

# Lasting boost to Indo-German partnership

Intergovernmental Consultations: Prime Minister Modi is meeting Chancellor Merkel in Berlin today



MARTIN NEY

Expectations are running high when Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives in Berlin today (May 29) for the 4th edition of the Indo-German Intergovernmental Consultations (IGC) — and rightly so. Since the premiere in 2011, the IGCs have been the regular biannual highlight of our partnership — each time providing a significant boost to our bilateral ties. Importantly, these boosts have been designed to have lasting effects — deepening existing programmes, creating additional fora for collaboration and consultation and extending our partnership to new areas.

The 4th Indo-German IGC in Berlin will be another milestone. We will conclude a whole series of substantial agreements and take our partnership to the next level. At this event, the natural partners India and Germany will move even closer together. The time could not be more fitting to do so.

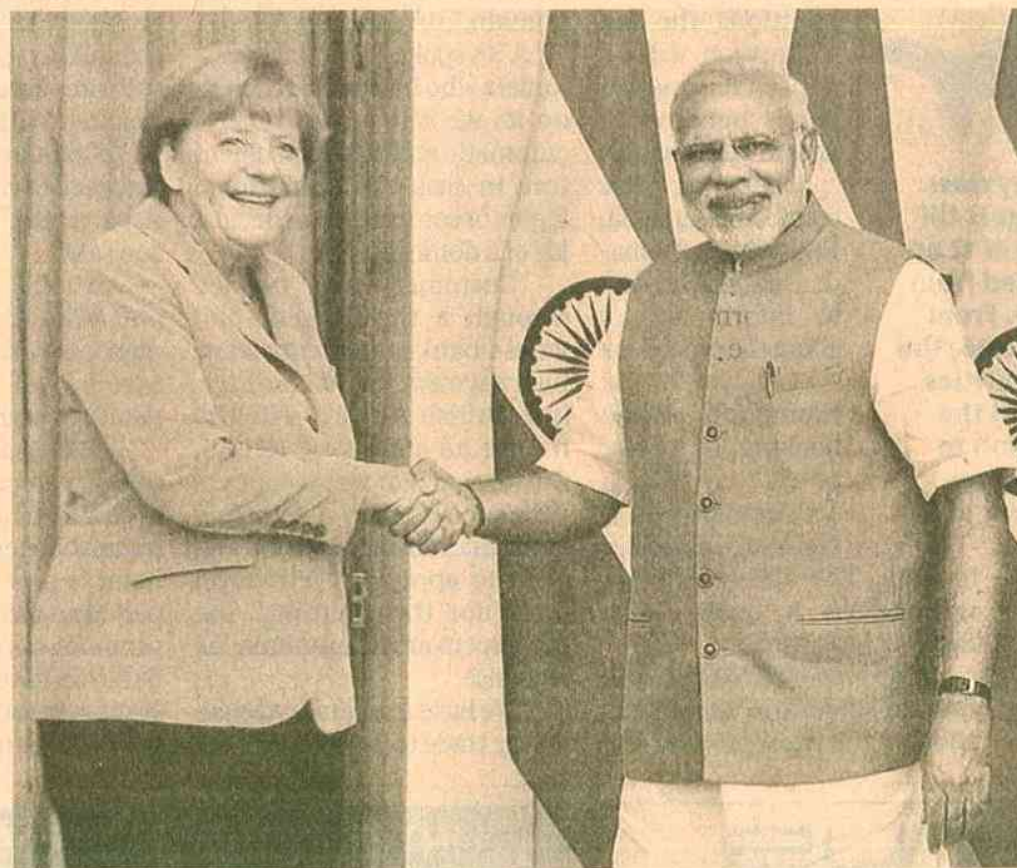
In a world increasingly characterised by uncertainty, it is essential to have reliable partners, partners with common interests. Both India and Germany as trading nations depend on a functioning rules-based international order, on the freedom of navigation in international waters, and on

the safeguarding of international law. As close partners within the G4, we are working on a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including the UN Security Council. At the G20 summit in Hamburg this July, Prime Minister Modi and Federal Chancellor Merkel will work in unison in order to improve global conditions for free trade and increasing prosperity and stability. Furthermore, Germany has been one of the staunchest supporters of India's accession to international export control regimes such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Facing growing uncertainty in terms of access to important markets and potentially momentous initiatives by other actors, India and Germany share a strong interest in the timely conclusion of an EU-India Free Trade Agreement as well as an agreement on investment protection. This is particularly true since Indo-German economic relations are becoming ever closer.

The German business community has long recognised India's potential. Now, India has emerged as the fastest growing major economy, and roughly 1,800 German enterprises are dynamically contributing to this success story. The Indo-German Chamber of Commerce is the biggest German binational chamber outside Germany. Since 2010, German companies have invested almost ₹53,000 crore in India — ₹8,121 crore in the last year alone, which constitutes an increase of 22.6 per cent compared to that of 2015.

At the 4th Indo-German IGC, we can expect further steps that aim at making the bilateral framework even more conducive to flourishing busi-



**TRADE WINDS** Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets German Chancellor Angela Merkel in New Delhi last year. Steps that aim at making the bilateral framework between India and Germany more conducive to flourishing business ties are expected at the 4th Indo-German Intergovernmental Consultations PHOTO: PTI

ness relations. The German government will enhance its support for German investments in India by offering competitive financing mechanisms, with an initial focus on transport and infrastructure. Besides, both governments are eager to better tap the synergies between our immensely creative start-up scenes.

Vocational training is another core field of Indo-German collaboration. India designed its national system of dual vocational training based on the

world-renowned German model. The German government is going to great lengths to help India skill its rapidly growing workforce. It is also worthwhile mentioning that the number of Indian students at German universities has doubled to roughly 14,000 within the period of only four years. Germany continues to welcome young Indians thriving for excellence.

Additionally, in the field of science and technology, Germany is one of India's closest partners. The number

of joint bilateral programmes has been growing exponentially — and so has the number of institutional interlinkages such as the Indo-German Science & Technology Centre or the International Centre for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences. The high level of engagement between India and Germany in these fields is also exemplified by India's participation in mega-science facilities like DESY and FAIR in Germany.

Furthermore, India is Germany's global development partner number one while Germany is India's second biggest donor. In recent years, Germany has made available more than ₹7,000 crore annually to India. Germany's contributions to India's renewable energy programme have amounted to more than ₹30,000 crore in the past few years — making Germany India's most important partner in the field of renewable energy. Thanks to this cooperation, numerous Indians benefit from access to clean energy. At the same time, it is a significant contribution to the global fight against climate change.

The thriving Indo-German partnership has become too comprehensive and multifaceted to give an exhaustive outline in one brief article. Much more could be said about other important areas of cooperation such as technology, security, culture and agriculture. Ultimately, it is gratifying to see that the Indo-German partnership has reached such an elevated level. With the 4th Indo-German IGC starting today, this phenomenal trend is set to continue.

*The author is German ambassador to India*