

Turkish-Swedish Talks Progress



In a significant development, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is set to hold a crucial meeting with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson today. The meeting aims to clear hurdles for Sweden's potential NATO membership - a move Turkey has continually vetoed.

The bone of contention lies in Sweden's alleged lack of action against anti-Islam and pro-PKK demonstrations. Turkey, the United States, and NATO categorize PKK, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, as a terrorist organization. Hence, Ankara expresses perplexity over Stockholm's permission for protests showcasing PKK flags.

A previous discussion between

the two countries' foreign ministers and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was promising, yet fell short of Sweden's anticipated green light. Despite Sweden's right-wing government, elected last fall, adopting various measures urged by Turkey, the membership issue persists. Measures include a new anti-terrorism law, extraditing individuals sought by Turkey, and probing groups reportedly extorting the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden for PKK funding.

Sweden, alongside Finland, sought NATO membership last year, agreeing to undertake several Ankara-required actions through a tripartite agreement. While Turkey sanct

ioned Finland's membership in April, it retains the veto on Sweden, citing ongoing demonstrations as the reason.

Though Hungary's parliament hasn't yet ratified Sweden's NATO accession, the Hungarian government affirmed it would follow suit once Turkey reconsiders. Nevertheless, even if today's discussions yield progress, full membership confirmation before the upcoming NATO summit is unlikely, leaving the alliance with 31 members. However, hopes are high for a breakthrough in talks and Ankara's short-term nod to Sweden's NATO entry.

President Erdogan has reportedly linked the EU's unblocking of Turkey's member

ship to Sweden's NATO accession - a condition not stipulated in the tripartite agreement. Erdogan is also keen on acquiring F-16 planes from Washington, currently hindered by the US Congress. Observers suggest Sweden's NATO membership might only materialize after Ankara secures this American concession.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz responded to Erdogan's assertions, arguing that Turkey's EU accession impasse should not affect Sweden's NATO membership prospects. "Sweden meets all the requirements for joining NATO," Scholz declared in Berlin, insisting the two issues should not be seen as interconnected.