

India, Australia keen to conclude trade agreement by 2023-end

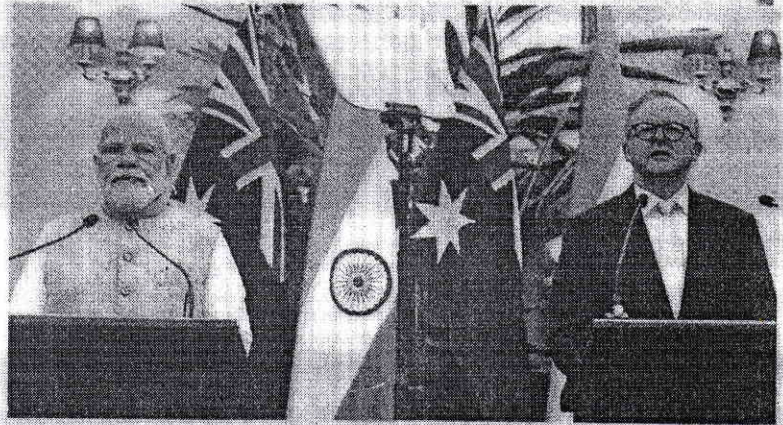
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India and Australia on Wednesday inked a migration and mobility partnership pact to open up opportunities for students, academic researchers and business people, and resolved to conclude a comprehensive trade deal by the end of year to significantly expand economic ties.

The pact was signed after wide-ranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese.

In his media statement, Albanese said the aim is to conclude the Comprehensive Economic Co-operation Agreement (CECA) by the end of the year. "We reiterated our shared ambition for an early conclusion of the Australia-India comprehensive economic co-operation agreement later this year," he said in the presence of Modi.

Last year, India and Australia finalised the Economic Co-operation Trade Agreement (ECTA) and it came into force last December. The two sides are now



CONSTRUCTIVE TALKS. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese at a joint press meet, in Sydney on Wednesday AP

working on the CECA. "Today, in my meeting with Prime Minister Albanese, we talked about taking India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to greater heights in the next decade," Modi said.

TASK FORCE

"We discussed in detail, the possibilities of co-operation in new areas. Last year India-Australia ECTA came into effect. Today we have decided to focus on CECA — Comprehensive Economic Co-operation Agreement," he said.

"We had constructive discussions on strengthening our strategic co-operation in the sectors of min-

ing and critical minerals. We have identified concrete areas for co-operation in renewable energy," Modi said.

"It was decided to set up a task force on Green Hydrogen," he added. The taskforce will advise on opportunities to accelerate manufacture and deployment of clean hydrogen, focusing on hydrogen electrolyzers, fuel cells as well as supporting infrastructure and standards and regulations.

Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said the next two rounds of talks on the economic partnership pact have been scheduled for June and July.