

India, Spain sign pacts on infra, railways, RE, tourism sectors

TAKING STOCK. Both countries also discuss EU FTA, Ukraine and West Asia

Avinash Nair
Vadodara

Ukraine, West Asia, as well as a free trade agreement (FTA) being negotiated between India and European Union figured during the bilateral talks held at Vadodara between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart from Spain Pedro Sanchez.

"The two leaders discussed the entire range of bilateral engagements as well as global issues of mutual interest and concern, including Ukraine and West Asia. The two leaders also met a group of 15 CEOs who have come from Spain," said Tanmaya Lal, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, while interacting with mediapersons at Vadodara.

"PM Modi reiterated the position that any such conflict can be resolved by dialogue and diplomacy, and it cannot be resolved on the battleground," he added. The bilateral talks were held at the historic Laxmi Vilas Palace in Vadodara city.

ON FTA

The two leaders also talked about the FTA being negotiated between the European Union and India. "This was an issue which is of interest to both India and Spain. Both are wanting an early agreement to be finalised which will be of interest for both sides," Lal added. Both the leaders also discussed issues regarding the Indo-Pacific region.

"The Indo-Pacific also finds a mention in the joint statement issued. It reiterates India's position that we look for a free, open, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific," he said. Both sides acknowledged India's



FOSTERING TIES. Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Spanish counterpart Pedro Sanchez, in Vadodara. ANI

invitation to Spain to participate in the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) for collaborative efforts aimed at the management, conservation, sustainability, security, and development of the maritime domain in the Indo-Pacific.

They also recognised the complementarity between India's Indo-Pacific Vision and the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. On Monday afternoon, a luncheon was hosted by PM Modi for his counterpart from Spain and the accompanying officials, ministers and CEOs.

A joint statement issued after the talks concluded stated that the two leaders shared their firm commitment to achieving peace and stability in the Middle East and expressed their deep concern at the escalation of the security situation in West Asia and called for restraint by all concerned.

They urged that all issues be addressed through dialogue and diplomacy. The two leaders unequivocally condemned the terror attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023, and agreed that the

large-scale loss of civilian lives and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is unacceptable and must end as soon as possible. They called for the immediate release of all hostages, immediate ceasefire and safe, sustained entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Both sides reiterated their concern on escalation and violence in Lebanon, and the security situation along the Blue Line and reaffirmed their commitment to the full implementation of UNSC Resolution 1701.

This is the first visit by the head of Spain in nearly two decades. Sanchez is accompanied by two ministers — Jordi Hereu i Bohe, Minister of Industry and Tourism and Oscar Santiago, Minister of Transportation and Sustainable Mobility — and a group of 15 CEOs of leading Spanish companies.

INVITED TO JOIN IDRA

Spain has invited India to join IDRA, the International Drought Resilience Alliance, which was launched in 2022, a platform to promote concrete actions to reduce the vulnerability of countries, cities and communities to drought through prepared-

ness and adaptation measures.

During the visit, agreements on cooperation in key sectors including infrastructure, railways, renewable energy, culture and tourism were also inked.

An MoU on cooperation in rail transport was signed which will boost cooperation in planning, design, development, commissioning and operation of infrastructure, stations, railway facilities and equipment covering long distance networks for both passenger and freight transport as well as urban and regional railway systems.

Agreements on cooperation and mutual assistance in custom matters were reached. This includes exchanging information for prevention, detection, investigation and combating of customs offences. While India's Consulate General at Barcelona, Spain was operationalised in August, a Spanish consulate will be opened in Bengaluru. Apart from this, the year 2026 will also be celebrated as India-Spain Year of Culture, Tourism and AI.

Sanchez will be addressing the India-Spain Business Summit along with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari at Mumbai on Tuesday.