

COMMERCE MINISTER, ITALIAN COUNTERPART HOLDS 3 MEETINGS IN 35 DAYS

# Pace of EU FTA will beat expectations, says Goyal

MUKESH JAGOTA  
Brescia (Italy), June 5

**NEGOTIATORS OF THE** India and European Union's (EU) free trade agreement (FTA) will beat the expectations of top leaders from both sides and may conclude it before the end of the year. In the last 35 days, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal held three meetings with his counterpart Maros Sefcovic on the pact.

"We have held three meetings in 35 days. It shows our shared commitment for the FTA...we are trying to do it faster," Goyal told reporters at the joint press conference with the Italian deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani.

The first two meetings were held on May 1 and May 23 in Brussels. The third meeting was held on June 2 in Paris.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had set the deadline of 2025-end for concluding the FTA.

He said that negotiating rounds are happening every month and in between inter-session meetings are being held. Every week. The EU normally keeps a gap of 90 days between two negotiating rounds of the FTAs but in the final leg of negotiations there is no let up in contact.

Goyal said after the FTA with EU India would have fully covered Europe as agreement with UK has already been finalised and with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) signed. EFTA covers Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzer-



Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal attends a dinner hosted by Antonio Tajani, deputy PM and minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation of Italy (centre)

PTI

**PIYUSH GOYAL, COMMERCE & INDUSTRY MINISTER**

It is important that the world recognises the danger of critical minerals, and supply and processing being concentrated only in particular geographies

land.

In June 2022, India and the 27-nation EU bloc resumed negotiations for a comprehensive free trade agreement, an investment protection agreement and a pact on Geographical Indications after a gap of over eight years.

So far, 11 round of negotiations on the agreement have been held.