

PM Modi's UK Visit to Strengthen Strategic Ties and FTA Implementation

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As Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives in the United Kingdom today for his fourth visit, the focus is firmly on cementing the robust India-UK partnership, with the implementation of the recently finalised Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and deeper cooperation in technology and strategic affairs at the forefront. The visit underscores the growing momentum in bilateral relations, which have evolved from historical ties into a dynamic, multi-dimensional partnership elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2021.

According to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, PM Modi's discussions with his UK counterpart, Sir Keir Starmer, will cover the full spectrum of bilateral relations, including trade, defence, technology, and people-to-people ties. The leaders will also exchange views on regional and global challenges, reflecting the shared interests of two major global players. This follows their recent engagements, including meetings on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Brazil in November 2024 and the G7 Summit in June 2025, alongside several telephonic conversations over the past year.

The India-UK relationship has seen consistent high-level engagement, underpinned by five ministerial-level institutional mechanisms covering strategy, finance, trade, energy, and technology. Recent dialogues, such as the Foreign Office Consultations, Defence Consultation Group, and the inaugural Strategic Exports and Technology Cooperation Dialogue in June 2025, co-chaired by Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and UK Permanent Under-Secretary Oliver Robbins, have further deepened ties. These discussions have prioritised trade, technology, defence, and cultural exchanges, reinforcing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

A cornerstone of this visit is the India-UK FTA, finalised on 6 May 2025, which both leaders have hailed as a landmark achievement. The agreement marks a new chapter in economic cooperation, with bilateral trade already reaching a record £43 billion (approximately USD 55 billion) in 2024, a 10% increase from the previous year. In a statement following the FTA's announcement, UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy described it as "the start of supercharging our £43 billion trading relationship," emphasising its economic and strategic significance. Similarly, PM Modi, speaking at the ABP Network India@2047 Summit, underscored the FTA's potential to drive growth for both nations, particularly for India's MSME sector, stating, "The world's two largest open markets have come together, opening new opportunities for growth and development."

Key sectors driving this partnership include business, technology, research, education, and innovation. The Indian diaspora, constituting 2.7% of the UK's population, serves as a vital bridge, contributing significantly to British society and fostering cultural and economic ties. Their role in strengthening bonds between the two nations cannot be overstated.

During this visit, Modi and Starmer will review progress on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with a particular emphasis on trade, technology, defence, security, climate, health, and education. However, the current UK Labour government's broader economic policies, which some critics argue prioritise domestic challenges over international

ambition, may face scrutiny in ensuring the FTA's swift and effective implementation. Nonetheless, both nations remain committed to leveraging their shared strengths to address global challenges and foster mutual prosperity.

This visit marks another milestone in the enduring India-UK partnership, with both leaders poised to unlock new opportunities for collaboration in an increasingly interconnected world.