

WILL TRY TO STRENGTHEN SPIRIT OF COOPERATION WITH EUROPE: PM

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Europe, European Union (EU) and India

Welfare of the Indian diaspora, the crisis in Ukraine and renewable energy are expected to be in focus during the three-nation Europe tour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that starts on Monday. In a pre-departure press statement, Mr. Modi said his visit would strengthen the spirit of cooperation between India and the European countries.

“My visit to Europe comes at a time when the region faces many challenges and choices. Through my engagements, I intend to strengthen the spirit of cooperation with our European partners, who are important companions in India’s quest for peace and prosperity,” Mr. Modi said. The visit is the first big engagement by the top Indian leadership with major European powers since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24.

Ties with Germany

Mr. Modi will reach Berlin on Monday morning where he will hold talks with Chancellor Olaf Scholz. The two leaders will lead the Indian and German delegations during the Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC).

“I see the IGC as an early engagement with the new government of Germany, within six months of its formation, which will be helpful to identify our priorities for the medium and long term,” Mr. Modi said.

Holding a special briefing on the visit, the newly appointed Foreign Secretary, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will accompany the Prime Minister and hold talks with their respective counterparts.

The visit by Mr. Modi comes against the backdrop of multiple visits by European leaders to Ukraine who have pressed for a common front against Russia.

Mr. Kwatra, however, indicated that India would stick to the cautious stance regarding Russia. “We have been calling for cessation of violence,” he said.

India has refused to endorse an outrightly pro-Ukraine line at the United Nations and has maintained neutrality in the face of mounting pressure from Western countries.

Indian diaspora

Mr. Kwatra said outreach to the Indian diaspora would be an important part of Mr. Modi’s visit.

“Continental Europe is home to over one million persons of Indian origin, and Germany has a significant proportion of this diaspora,” Mr. Modi said, adding that he would meet “brothers and sisters there”.

From Berlin, Mr. Modi will fly to Copenhagen where he will lead the Indian team at the second India-Nordic Summit along with the Prime Ministers of Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Sweden and Norway. The summit is expected to focus on the post-pandemic economic path, climate change, digitisation and renewable energy.

On his way back, Mr. Modi will meet French President Emmanuel Macron who recently won the re-election against far-right candidate Marine Le Pen.

“President Macron and I will share assessment on various regional and global issues and will take stock of ongoing bilateral cooperation. It is my firm belief that two countries that share such similar vision and values for the global order, must work in close cooperation each other,” Mr. Modi said in his statement.

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