



UK-INDIA TRADE RELATIONS

* Rt. Hon. Mark Field MP

UK-India Relations

As the Foreign Office Minister for Asia, strengthening the ties between the UK and India is an important focus for me. And it's not just about our political and diplomatic relationships. As I beaver away just across the road in King Charles Street, or on my visits to India, I know that our business communities are working alongside me, building links of their own. It is great to see so many of you here tonight. Our long-standing friendship with India has blossomed into a thriving, modern, forward-looking partnership. Prime Minister Modi was exactly right when he said that our two countries make an "unbeatable combination".

Visas

Almost every time I talk about India, my interlocutor raises visas. This time I am going to tackle it up front. Starting with this: we issue more skilled work visas to India than all other countries in the world combined. While all things can be improved, I am sure we can agree that is not a bad starting point. The connections between our people provide a unique 'living bridge', and we continue to welcome expertise and talent from India. It means we can pool our strengths and collaborate on a wide range of issues - from cyber security and smart cities to trade and technology. By working together, we can enhance our mutual prosperity, and find solutions to some of the big global challenges.

Technology

That was the spur for the new UK-India Tech Partnership, agreed with Prime Minister Modi during his visit to London earlier this

year. This partnership will marry British and Indian expertise to promote investment, enhance skills and support start-ups in our technology sectors. We have committed to invest up to £14 million in it over the next four years and I am hugely excited by the opportunities it will bring. We have already created a new UK-India Tech Hub, and in December we will be holding a Future Tech Festival in New Delhi which will show off some of the UK's cutting edge technology, and the ways we are working together to establish some of the rules governing these new industries.

Trade

The UK is also committed to increasing our bilateral trade, and it is definitely heading in the right direction. Last year, trade between our two countries grew by 19%. That's fantastic. But I, like you, would like to see that figure continue to grow year on year, to both of our benefit.

Conclusion

The opportunities for the UK and India can only grow as the UK leaves the EU, and I will continue to champion them enthusiastically. The unbeatable combination of British and Indian ambition, innovation, talent and expertise will take our partnership from strength to strength. It is an exciting prospect, and, together with many of you here tonight, I very much look forward to continuing and accelerating our journey together.

Excerpts from the speech delivered by Rt. Hon Mark Field MP, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office at the Global Business Meet, House of Lords during the '2018 London Global Convention'.