

REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF 'MAITRI' AND 'MATESHIP'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Australia

Understanding between two multicultural democracies | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

Australia is celebrating India's 75 years of Independence by making the largest single investment in our bilateral relationship.

We do so because Australia and India share a long and special relationship, one we are now working together to make even stronger.

We are natural partners because we are each ancient and modern countries and cultures, vibrant and full of energy and optimism.

Australia recognises the depth and diversity of India's magnificent culture. We know the importance of connection to history.

Like India, Australia's story stretches back tens of thousands of years. Australia's Indigenous peoples are custodians of the oldest continuing civilisation in the world: which is why the Australian government was delighted to return 29 culturally significant artefacts to the people of India this month.

Even our words for friendship have a similar ring: India says *maitri*, Australians say mateship. Both stand for respect, understanding and equality. Friends looking out for each other.

That is the warm friendship shared between our Prime Ministers, The Hon Shri Narendra Modi and The Hon Scott Morrison MP.

On March 21, the two Prime Ministers held their Virtual Summit and took stock of the remarkable pace we are implementing the Australia-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. To drive closer cooperation and regularly review relations, the Prime Ministers also established an Annual Summit mechanism.

Since we elevated our relationship in 2020, we have advanced practical actions on cyber and critical technologies, maritime affairs, defence ties, economic and business links and Quadrilateral cooperation.

The Virtual Summit marked another milestone as our Prime Ministers announced a range of tangible and practical initiatives spanning the breadth of our shared economic, strategic, and regional interests.

These initiatives are an investment into the promise and potential of our nations. They address the most pressing challenges and opportunities of our time.

Because when it comes to friendship, we know actions speak louder than words.

Together, we are harnessing the technology, the talent, and the trading spirit of our people to deliver resilience, prosperity, and security.

Together, we are focused on the future.

We are working on a new and renewable energy partnership, to support the development of technologies such as green hydrogen and ultra-low cost solar. We are also supporting research and investment to unlock Australian critical minerals for Indian advanced manufacturing.

We will boost collaboration on innovation, science and entrepreneurship, to scale up ideas that address global challenges.

We are also increasing investments into our countries' rapidly growing space sectors.

And we are establishing the Australia-India Centre of Excellence for Critical and Emerging Technology Policy — and a Consulate-General — in Bengaluru.

Our governments know that resilience relies on strong economies.

We have made significant inroads on negotiations on a deal that will open new two-way trade and investment opportunities, build more secure supply chains, and unlock our complementary economies, increasing the flow of goods, services and people.

We are investing in India's talented young people through our new Future Skills Initiative between education and training providers and industry.

This complements the Australian government's significant new *Maitri* scholarships and fellowships, giving Indian students and researchers the chance to experience Australia's world class education system.

Australians value highly the Indian diaspora and student contributions to our community — whether economic, social, or cultural.

Prime Minister Morrison announced a dedicated Centre for Australia-India Relations to deepen that friendship between our communities.

Australia and India are also working to ensure a peaceful and stable region.

We are each committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific. We are advancing our cooperation all the way from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Islands.

Last month we announced initiatives to enhance Australia's engagement in the Northeast Indian Ocean in support of India's natural leadership.

In our defence relationship, we are enhancing information sharing and operational cooperation.

Such arrangements also help us continue delivering quality humanitarian support to the region, seen recently when India helped Australia's Pacific family, Tonga and Kiribati.

Finally, Australia was saddened at the tragic loss of Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat last year. Our governments are recognising his contributions by announcing an Australia-India Young Defence Officer Exchange Program named in his honour.

These investments in our strategic, economic, and community ties show what we can achieve when two multicultural democracies join in a spirit of trust and understanding.

Australia knows that in India we have a natural partner who will help build a region where every nation can prosper.

I hope India sees a similar friend in Australia.

We are closer than ever and our transformational commitments and collaborations will continue to bring us together. We are realising the potential of our *maitri* and mateship.

Barry O'Farrell is the Australian High Commissioner to India

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