



**'PM Modi is the Boss': Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (right) with his Indian counterpart in Sydney on Tuesday** PT

# India, Australia working on CECA, says PM Modi

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New Delhi/ Sydney, 23 May

Addressing over 21,000 members of the Indian diaspora at a packed Qudos Bank Arena in Sydney on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India and Australia were working on a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

He also announced, to loud cheers, the opening of an Indian consulate in Brisbane.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who accompanied Modi to the arena, sat through his speech with other Cabinet members and described the Indian PM in his brief address as "boss".

"The last time I saw someone on this stage was Bruce Springsteen (in 2017), and he did not get the welcome that Prime Minister Modi has gotten. Prime Minister Modi is the Boss," Albanese said, adding that Modi got a "rock star reception" wherever he went.

In his speech, Modi said there was a time when three Cs defined relations between India and Australia — Commonwealth, cricket and curry. After that, it was three Ds — democracy, diaspora, and dosti. Then it became three Es as it was all about energy, economy and education.

"But the truth is that the actual depth of the relations between India and Australia transcends these C, D, E ..., " Modi said.

Albanese praised the Indian community. "We want to see more connections. More Australian and Indian students are living and studying in each other's countries and bringing those experiences home," he said. "More business leaders and artists and families sharing your experiences and your knowledge and your ideas," the Australian PM said.

Modi said the two countries had signed the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), and were now working on the CECA.

"We are building a resilient and reliable supply chain. This will strengthen the business of both countries," he said.

Australia was the 13th largest trading partner of India in 2022-23.

Underling that the International Monetary Fund considers India the bright spot of the global economy, Modi said according to the World Bank, if any country withstanding global headwinds, it was India.

"India has made record exports even in the most challenging times," he said, adding that India did not lack capability or resources.

"Today the country which has the world's biggest and youngest talent factory is...India," Modi said.

Millions of Indians mourned when the great Australian spinner Shane Warne died last year.

Earlier in the day, Modi met business leaders of top Australian companies and

called for enhancing cooperation with Indian industry in areas such as technology, skilling, and clean energy. He held meetings with Hancock Prospecting Executive Chairman Gina Rinehart, Fortescue Future Industry Executive Chairman Andrew Forrest, and AustralianSuper Chief Executive Officer Paul Schroder.

AustralianSuper is a superannuation fund headquartered in Melbourne. After the meeting, Schroder said AustralianSuper did invest in India and, in particular, in the National Indian Infrastructure Fund.

"We have had a very good experience in investing in India," he said.

During his meeting with Forrest, he welcomed the Group's plans to work with Indian companies in green hydrogen.

Forrest briefed the PM on Fortescue Future Industries' plans and projects in India. Rinehart said that there were huge business opportunities between India and Australia.

Modi also interacted with prominent Australian public figures, including Nobel laureate Brian Paul Schmidt, "Toilet warrior" Mark Balla, artist Danielle Mate, rockstar Guy Sebastian and celebrity chef and restaurateur Sarah Todd. Other influencers included Toby Walsh, chief scientist, Artificial Intelligence Institute, University of New South Wales, Sydney, and Salvatore Babones, sociologist, researcher and author.