

Trade, tech, defence: EU rolls out new strategic roadmap for India

India purchase of Russia oil stands in way of closer ties: EU official

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Will open new chapter in ties: Ursula von der Leyen

AT A time when New Delhi is taking one step at a time in dealing with the US administration under President Donald Trump, the European Union announced “a new strategic agenda to raise bilateral relations with India to a higher level”. This includes a range of areas from trade and technology to defence, security, connectivity and climate change.

Announcing the initiative, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said, “Now is the time to double down on partnerships rooted in shared interests and guided by common values. With our new EU-India strategy, we are taking our relationship to the next level.” Earlier, the European Commission and its High Representative Kaja Kallas, who is the top diplomat leading EU’s foreign policy, adopted a joint communication outlining the ‘New Strategic EU-India Agenda’.

Kallas, however, said the College of Commissioners (members of 27 EU countries) has hesitations on areas where they have disagreements. “India’s participation in Russian military exercises and its purchase of Russian oil stand in the way of closer ties,” she said. The European Union has flagged this issue with India in the past too.

President von der Leyen also said EU was committed to finalising a Free Trade Agreement by the end of the year. She said Europe is already India’s biggest trading partner, is open for business, and ready to invest in a shared future with India. “The free trade agreement with India will be the largest deal of its kind anywhere in the world,” she said.

“On the day we launched our new EU-India strategy, I had the pleasure of wishing @narendramodi a very happy birthday,” she posted later on social media platform X. “I look forward to visiting India again for our next Summit. Together we’ll open a new chapter in our partnership. We also discussed progress in our ongoing trade talks and how we can work together to effectively support Ukraine’s fight for freedom,” she said in the post.

Modi thanked her for the birthday greetings. “Delighted to know about the ‘New Strategic EU-India Agenda’ adopted today. India is ready to take the India-EU relationship to the next level. It is our shared commitment, shared goal, and shared responsibility. We remain committed to an early and peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict,” he said on X.

Separately, the Prime Minister’s Office said in a statement that the two leaders “welcomed efforts towards further strengthening the India-EU Strategic Partnership for mutual prosperity, as well as for jointly addressing global issues, fostering stability, and promoting a rules-based order”. “India remains committed for an early and peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine,” it said.

Prime Minister Modi also reiterated his invitation for the next India-EU Summit to be held in India next year, it said.

The joint communication adopted by the EC comes months after the visit of the College of Commissioners to India in February this year, and outlines the EU’s strategic vision for

enhancing cooperation with New [Delhi](#). It has identified five areas of shared interest and complementary strengths, building on existing ties while addressing areas that present potential for increased engagement.

“Amid shifting geopolitical realities, closer EU–India relations are increasingly vital for strengthening economic growth and security, and diversifying supply chains in response to today’s uncertain global order. Beyond the bilateral dimension, the new strategic agenda highlights EU-India joint engagement on global issues and with third partners, reflecting India’s growing global influence,” it said.

It said there was “significant untapped potential in trade and investment, outlining strategies to strengthen commercial ties, particularly finalising the ongoing negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement”. It proposed “reinforcing supply chains while promoting critical emerging technologies and engagement on digital issues, with particular attention to strengthening economic security within the Trade and Technology Council (TTC). This new strategy also proposes deepening tech cooperation, including a potential EU-India Startup partnership, and invites India to associate with Horizon Europe programme.

The Joint Communication also takes forward the proposed EU-India Security and Defence Partnership. This will enhance strategic consultations and joint initiatives, including on crisis management, maritime security, cyber defence, and counterterrorism, and foster defence industrial cooperation, focusing on boosting production and technological capabilities, securing supply chains, and driving innovation.

“Launching negotiations for a Security of Information Agreement to facilitate classified information exchange will support closer security and defence cooperation. Closer cooperation on the Indo-Pacific, addressing hybrid threats, space security, and intensifying engagement on Russia’s war against Ukraine, shadow fleets, and sanctions are other areas of focus,” it said.

EXPLAINED

Mutual benefit

The EU views India, the world’s fastest-growing major economy, as a vital partner. The EU document welcomes India’s rise as a global power, which creates new opportunities for strategic cooperation. India’s success benefits the EU, just as the EU’s success benefits India.

The Joint Communication also emphasised strengthening regional connectivity initiatives, such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and advances Global Gateway and EU-India trilateral cooperation with and in third countries. It aims to enhance cooperation with India in multilateral forums and encourage India to advance international law, multilateral values and global governance. It also prioritises maximising interaction and strengthening EU-India coordination at all levels. This includes “skills mobility with the pilot European Legal Gateway Office to facilitate labour mobility”.

It proposes developing a comprehensive mobility cooperation framework covering study, work, and research. In addition to deeper engagement with civil society, youth and think tanks, further reach out to the businesses community is supported by the proposal for an EU-India Business Forum.

“India is one of the most important players in the world today and a natural partner for the European Union. There are many areas where our interests, strengths and political will align. Boosting our collaboration – which we are proposing today – will benefit the security and prosperity of citizens and businesses on both sides. There are areas where we disagree. Ultimately our partnership is about defending a rules-based international order. Our negotiations will address these challenges,” Kallas said.

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