

Germany, India sign wide-ranging agreements to deepen bilateral ties

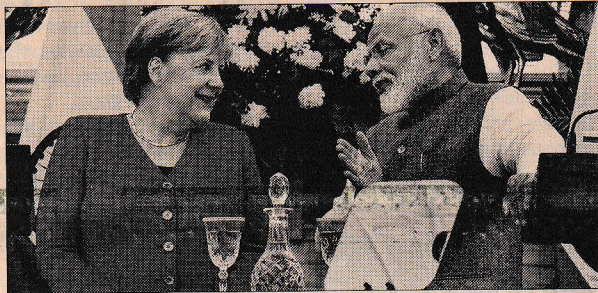
ANDREAS RINKE &
ADITI SHAH
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GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA Merkel and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday signed wide-ranging agreements to deepen strategic cooperation and exchanged notes on ways to boost bilateral trade.

Merkel, accompanied by several Cabinet colleagues and a business delegation, is in India on a three-day visit that began on Thursday.

"We're encouraging our private sectors to give an impetus to our growing bilateral trade and Chancellor Merkel and I will meet some of the top business and industry leaders," Modi told a joint news conference with the German leader.

Bilateral trade rose to \$24.06 billion in 2018-19



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German chancellor Angela Merkel at the joint press conference, in New Delhi on Friday

PTI

from \$22 billion the previous year, while German companies have invested nearly \$12 billion in India since 2000.

Germany is India's largest trading partner in Europe and more than 1,700 German companies are operating in India.

Agreements on strategic

cooperation, included agriculture, cyber security and artificial intelligence were signed. Modi said the two countries would also bolster ties to combat "terrorism and extremism".

Germany and India also agreed to join hands in the area of education. "As many as 20,000 Indian nationals are studying in

Germany and we would like to see more," Merkel said.

Though Merkel and Modi didn't mention anything about restarting talks on finalising a free trade agreement between India and the European Union, sources earlier said the two leaders could take up the trade deal.

Eric Schweitzer, president of the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), earlier said India had enormous potential but there has been uncertainty among companies after an investment protection agreement between the two countries ended in 2016.

"Small and medium-sized German companies stand in a labyrinth of regulations and shy away from larger investment. Negotiations should restart and Merkel's visit could help," he said. **REUTERS**