

GLOBAL POLICY INSIGHTS

Brexit: Exploring Opportunities for the UK and Tamil Nadu

Portcullis House

Westminster, London, United Kingdom

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The Big Question

The UK's preparations for its departure from the European Union signify a country looking outwards, ready to explore relationships and strengthen partnerships beyond its European neighbors. The UK and India enjoy a unique relationship that is woven together by a shared history, culture and language. The southern state of Tamil Nadu has a population of 81.5 million, exceeding that of Britain and 5 other EU nations. It is no surprise then that India and Tamil Nadu in particular, is expected to play an important role in the UK's post-Brexit agenda.



(From Left to Right) Dr Vijay Bhaskar, Lord Bilimoria, Virendra Sharma MP, Sri Edappadi Palaniswami, Richard Harrington MP, Rajesh Agarwal, Baroness Verma, Uday Nagaraju, Professor Jonathan Portes, Dr Patsy Robertson, Prof Kevin Ibeh

It is in this context that Global Policy Insights hosted the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Sri Edappadi Palaniswami, at the event '**Brexit: Exploring Opportunities for the UK and Tamil Nadu**' at Portcullis House, Westminster on August 29th 2019. The roundtable discussion brought together eminent politicians; diplomats; professors and industry figures to explore the potential for developing partnerships between the UK and Tamil Nadu in the post-Brexit climate.

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Global Policy Insights is an international, centrist policy institute researching models of governance, political economy and policies aimed at accelerating socio-economic growth at the local, national and international levels by building a strong network of engagement between governments, corporates, academic and professional communities across the world.

At GPI we employ a unique approach to understanding the world and solving some of its most pressing policy issues based on insights from a wide array of methodologies including systems thinking, game theory, behavioural economics, statistical and narrative research, and historiography.

In line with this vision and followed by their programme on Brexit, GPI convened this roundtable to bring together prominent figures in Indo-British relations to discuss the potential for future collaboration.

Right: Uday Nagaraju

Introducing the discussion, GPI Co-Founder and Executive President Uday Nagaraju welcomed the participants and stressed the potential for strengthened partnerships between the UK and Tamil Nadu. In line with its UK-India and Commonwealth programmes, GPI has been working to facilitate innovative industry partnerships across the Commonwealth. India continues to sit at the forefront of these efforts, owing to the seemingly unending opportunities for trade across the subcontinent.



Mr Nagaraju assured the panel that investment in India will continue to grow and identified the roundtable as an opportunity for British organisations to expand their role in this.



Left: Virendra Sharma MP

Virendra Sharma MP, Chair of the Indo-British All Party Parliamentary Group, echoed this sentiment. He outlined the collaborative efforts of Indian and British parliamentarians in working to bring together South Indian states to encourage investment. Despite reaffirming his position as a Remainer, Mr Sharma emphasised the potential Brexit brings, “building a strong vision” for the future of Indo-British relations.

Mr Sharma’s address was followed by the Chief Minister Sri Edappadi Palaniswami of Tamil Nadu. The Honourable Minister emphasised the pre-eminence of Tamil Nadu’s healthcare system, which is renowned for its success in providing healthcare at an affordable cost. As well as boasting high-quality primary care centres across the state, Tamil Nadu has the largest number of doctors clearing the PG

NEET. He noted that the UK and Tamil Nadu have a strong historical partnership with respect to healthcare, with medical professionals from Tamil Nadu making significant contributions to the NHS for many years. Brexit presents the exciting opportunity to bolster this relationship and explore new avenues for partnerships in the automotive industry amongst other things.

Right: Sri Edappadi Palaniswami

This was followed by a short presentation by Sai Kumar, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, who spoke about investment opportunities in Tamil Nadu in the technology, automotive and healthcare industries.



Left: Dr Vijay Bhaskar



Following the theme of healthcare, the roundtable heard from Dr Vijay Bhaskar, Health Minister of the Government of Tamil Nadu, on alternative collaborations in the medical field. He reiterated the effectiveness of public health initiatives in Tamil Nadu and outlined the potential for joint research efforts between the London School of Tropical Hygiene and Tamil Nadu institutions in treating malaria and dengue fever. Moreover, he identified the admirable research accomplishments in the areas of organ transplantation as well as

bilateral hand transplantation achieved in Chennai. This was followed by further comments from Dr Beela Rajesh, Health Secretary of Tamil Nadu on UK-Tamil Nadu partnerships in the health sector.

Right: Rajesh Agarwal

The panel then heard from Rajesh Agarwal, Deputy Mayor of London. Mr Agarwal focussed on London's innovative technology market for partnerships with Tamil Nadu and India more broadly. He emphasised that, as London's third largest investor, India should capitalise on the booming technology market and consider life sciences and smart cities as areas for further exploration.



Baroness Sandip Verma echoed this sentiment, but stressed that the investors from Tamil Nadu and elsewhere in India should set their sights beyond London. She highlighted the exciting prospects in the midlands and the north of England as particularly attractive. She reminded the panel that Brexit presents the opportunity for investors to “really scale up”. This point was later emphasised by Lord Bilimoria, Vice President of the

Confederation of British Industry, who identified the University of Birmingham as a willing partner for educational institutions in Tamil Nadu.

Left: Baroness Sandip Verma

Moreover, Dr Patsy Robertson, Chair of the Ramphal Institute, contended that we must not just focus on bilateral Indo-British relations after Brexit. Rather, we should understand their importance to the wider Commonwealth network, which is still alive as “a family of nations in the world”.



The panel also heard from Richard Harrington MP, who outlined the de-regulation in trade policy in India and in post-Brexit Britain as one of the most exciting prospects about the future of bilateral trade relations. He noted, however, that this must be supplemented by deregulation in visa arrangements in order to be wholly effective.

Left: Richard Harrington MP

This final point was echoed by Professor Jonathan Potres of King's College London. He noted the expanding flows of skilled people ready to work in the growing health and IT sectors and stressed that the benefits can only be felt if supplemented by a fair and efficient visa system. He concluded the discussion by emphasising the importance of a progressive immigration system for a flourishing global economy.

Professor Kevin Ibeh, Vice Master of Birkbeck, University of London followed this by speaking on the potential for academic collaborations between the UK & India and the possibility for Tamil Nadu to engage with this.



Right: Wilson Room, Portcullis House, Westminster



Above: The panel received traditional shawls from Tamil Nadu from the delegation.

The discussion drew to a close with the kind presentation of gifts from Tamil Nadu to the esteemed dignitaries in attendance with an air of excitement for the prospects post-Brexit. The event provided a space for cross-industry experts to share insights in their respective areas and discuss strategies for forging close partnerships between the UK and Tamil Nadu and India more broadly. The discussion ranging from industry-specific opportunities to geographical considerations, from the Commonwealth network to immigration policy - painted a picture of the bright future of Indo-British relations and the steps that must be taken to achieve it.