

Partners, naturally

The European Union and India are natural partners. Every year, millions of Europeans come to India to discover this great country's many marvels. Whether inspired to visit by the beautiful verses of India's Nobel prize winning poets, its intensely rich cultural heritage or simply its exquisite cuisine, they all invariably leave in awe. Millions of Indians make the reverse trip to Europe to visit, live, work or study. There is even a local cricket team in my native Luxembourg, made up largely of Indian players.

Our bond is built on our shared beliefs. We are the two largest democracies in the world. We share the same values of freedom, equality and tolerance. We believe that the strength of the law outweighs the law of the strong. And we both understand that working with like-minded partners is the only way forward in a world in which we share both challenge and opportunity.

This is why the European Union and India already do so much to make each other safer and better off. Our work goes from fighting climate change and terrorism to cooperating on cyber security and digital

This week, I am in India for the 14th EU-India Summit to meet Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) and further strengthen our excellent partnership. My message will be that Europe is open for business and will continue to remain so.

While India is one of the world's fastest growing economies, the EU is the world's biggest open market and the world's second largest economy. We are the largest trading partner for 80 countries, including India. Our economy is growing faster than that of the United States and eight million new jobs have been created in the last three years alone.

We already trade more than 100 billion euro worth of goods and services every year with India. Around 6,000 European companies - from tyre manufacturers, to banks, to pharmaceutical companies - have set up shop here in India. They have created five million jobs right across the country. Indian companies are doing the same in Europe, from [Wipro](#) in Romania, to Infosys in the Czech Republic through to Tech Mahindra in Sweden.

This trading partnership will continue to thrive during and after the United Kingdom's divorce with the European Union. Beyond March 2019, the EU of 27 will still be India's largest trading partner. We will still be the second largest economy in the world. And we will still be - by some considerable distance - the largest destination and source of foreign direct investment in the world.

The fact that the European Investment Bank has now set up an office in New Delhi is a statement of our intent. European loans have helped to finance the construction of the Lucknow Metro and solar power schemes across the country.

The truth is that we can still do so much more, and so much better. One of the key topics for discussion at this week's summit will be how we can fulfil that potential. I hope and I believe that talks on an EU-India Free Trade Agreement can resume in the not too distant future. As we do so, we must also work together on the highest standards of data protection. This will help to protect citizens' rights online and also make it easier for businesses on both sides to work together by exchanging personal data freely and securely.

But the EU-India partnership is about much more than commercial or trading interests. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the fight against climate change and both PM Modi and I have been unequivocal in our support for the Paris Agreement. Europe will support India's ambitious goals

through investment and expertise in green buildings, renewable energy, waste management and air pollution.

We must also work together to make the world a safer place. The need to pool our knowledge and resources to tackle common threats of terrorism, radicalisation and cyber crime has become even more acute in the 18 months since the last EU-India Summit in Brussels. I am delighted that this week, we will make it easier for Indian security agencies and Europol to work together to fight our common threats.

Above all else, the bond between India and Europe is a bond between people. Indian students are now the most successful recipients of Erasmus grants to study in European universities. Indian scientists have received research grants to work with their European counterparts on medical breakthroughs or cutting-edge technologies. I can think of no better illustration of what makes the EU-India partnership so special - and so natural.

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