

# India and New Zealand to institutionalise defence and security cooperation: PM Modi

PM Modi and New Zealand PM Luxon discuss strengthening bilateral ties, focusing on trade, defense, education, and agriculture cooperation.

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KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon during joint press conference at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on March 17, 2025. | Photo Credit: Shiv Kumar Pushpakar

**India believes in development and not in expansionism, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday (March 17, 2025). Welcoming his counterpart from New Zealand**

Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister Modi said the two sides will “strengthen and institutionalize” defence and maritime cooperation and reminded that both India and New Zealand have fought global terrorism in Mumbai (26/11) and in Christchurch (15 March 2019). PM Modi further announced that the two countries will celebrate a century of sporting relationship in 2026.

“We have decided to strengthen and institutionalize our defense and security collaboration. In addition to joint exercises, training and port visits, a roadmap for bilateral defense industry collaboration will be developed. Our navies are working together in the Combined Task Force-150 for maritime security in the Indian Ocean,” said Mr. Modi following delegation-level talks at the Hyderabad House. Sources at the MEA described the MoU on defence as “a large ombibus agreement.” PM Modi further announced that the two sides have also started discussion on a “mutually beneficial Free Trade Agreement”.

“This shall increase the potential for bilateral trade and investment. Mutual cooperation and investment shall be encouraged in fields such as dairy, food, processing, and pharma,” said PM Modi. Mr Modi described India and New Zealand as part of a common front against terrorist and reminded that the two sides dealt with the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai and the 15 March 2019 Christchurch attack.

Mr. Modi spoke about the activities of pro-Khalistan activists in New Zealand and stated, “We have also shared our concerns about anti-India activities by certain illegal elements in New Zealand. We are confident that we will continue to receive the full cooperation of the New Zealand Government against such illegal elements.” Prof-Khalistan elements who have been advocating an online ‘referendum’ for establishing a Sikh homeland in Punjab has been active in New Zealand and the matter was further elaborated by Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs Jaideep Mazumdar. “We do alert our friends to the activities of anti-India elements in their countries and their abuse of freedom of speech and the democratic freedoms to glorify terror and to threaten attacks against our diplomats .. I must say that the Government of New Zealand has been receptive as well as has taken our concerns on board in the past as well,” said Mr Mazumdar.

In his remarks, Prime Minister Luxon informed that New Zealand will expand diplomatic presence in India announcing that his government would increase its diplomatic presence

in India by more than 60 percent highlighting his country's commitment to deepen relationship with India.

Mr. Luxon paid his tributes to the Indian community in New Zealand saying, "The Indian community is the third-largest ethnic group in New Zealand, India is our largest source of skilled migrants and our second largest source of international students. In short, Indian-Kiwis make a massive contribution to New Zealand and I'm proud of what this community does for our country."

Earlier Mr. Luxon on Sunday had announced that New Zealand and India have agreed to launch negotiations on a comprehensive free trade agreement. "It is through trade that we can boost the economies of both our countries, providing more jobs and higher incomes for Kiwis and Indians. India and New Zealand have a dynamic, multi-faceted relationship, with 300,000 Kiwi-Indians at its heart." Mr. Luxon joined PM Modi on Monday evening at the annual Raisina Dialogue where he was the keynote speaker.

In his speech, Mr. Luxon focused on three "tectonic" geopolitical shifts, in comments aimed at the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's aggression towards Indo-Pacific neighbours . He said that the rules-based order was giving way to "power" politics, that instead of economics, security considerations now drive countries, and instead of efficient and convenient supply chains, they now preferred protectionism and resilient supply chains from trusted partners. Mr. Luxon said that New Zealand has "no pretensions to Quad membership" referring to the India-US-Australia-Japan grouping, but was working with a grouping of New Zealand-Australia-Japan-South Korea to discuss Ukraine and North Korea.

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Following his stay in Delhi, Mr. Luxon will fly to Mumbai where he is scheduled to visit the Indian naval ship INS Surat and the Royal New Zealand ship HMNZS Te Kaha which is making a port call in Mumbai. Mr. Luxon will leave for New Zealand from Mumbai on 20 March.

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