

India-EU Meeting to boost cooperation in several areas

The leaders of the EU, its Member States, and India met in a hybrid format on May 08, 2021, where various issues of mutual concern were discussed. At the outset, all parties agreed to speed up the implementation of the actions and strategies set out in the 'EU-India Roadmap 2025', which was endorsed by them in July 2020. The parties arrived at a consensus to boost cooperation on specific areas in various sectors, which are:

- The Digital Sector: Reliable and secure connectivity solutions, submarine cables, cross-border payments, 5G connectivity, and satellite navigation systems.
- The Energy Sector: Public-Private Partnerships in eco-friendly public utility development.
- The Transport Sector: The EU plans investment in railways or metro transit systems in several Indian cities and the commencement of new air routes between India and Europe.
- The Scientific Research Sector: 'Innovation partnerships' connecting Incubators, and eco-friendly start-ups; and promoting academic collaborations.

Additionally, the meeting lay specific focus on

pandemic management, cooperation concerning medical supply chains and vaccines, resumption of negotiations on a proposed Free Trade Agreement between the parties, and the implementation of relevant international standards, to ensure easier reciprocal access to markets.

COVID-19 Update in India: A Ray of Hope

The Managing Director of Zydus Cadila, an Indian pharmaceutical company, has announced that it has recently developed a vaccine against the COVID-19 virus, named ZyCoV-D, and is very close to getting it approved. This would push India's domestically manufactured vaccines to three. Earlier in April this year, India had granted a 'restricted emergency use approval' to a drug developed by Zydus Cadila named Virafin. Meanwhile, Pfizer had reported on May 03, 2021, that the company is in talks with India for an "expedited approval" for its vaccine. This comes as a ray of hope for India, which is currently going through a strong second wave of infections. Moreover, the Indian Health Ministry stated on May 10, 2021, that India has administered more than 170 million vaccine doses, in just 114 days, which is, the fastest in the world, therefore showcasing India's resilience and commitment to recover from the crisis.

India-France Tech Programme to support start-ups launched

The Indian Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's Start-up Hub, which is an integrating platform to support Incubators and start-ups, along with La French Tech, a French organisation seeking to promote French start-ups and investors, has launched the 'Indo-French Tech Programme' to support cross-border start-up collaboration, facilitate the convergence of the French and Indian start-up ecosystems, and establish links between Indian and French Incubators and start-ups.

The Programme, which is also supported by the French government, was launched at an event in Bengaluru, India, on April 15, 2021.

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