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UK-India 'superpower' partnership launched to drive transport decarbonisation efforts

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Backed by governments in both the UK and India, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and delivered in partnership with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), the initiative will for the first time bring together innovators, industry heavyweights, researchers, policymakers and investors from both countries to target the transport system's toughest decarbonisation challenges, such as developing an electric vehicle-ready infrastructure.



UK-India 'superpower' partnership launched to drive transport decarbonisation efforts

The UK and India are set to become first movers in the transition to Net Zero transport systems, thanks to a pioneering innovation partnership, led by Energy Systems Catapult. Innovating for Transport and Energy Systems (ITES) is a unique collaboration to develop greener, quicker and more affordable ways for people and goods to move around – in India, the UK, and beyond.

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The initiative is one of the first to be announced following a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by UK and India Science Ministers last Wednesday, 26 April, in Westminster, to boost science and innovation, and deliver economic growth across the two countries.

ITES will offer a 'soft-landing' for UK SMEs interested in the Indian market, and opportunities for SMEs and start-ups in India, helping innovators to safely develop, test and export solutions that help decarbonise transport, thanks to low-risk, high-impact pilots with trusted partners. The collaboration will also help SMEs tackle scalability with go-to-market support and access to potential clients, funders and investment.

Adopting a perspective across the whole transport and energy system, ITES will consider the multiple solutions needed to deliver cleaner seas, skies, roads and railways. Cutting-edge pilots and research programmes in India and the UK will test technologies and explore pathways for sustainable and clean transport – such as electric and hydrogen solutions – that are reliable, affordable and acceptable to businesses and consumers, as well as ensuring an infrastructure and energy generation system that can meet demand.

ITES aims to attract public, private and third sector partners and sponsors to ensure activities are market-led and solve practical

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problems, such as zero-emission fleets and last-mile delivery, and innovative charging technologies. By combining resources, the programme will make it more cost-effective for the UK and India to develop world-first pilot projects and Net Zero solutions.

Guy Newey, Chief Executive at Energy Systems Catapult, said: "Decarbonising transport is one of the greatest challenges we face. This is not a hurdle we can overcome alone. By linking innovators, researchers, and investors together in the UK and India we can unlock financial investments, accelerate the pace of decarbonisation, and flex our collective low-carbon muscle.

"The partnership underlines how innovation from SMEs will be at the heart of the Net Zero transition and affords them an opportunity to collaborate and trial their solutions in the world's fifth biggest economy – turbocharging decarbonisation efforts and unleashing economic potential."

The initiative will be steered by in-country partner, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). Prof Ashish Verma, Convenor, IISc Sustainable Transportation (IST) Lab, said, "India is currently passing through an interesting phase of economic growth and infrastructure development in many sectors including transport, which provides a great opportunity for the country to leapfrog to a sustainable and Net Zero future.

"We are committed to exploring disruptive, cutting-edge and collaborative solutions. Complementing these efforts, ITES, which is anchored within the IST lab, will harness the UK and India's rich reputation for R&D and the strength of our business sectors to pioneer test beds that unlock better data, clearer decision-making and bolder collective action from industry and leaders in the transport and energy sector."

ITES will form part of the new UK-India Net Zero Innovation Virtual Centre, a key coalition forged as part of the Memorandum of Understanding signed last week, to help maximise cooperation on Net Zero action.

Backed by the UK Government, the Centre will be facilitated by the UK Science and Innovation Network in India, hosting programmes such as the Hydrogen Valley and Industrial Decarbonisation Living Lab to help decarbonise manufacturing and – through the ITES initiative – transport systems.

The launch of ITES builds on the success of former initiatives to boost innovation between the UK and India, such as the Innovating for Clean Air (IfCA) programme. Led by Energy Systems Catapult, with partners including the Indian Institute of Science, the programme enabled the adoption of clean EV technologies and services by proving solutions across real-life testbeds in India.

Sarah Fallon, Regional Director (India, Middle East), Science, Innovation and Tech, British High Commission, New Delhi said: "Our ambition is that ITES will be a long-term, established base for UK-India superpower partnerships and programmes that shape the future of Net Zero transport systems, and that can be expanded to other sectors over time.

"We are confident that this initiative will help accelerate the development of innovative solutions for greener transport systems in India and overseas, and bring us closer to our shared goal of Net Zero emissions – an ambition that can only be realised with international collaboration."

London-based business GreenEnco is among the UK innovators that has expanded its offering in India after demonstrating its EV charging station solution, and gaining support to develop a mobile app as part of the project. The company is now applying its expertise to help deliver faster electric vehicle charging solutions in India, while also supporting local industry.

GreenEnco Chief Executive Officer Dr Jyotirmoy Roy said: "Through international programmes such as IfCA, ESC and their partners have provided innovative businesses like ours with the safe springboard we need to develop overseas, opening doors in India to help us collaborate and commercialise across borders. We have now committed with our integrated green energy solution to help develop a fast EV charging infrastructure in India.

"We're delighted that our innovative solution will not only make an environmental impact to help decarbonise the transport sector, but – with our locally-procured system components – we are also supporting the development of a sustainable socio-economical ecosystem in India."

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