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Blog: Building bridges between Denmark and India - reflections from the ground

After an intense trip starting in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, for The Vibrant Gujarat Summit, and New Delhi for the opening of the new Danish Cultural Institute, as well as the inauguration of the new Danish Embassy, I am back in full swing in Mumbai, and have had a chance to reflect on the eventful days, which I believe mark a prosperous paradigm shift in the Indo-Danish collaboration.

Mid-January marked a significant milestone in the Indo-Danish diplomatic relations, as widely covered by Danish and Indian media. I have had some time to reflect on the whirlwind of cool and progressive Indo-Danish projects that were launched or presented during the eventful days in Gujarat and Delhi. My

overall takeaway is that the Danish and Indian political, commercial and civil society sectors cumulatively make for an unprecedented wave of Indian-Danish projects and partnerships. Not just in words and intentions, but in action. We can already see the change on the ground, with heightened interest from companies on both sides to explore opportunities and collaborations.

New wave of projects on the ground

The positive diplomatic dialogue on the highest level between the Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Lars Løkke Rasmussen and other notable ministers, undoubtedly makes for a fantastic framework and for future collaboration and cooperation. Despite the bilateral challenges of the past and global political turmoil, which caused for some uncertainty, the events last month, as well as the new popular Copenhagen-Delhi direct flight that opened last year, mark the beginning of exciting new opportunities for collaboration between India and Denmark. Credit to the Danish and Indian diplomats who have worked diligently on enabling this perfect launching pad.

Closer cooperation between the two countries will take place 'on the ground' with collaborations between people, consumers, startups, major companies, investors, NGOs, tourists, students, artists, researchers etc. The list goes on and on. And now we are slowly but surely taking concrete steps – baby steps, but big baby steps – into launching projects and cooperation in these fields. All stakeholders should utilize the momentum created, while also keeping a sense of realism, and initiate any kind of project with persistence; patience; and investment, openness/creativity and intercultural sensibilities.

Sustainable Development Goals fostering innovative partnerships

I find it particularly fascinating that there is a growing focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) in India – directly and indirectly. It is highly encouraging to see that the SDG agenda has become a political focus and increasingly a commercial one too in India.

Denmark is well positioned to be at the forefront of the SDG agenda, and has been ambitious on adopting the SDG agenda in the political and commercial spheres. At the same time, India has a rich history of sustainable living. Together, India and Denmark make for a solid and successful partnership in which shared knowledge, technology and collaborations between Danish and Indian partners will be beneficial when working towards reaching the SDG's. An example of this is DI's partnership with the Indian Green Building Council in which tools for measuring wellbeing of occupants in 'green buildings' in India will be co-developed between Indian and Danish architects and engineers. By focusing on areas of common interest, Denmark and India can look forward to new cooperative opportunities ahead.

In other words: The next few years will provide unique opportunities to collaborate, co-develop, learn from each other's strengths, explore and access markets for Danish and Indian organizations. I am professionally and personally thrilled and privileged to be part of strengthening the bridge and connections between organizations in Denmark and India.

Ps. let's get that direct Copenhagen-Mumbai flight started, so the Indo-Danish collaboration can really take off 😊.

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