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PM Modi Five-Nation Tour: 3rd India-Nordic Summit at Oslo Anchors Europe Pivot

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WHY IN NEWS

The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** on **May 13, 2026** held a curtain-raiser briefing for **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's** five-nation tour of Europe and West Asia from **May 15 to May 20, 2026**. The itinerary covers **United Arab Emirates -> Netherlands -> Sweden -> Norway -> Italy**. The high-point is the **3rd India-Nordic Summit at Oslo on May 19, 2026** – the first **Indian PM visit to Norway in 43 years**.

ITINERARY AT A GLANCE

DATE	COUNTRY	KEY ENGAGEMENTS
May 15	UAE	Brief stopover; engagement with UAE leadership
May 15-17	Netherlands	Hosted by Dutch PM Rob Jetten ; first Indian PM full visit in over two decades
May 17-18	Sweden	Bilateral with Swedish PM; defence and innovation focus
May 18-19	Norway	Bilateral with PM of Norway + 3rd India-Nordic Summit at Oslo on May 19
May 19-20	Italy	Meetings with President Sergio Mattarella and PM Giorgia Meloni

3RD INDIA-NORDIC SUMMIT – OSLO, MAY 19, 2026

Format

- India + Nordic 5 (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden)
- Previous summits: **Stockholm (April 2018)** and **Copenhagen (May 2022)**
- Convened roughly every four years; biennial Foreign Minister-level interactions in between

Attendees (Nordic side)

COUNTRY	PRIME MINISTER (MAY 2026)
Denmark	Mette Frederiksen
Finland	Petteri Orpo
Iceland	Kristrun Frostadottir
Norway	(Host)
Sweden	Ulf Kristersson

Likely Themes

- **Energy transition:** Norwegian offshore-wind expertise; Danish district-heating; Finnish nuclear (small modular reactors – SMRs)
- **Green hydrogen:** Norway-Denmark electrolyser supply chains; Indian off-take
- **Defence:** Sweden (Saab) and Norway (Kongsberg); already long-standing Indian supply relationships
- **Space:** ISRO-Nordic cooperation; Arctic-orbit satellite reception (KSAT, Svalbard)
- **Arctic Council:** India is a Permanent Observer since 2013; Norway is current Chair
- **Supply chain resilience:** critical-minerals, semiconductor materials, rare-earths
- **Digital and AI governance:** shared interest in EU-style sovereign-AI frameworks

BILATERAL HIGHLIGHTS

Netherlands – the Indo-Pacific Anchor in Europe

- India's **largest European export destination** (since FY 2022-23)
- Rotterdam Port – gateway for ~7-8 per cent of India's EU-bound trade
- Dutch FDI cumulative in India: ~**USD 50 billion** (March 2025)
- India's Indo-Pacific Forum partnership with the Dutch and EU

Sweden – Defence and Industry

- Saab is bidding for the **Indian Air Force MRFA tender** and offering Gripen E/F
- Indo-Swedish JV interest in **AI, advanced manufacturing, life sciences**

Norway – the 43-Year Gap

- Last Indian PM visit: **Indira Gandhi, 1983**
- Norway is **second-largest sovereign wealth fund (Government Pension Fund Global)** – ~USD 1.7 trillion AUM
- Norwegian investment in Indian renewables and offshore-wind expected to deepen
- **Norway's Arctic Council Chair (2025-27)** – aligns with India's Polar interests
- India-Norway Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation revived

UAE – Continuing CSP Track

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2017)**
- **India-UAE CEPA**: signed in 2022 (specifically February 18, 2022); **in force since 2022 (specifically May 1, 2022)** – first CEPA with an Arab state
- BAPS Hindu Mandir, Abu Dhabi (inaugurated 2024); Indian diaspora ~3.5 million

Italy – the Mediterranean Anchor

- **India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-29** signed at **G20 New Delhi, September 2023**
- Italy is the **G7 President in 2024-25**; reshapes India-G7 engagement
- IMEC corridor anchor (Indian-Israel-Mediterranean-Italy-Europe routing)

STRATEGIC BACKDROP

India-EFTA TEPA

- **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement** since 2024 (specifically signed **March 10, 2024**)
- **Operational since October 2025**
- EFTA = European Free Trade Association: **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland**
- Commits EFTA to **USD 100 billion of investment in India** over 15 years; creates 1 million jobs (target)

India-EU FTA

- Negotiations ongoing since 2007; round-13 expected in mid-2026
- Sticking points: data adequacy, climate-trade measures (CBAM), automobile tariffs

Arctic Strategy

- India released its **Arctic Policy** in **March 2022**: “India and the Arctic: Building a Partnership for Sustainable Development”
- Permanent Observer at **Arctic Council** since **2013**
- Indian research station **Himadri** at **Ny-Alesund, Svalbard** since **2008**
- Other Polar bases: Maitri (Antarctica), Bharati (Antarctica), Dakshin Gangotri (decommissioned)

IMEC

- **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor**, launched in 2023 (specifically at **G20 New Delhi, September 9, 2023**)
- Signatories: India, US, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, Italy, EU
- Three legs: India-UAE shipping, UAE-Israel rail, Israel-EU shipping (Greek/Italian ports)

INDIA-NORDIC BILATERAL TRADE

- ~**USD 19 billion (2024)** in goods trade
- Major exports from India: pharmaceuticals, textiles, organic chemicals, leather, software services
- Major imports: machinery, paper-pulp, electrical equipment, fish & seafood, fertiliser inputs
- Nordic FDI in India (cumulative): ~USD 8-10 billion

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 – International Relations

- India’s bilateral and plurilateral engagements – Nordic 5, EFTA, EU
- India’s Arctic engagement and Polar diplomacy
- Strategic partnerships with mid-sized European states
- IMEC and India-Italy-G7 trajectory

GS Paper 3 – Economy

- Trade agreements (EFTA TEPA), FDI inflows
- Energy-transition supply chains – green hydrogen, offshore wind, SMRs

Mains Angles

- 1 Examine India's engagement with the Nordic states as a discrete cluster within its Europe strategy.
- 2 Discuss the strategic significance of India's Arctic Policy 2022 in the context of climate change and great-power competition.
- 3 India-EFTA TEPA commits the EFTA bloc to USD 100 billion of investment in India over 15 years. Critically evaluate the conditionalities and prospects.

First held **Stockholm 2018**; second **Copenhagen 2022**; third **Oslo May 19, 2026**.

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden.

European Free Trade Association (1960); four members – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland.

Signed since 2024 (specifically March 10, 2024); in force since October 2025; commits EFTA to **USD 100 billion** investment in India over 15 years.

Signed in 2022 (specifically February 18, 2022); in force since 2022 (specifically **May 1, 2022**); first Indian CEPA with an Arab state.

Signed at G20 New Delhi, September 2023.

Founded 1996 (Ottawa Declaration); 8 Arctic States; 13 Permanent Observer states including India (since **2013**); India released its **Arctic Policy in March 2022**.

India's Arctic research station at **Ny-Alesund, Svalbard**; operational since **2008** under NCPOR (National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research), Goa.

Earlier NCAOR; under Ministry of Earth Sciences; HQ Vasco-da-Gama, Goa.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor; launched in 2023 (specifically September 9, 2023) at G20 New Delhi.

World's largest sovereign wealth fund (~USD 1.7 trillion AUM).

First Indian PM visit since **Indira Gandhi in 1983**; gap of **43 years**.

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