

Modi hosts Italy PM, both pledge to expand ties

SANJEEV RASTOGI

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Italian counterpart Giuseppe Conte on Tuesday agreed to expand cooperation in areas of defence, trade, energy and infrastructure even as they condemned those providing safe havens to terror groups and supporting cross border terrorism.

The two leaders also underlined that connectivity initiatives must be based on internationally recognised norms and standards, rule of law, and inclusiveness, seen as an oblique reference to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

A joint statement said Conte reiterated Italy's support to India's intensified engagement with the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) which strengthens global non-proliferation efforts.

Referring to defence cooperation, it said both sides recognised the need to



PM Narendra Modi with his Italian counterpart Giuseppe Conte in Delhi on Tuesday

broad base defence ties and make them "enduring and mutually beneficial".

Italy has been pushing for strengthening of bilateral defence ties which were hit by the AgustaWesland chopper scam. "India invited Italian defence equipment manufacturing firms to invest in India and to collaborate with Indian firms for construction of defence equipment," the joint statement said. PTI