, a civil and defense delegation from India visited Sweden and had meaningful interactions with officials from the government, armed forces, think tanks, and industry. The delegation also included officers from four partner states. During the visit, the National Defense College delegation called on the Indian Ambassador in Sweden Tanmaya Lal. The delegates also met with the State Secretary for Civil Defense Johan Berggren and the Deputy Chief of Defense Rear Admiral Jens Nykvist, and had a briefing by Ambassador Niclas Trouvè from the Swedish MFA.



The delegation also had interactions with Robert Egnell, the Vice Chancellor of the Swedish Defense University, and Märten Sundmark, the Director of International Affairs at the Swedish Defense Research Agency (FOI). The delegation also visited the Swedish Armed Forces International Training Centre (SWEDINT), the Amphibious Regiment of Swedish Navy in Gothenburg, the Swedish Defense Materiel Administration (FMV), the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the SAAB Carl Gustaf Manufacturing & Testing Facility, Heart Aerospace, and the Embassy of India.

Source: @IndiainSweden, June 03.

India Trilateral Forum 2024 in Sweden

The 24th India Trilateral Forum, a platform for facilitating closed-door discussions on a range of topics among experts and policy-makers from India, Europe, and the US, was held in Stockholm on June 10 and 11. The event was co-convened by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Marshall Fund, and ORF America.



The discussions held at this year’s event included a wide ambit of topics such as Ukraine war and the implications for NATO, Russia-China relations, and Indo-Pacific security; elections in India, the US (in November), and for the European Parliament; and India’s policies for technology, clean energy, and the Middle East.

The Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs Tobias Billström delivered the keynote address.

Sources: ORF America, June 10-11.

India Congratulates Sweden on Its National Day

June 6 is celebrated in Sweden as its National Day since 1983. On this date in 1523 Gustav Vasa was proclaimed by the Parliament as King of Sweden and the Constitution of

1809 was adopted. This laid the foundation of Sweden as an independent state. In 2004, after decades of discussions under a succession of governments, the Swedish Parliament voted to make it a public holiday. The public holiday was finally implemented in 2005. Across the Swedish cities, the holiday is celebrated with music, civil acts, waving the flag, and speeches dedicated to Sweden and the Royal Family.

The Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar took this opportunity to greet the Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström, the Swedish government, and Sweden's public on the National Day. Dr. S. Jaishankar also expressed interest in continuing to deepen the relationship between the two countries and posted a video with highlights of the diplomatic relations between the two countries; India and Sweden celebrated the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic ties in 2023.

Among the topics highlighted in the video are high-level interactions between prime ministers, diplomats, and other officials/leaders from both countries. Prominent meetings included the 7th India-Sweden Foreign Office Consultation (held in Stockholm in May 2024), and the India Trilateral Forum with FM Tobias Billström (in May 2023). In the area of defense cooperation, the 9th India-Sweden Joint Working Group meeting (held in New Delhi in August 2023), the presence of SAAB at the Aero India Show (in Bengaluru in February 2023), and the construction of a SAAB manufacturing facility in Haryana (started in March 2024) were also mentioned.

In the area of economic cooperation, the collaboration between the two countries was highlighted in the 4th edition of the Engaging India at Almedalen business seminar series (held in Gotland in June 2023), the India-Sweden Economic Partnership Conference (New Delhi in December 2022), as well as the participation of an Indian business delegation at the Join Sweden Summit (in June 2022), the organization of Business and Investments Roadshows on Time for India in many different cities in Sweden, and the Investment Promotion Roadshows organized by different Indian states (in Stockholm).

Science & technology and energy cooperation was highlighted via the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Dhruva Space and the Swedish

Space Corporation, and the visit made by an Indian business delegation to the Esrange spaceport in northern Sweden (situated far above the Swedish Arctic Circle, approximately 45 kilometers north of Kiruna in March 2024). It also highlighted the visit of the Swedish FM Tobias Billström to the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) early this year (in February). The launch of the LeadIT 2.0 on the sidelines of the COP28 (in December 2023), the First India-Sweden Space & Geospatial Business Summit (in December 2023), and the 10th India-Sweden Innovation Day seminar (October 2023) were also included.

The cultural connection and diaspora has also been a source of close ties between the two countries, with the Indian diaspora in Sweden estimated to be over 60,000.

In response, the Swedish Foreign Minister, Tobias Billström, thanked the Indian FM for showcasing the strengths of the India-Sweden relations, and expressed Sweden's interest in deepening cooperation between the two countries, especially in the areas of digitalization, defense, green transition, space, and transport.

Sources: @DrSJaishankar, June 6; @TobiasBillstrom, June 6; Sweden.se, April 15;

Engaging India: "Samband for Climate"

On June 25, the fifth edition of the Engaging India took place at the Uppsala University campus, Gotland. Tanmaya Lal, Ambassador of India to Sweden & Latvia; Jan Thesleff, Ambassador of Sweden to India; and Daniel Westlén, the Swedish State Secretary to Minister of Climate & Environment joined leaders in the industry, government, and academia from India and Sweden to facilitate meaningful discussions and opportunities for



meaningful action via panel discussions, fireside chats, and presentations innovative solutions, and collaborative pathways for climate action.

The theme of the event this year was “Samband for Climate,” referring to the Hindi (Sambandh) and Swedish (Samband) words for “connection” in order to stress on collaborative approaches to global challenges.

Sources: @IndiainSweden, June 20; @IndiainSweden, June 28; Engaging India, June 25

India’s Tech Mahindra Expands into Baltic States

In early July, Tech Mahindra, a leading global provider of technology consulting and digital solutions to enterprises across industries, announced the expansion of its Business Processing Services (BPS) in the Baltic States with a new center in Riga, Latvia. Tech Mahindra will establish a business process outsourcing service within the Jaunā Teika complex, Latvia’s premier business hub. According to the company, entering the Baltic States is an important part of Tech Mahindra’s long-term strategy to provide innovative technology solutions worldwide. This expansion will boost the local economy, as it is expected to create at least 500 new jobs. In turn, the new facility in Latvia will also enhance Tech Mahindra’s BPS presence in Europe, which will facilitate access of services such as 5G, Metaverse, Blockchain, Quantum Computing, Cybersecurity, and Artificial Intelligence to local and regional customers.

According to Dace Priede, Head of Office Solutions for Latvia at Newsec – which supported Tech Mahindra and EFTEN Capital Latvija in signing the lease agreement – “This marks the largest deal in the Baltic office market thus far in 2024 from the existing office stock already available in the market.” The center was inaugurated by Mr. Tanmaya Lal, Ambassador of India to the Republic of Latvia & Sweden; Mr. Jurgis Miežainis, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Economics, Republic of Latvia; and Mr. Vilnis Ķirsis, Mayor of Riga.

Sources: Baltic Times, July 4; NDTV Profit, July 4; lsm.lv, July 3;

Alfa Laval Celebrates Sustainability and Innovation Day in Pune

The Swedish company Alfa Laval, a leading global provider of quality products in the areas of heat transfer, separation, and fluid handling, hosted Sustainability and Innovation Day in Pune, India. During the event, the Swedish Consul for Mumbai Sven Östberg talked about the Swedish Government’s policy that are in the interest of the Indian partners. Notably, in its Pune facility, the company has achieved its targets to recycle all wastewater, collect rainwater, and bring liquid discharges to zero with the installation of a new wastewater treatment plant using Alfa Laval’s own technology.

Sources: @SwedenCGMumbai, May 30; Alfa Laval, June 12.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Italy Hosts G7 Amid Focus on International Order, Global South & AI

During June 13-15, the heads of the Group of Seven (G7) comprising Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The United Kingdom, and the United States began their annual summit in Borgo Egnazia, Puglia on the southern Italian coast. The European Union (EU) is also a full member of the G7 since 1981 – a “non-enumerated” member that does not participate in the rotating presidency. The EU was represented by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. The host of this year’s summit Italy also invited the leaders of several countries and 5 international organizations to take part in some working sessions during the summit: African Development Bank,

Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, India, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Jordan, Kenya, Mauritania, OECD, Tunisia, Türkiye, United Nations, United Arab Emirates, and World Bank. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni also invited President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and Pope Francis, who became the first pontiff to attend a G7 gathering. The leaders of China and Russia were absent (Russia was suspended in 2014 after it annexed Crimea and left permanently in 2017).

The Italian edition of the G7 Summit had several diverse topics on the agenda for tackling global challenges, such as global food security; climate change and development in Africa; efforts toward an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, release of all hostages, humanitarian assistance, and



commitment to the vision of the two-state solution; unwavering support to Ukraine and condemnation of Russia’s blatant breach of international law; migration; economic security; commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific; energy, climate, and environment; and artificial intelligence.

The following are the priority areas for the Italian Presidency:

- Defense of the rules-based international order
- Russia’s war of aggression on Ukraine that has not only undermined the world order but also triggered multiple global crises
- The conflict in the Middle East and its global ramifications
- Relationships with developing nations and emerging economies, particularly in Africa (a “key priority”) and in the Indo-Pacific region
- Migration, climate, energy, and food security issues
- Artificial intelligence

In the G7 Apulia Communiqué, the leaders demonstrated their unstinting and united support to Ukraine in the ongoing war against Russia. They decided to make available approximately US\$50 billion “leveraging the extraordinary revenues of the immobilized Russian sovereign assets, sending an unmistakable signal to President Putin.” In other words, a definitive collective effort to “disarm and defund Russia’s military industrial complex.”

In the same vein, the Apulia summit saw the grouping take a much more assertive approach toward China. Particularly China’s facilitation of materially supporting

Russia’s war machine, including financial institutions, was targeted.

Regarding the conflict in Gaza, the members strongly condemned the terrorist attacks conducted by Hamas in October 2023 and the use of civilian infrastructure for military activities and expressed their full support and solidarity for Israel. At the same time, it was also noted that Israel needed to fully comply with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. The leaders called with urgency for a cease fire and a “rapid and unimpeded” passage for humanitarian relief to civilians in need. Other ongoing security challenges addressed included the Iranian destabilizing actions, and the attacks against commercial and international vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. They also reiterated their commitment to the vision of the two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, consistent with international law and relevant UN resolutions, and in this regard stressed the importance of unifying the Gaza strip with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority.

Shifting from the security challenges to partnerships and economic matters, the leaders stated their interest in fostering partnerships with African countries on sustainable development, enhancing democratic governance and values, food security, infrastructure, agricultural, and trade. The promotion of private investments was also on the agenda, alongside with the endorsement for the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Another important issue was the commitment to a free



and open Indo-Pacific. The joint statement, especially reaffirmed their support for ASEAN centrality and unity, the promotion of cooperation with countries in the region, support for Pacific Island countries, a stable and constructive relationship with China, and the disarmament of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles.

The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi fresh after winning the elections attended the G7 summit at the invitation of PM Meloni for fifth consecutive time. He held bilaterals with several world leaders including his PM Meloni, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Addressing the Outreach Session at the G7 Summit PM Modi elaborated on India's energy transition pathway noting that its approach was based on availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability. He also emphasized that India was fostering international collaboration as a founding member of Global Partnership for AI.

Sources: G7 Italy, June 28; Council on Foreign Relations, June 24; European Council/Council of the EU; G7 Italia, 2024; NYT, June 13; The White House, June 14; Global Memo, June 20; NPR, June 13; AIR, June 15; Indian Express, June 16

2024 NATO Summit: Marking 75 Years of Collective Defense

On July 9-11, the United States is hosting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summit in Washington D.C. The meetings will be chaired by the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, whose term will end on October 1. Former Prime Minister of the Netherlands Mark Rutte will take over as the next NATO chief.

According to some reports, foreign ministers from 35 non-NATO member partners could be invited to attend the Washington summit. They may include the foreign ministers of Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

The 2024 Summit celebrates the 75th anniversary of the Alliance's establishment – a historic event. In 1949, 12 founding members signed the North Atlantic Treaty to ensure collective defense. Today, NATO has 32 members across Europe and North America. The latest accessions include Finland, which joined in 2023, and Sweden that joined in 2024. Their entry into NATO will certainly

strengthen the defense options.

For example, according to experts, it will allow gains via “Sweden’s ground and air combat, nearshore and undersea warfare capabilities, as well as the country’s expertise in niche areas such as cold weather operations.” Moreover, beyond the hard security, “The addition of Sweden and Finland effectively doubles NATO’s land border with Russia. The entire Nordic-Baltic region also becomes NATO-aligned territory, save the Russian coast and the small exclave of Kaliningrad.”

In this context, the agenda for this year’s summit assumes greater importance. According to Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, “three topics will be at the top of the agenda”:

1. Deterrence & defense – the Alliance’s “core” interests: Even as the US military presence in Europe is still essential, Europe too has increased the readiness of its combined forces. With highly capable Finland and Sweden militaries joining, as detailed above, and more than 20 Allies expected to ramp up their spending to at least 2 percent of GDP on defense are examples of this readiness.
2. Ukraine, which he called the “most urgent” theme: Post the 2022 unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Ukraine’s sovereignty and ability to defend and resist Russian attacks have become a central issue for the West. Therefore, the summit is expected to accelerate NATO’s coordination and provision of security assistance and training for Ukraine.
3. Global partnerships, particularly in the Indo-Pacific: As Europe continues to face the ramifications of Russia’s ongoing brutal war in Ukraine, this is a pivotal time for NATO to showcase its strengths. China’s supporting Russia in multiple ways and “fuelling the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War Two,” including via supplying high-end technologies like semi-conductors and other dual-use items. Not only that, the rise in global crises, conflicts, and wars – South Caucasus, Korean Peninsula, and Gaza to name some – in tandem with China’s militarily aggressive actions in its extended neighborhood and beyond – e.g., Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, East China Sea, Indian Ocean, and the Himalayas – have necessitated a stronger role for the

Alliance at a global level.

At the same time, according to Douglas Jones, deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs, the proposal to establish a NATO liaison office in Tokyo, as a hub for cooperation with NATO's four Asia-pacific partners, namely Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, is currently "not under active discussion."

Sources: *Politico*, June 26; *Encompass*, March; *NATO*, June 18; *VOA*, July 3; *CSIS*, July 2

2024 Elections in Europe: Political Churning in the European Parliament

June was also an important month for elections in Europe when the make-up of the new European Parliament was confirmed, highlighting the direction the European Union (EU) and its institutions will take in the coming years. The exercise, a five-yearly affair, is considered the largest transnational elections in the world. Following the elections, the Parliament votes to elect the new head of the European Commission, the EU's executive body, and approve the full team of commissioners.

The election results highlighted that no single bloc got the overall majority while the far-right made major gains: the center-right European People's Party (EPP) got 189 seats, followed by the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D; traditionally the second-biggest power in the house) at 136; European Conservatives and Reformists, a right-wing group that includes Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, won 83 members; Renew Europe, a liberal group dominated by French President Emmanuel Macron's MEPs, lost big with only 74 seats; and the Greens/European Free Alliance, too had a disappointing run with 51 seats.

The members of the new legislative term are going to participate the first plenary session in mid-July in Strasbourg, where they are going to elect the new president for the Parliament, vice-presidents, and the composition of parliamentary committees.

Already, Ursula von der Leyen has been nominated for a second term as the president of the European Commission and Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas as the High

Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. However, Von der Leyen's and Kallas's nominations are not final and still require confirmation by the European Parliament. The vote will take place in July. By contrast, former Prime Minister of Portugal António Costa has been named as the president of the European Council, succeeding current Chair Charles Michel. He will take office on December 1.

Sources: *European Parliament*, June 28; *Politico*, June 28, 2023; *ECRE*, June 14; *European Parliament*, June 17; *Euro News*, July 7; *DW*, June 5; *BBC*, June 8; *The Parliament*, June 18; *AP*, July 1; *NYT*, June 12; *DW*, June 10; *Politico*, June 19; *European Parliament*; *Al Jazeera*, June 28; *Euro News*, June 27;

Indian Elections 2024: Modi's Coalition Returns

Indian Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi won a third consecutive term in India's general elections – only the second Indian prime minister after Jawaharlal Nehru (the first prime minister of independent India, 1947–1964) to retain power for another five-year term. The results for the Indian parliamentary (namely 18th Lok Sabha) elections were announced on June 4 after six weeks and seven phases (from April 19 to June 1). Considered the largest democratic election exercise in the world and in history, the 2024 general elections had a record voting turnout this year: About 642 million people voted this year – reportedly, this is over 1.5 times the voters of all G7 countries and over 2.5 times the voters of 27 countries in the European Union (EU). Out of that total tally of voters, a record 312 million were women, which is, in comparison, over 1.25 times the voters of 27 countries in the EU.

Out of the 543 parliamentary constituencies, the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 293 seats and the Indian National Congress (INC)-led the Congress Party-led Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) – an opposition alliance comprising more than two dozen regional parties – won 234 seats. A brief look at the statistics highlights that the BJP won the most parliamentary seats (240), followed by six parties with seats in double digits, highlighting the gap: namely the INC with 99 seats, the Samajwadi Party (SP, INDIA) 37 seats; the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC, INDIA) 29; the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK, INDIA) 22; the Telugu Desam (NDA) 16; and the Janata Dal (United, NDA) 12.



After the results were announced, PM Modi gave a speech at the BJP headquarters, emphasizing that the outcome was a “victory of the world’s biggest democracy”; “a win for the 1.4 billion people of India”; and hailed the country’s election process and credibility. Such an overall celebratory sentiment echoed across the country, where even the opposition highlighted the results as a win for the constitution and democracy.

Five days after the counting, on June 9, PM Modi and his cabinet ministers took the oath of office, which was administered by President Droupadi Murmu, at India’s Rashtrapati Bhavan (the official residence of the president of India) in New Delhi. His 71-member Council of Ministers includes 7 women; and is only nine short of the maximum permissible strength of 81 – 15 percent of the total strength of 543 – and six less than the maximum of 78 ministers the Modi government had between 2019 and 2024.

Some of the high-profile cabinet ministers have been retained by PM Modi for another stint at office. They include Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, S Jaishankar, and Piyush Goyal who have returned to head their respective ministries – home, defense, road transport & highways, finance, external affairs, and commerce & industry. Such a measure signals policy continuity in major areas of governance.

Sources: The Hindu, June 03; The Hindu, June 07; The Hindu, June 21; India Today, June 24; The Hindu, June 24; Arunachal Times, June 13; CNBCTV18, June 3; CBS, June 4; Al Jazeera, June 2; NYT, June 6; ET, September 23; Indian Express, June 26; NDTV, June 10; HT, June 26; TOI, June 11; Mint, June 11

INDIA-NORDIC

India-Norway: Advancing Maritime & Green Shipping Initiatives

In May, Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways of India, visited Norway, where he engaged in several key meetings and activities related to maritime and green shipping initiatives. On May 9, Mr. Sinha visited Plug AS’s facility located in the Port of Bergen, where the company presented an overview of their expertise in providing shore power to vessels and maritime charging stations.

Moreover, he visited the Coast Centre Base (CCB) Maritime Cluster and the H2 production plant. CCB provided an overview of their activities, including those of CCB Energy and the Energy Park being developed in Oygarden, Bergen.

Mr. Sinha also participated in a seminar organized by Maritime Bergen and Innovation Norway, focusing on the India-Norway maritime sector. During the seminar, which saw participation from around 25 Norwegian companies,

Mr. Sinha gave a presentation on India’s maritime industry and the opportunities available for investments and joint collaboration.

On May 13, the 9th Joint Working Group (JWG) Meeting between India and Norway was held in Oslo. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Sinha and Mr. Ottar Ostnes, Director General of the Norwegian Department for Maritime Policy and Coastal Development. Finally, the visit ended with Mr. Sinha meeting with DNV in Oslo to discuss green shipping initiatives.

Sources: @IndiainNorway, May 9; @IndiainNorway, May 10, May 13, May 15;

India & Iceland Propel Geothermal Energy Solutions

An Indian energy delegation led by Ms. Esha Srivastava, Joint Secretary (IC) of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India, visited Iceland during May 1-3. Ms. Srivastava who is also the co-chair of the

Iceland-India Joint Task Force on Geothermal Energy was accompanied by Dr. Ranjit Rath, Chairman & MD, OIL Ltd; Dr. Manas Kumar Sharma, Director, OIL Ltd; Mr Binayananda Bharali, Chief General Manager, OIL; Mr. Ravi, Director General, ONGC Energy Centre; and Mr. Ranjeet Kumar, CEO, Techon Consulting Engineers.

On May 2, the Indian delegation participated in the Second Joint Task Force Meeting on Geothermal Energy Cooperation, which was hosted by Mr. Benedikt Hoskuldsson, special envoy for climate, MFA and co-chair of the Iceland-India Joint Task Force at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Reykjavik.

The delegation also participated in a bilateral discussion with Iceland GeoSurvey and Verkis during the aforementioned India-Iceland Joint Task Force meeting on geothermal energy. Among other issues, the dialogue focused on combining expertise to harness geothermal energy in India.

The India-Iceland collaboration includes assessing geothermal resources across India, developing geothermal fields, and implementing various power generation systems.

Already, India and Iceland, are collaborating closely on tapping geothermal energy in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh. Reportedly, ONGC is planning to resume drilling by June at the Puga Valley geothermal project in Ladakh. It aims to complete the drilling for two wells, each with a depth of 1000 meters by the end of September this year, and begin energy production next year.

Similarly, Oil India will begin geothermal exploitation research in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. In addition to geothermal utilization, oil companies are interested in carbon capture and engaged in discussions with CarbFix and Carbon Recycling International during their visit to Iceland.

Sources: @IndiainIceland, ThinkGeoenergy, May 14; TOI, April 24;

INDIA-EU

India-EU Boost Security Linkages

On May 6, the EU and India held their second consultations on security and defense in New Delhi. The two strategic partners exchanged notes on global and regional challenges in Europe, South Asia, and the Middle East, particularly Russia's protracted war against Ukraine. The consultations were co-chaired by Joanneke Balfourt, Director for Security and Defense Policy of the European External Action Service, and Vishvesh Negi, Joint Secretary (International Cooperation), India's Ministry of Defense.

They agreed to deepen security cooperation in several areas including cyber, maritime security, crisis management, and space security (a new area of convergence). The EU informed on the implementation of EU's Strategic Compass and the Indo-Pacific Strategy, including the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), as well as new EU operations, such as the EUNAVFOR Aspides. The EU is looking to bolster its presence in the Indo-Pacific and is concerned about China's aggressive actions in the region. Both India and the EU have continued to reiterate their commitment to a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.


Sources: EEAS, May 6; Hindustan Times, May 7

EU Delegation Organizes Security Seminar in India

In the run up to the second Schuman Forum – a platform that aims to facilitate high-level dialogue on international peace, security and defense issues between the EU, its member states, and partners – in May, a series of preparatory events named “Road to Schuman Forum 2024” were held in six partner states, including in India.

The seminar in India, entitled “The security environment in the Indo-Pacific region and the EU's role as security actor in partnership/cooperation with India,” was attended by security and defense experts, think tank representatives, diplomats, Indian officials, and EU member state representatives. It was held on May 6 in New Delhi.

The topics covered included the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, India's Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative, EU-India maritime cooperation, and regional initiatives to address international maritime security issues. The dialogue also examined the scope of current and emerging challenges in the Indo-Pacific region while identifying future avenues for cooperation between the EU and India.



Joanneke Balfourt, Director, Security and Defense policy, European External Action Service, talked about the need for strengthening mutually beneficial security partnerships, particularly between India, “a country with considerable strategic weight on the global security balance,” and the EU in the Indo-Pacific.

Sources: Deccan Herald, May 7; EEAS, May 7

India-EU Hold 14th Counter-Terrorism Dialogue

On May 7, the EU and India held their 14th Counter-Terrorism Dialogue in New Delhi. The two sides emphasized the need to strengthen global cooperation, including via the United Nations and the Global Counter terrorism Forum (GCTF), in combating terrorism in all forms.

The Dialogue was co-chaired by Joanneke Balfourt, Director for Security and Defence Policy in the European External Action Service and Ambassador K.D. Dewal, Joint Secretary for Counter-Terrorism in the Ministry of External Affairs of India. The EU's Belgian Presidency chair of the COTER Working Group, Nicolas Nihon also took part in the Dialogue.

The dialogue focused on facilitating discussions on terrorist threat assessments; key counter-terrorism policy developments, including state-sponsored and cross-border terrorism; countering terrorism financing; mitigating online radicalization; and the impact of new technologies in countering terrorism. The two sides highlighted the importance of exchange of information, capacity building, strengthening law enforcement, and judicial partnerships in this regard. The EU and India also welcomed the signing of the working arrangement between Europol and the Indian Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The next round of joint working group discussions will be held in Brussels.

Sources: DD News, May 9; ET, May 9

SHAKTI 2024: Elevating India-France Military Cooperation

The 7th edition of the India-France Joint Military Exercise SHAKTI kicked off on May 19 at the Eastern Command's Joint Training Node, Umroi, Meghalaya. It concluded on May 26. The opening ceremony was attended by Thierry Mathou, the Ambassador of France to India, and Major General Prasanna Sudhakar Joshi, General Officer Commanding 51 Sub Area.

Exercise SHAKTI, is a biennial event held alternately in India and France. The Indian contingent comprised 90 personnel, primarily from the Rajput Regiment. Observers from the Indian Navy and Air Force were also part of the exercise. Similarly, the French contingent, also comprising 90 personnel, were represented mainly by the 13th Foreign Legion Half-Brigade (13th DBLE).

The exercise's main objective is to bolster the joint military capabilities, particularly in conducting multi-domain operations within a sub-conventional scenario under Chapter VII of the United Nations Mandate. Focused on semi-urban and mountainous terrains, SHAKTI aims to achieve objectives like enhancing physical fitness, refining tactical drills, and sharing best practices.

Tactical drills during the exercise included responses to terrorist actions; establishing a Joint Command Post and a Intelligence & Surveillance Center; securing helipads; small team insertions/extractions; special heliborne operations; cordon & search operations; and employing drones and counter-drone systems. SHAKTI thus provides a platform for sharing tactics, techniques, and procedures for joint operations, fostering interoperability, camaraderie, and mutual understanding among armed forces personnel. Additionally, it serves to strengthen defense cooperation and bilateral relations between India and France.

Sources: French Embassy in New Delhi, May 13; TOI, May 14

FM Jaishankar Attends Europe day Celebrations in Delhi

The Indian Minister of External Affairs Dr. S. Jaishankar extended his greetings to the EU and Europe's top diplomat Joseph Borrell on Europe Day. He also attended the Europe Day celebrations in New Delhi along with his wife Kyoko Jaishankar. The minister that India and the EU have strong ties and that their deepening relationship was consequential not only for India and Europe but for the entire world. At the event, he highlighted the India-EU enhanced economic ties, stronger technology cooperation, and growing people-to-people connect.

He noted that the cooperation in more resilient and reliable supply chains, as well as digital collaboration was the need of the hour. He also recognized the contribution of the EU to the India-Middle-East-Europe Economic Corridor



(IMEC), launched during the 2023 G20 Summit in Delhi. The EU's greater engagement in security affairs of the Indo-Pacific was also welcomed.

Sources: @DrSJaishankar, May 09; ET, May 10; @LVinIndia, May 11; European Council/Council of the EU

INDIA-GLOBAL

India-US NSAs Take Stock of Expanding High-Tech Cooperation

On June 17, India's National Security Advisor (NSA) Shri Ajit Doval, and the US NSA Jake Sullivan co-chaired a review meeting of the India-US initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) in New Delhi. They noted the progress in this area – the iCET was launched in January 2023 – and pledged to boost strategic cooperation across key sectors including space, semiconductors, advanced telecommunications, artificial intelligence, quantum, biotechnology, critical minerals, and clean energy.

The two also highlighted the need to focus on key areas across governments, industry, and academia. These include funding innovative ecosystems in areas like semiconductor manufacturing, clean energy, sustainable agriculture and food security, pandemic preparedness, and machine learning. They also discussed potential co-production and co-development of defense equipment, including co-production of land warfare systems, as well as and research and development (R&D) opportunities.

NSA Sullivan was on a two-day visit to New Delhi, the first from a high-ranking US official after PM Modi

won the mandate to form the government for the third consecutive time. He also had a meeting with PM Modi and FM Jaishankar.

Sources: AP, June 18; VoA, June 18; The White House, June 17.

India Contributes US\$ 500,000 to CTF

On May 7, the then Indian Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, handed over to the Under Secretary General of the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT) Valdimir Voronkog half million dollars as a voluntary financial contribution to the Counter Terrorism Trust Fund (CTTF) for global counter-terrorism initiatives.

This contribution highlights India's continued implementation of the announcement made by the Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar during the Special Meeting of the Counter Terrorism Committee held in New Delhi on October 29, 2022. The contribution looks to augment support to UNOCT's global programs, in particular the Countering Terrorism Travel Programme (CTTP) and the Countering Financing Terrorism (CFT), which are aimed at capacity building of the member states of eastern and southern Africa to combat of terrorist financing. Thus far, India's cumulative financial support to the trust fund is about \$2.55 million.

Sources: @IndiaatUN, May 7; Permanent Mission of India to the UN, May 7; TOI, May 8.

ASEAN-India Hold Joint Committee Meeting to Review Trade in Goods Agreement

On May 7-9, the fourth Joint Committee meeting for the review of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) was held in Putrajaya, Malaysia. It was co-chaired by India's Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Rajesh Agrawal and Malaysia's Deputy Secretary General (Trade), Ministry of Investment, Trade & Industry, Mastura Ahmad Mustafa. The delegates from India and all 10 ASEAN countries participated in the discussions. The two comprehensive strategic partners started the negotiations to review AITIGA in 2023 for better facilitating trade and improving the benefits accorded to businesses across participant countries. In all, eight sub-committees have been constituted for reviewing different policy areas of the Agreement and out of these, five have started their



discussions. All the five sub-committee reported the outcomes of their discussions during the fourth joint committee.

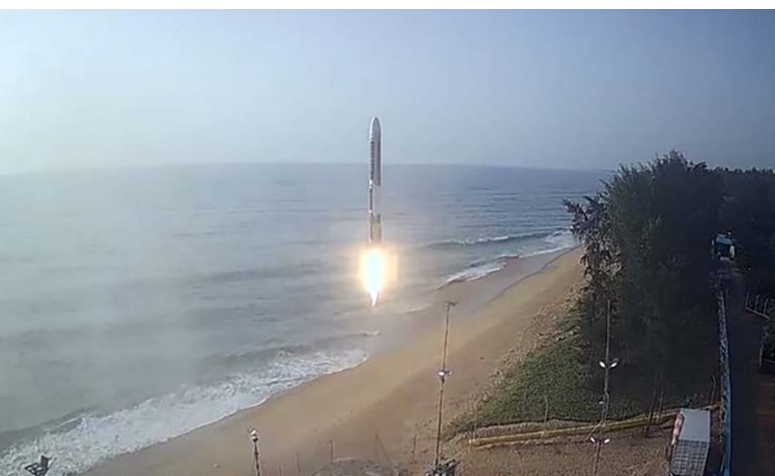
ASEAN is one of the major trade partners of India. During 2023-24, bilateral trade was US\$122.67 billion, which would be enhanced when AITIGA is upgraded. The next AITIGA joint committee meeting will be held on July 29-31 this year in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Sources: ET, May 13; Vietnam Plus, May 13

Agnikul Launches India’s Second Privately Built Rocket Agnibaan

The Indian private space startup Agnikul Cosmos announced on May 30 the successful flight mission of the Agnibaan SOrteD – SubOrbital Technological Demonstrator – a major milestone. This is India’s first sub-orbital test vehicle powered by the world’s first single-piece 3D-printed rocket engine. According to the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), which congratulated Agnikul on X, this is also the first-ever controlled flight of a semi-cryogenic liquid engine realized through additive manufacturing.

The vehicle was completely designed in-house in India and assembled at Agnikul’s facilities within IIT Madras. Agnibaan is a customizable, two-stage launch vehicle that can carry a payload of up to 300 kg into orbit of about 700 km, and is configurable by the customer. It has been designed to launch from its mobile launch pad, called Dhanush, from any location. A key goal of this mission is to serve as a test flight, demonstrate in-house and home-



grown technologies, gather crucial flight data, and ensure optimal functioning of the Agnibaan systems. Agnikul was founded in 2017 and runs India’s first private launch pad and mission control center. All other launch pads are operated by ISRO. The start-up hopes to conduct its first orbital launch by the end of 2024-25.

Sources: @Tanmaya_Lal, @AgnikulCosmos, May 30; DD News, May 30; Indian Express, June 1; BT, June 1; Business Standard, May 30; ET, May 30

ISRO’s Reusable Launch Vehicle Completes Third Landing Experiment



On June 23, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) successfully completed its third and final Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) Landing Experiment (LEX). The vehicle is named “Pushpak.” The demonstration took place at the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) in Chitradurga, Karnataka, and was the collaborative effort of ISRO centers (SAC, ISTRAC, SDSC-SHAR), Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE), the Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), the Regional Centre for Military Airworthiness (RCMA), National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), the Indian Air Force, Indian Institute of Technology, Indian Oil Corporation, Airport Authority of India, and Indian aerospace industrial partners.

During the mission, the winged vehicle “Pushpak” demonstrated advanced autonomous landing capabilities by executing a precise horizontal landing under challenging conditions. This mission, which simulated the approach, landing interface, and high-speed landing conditions for a vehicle reentering from space, highlighted India’s capabilities in acquiring crucial technologies for Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) development.

Sources: @Tanmaya_Lal, June 23; @ISRO, June 23; HT, June 23



EDITOR'S NOTE

Post the elections both in the European Parliament and India, the momentum in foreign policymaking should ideally resume its earlier pace. Notably, concluding timely negotiations for the much-awaited EU-India free trade agreement within this year would be mutually beneficial. Even as election results in Europe offer a new trend, the bilateral trajectory growth with India should not be impacted.

Particularly as India's growth has looked strong and India's top decision-makers, including foreign minister, defense minister, and finance minister have been retained by the prime minister, who is returning for a record third time. PM Modi and FM Jaishankar's foreign policy priorities would unlikely have changed with the election results, as the EU and its member-states are some of the most important Indo-Pacific partners for India.

In this context, India and Sweden have long-standing close ties, and over the last year their strong economic-

centered relations have looked to transform – with security concerns including cyber-security, counter-terrorism, and joint collaborations on defense also being included in the foreign office consultations. The year 2023 was especially remarkable with the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations and multiple ministerial-level visits, including Jaishankar's notable visit that saw discussions on the Indo-Pacific, European strategic situation, and de-risking the global economy – a successful pivot to the growing strategic linkages between the two sides.

India and Sweden must now push for elevating their ties, as well as strengthening India-EU cooperation, including providing impetus to the India-EU FTA talks (the seventh round concluded in February 2024) and enhanced coordination at the Trade & Technology Council (TTC). The TTC was announced in 2022, and under which new initiatives have been launched earlier this year (e.g., start-up collaboration on Recycling of E-Vehicles Batteries).

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Disclaimer: The views expressed here are as published in the original sources and not of the ISDP or the SCSA-IPA.

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The Institute for Security and Development Policy is a Stockholm-based independent and non-profit research and policy institute. The Institute is dedicated to expanding understanding of international affairs, particularly the interrelationship between the issue areas of conflict, security and development. The Institute's primary areas of geographic focus are Asia and Europe's neighborhood.

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