

'QUAD HAS ACCEPTED INDIAN STAND'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Barry O' Farrell

There is no reason to be unhappy with the Indian position regarding the Ukraine crisis, the Australian envoy to India said here on Sunday.

Addressing the media here, High Commissioner Barry O'Farrel appreciated India's efforts in this regard and said Canberra is hopeful of concluding the early harvest trade deal by the end of the March.

"[The] Quad countries have accepted India's position, each country has bilateral relationship and it's clear from the comments of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Prime Minister that he has used his contacts to call for an end of the conflict and no country will be unhappy with that," said Mr. O'Farrel.

The comments from the Australian diplomat set the stage ahead of the virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison, who is expected to highlight Australian concerns about the ongoing Russian attacks against Ukraine.

Australia has imposed an array of sanctions against senior Russian officials involved in the execution of the military campaign against Ukraine. Canberra has also pledged to punish those who amplify media narratives that support Russia's claims regarding "de-nazification of Ukraine".

India, in comparison to the aggressive Australian position, has taken the moment to strengthen energy ties with Russia. Indian energy companies have ordered large supplies of crude that Moscow is making available at a 'discount'.

This move to secure energy from Russia has made India an exception in the Quadrilateral alliance of the Indo-Pacific where the other partners — the U.S., Japan and Australia — have hit Russia with sanctions.

Continued support

Despite the divergence in the Indian approach, the Modi-Morrison dialogue will provide Canberra an opportunity to press India to increase coordination with other members of the Quad regarding Ukraine.

Australia, however, it was learnt, will continue to support India's quest for sustainable energy security and there is a possibility of both sides exploring joint projects to source precious minerals like lithium from Australian mines.

Mr. O'Farrel also indicated that the dialogue between Indian and Australian officials has been proceeding on the trade front since it was launched by the Trade Ministers — Piyush Goyal and Dan Tehan — in February.

"We are hopeful of signing the phase-1 — early harvest — trade deal by the end of this month," said Mr. O'Farrel. The early harvest trade deal is expected to focus on commodities trade and will be followed by the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, CECA.

India and Australia have been in dialogue regarding CECA since 2011, but this is the first time that they have agreed on an early harvest trade deal.

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