

## VICE PRESIDENT MAKES FIRST STATE VISIT TO UNION TERRITORY OF LAKSHADWEEP

Chennai, January 01 2022: The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu today inaugurated two Colleges of Arts & Sciences in Kadmat and Andrott islands on his first State visit to the Union Territory of Lakshadweep.

The Vice President, who is on a two-day tour of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep, was received by the Administrator of the UT, Shri Praful Patel and was accorded a guard of honour on his arrival on Friday.

Addressing the gathering at Kadmat island today, Shri Naidu expressed happiness about his first official visit to the islands as the Vice President of India. He said that Lakshadweep boasts of a 'unique confluence of ancient cultural heritage and pristine natural beauty' and that he was humbled by the hospitality of the people.

Praising the beauty of Lakshadweep, he appealed to people that everyone must try to visit the islands at least once in their lifetime. Inaugurating the two colleges, Shri Naidu said that the courses being offered will help the students of the islands, especially the girl students, overcome the geographical constraints of the region and pursue quality higher education with employment potential.

The Vice President, who is also the Chancellor of the Pondicherry University to which the colleges are affiliated to,



emphasized the importance of skill development among students. He advised the administration to start more short courses in skill development to increase the employability of the islands' youth.

Observing the immense eco-tourism and fisheries potential of Lakshadweep, Shri Naidu called upon the youth of the islands to utilise the courses offered in aquaculture, tourism and hospitality and proactively strive for excellence in these sectors where they have a natural advantage.

He expressed confidence that the new colleges "will not only serve the aspirations of the youth of the islands, but have a powerful multiplier effect and redefine the socio-economic landscape of the region."

The Vice President emphasized that the development of the Lakshadweep islands is integral to the development of the nation.

Shri Naidu lauded the resolve of the people and administration of Lakshadweep for

enforcing the complete ban on single use plastic on the islands. He also appreciated the fact that islands are moving towards 100 percent shift to green energy in a span of two years.

He called for a people's movement for continuing the high cleanliness standards of the island under the 'Swachh Lakshadweep' program.

Highlighting the importance of 'application' in education, Shri Naidu called upon the youth of the islands to also look for innovative solutions for long-standing issues of the islands such as the scarcity of potable water. He said the "real power of education gets unleashed when knowledge, skills and values are applied to bring about a transformation in the lives of the people."

Referring to tourism and fisheries as the great strengths of Lakshadweep, Shri Naidu said islands should aspire to become the role model for the country in eco-tourism and sustainable fisheries, without risking its fragile

and sensitive biodiversity. He noted various initiatives such as submarine optical fibre connectivity, expansion of airports, strengthening of infrastructure and plan to introduce water villas on some islands as laudable efforts.

On the aspect of livelihoods, Shri Naidu highlighted an imminent need to upgrade the skills of people and make them up-to-date with global standards. He called for ensuring highest quality output, with better value-addition and greater visibility to build a brand name for products from Lakshadweep.

The Vice President appreciated efforts in large-scale cultivation of seaweed, measures to modernise the fisheries sector and steps towards increasing production of organic coconut oil and coir, among others.

On this occasion, Shri Naidu advised the youth to take up physical activities such as yoga and sports for a fit body and sound mind. He also distributed equipment such as coconut tree climbing devices and other implements to beneficiaries.

Shri Praful Patel, Administrator, UT of Lakshadweep, Shri Mohammed Faizal PP, Member of Parliament, Shri Gurmeet Singh, Vice Chancellor, Pondicherry University, senior officials, students, teachers and others were present during the event.

## SWIGGY, ZOMATO TO PAY 5% GST FROM TODAY AMID NEW NORMS

Chennai, January 01 2022: Food aggregators like Swiggy and Zomato will have to collect and deposit tax at five per cent rate beginning Saturday, a move which will widen the tax base as food vendors who are currently outside the GST threshold will become liable to GST when provided through these online platforms.

Currently, restaurants registered under GST are collecting and depositing the tax. Also, cab aggregators like Uber and Ola will have to collect five per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) for booking two and three-wheeler vehicles effective January 1. Also, footwear irrespective of prices will attract 12 per cent tax from Saturday.

These are among the many changes in the GST regime that have come into effect in this new year 2022. Also to tackle evasion, the GST law has been amended to state that the input tax credit will now be available only once the credit is appearing in GSTR 2B (purchase return) of the tax payer. Five per cent provisional credit, earlier allowed in GST rules, will not be permitted post January 1,

EY India Tax Partner Bipin Sapra said, "this change will have an immediate impact on working capital of tax payers who are currently availing credit of 105 per cent of matched credit. The change will also mandate industry to validate that the procurements are made from genuine and compliant vendors."

The other anti-evasion measures which would come into effect from the new year include mandatory Aadhaar authentication for claiming GST refund, blocking of the facility of GSTR-1 filing in cases where the business has not paid taxes and filed GSTR-3B in the immediate previous month.

Currently, the law restricts filing of return for outward supplies or GSTR-1 in case a business fails to file GSTR-3B of preceding two months.

While businesses file GSTR-1 of a particular month by the 11th day of the subsequent month, GSTR-3B, through which businesses pay taxes, is filed in a staggered manner between 20th-24th day of the succeeding month.

Also, the GST law has

been amended to allow GST officers to visit premises to recover tax dues without any prior show-cause notice, in cases where taxes paid in GSTR-3B is lower based on suppressed sales volume, as compared to supply details given in GSTR-1.

Sapra said while the amendment is likely to curb the malpractice of passing of input tax credit through declaring in GSTR-1 without paying taxes in GSTR 3B, genuine differences in GSTR-1 and GSTR 3B like carry forward of unadjusted credit notes are likely to face unnecessary scrutiny.

The move is intended to curb the menace of fake billing whereby sellers would show higher sales in GSTR-1 to enable purchasers to claim input tax credit (ITC), but report suppressed sales in GSTR-3B to lower GST liability.

Nextdigm Executive Director (Indirect Tax) Saket Patawari said e-commerce operators are now liable to pay GST in place of the restaurants and the tax base of government may increase due to above as these operator will be liable to GST even for unregistered restaurants.

"E-com operators may be asked to obtain registration in each State where restaurants are located even if they don't have presence and undertake all the regular GST compliances even if they don't have any infrastructure in the State. It may become a challenge to handle audits and investigations in all the states esp. for start ups and new E-com operators," Patawari added.

Sapra further said that this amendment will also widen the tax base as food vendors who are currently outside the GST threshold will become liable to GST when provided through these online platforms. Thus, making procurement from these platforms more costlier.

"Given that restaurants sometimes supply goods along with restaurant services, an invoice may have multiple payments by multiple people and hence would involve complexity of operations. This practice of laying burden on E-Commerce operators for supplies made through them is putting additional burden on a platform which is just facilitating the supply," Sapra added.

## In India, Christians are a Power-House KJ ALPHONS IAS (Rtd)

Chennai, January 01 2022: The article in New York Times titled 'Arrests, Beatings, and Secret Prayers: Inside the Persecution of India's Christians' dated 22nd Dec 2021, is unfortunate and misleading.

It is a known fact that India is one of the earliest civilizations in the world. Today, we are also proud to be the largest democracy in the world. Freedom of speech, religion, association, and more are celebrated tenets of life in India. Close to 80% of the country are Hindu. Roughly 15% are Muslim and 2.3% are Christians. The percentage of Christians have remained steady since independence, hence their absolute number has grown, along with the increase in India's overall population. For Indians, religion is a way of life.

In the spirit of not taking a defensive or political tone in response to the article, and to be respectful of everyone's time, let me just illustrate three misleading claims from article:

1. Anti-Christian vigilantes are sweeping through villages, storming churches, burning Christian literature, attacking schools and assaulting worshippers.

2. In 2014, all that changed...Anti-Christian hate crimes have doubled since 2014.

3. A few years ago, after Catholic churches in New Delhi, the capital, had been vandalised, Christian leaders pleaded with Mr. Modi for help. He was disinterested, mocking them and never addressing the attacks, according to three clergymen who attended an important meeting at the Prime Minister's residence in December 2014...he acted like a don.

The above passages give the impression that a concentration-like, ghettoized, persecution of Christians is rampant. This is so far from the truth, that

frankly, we're confused and at a loss on how to fittingly respond, except present facts. Christians run the largest number of schools, colleges, orphanages, old age homes and homes for the destitute in this country. Christianity is a power-house in India due to these institutions, even though they make up only 2.3% of the population of India. These institutions have made immense contributions to the country and there is one overarching agenda the current government has propagated, it's the welfare and development of the poor and for Christians it is natural to align strongly with these goals. Yes, there have been stray incidents. We cannot be blind to these incidents. Those who perpetuate them must be brought to justice.

Regarding the third claim, I was in the delegation of Christian leaders which met Prime Minister Modi on Christmas in 2014, a few months after he formed the government. I was there because, as a matter of fact, I organized the meeting. He was extremely cordial, cut a Christmas cake which was shared by everyone in the large delegation. It is a fact that we raised the issue of attack on churches that happened in Delhi prior to the elections in 2014. 11 churches were attacked under the cover of darkness a few weeks before the elections. I visited all the 11 churches. It was widely misreported in the national and global media that BJP elements were behind the attack and this would be the fate of all Christian institutions in this country if Modi came to power. The Prime Minister was categorical and emphatic when we raised the issue: he said that the criminals will be brought to justice, irrespective of religious or political affiliations. Investigations revealed that the BJP had nothing to do with the vandalization of any of these churches. Investigation revealed that most of the accused belonged to an upstart

political party, trying to establish a base in Delhi by laterally positioning themselves as anti-BJP and stoke fears of BJP. I do not want to name the party behind the attacks. Religious tolerance is a deeply democratic belief that we take seriously and shouldn't be turned into a political he-said-she-said.

Even a single incident of any attack on minority group is an attack to us all and unacceptable. The Prime Minister did not mince words when he called these extremists "criminals", and that they would be treated as such. He said that they were an insult to the country and their religion. He instructed the state governments to take stern action. Any such incident is taken very seriously.

The basic tenant of Indian civilization, which predates most western philosophies, is the belief in Vasudhaiva Kutumbhaka, that humanity is one. The slogan for Prime Minister Modi's election campaign in 2014 was Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, which means with everybody, for everybody's development. Addressing Christian leaders in Vignyan Bhavan, Delhi on 16th February 2015, Prime Minister Modi said "My government will ensure that there is complete freedom of faith. Everyone has the undeniable right to retain or adopt the religion of his or her choice without coercion or undue influence." He added "My government will not allow any religious group, belonging to the majority or the minority, to incite hatred against others, overtly or covertly. Mine will be a government that gives equal respect to all religions. India is the land of Buddha and Gandhi. Equal respect for all religions must be in the DNA of every Indian. We cannot accept violence against any religion on any pretext and I strongly condemn such violence.

(KJ Alphons is former member of Indian Administrative Service and is currently a Member of Indian Parliament. He was Minister of State (Independent charge) Tourism, India, 2017-19)



My government will act strongly in this regard." Following the 2014 meeting, I have taken the Cardinals of India to the Prime Minister at least three other times; every time he re-iterated his commitment to ensure that Christians were protected in this country.

India is a true democracy and therefore everyone has the freedom to accuse the Prime Minister or its governing party in any way they feel. However, we take any allegations that violate our democratic systems and beliefs extremely seriously and we thank the New York Times for expressing their side of the story. We regret that the story positions India as rife with extremism, when these are isolated incidents, and not a pattern, as they suggest, within a richly diverse country of 1.4 billion people. We also regret that the story is perhaps incurably political, for instance, stating that Madhya Pradesh passed an anti-conversion law in 2021, when a little bit of research would have easily shown that the original bill was introduced and passed in 1968, when Congress, the opposition party was in power. But, again, we do not want to turn this into a political issue, as these are human rights concerns. We only wish to reiterate our everlasting commitment to preserve the rich religious diversity of our beloved land.

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## Tanishq revamps its store at Valasaravakkam, Tamil Nadu

Chennai, January 01, 2022: Tanishq, India's most trusted and celebrated jewellery brand revamps its store at Valasaravakkam in Tamil Nadu in a brand new format. The store was inaugurated at 5 pm by Mr. Narasimhan – Regional Business Manager- South, Tanishq. As part of the grand inauguration, the brand is offering free Gold Coins\* with every jewellery purchase. The offer is valid from 24th December to 26th December 2021.

Spanning across 5000 sq. ft, the new store located at No. 185, Devi Karumariamman Nagar, Arcot Road, Valasaravakkam, Chennai - 87 caters to wide range of designs across gold, diamonds, solitaires and platinum. Wedding jewellery from Rivaah by Tanishq features some stunning jewellery designs for the brides-to-be. This store also caters to Tanishq's exclusive collections like,



Little Big Moments, Ekavatam, Aarambh, Virasat and the latest Utsaah collection which is a beautiful blend of traditional designs infused with a touch of contemporary. Each piece comes with intricate works of art rich in splendour with unique design sensibilities.

Speaking on the inauguration, Mr. Narasimhan YL Regional Business Manager - South, Tanishq said "We are delighted to announce the re-launch of our store at Valasaravakkam in Tamil Nadu, today. Tamil Nadu is a

wide range of consumers with unique designs that will surely leave a lasting impression in the minds of our consumers. At Tanishq, there's a jewellery for everyone and for every occasion. The new store houses exquisite jewellery designs to suit diverse tastes and preferences. We are also providing safe and



very important market for us and it is our constant endeavor to provide the best service and offerings to our esteemed customers. The revamped store caters to a

convenient shopping experience to all our customers with Gold Standard of Safety measures and remote selling options in place."

## GST Collection Stood At Rs 1.29 Lakh Crore in December 2021

Chennai, January 01, 2022: GST revenue collected in December 2021 was over ₹ 1.29 lakh crore, 13 per cent higher than the same month last year, the Finance Ministry said on Saturday. Though the collection was lower than ₹ 1.31 lakh crore mopped up in November, December is the sixth month in a row when revenue from goods sold and services rendered stood at over ₹ 1 lakh crore.

collected in the month of December 2021 is ₹ 1,29,780 crore, of which CGST is ₹ 22,578 crore, SGST is ₹ 28,658 crore, IGST is ₹ 69,155 crore (including ₹ 37,527 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is ₹ 9,389 crore (including ₹ 614 crore collected on import of goods)," the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

The revenues for December 2021 are 13 per cent higher than the GST

revenues in the same month last year (Rs 1.15 lakh crore) and 26 per cent higher than December 2019.

The average monthly gross GST collection for the third quarter (October-December) of the current year has been ₹ 1.30 lakh crore against the average monthly collection of ₹ 1.10 lakh crore and ₹ 1.15 lakh crore in the first and second quarter, respectively.

"Coupled with

economic recovery, anti-evasion activities, especially action against fake billers have been contributing to the enhanced GST. The improvement in revenue has also been due to various rate rationalisation measures undertaken by the Council to correct inverted duty structure," the ministry said. It hoped that the positive trend in the revenues will continue in the last quarter as well.

## Reliance Plans To Raise Up To \$5 Billion In US Debt: Report

Chennai, January 01, 2022: Reliance Industries Ltd said it plans to raise up to \$5 billion in dollar-denominated debt and use proceeds primarily to refinance its existing borrowings.

The Mukesh Ambani-owned oil-to-telecoms conglomerate said that the proposal for fixed rate notes, which could be issued in one or more tranches, was approved by the board in a meeting on Saturday.

While the company did not give further details on the use of proceeds, the Economic Times newspaper said it will be used to refinance earlier debt raised from international investors, with a bundle of loans coming up

for maturities in the next three to four months.

The newspaper said the offering would be the largest offshore raising by an Indian borrower in one go, adding that the move will be debt-neutral to the company.

## Delhi's Daily Covid Cases Jump 50%, Highest Since May

Chennai, January 01, 2022: Delhi recorded a massive 50 per cent jump in coronavirus cases on Saturday, at 2,716, with around 3.64 percent of COVID-19 tests returning positive - a high positivity rate considered one of the first signs of an impending wave of infections.

were also reported on that day.

On Friday, New Year's Eve, it had recorded 1,796 cases and a positivity rate of 1.73 per cent. On Thursday, 1,313 cases were recorded with a 2.44 per cent positivity rate, according to official figures.

The huge spike in fresh cases in the span of the last few days in Delhi is being recorded amid a significant jump in cases of new Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the city.

The death count due to coronavirus in the city has

risen to 25,108.

On Wednesday, Tuesday and Monday the daily cases tally had stood at 923, 496 and 331, respectively, as per official data.

Given the high number of cases, the city has imposed a "Yellow Alert" - the first of a four-level system of restrictions that have closed down schools, gyms, set 50 per cent occupancy rules for private offices and transit, and a night curfew.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Saturday said whether more curbs need

to be imposed in the national capital will be reviewed although hospital admissions are not worrying so far.

He also said that in view of the current situation, more than 3,000 beds have been prepared for children.

Prevention is better than cure and people need to keep themselves safe at all times. It should be our responsibility to wear masks at all times whenever we are heading outside our homes, this will help us to stop the further spread of coronavirus," Mr Jain told reporters.

## Amid Omicron Scare, Haryana's New Covid Curbs In Gurgaon, 4 Other Cities

Chennai, January 01, 2022: Cinema halls and sports complexes will be closed in Gurgaon and four other cities in Haryana as part of restrictions imposed on Saturday by the state government in view of a surge in coronavirus cases and the emergence of Omicron variant. Schools are also closed till January 12.

50 per cent staff in attendance.

These restrictions will come into force in Gurgaon, Faridabad, Ambala, Panchkula and Sonapat districts, which have the highest daily infection rates, from January 2 and remain in force till January 12, according to a government order.

Malls and markets have been allowed to stay open till 5 PM, while bars and restaurants have been permitted to function with only 50 per cent of their

seating capacity.

The restrictions were imposed in view of a persistent rise in coronavirus cases in the state and the emergence of the new Omicron variant, the order said.

Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar will hold a meeting with top officials on Sunday to review the situation.

Besides, the order by the State Disaster Management Authority said only fully

vaccinated persons shall be allowed at vegetable markets, public transport, parks, religious places, restaurants, and other places across the state.

Haryana reported 26 cases of the Omicron variant on Friday, with the total number of such cases rising to 63 in the state. Of the total cases, 23 are active while others have been discharged, said a health bulletin yesterday. The state had brought back night curfews a week ago.

## IndusInd Bank launches 'Green' Fixed Deposits

Chennai, January 01, 2022: IndusInd Bank has announced the launch of 'Green Fixed Deposits' where the deposit proceeds will be used to finance projects and firms supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). IndusInd Bank is amongst few banks globally, to bring forth this proposition, thereby integrating SDG into a regular fixed deposit product.

These deposits, shall be

offered to both retail and corporate customers. The Bank, will use the proceeds from these deposits to finance a wide array of sectors falling under the SDG category including, energy efficiency, renewable energy, green transport, sustainable food, agriculture, forestry, waste management, and greenhouse gas reduction.

Speaking about the launch, Ms. Roopa Satish, Head- CSR and Sustainable Banking, IndusInd Bank said, "At IndusInd Bank, sustainable banking has

always been a critical area of focus. We are the only bank in India to secure 'band A' in the Carbon Disclosure Project and we have maintained our leadership capability over the last 5 years. We are now delighted to bring forth Green deposits that provide our customers with an opportunity to contribute towards building a cleaner and better society. We encourage both corporate and retail depositors to avail this opportunity. The interest on Green deposit remains attractive with an additional

benefit of 50 basis point for senior citizens. In all ways, it is similar to a regular bank deposit but in addition, depositors will be issued a 'Green' certificate as well as an 'Assurance' certificate confirming the end use of deposit proceeds at the end of the financial year."

The launch of 'Green' deposits' is part of IndusInd Bank's larger commitment of creating value for all its stakeholders, and remaining focused at driving sustainable economic growth of the country.

## ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launches new term insurance plan: ICICI Pru iProtect Return of Premium

Chennai, January 01, 2022: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched an innovative term insurance product 'ICICI Pru iProtect Return of Premium', a customer-centric proposition offering life-stage based cover wherein the quantum of life cover is automatically adjusted based on the customer's life stages.

The ICICI Pru iProtect Return of Premium offers return of 105% of all premiums paid on survival, besides providing cover against 64 critical illnesses, one of the highest in the industry. It offers two variants - Life Stage Cover and Level Cover.

The Life-stage Cover is an innovative feature

which auto adjusts the sum assured or life cover based on the life-stage of customers. It enables customers to increase their life cover when it matters the most as responsibilities grow in the initial stages. Also, it automatically reduces the life cover as responsibilities reduce in the later life stages. Importantly, the premium remains constant throughout the tenure of the policy. This is ideally suited for customers who seek adequate life cover across their life stages. Also, it offers customers the flexibility to get 105% of the premiums paid back at an early age of 60 or 70 years with continued protection till the end of the policy term or at maturity, as per the customer's

choice.

The Level Cover variant is ideal for individuals looking for a term insurance plan that offers a survival benefit along with a fixed death benefit.

Mr. Amit Palta, Chief Distribution Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "Our innovative protection product, ICICI Pru iProtect Return of Premium, promises adequate protection at all life stages with fixed premiums and return of 105% of all premiums. We believe this product addresses questions customers have in their minds on survival benefits. Our approach to product development is to embed customer's needs as

product features. We will continue to leverage cutting-edge technology solutions to provide financial security to a larger section of the country's population. This dovetails into our vision to build an enduring institution that serves the protection and long-term saving needs of the customers with sensitivity."

With rising cases of lifestyle-related ailments such as cancer and heart disorder it is essential to have a critical illness benefit. Therefore, ICICI Pru iProtect Return of Premium offers customers the option to take cover against 64 critical illnesses, one of the highest in the industry.

## UK Planning Cheaper, Easier Visas For Trade Deal With India

Chennai, January 01, 2022: The UK is planning to relax immigration rules by offering cheaper and easier visas for Indian tourists, students and professionals, in an attempt to clinch a trade deal with India, a media report said on Saturday.

UK International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan is expected to travel to New Delhi this month, when formal negotiations on a proposed India-UK free trade agreement (FTA) are expected to begin.

Trevelyan is expected to use this visit to open the prospect of relaxing immigration rules for Indian citizens, a key demand from New Delhi, The Times newspaper reported.

While she has the backing of Liz Truss, the Foreign Secretary, who has put securing closer ties with India on top of the government's agenda to counter the growing influence of China, Home Secretary Priti Patel is opposed to this move, the report said.

In May last year, Ms Patel had signed a 'bespoke' and reciprocal Migration and Mobility Partnership (MMP) with External Affairs Minister

S. Jaishankar to have around 3,000 students and professionals a year access work experience benefits in either country.

Under the MMP, both sides have agreed to work towards an April 2022 timeline to bring the new system in place, with work underway in the High Commission in London and the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi.

However, under further immigration plans reportedly in the works, one option being looked at is a scheme similar to that agreed as part of the UK's FTA with Australia, which would allow young Indians the chance to come and work in the UK for up to three years.

Another option would be to cut visa fees for students, thereby allowing them to stay in the UK for a period after they graduate, possibly building upon the Graduate Route visa under the points-based immigration rules currently in place, the report said.

There could also be reductions in the fees for work and tourism visas.

At present, it can cost an Indian citizen up to GBP 1,400 for a work visa, while students pay GBP

348 and tourists GBP 95 respectively.

These are in sharp contrast with visa fees for countries such as China, who have to pay significantly less.

Indian-origin peer Lord Karan Bilimoria, the president of the Confederation of British Industry, has been among the most vocal advocates for lowering visa fees for Indians.

"That FTA, I hope, will benefit in enhancing bilateral trade and be as comprehensive as possible. Movement of people; reduction of duties and tariffs - the tariff on Scotch whisky is 150 per cent, that's got to be reduced drastically; academic collaborations and cross-border research is going to be huge between our countries and partnering on a Green industrial revolution. There is a vast array to really ramp up business and trade between our two countries," he had said.

A senior government source told 'The Times' that there was an acceptance by ministers that the price of a trade deal with India would be to make a "generous" offer on visas.

"The tech and digital space in India are still

hugely protectionist and if we could open up even a slither of access, it would put us ahead in the game," a government official was quoted as saying.

The UK government has repeatedly said it wants a deal that slashes barriers for doing business with India.

According to the Department for International Trade, preparations for the launch of negotiations for the UK-India FTA 'remains underway' since the conclusion of bilateral working groups.

Trevelyan and her Indian counterpart, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, had also held talks during the G-20 trade ministers meeting in Sorrento, Italy, last October to discuss "final preparations" for the launch of India-UK FTA negotiations this year.

"We look forward to launching negotiations early this year. India is projected to become the world's third largest economy by 2050, and a trade deal will open huge opportunities for UK businesses to trade with India's GBP 2 trillion economy," a UK government spokesperson said.

