

# GERMANY TO INVEST €1 BN FOR GREEN URBAN MOBILITY

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday pledged to invest €1 billion over the next five years on environmentally-friendly urban mobility in India.

Ms. Merkel, whose visit to the country coincided with one of the worst spells of air pollution in Delhi and the National Capital Region, emphasised the need to replace diesel-run public transport with electric vehicles.

“We have agreed to cooperate on climate protection and green urban mobility and have earmarked 1 billion euros towards this,” Ms. Merkel said at an event here.

Germany would also put in €200 million to reform the bus sector in Tamil Nadu, she added.

Touching upon the subject of air pollution in Delhi, she said that looking at the severity of the situation, it would be a good idea to replace diesel buses with electric ones.

## Air quality

Delhi recorded its worst air quality of the season on Friday as the pollution level touched the “severe plus” category, prompting authorities to shut schools till November 5, ban all construction activities and declare a “public health emergency”.

Ms. Merkel said that Germany would also like to work with India on various segments including healthcare, agriculture and artificial intelligence.

On Friday, India and Germany agreed to deepen efforts to resume stalled negotiations for a free trade agreement between India and the European Union (EU).

The negotiations for the pact have been held up since May 2013 as the two sides failed to bridge substantial gaps on crucial issues.

Launched in June 2007, the negotiations for the proposed pact have witnessed many hurdles with the two sides having major differences on key issues like intellectual property rights, duty cut in automobile and spirits, and liberal visa regime.

The two countries agreed to intensify efforts for an early conclusion of an investment protection agreement between the EU, the EU member states and India.

## At Metro station

Ms. Merkel visited the Dwarka Sector 21 metro station, which is fitted with solar panels funded by the KfW, a state-owned development bank of Germany.

She visited the terrace of the metro station where she was briefed by officials of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) about the solar project.

The Frankfurt-based bank has also offered soft loans for other projects in India, including the

## Clean Ganga Mission.

The visit to the metro station, the first-solar fitted one in the mammoth Delhi Metro network, was the last leg of Ms. Merkel's trip to India, who arrived here on Thursday night.

The Chancellor spent nearly 30 minutes at the station and also interacted with an e-auto driver.

Rajkumar, the driver of the e-auto, said she asked him about the vehicle and his work during their three-minute conversation.

A former supervisor at a garments company, Rajkumar, said he was happy to have interacted with her. The e-auto is being rented by a private company to auto drivers and Mr. Rajkumar pays Rs. 400 daily as its plying charges. "I am so elated that I could shake hand and talk to her," he said.

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