

India, Israel to expedite negotiations for early signing of FTA

Our Bureau
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India and Israel on Thursday gave fresh momentum to bilateral trade ties by expediting negotiations for an early signing of a free trade agreement (FTA) even as the two countries elevated their relationship to a special strategic partnership for peace, innovation and prosperity.

A NEW DIRECTION

Jointly addressing the media in Tel Aviv, along with Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu on the last day of his two-day state visit to Israel, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said they discussed imparting a new direction and faster pace to bilateral cooperation. "In today's meet-



OPERATION ISRAEL. Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the cast of *Fauda* in Jerusalem on Thursday ANI

ing, we discussed giving a new direction and a faster pace to our cooperation. Our economic cooperation is the engine of growth, innovation

and shared prosperity. To encourage mutual investment, we entered into a bilateral investment agreement last year.

"We will also soon finalise a mutually beneficial FTA," he said.

The next round of negotiations for the FTA will be held in May, the Commerce Ministry said. An Israeli delegation is here to hold talks.

The statement came after the two countries concluded the first round of four-day talks that discussed a wide range of issues, including trade in goods and services, trade in origin, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, customs procedures, intellectual property rights and digital trade.

MODI'S SECOND VISIT

In his second visit to Israel in nine years, Modi also held talks with President Isaac Herzog, interacted with the

Indian diaspora, and the cast and crew of the global hit Israeli television show *Fauda* on Thursday before flying back to India.

The push to the FTA comes alongside the India-Israel Bilateral Investment Agreement signed in September 2025, aimed at strengthening investor protection and dispute resolution mechanisms.

In a move with commercial implications, the two sides also agreed to explore linking India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) with Israel's payment system.

An MoU between NPCI International and MASAV was signed to examine cross-border digital payment interoperability, potentially easing transactions for businesses and travellers.