



INDIA-SWEDEN STRATEGIC COMPASS

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

September-October 2024 • Vol.3 • No.5

INDIA-SWEDEN

Jaishankar Meets Stenergard at the UNGA

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met the new Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Maria Malmer Stenergard on the sidelines of 79th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. The two ministers discussed the deepening of bilateral ties, particularly in areas such as sustainable development, investments, and skilled workers' mobility. They also deliberated on the challenges arising due to the war in Ukraine and the geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific.

Dr Jaishankar was representing India at the general debate of the 79th UNGA session that opened on September 24. He delivered a speech on September 28. The theme for the general debate was titled "Leaving No One Behind: Acting Together for the



Advancement of Peace, Sustainable Development and Human Dignity for Present and Future Generations."

Dr. Jaishankar also met several dignitaries including Philemon Yang, the new President of the UNGA, and United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. He reaffirmed India's commitment to the recently adopted "Summit of the Future" pact.

Sources: *Business Standard*, September 27; *AIR*, September 24; *Business World*, September 27; *MEA*, September 26

India-Sweden Strengthen Tech-Oriented Business Partnerships

The Embassy of India in Stockholm recently hosted a key session aimed at deepening business ties between India and Sweden, co-organized with Swedish entrepreneur Lena Bäcker. The event brought together Indian and Swedish business leaders to discuss collaboration in technology, innovation, and investment.

Key speakers included Khashayar Farmanbar, a former Swedish Minister for Energy and Digital Development, and Gautam Bhattacharyya, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Qatar. Farmanbar, who has a background in IT and politics, emphasized the importance of innovation in driving future partnerships. Bhattacharyya highlighted the growing bilateral cooperation in sectors like digital technology and green energy.

The event is part of a broader push to enhance economic ties between India and Sweden, fostering collaboration in cutting-edge industries.

Source: *IndiainSweden*, October 4

India and Sweden Strengthen Ties at 11th Innovation Day

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, speaking at the 11th India-Sweden Innovation Day, called for enhanced bilateral cooperation across government, industry, and academia. With India ranked first in innovation in Central and Southern Asia and 39th globally in the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2024, Dr. Singh highlighted India's rapid growth and Sweden's leading position as a global innovator, ranking second in Europe. He also pointed to joint ventures like the Venus Orbiter Mission between ISRO and the Swedish Space Corporation.

The India-Sweden Innovation Day is organized by India Unlimited, an organization that promotes cross-cultural ties between the two countries. It is supported by the Embassy of India in Sweden and the Sweden-India Business Council, bringing together government, industry, and academia.

The event, titled "Accelerating Green Growth for Inclusive Transition," underscored the need for collaboration on green technologies, particularly through initiatives like LeadIT 2.0, focusing on low-carbon industrial transitions.

Swedish Vice Prime Minister Ms. Ebba Busch also stressed Sweden's commitment to innovation-driven collaboration, with both nations aiming to create scalable, sustainable solutions.

Sources: ANI, October 17; LeadIT, October 20



Sweden, India Deepen Space Ties

On September 25, Sweden's State Secretary for Foreign Trade Håkan Jevrell met with ISRO Chairman Dr. S Somanath in Bengaluru to explore opportunities for strengthening space collaboration between the two nations. Key areas discussed included potential partnerships on optical ground stations, the utilization of Sweden's Esrange Space Center, and the exchange of experts in space research. Håkan Jevrell was leading Sweden's largest space delegation to date. Besides ISRO, he also held meetings at the National Space Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe), took the delegation to the Indian Institute of Science (IISc)



Earlier the same month, the Indian government had approved the Venus Orbiter Mission (VOM), which aims to study the surface and atmosphere of Venus and is slated for launch in 2028. A major highlight is Sweden's involvement in the VOM. The Swedish Institute of Space Physics (IRF) will contribute the Venusian Neutrals Analyser (VNA), a sophisticated instrument designed to study the interactions between solar particles and Venus' atmosphere.

The partnership between Sweden and India in space exploration goes back decades, and this latest collaboration reflects the enduring and evolving relationship between the two countries.

Sources: X Swedenin India, September 25; India Today, October 1; ISRO, September 26; ET, September 18; TOI, September 27

India Appoints New Ambassador to Sweden

In late October, Neena Malhotra, Officer on Special

Duty, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Sweden. She is expected to take up the assignment shortly though no date has been specified as yet.

India's previous envoy to Sweden and Latvia (2020-2024) Tanmaya Lal was appointed Secretary (West) at the Ministry of External Affairs in July this year, assuming charge on August 5.

Sources: ANI, October 24; MEA, October 24; Print, July 13

SPECIAL FEATURES

India at BRICS 2024: A Key Economic, Political & Diplomatic Endeavor amid Global Tensions

In late October, the 16th Summit of the BRICS nations comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, as well as four new members, namely Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was held in the Russian city of Kazan. The three-day event was attended reportedly by nearly 36 countries, with more than 20 of them represented by heads of state. The United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who has repeatedly criticized Russia's actions in Ukraine, too, attended the summit and made his first visit to Russia in more than two years. The visit raised eyebrows in certain sections, including Ukraine. But the meeting was important as part of UN's role as a peace builder and because BRICS nations represent nearly half of the world's population.

This is the first annual meeting of this non-Western forum after its expansion last year that raised the stakes in global governance for the Global South. The summit welcomed 13 new partner countries, though not as full members. The newly expanded BRICS "Plus" will include Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

The Kazan Declaration reiterated the BRICS' commitment to strengthening political and economic cooperation while enhancing the countries' strategic partnerships for a "more representative, fairer international order, a reinvigorated and reformed multilateral system, sustainable development, and inclusive growth." On Ukraine, the Declaration noted the national positions in forums such as the UN and the UNSC. It also held that "all states should act consistently with the Purposes and Principles of the UN Charter in their entirety and interrelation." The peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy was also reiterated.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, attending the Kazan Summit, reaffirmed India's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution, offering once again to mediate the Russia-Ukraine war in his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Modi emphasized the need for diplomacy to resolve global conflicts, a message that underscores India's growing influence on the world stage. Modi's engagement with Putin also touched on strengthening India-Russia trade and defense partnerships, ahead of the India-Russia



Inter-Governmental Commission in November 2024 in New Delhi. The two leaders expressed a shared vision of maintaining strong ties amidst global uncertainties.

In addition, Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping, discussing peace along the India-China border, while continuing to advocate for stability in the Indo-Pacific. He also held bilateral meetings with his counterparts from other BRICS member nations and invited leaders.

PM Modi also addressed two sessions at the summit. He underscored the need for a people-centric approach to global tensions and challenges, including conflicts, climate change, and cyber threats. He emphasized on proactively working for global governance reforms. He stated that the BRICS Startup Forum, proposed during India's BRICS presidency in 2021, would be launched this year and would add significant value to the BRICS economic agenda.

BRICS' expansion implies that India, which enjoys deep ties with several new members, will be able to broaden its outreach in multilateral platforms, with Modi also praising the group's role in global development. The Indian leader's efforts at the summit highlighted India's balancing act between promoting peaceful solutions and expanding its influence in the global order.

Sources: Indian Express, October 22; Guardian, October 23; PBS, October 23; BBC, October 25; DD News, October 28; Reuters, October 23; NYT, October 29; UN News, October 25; Radio Free Asia, October 28; Mint, October 23

Modi's U.S. Visit – Strengthening Quad & Batting for UN-led Multilateralism

During September 21-23, PM Modi visited the United States to attend a number of important events: bilateral with the U.S. President Joe Biden, Quad summit, UN "Summit of the Future," diaspora outreach, and several high-level engagements.

Before the Quad Summit, PM Modi and President Biden held bilateral talks. The meeting between the two leaders lasted for an hour. The two leaders

focused on deepening the India-U.S. Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and discussed regional and global priorities. President Biden reiterated U.S. support for India's permanent membership in a reformed U.N. Security Council, recognizing India's essential voice in global governance. Notably, the two sides announced plans for the establishment of a new semiconductor fabrication plant. It will be facilitated with support from will be enabled by support from the India Semiconductor Mission as well as a strategic technology partnership between Bharat Semi, 3rdiTech, and the U.S. Space Force.

Later, he attended the sixth (fourth in-person) Quad Summit comprising leaders of Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S. hosted by President Biden in his hometown Wilmington, Delaware. (Prime Ministers Anthony Albanese of Australia and Kishida Fumio of Japan were the other two leaders.) The meeting reviewed both the Quad's progress since last year's summit and its agenda for 2024. It also highlighted India's commitment for rules-based, inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific that prioritizes regional, and in turn global, development amid rising geopolitical tensions. PM Modi in his address at the summit stressed that the "Quad is here to stay, to assist, to partner, and to complement." He talked about a free, open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific as a "shared priority and a shared commitment" for the Quad members.



The Quad leaders in their joint statement, the so-called “Wilmington Declaration,” announced a variety of developmental initiatives including on infrastructure, maritime security, public-private partnership, climate, health, critical and emerging technologies, and space. The following are some key projects, including a few established by India:

- “Quad Cancer Moonshot,” a historic project to combat cervical cancer in the Indo-Pacific. India has contributed US\$7.5 million for sampling kits, detection kits, and vaccines under the Moonshot initiative
- “Maritime Initiative for Training in the Indo-Pacific” (MAITRI)
- First-ever “Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission” in 2025 to enhance naval interoperability and safety measures
- “Quad Ports of the Future Partnership” to support sustainable and resilient regional infrastructure development
- “Quad Principles for Development and Deployment of Digital Public Infrastructure”
- “Semiconductor Supply Chains Contingency Network Memorandum of Cooperation”
- Space-based web portal for Mauritius, established by India, for space-based monitoring of extreme weather events and climate impact.
- A new sub-category under the Quad STEM Fellowship, announced by India (a four-year bachelor’s level engineering program at an Indian government-funded technical institute.

India will host the 2025 Quad Leaders’ Summit.

On the second day of his visit, PM Modi interacted with the CEOs of leading U.S.-based companies to foster greater collaborations between the two countries in the area of cutting-edge technology. The roundtable hosted by PM Modi included Chairman President and CEO of Adobe Shantanu Narayen, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, IBM COE Arvind Krishna, Lisa Su-Chair and CEO of AMD Noubar Afeyan - Chairman Moderna.

On September 23, the Prime Minister addressed the Summit of the Future at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) headquarters in New York. The aim of the summit is to focus on realizing inclusive and

equitable sustainable development goals. PM Modi talked about sharing India’s successful model of the Digital Public Infrastructure, as well as emphasized on reforms of global multilateral institutions. He underlined that “success of humanity lies in collective strength, not in the battlefield.”

Sources: Economic Times, September 24; AP, September 23; Mint, September 22; India Today, September 22; Economic Times, September 22; First Post, September 23; NDTV, September 23

India’s Southeast Asia Outreach: PM Modi Visits Brunei & Singapore

Historic Brunei

In early September PM Modi arrived in Brunei at the invitation of Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkhiah for a two-nation trip that also included Singapore. He is the first Indian prime minister to travel to Brunei on a bilateral visit. The visit also marked the 40th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries. Sultan Bolkhiah welcomed PM Modi at the Istana Nurul Iman – the official residence of the Sultan and the seat of the Brunei government – for the bilateral talks.



The two leaders elevated the ties to an “enhanced partnership” and discussed a wide range of issues, including defense, trade, investment, and regional security. They agreed on the need to address climate change and to collaborate in ICT, fintech, cybersecurity, and renewable energy.



Strategic Singapore

After Brunei, PM Modi visited Singapore on September 4-5, which marked his fifth trip to the country often seen as a premier strategic gateway to Southeast Asia. Invited by Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, the visit included high-level meetings with Singaporean leadership, including the President Tharman Shanmugaratam, and Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong, and Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong. He also met with leaders of Singapore's vibrant business community. The two prime ministers also visited AEM, a leading Singaporean company in the semiconductor and electronics sector.

During the visit, the two prime ministers agreed to enhance cooperation by elevating their bilateral relationship to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership." This includes expanding cooperation in key areas such as political, economic, and security ties, as well as technology, education, and cultural exchanges.

Both these visits reaffirm Southeast Asia's centrality in India's inclusive Indo-Pacific vision, as well as India's commitment to strengthening its diplomatic, economic, and strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. The trip also aimed to strengthen cooperation in sectors like defense, trade and investment, energy, and people-to-people exchanges.

Sources: NDTV, September 3; DD News, September 4; Print, September 4; Indian Express, September 4; Hindustan Times, September 5

Maria Malmer Stenergard as Foreign Minister: A New Chapter in Swedish Diplomacy?

In a significant reshuffle within the Swedish government, Maria Malmer Stenergard has been appointed as the new Foreign Minister. She takes over from Tobias Billström, who in a shock departure resigned from politics entirely. Her ascension to this pivotal role comes at a time when Sweden is navigating complex international challenges and redefining its foreign relations strategy.

Stenergard, who previously served as the Minister for Migration, brings a wealth of experience in policy-making, having played a crucial role in shaping the EU's migration pact during Sweden's presidency. In her first remarks as Foreign Minister, she underscored her commitment to prioritizing Swedish national interests. "Sweden has a strong voice in the world, but Swedish foreign policy should be good for Sweden," she stated, resonating with the government's focus on pragmatic diplomacy.

Considering an increasingly fragile global and European geopolitical landscape, Stenergard faces immediate challenges such as long-standing support for Ukraine amid Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. The new Foreign Minister told a press conference that Russia's invasion of Ukraine "affects everything we do ... At the same time, it shows the importance of foreign policy and EU cooperation is now more important than ever."

Navigating Sweden's position on the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly in light of Israel's escalations in Gaza, is another such challenge. She has reiterated the importance of balancing humanitarian efforts with Sweden's strategic interests, stating, "We must ensure our support aligns with what is best for Sweden."

Stenergard visited Helsinki as the first trip in her capacity as Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs. She met with Finland's Minister for Foreign Affairs Elina Valtonen. The agenda included discussions on regional cooperation, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and support to Ukraine.

Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson also made other changes to his Cabinet: Johan Forssell is the new Migration Minister; Benjamin Dousa replaced Forssell as Development Minister; Jessica Rosencrantz is the new European Union Affairs Minister; Johan Pehrson the Education and Research Minister; and Mats Persson became the Minister for Employment and Integration.

Sources: Dn SE, September 11; Sweden Abroad September 10; AP, September 4; AP, September 11; BBN, September 11; Government Offices of Sweden, nd; Government Offices of Sweden, September 13; Politico, September 10.

INDIA-NORDIC

India-Denmark Boost Green Strategic Partnership

In a significant step towards strengthening bilateral ties, Morten Bodskov, the Minister for Industry, Business and Financial Affairs of Denmark, met with Indian officials to discuss advancements in their Green Strategic Partnership. This meeting took place as part of Denmark's participation in the Fourth Global Renewable Energy Investors Meet & Expo (RE-INVEST 2024 - September 16 to 18).

During the discussions, Minister Bodskov engaged with India's Minister of New and Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi, and Chief Minister of Gujarat, Bhupendra Patel. The dialogue focused on collaborative efforts to enhance sustainability

and innovation in various sectors, underscoring the shared commitment of both nations to address climate change and promote green technologies.

The Green Strategic Partnership aims to foster cooperation in renewable energy, sustainable business practices, and green technology development, reflecting a mutual interest in driving economic growth while prioritizing environmental sustainability.

As both countries move forward, this partnership is expected to unlock new opportunities and further solidify the relationship between India and Denmark, paving the way for a more sustainable future.

Sources: X Denmark in India, September 16; ET, September 17

India Water Week 2024: Denmark Announced as Partner Country

In an exciting development, Denmark was announced as the Partner Country for the 8th India Water Week, which took place from September 17 to 20 in New Delhi.

This annual event served as a key platform for fostering partnerships and advancing inclusive water development and management strategies. With Denmark's reputation for innovative and sustainable water solutions, the collaboration was poised to enhance discussions and initiatives aimed at addressing pressing water-related challenges.

As the event unfolded, stakeholders from various sectors came together to explore innovative strategies and share best practices for effective water management. The partnership with Denmark brought valuable insights and expertise, reinforcing the importance of international collaboration in tackling global water issues.

The event highlighted the two partners' ongoing commitment to addressing water-related challenges both locally and globally.

Source: X Indiawaterweek, September 8



Celebrating 75 years of India-Finland Diplomatic Ties

On September 10, an event was held in New Delhi to commemorate the 75th anniversary of India and Finland first establishing diplomatic relations on September 10, 1949. Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (West) Tanmaya Lal, Finnish diplomats, business leaders, and cultural figures came together to celebrate the milestone event and the continuing strong relationship.

Finland's Ambassador to India, Kimmo Lahdevirta, highlighted the robustness of the India-Finland partnership, emphasizing its strong historical roots with the evolution into the "DESI" (digitalization, education, sustainability, and innovation) approach. The DESI framework, based on the 2021 Joint Declaration has facilitated the expanding cooperation in areas like ICT and environmental sustainability.

The event also featured an address by the Chairperson of the Commerce Committee of the Parliament of Finland Sakari Puisto, who highlighted the increase in foreign direct investments to India, as well as the stress on cultural and people-to-people exchanges, including tourism. The landmark agreement between India and EFTA is set to bring significant economic benefits, such as better integrated and more resilient supply chains. Finland's Minister for Foreign Affairs Elina Valtonen sent a special video message highlighting Finland's commitment to strengthening ties with India.

Sources: ANI, September 10; Financial Express, September 10

Norwegian Parliament's Standing Committee Visits India

The Norwegian Parliament's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense visited India for three days in September. The committee, led by former foreign minister Ine Eriksen Søreide, met Indian government, opposition, business, and civil society leaders. The delegation members also visited India's new parliament building.

The Standing Committee had productive talks with the Indian Minister for Commerce & Industry Piyush

Goyal. Both sides explored the potential of the recently inked India-European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA). The Standing Committee also met Defense Secretary Giridhar Aramanein New Delhi on September 9. They discussed issues of contemporary relevance and mutual interest. The Norwegian delegation comprised 11 Parliamentarians and the Ambassador to India.

India and Norway have enjoyed a cordial relationship since 1947, built on a foundation of shared values, including democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. India's opposition leader Mallikarjun Kharge stressed on the same while interacting with the Committee members, led by Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide, alongside Norway's Ambassador to India, Ms. May-Elin Stener.

Such interactions reflect the commitment of both nations to deepen their partnership and explore new avenues for collaboration, reinforcing the friendly ties that have flourished over decades. As India and Norway look to the future, their shared ideals and strong diplomatic relations promise to foster further collaboration across diverse sectors.

Sources: ANI, September 10; MoD, September 9; @PiyushGoyalOffc, September 9

India Appoints New Ambassador to Iceland

The Indian government has appointed R Ravindra as India's next ambassador to Iceland. He is at present the Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations at New York. He is expected to take over the ambassadorial duties shortly; no date has been mentioned.

Source: ANI, September 10

Indian Cinema and Music Comes to Norway

Bollywood Festival Norway, the biggest Indian Dance and Film Festival in Norway since 2003, was held at the Klingenberg Cinema Theatre and Lillestrøm Kultursenter, from September 27 to October 3. It showcased the rich cultural heritage of Indian film and music, drawing enthusiastic crowds. The festival

was supported by Indian Embassy of Norway, Oslo, and the Royal Embassy of Norway, New Delhi.

The Bollywood Festival Norway opened on September 27, with a grand ceremony that featured special guests including Indian producer, actor, and director Rakesh Roshan. Dr. Acquino Vimal, India's Ambassador to Norway, also attended the event. The screening of India's superhero film *Krrish*, directed by Rakesh Roshan, kicked off the festival.

The festival also featured a live musical night on September 29, featuring singer Suresh Wadkar and his wife, Padma Wadkar, at the LillestrømKultursenter. During the day, a poetry session featuring Mirza Ghalib's works was held, with poems presented in Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu.

On October 1 and 2, two popular films, namely *Shershab*, a Hindi-language biographical war film, and *Major*, another Indian biographical action drama shot both in Hindi and Telugu languages. Both films were shown at the iconic Klingenberg Cinema Theatre, giving over 400 attendees a cinematic experience filled with heart-pounding action and emotion.

On October 3, a seminar was held to address the rise of youth crime in Norway, led by author and journalist Nina Hansenn.

The festival closed on October 4 with a tribute to Raj Kapoor, featuring a screening of the documentary *Loni Tunes*, which delves into the life of legendary Indian filmmaker Raj Kapoor and his second studio in Loni, a suburb of Pune.

Sources: X IndiainNorway, September 28 ; XIndiainNorway, September 30; Bollywood Festival Norway

INDIA-EU

Strengthening U.S.-EU-India Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific?

In September, the EU Ambassador to India, Hervé Delphin, met the U.S. Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, to discuss shared priorities and explored avenues for trilateral collaboration with India. These meetings follow the discussions between U.S. Deputy Secretary Kurt Campbell and European External Action Service (EEAS) Secretary General Stefano Sannino during the U.S.-EU High-Level Consultations on the Indo-Pacific in Brussels.

Ambassadors Delphin and Garcetti emphasized common interests and joint initiatives, underscoring their mutual commitment to a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. This diplomatic push reflects the growing importance of trilateral cooperation in the region as both the EU and the U.S. look to strengthen ties with India to promote regional stability and economic prosperity.

These discussions further align with the broader strategy to address emerging geopolitical challenges in the Indo-Pacific, enhancing cooperation in areas such as maritime security, sustainable development, and connectivity.

Sources: X EUambIndia, September 20; UsAmbIndia, September 19

EU Organizes Study Tour to Further Defense & Security Ties

In early September, the European Union (EU) organized a three-day study visit in Europe for senior Indian officials from the ministry of defense and ministry of external affairs to boost security



and defense cooperation, particularly to brief Indian officials about the EU's security and defense mechanisms. It also aimed to explore potential cooperation via Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions, as well as in the Indo-Pacific.

The Indian delegation was led by Ms. Muanpui Saiawi, Joint Secretary, Disarmament & International Security Affairs Division, MEA, and accompanied by Captain (Navy) Fabrizio Falzi, Defence Attaché of the EU Delegation to India. The officials visited the EU institutions in Brussels, Belgium, and EU Naval Force Operation ATALANTA headquarters in Rota, Spain.

Hervé Delphin, the EU Ambassador to India, stressed the strategic importance of the region and praised the joint naval operations between the EU and Indian forces, emphasizing the critical role this growing partnership plays in maintaining regional security and advancing cooperation in maritime governance.

Sources: ABPlive Sept 6; ET, September 5

EU @ India “Defence Conclave 2024”

At the recently held India Defence Conclave 2024, Hervé Delphin, Ambassador of the European Union to India, emphasized the EU's pivotal role in the Indo-Pacific region, asserting that “Europe is not remote” from this vital part of the world. The EU's engagement in the Indo-Pacific is not solely economic but deeply strategic, focusing on fostering long-term stability and shared prosperity.

Ambassador Delphin highlighted the Indo-Pacific's significance as the global economic growth engine, underlining how the EU's collaboration with India is a cornerstone of ensuring peace and prosperity. The shared vision of cooperation among Indo-Pacific partners is crucial to maintaining deterrence against common threats and preserving stability.

This was the Conclave's ninth edition, organized by the defense news platform Bharat Shakti. The event served as a pivotal platform for top Indian defense officials to emphasize India's defense strategy amid a tense global security landscape. Vital aspects of

national security, including India's position as a stabilizing force in the Indo-Pacific, India's push for self-reliance in defense, and the strengthening of strategic international partnerships were discussed.

Sources : X EUambIndia, September 19; X BharatShakti, September 19; FE, September 18

EU-India Conclude Another Round of FTA Talks

Negotiations of the ninth round of India-EU free trade agreement (FTA) were held in New Delhi during September 23-27. The discussions focused on principles of fairness and reciprocity.

The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, an investment protection agreement, and an agreement on geographical indications (GIs). They discussed core trade issues covering goods, services, investment and government procurement along with necessary rules such as rules of origin, SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary), and technical barriers to trade.

The FTA talks resumed in 2022 after a nearly eight-year hiatus, focusing on reducing tariffs, addressing market access challenges, and facilitating investment flows between the two regions. Despite the political push for concluding the talks and the boom in two-way trade, key challenges still remain in several areas such as sustainability regulations, labor standards, environmental norms, and tariffs.

The next round of negotiations is likely to be held in the first quarter of next year. The FTA will be a high priority over the next five years, despite the challenges.

Sources: ET, October 7; Mint, September 22; Business Standard, September 22

FEBI's Launch Will Steer India-EU Businesses

In October, the Federation of European Business in India (FEBI) was officially inaugurated. On the momentous occasion, Hervé Delphin, Ambassador of the European Union to India, underscored the importance of EU-India economic collaboration, calling FEBI a “force multiplier.”



FEBI is an independent organization of European businesses in India. It aims to strengthen the collective EU policy advocacy voice. FEBI is supported by the EU Delegation in India and the embassies of the EU member-states in India. As the official EU Chamber of Commerce in India, FEBI is set to enhance investment and create jobs, driving forward the EU's strategic and economic partnership with India. Indian Minister for Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal also attended the event. He underscored the mutual commitment to fostering growth and cooperation.

Sources: ET, October 11; ANI, October 12; Print, October 12

Beer's India Visit Underscores EIB's Continued Commitment

European Investment Bank (EIB) Vice President Nicola Beer visited India and Bhutan in October to promote sustainable development and support for renewable energy, electric mobility, and urban development in the region.

In India, she met key leaders and announced vital initiatives. At a meeting in Gandhinagar, Vice President Beer and Director of Finance of Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (KRIDE) Awadhesh Mehta formally announced a €300 million loan to build a new suburban railway network covering four dedicated rail corridors in Bengaluru. This aims to support sustainable transport in India that will reduce pollution, enhance

mobility, and improve safety for women.

The EIB, which is the EU's long-term lending institution and a leader in climate finance, continues to play a crucial role in India's sustainable development. According to Ambassador Delphin in the last two decades, the EIB has invested nearly €5 billion in sustainable projects across India, with a focus on climate action. Financing key projects in metros, water management, and green energy, the EIB remains a cornerstone of the EU's broader engagement in India.

Sources: XEUinIndia October 24; ANI, October 25; Mint, October 25

INDIA-GLOBAL

PM Modi Reaffirms India's Commitment to Peace in West Asia

In a recent telephone call on September 30 with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned acts of terrorism in any form or manifestation. The Israeli PM Netanyahu briefed PM Modi on the escalating conflict in West Asia. As tensions rise, PM Modi stressed the importance of preventing further regional escalation.

Earlier in the same month, PM Modi had also met Palestine President Mahmoud Abbas on the sidelines of a United Nations event in New York. PM Modi had "expressed deep concern at the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza and the deteriorating security situation in the region." He had also pledged India's "unwavering support to the people of Palestine, including continued humanitarian assistance."

India emphasizes on a "two-State solution" for ensuring peace, calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Palestine, the release of hostages, and a return to diplomacy and dialogue.

Sources : News 18, October 1; NDTV, September 30; ET, September 23; TOI, October 1; India Today, September 23

India's Push for a Semiconductor Revolution

In early September, PM Modi and his cabinet approved the proposal of Kaynes Semicon Pvt Ltd to set up a semiconductor unit in Sanand, Gujarat. The proposed unit will be set up with an investment of INR 33,000 million.

India is rapidly advancing its semiconductor manufacturing capabilities, aiming to reduce dependency on imports and strengthen its position in the global supply chain. This push is part of the broader India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), a key initiative of the government to develop a robust semiconductor ecosystem. The ISM operates under the Digital Media Corporation, with a total outlay of INR 760,000 million.

India's dependence on imported semiconductors has become a significant challenge, particularly as the demand for electronic devices has surged. In 2019, semiconductor imports stood at \$4.65 billion, vastly outweighing domestic exports of \$0.33 billion. With the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting global supply chains, the world has seen a shift in semiconductor production hubs. India is strategically positioning itself to become a key player by fostering local production.

The government's semiconductor program has approved multiple projects across the country, including in Sanand, Gujarat, and Dholera, Gujarat, as well as Morigaon, Assam. These units collectively aim to produce up to 70 million chips daily. Notably, the Kaynes Semicon Pvt. Ltd. unit in Sanand will have the capacity to produce 6 million chips per day, with applications spanning industrial, automotive, and consumer electronics sectors.

This surge in domestic semiconductor manufacturing not only aligns with India's goal to diversify supply chains, but also to attract significant investments. The cumulative investments for these projects are a testament to the country's ambitions of becoming a global semiconductor hub.

Sources: DD News, September 2; ET, March 8; Economic Times, September 3

India Takes Major Steps to Achieve Its Space Ambitions

In a significant move to advance India's space exploration capabilities, the ruling Modi government approved two landmark projects on September 18. The first is the construction of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), India's first space station for scientific research, with the launch of its first module planned for 2028. The second is the development of a Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV), designed to meet the ambitious goals of India's space program, including human spaceflight missions and lunar exploration.

The move will augment the Indian Space Research Organization's (ISRO) plans to launch a series of Gaganyaan and Chandrayaan follow-on missions. India's goals for outer space include the development of a space station (BAS) by 2035 and Indian landing on the Moon by 2040.

The expansion of the "Gaganyaan" (spacecraft) program, initially approved in 2018, will now include eight missions aimed at laying the groundwork for the BAS. Four missions will validate key technologies for long-duration human space missions, while the first module of BAS will be operational by 2028. The space station, set to be fully operational by 2035, will enable advanced microgravity research and technology development, fostering innovation in space-related sectors. The NGLV will play a critical role in launching both crewed and uncrewed missions to the space station, as well as supporting future lunar missions, with an Indian crewed Moon landing planned by 2040.

Sources: Business Standard, September 18; ET, October 8

Blinken & Jaishankar Take Forward the India-U.S. Momentum

In a significant diplomatic exchange, the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, in Washington, D.C., in early October. The meeting underscored the collaborative efforts of both nations

to tackle pressing global and regional challenges.

This visit, marking Jaishankar's first to the U.S. since PM Modi's third-term re-election, allowed both leaders to reflect on the strong rapport between PM Modi and President Biden. "Together, the U.S. and India are working to address regional and global challenges," stated Blinken. He highlighted their mutual efforts in addressing the climate crisis, advancing regional security, and fostering economic prosperity.

Jaishankar underscored the importance of continuing discussions following the recent U.S.-India bilateral talks in Delaware at the sidelines of the Quad leaders' summit. Their dialogue spanned a wide range of topics, including developments in the Indo-Pacific, the situation in Ukraine, and emerging opportunities in critical sectors like space, semiconductors, and clean energy.

During the discussions, Blinken also acknowledged the importance of achieving a "just and lasting peace" in Ukraine, following Modi's visit to the war-torn region in August this year. The two sides reiterated the value both nations place on their expanding partnership and the potential it holds for contributing positively to global stability and progress.

As part of the broader agenda, both sides reviewed their ongoing coordination on regional issues, including West Asia, and assessed new developments in the Indian subcontinent. The meeting once again highlighted the growing strength of U.S.-India relations, rooted in shared democratic values and a vision for a secure, prosperous, and sustainable future.

Sources: Business Today, October 2; State.gov October 1; DrSJaishankar, October 1

India's Paralympic Triumph

India's para-athletes have made history at the Paris 2024 Paralympics, bringing home a remarkable 29 medals – the best-ever performance at the games. This includes seven gold, nine silver, and 13 bronze medals, far surpassing the 19-medal tally from Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

The Paris Paralympics were a spectacle of athletic brilliance and resilience. Standout performances

included Avani Lekhara, who became the first Indian woman to win two golds, and Dharambir, who led India's first-ever one-two finish in the men's club throw F51 event alongside ParnavSoorma.

India's dominance also extended beyond athletics. Seventeen-year-old archer Sheetal Devi set a world record and became the youngest Indian Paralympic medalist, while Harvinder Singh made history as India's first Paralympic archery champion. Across 12 disciplines, 84 para-athletes showcased India's growing prowess, cementing the country's place as a rising powerhouse in global para-sports.

This success is a testament to the growing support for para-athletes in India, thanks to government initiatives like the "Target Olympic Podium Scheme" (TOPS) and "Khelo India." Yet, to fully realize the potential of para-sports, greater corporate sponsorships, media coverage, and societal support are needed. The 2024 Paralympics have proven that India's para-athletes can conquer any challenge, paving the way for a more inclusive and supportive sports ecosystem.

Sources: ESPN, September 8; DailyPioneer, September 13; Olympics.com, August 30

India Clinches Double Gold at 2024 FIDE Chess Olympiad

India made chess history by winning both the men's and women's team gold medals at the 2024 FIDE Chess Olympiad in Budapest. The men's team, driven by standout performances from Grandmasters Gukesh Dommaraju and Arjun Erigaisi, triumphed over the United States in a crucial match, then sealed their victory by defeating Slovenia in the final round.

In the women's section, IM Divya Deshmukh led the charge with an unbeaten run, helping India outpace Kazakhstan and claim their first-ever team gold. India also walked away with four individual golds, cementing their status as a rising chess powerhouse. Indian legend Viswanathan Anand praised the achievement as a "magical time" for Indian chess, as the country continues to rise on the global stage.

Sources: IndiaToday, September 22; Chess.com, September 22; Aljazeera, September 23



EDITOR'S NOTE

The year 2024 has been thus far remarkable for India's global engagement, with significant strides in diplomacy, technology, and sports. Prime Minister Modi's visit to the United States highlighted deepening strategic, cultural, and diplomatic ties. Be it at the Quad or the United Nations, India's growing strategic influence on the world stage is running parallel to its growth as an economic superpower.

Internationally, India's diplomatic efforts have focused on strengthening ties with key Indo-Pacific partners, including the U.S., the EU, and its member states. Ties with China are also witnessing a thaw, which bodes well for regional stability.

The recent EU-U.S. diplomatic meetings have highlighted the potential of strengthening a trilateral partnership

between the U.S., the EU, and India, focusing on fostering stability and economic growth in the Indo-Pacific region.

Also, India's relations with the EU have been growing stronger, with a focus on trade, technology, climate, and geopolitical cooperation. India's deepening ties with Sweden and the Nordic countries reflect shared priorities in innovation, sustainability, and maritime security, as they pursue green transition and high-tech collaboration. These partnerships highlight India's increasing role as a global partner in driving economic and technological advancements. Vis-à-vis India-Sweden ties, the leadership of Sweden's new Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard will undoubtedly play a vital part in shaping the bilateral and regional diplomatic/strategic landscape in the coming years.

CONTACT DETAILS:

For inquiries about the newsletter or ISDP's Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs (SCSA-IPA) activities, please contact Dr Jagannath Panda at: jpanda@isdip.eu

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

CONTRIBUTORS: This newsletter was prepared by SCSA-IPA.

ABOUT ISDP

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.

www.isdp.eu