

# Modi, Sunak agree on early conclusion of FTA

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Britain's newly-elected Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Thursday thanked his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi for congratulating him on his new role, saying he was "excited" about what the two great democracies can achieve as they deepen their security, defence and economic partnership.

His comment came soon after Prime Minister Modi spoke to new him over phone and congratulated him on assuming charge as British Prime Minister.



"We will work together to further strengthen our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. We also agreed on the importance of early conclusion of a comprehensive and balanced FTA," Modi tweeted.

Sunak replied, "Thank you Prime Minister @NarendraModi for your kind words as I get started in my new role. The UK and India share so much. I'm excited about what our two great democracies can achieve as we deepen our security, defence and economic partnership in the months & years ahead."

Sunak, 42, was elected Conservative Party leader on Monday, marking a very special Diwali for the former Chancellor of Exchequer who entered 10 Downing Street as the youngest British Prime Minister in 210 years. His vision for India-UK bilateral ties has gone beyond the opportunity for the UK to sell things in India, wanting Britain to also "learn from India".

India and Britain launched negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement in January with an aim to conclude talks by Diwali but the deadline was missed due to a lack of consensus on issues.

The India-UK free trade deal is likely to get the much-needed impetus with Sunak moving into 10 Downing Street as experts see political stability in the UK giving momentum to negotiations.

  
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**NARENDRA MODI**  
Indian Prime Minister 

 **I'm excited about what our two great democracies can achieve as we deepen our security, defence and economic partnership in the months & years ahead**

**RISHI SUNAK**  
UK Prime Minister 



## India, UK tick 16 of 25 areas in proposed FTA

India and the United Kingdom (UK) have closed the majority of chapters — 16 of 25 policy areas — so far, said UK's Minister of State for Trade Policy Greg Hands as he sought a deal that is "fair, reciprocal". The next round of trade agreement talks between India and the UK is expected shortly, the minister told Parliament.

Both nations missed the October 24, or Diwali, deadline to finalise the agreement as several issues remained unresolved. Besides political uncertainty in the UK, the fear of recession and controversial comments by a minister regarding Indian immigrants overstaying

in the UK had raised doubts whether the FTA could be inked. With Indian-origin Rishi Sunak taking over as UK's Prime Minister, the talks are expected to gather pace. While a revised deadline for completing the deal is yet to be announced, *Business Standard* last week reported that the talks are unlikely to be finalised before mid-2023.

"An FTA with India supports the government's growth strategy, by taking advantage of the UK's status as an independent trading nation championing free trade that benefits the whole of the UK," Hands said. **SHREYA NANDI**