



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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UK-India Relations

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In News, why?

According to the Britain Meets India (BMI) Report by Grant Thornton Bharat in collaboration with The Confederation of Indian Industry, trade between India and the UK is expected to double by 2030 as a result of the proposed free trade agreement, investments in technology, diversification of global supply chains, and ease of doing business (CII).

The top industry that UK firms are looking to invest in in India is business services, with Maharashtra being the top state for investment followed by the National Capital Region and Karnataka.

What are our current understandings of the proposed free trade agreement?

About: The proposed FTA is anticipated to increase Indian exports in labor-intensive industries like education, pharmaceuticals, health care, and the production of leather, textiles, jewellery, processed agri-products, and marine products.

The UK is likely to consider lowering taxes on goods like apples, machinery, and medical devices made in the country.

Additionally, UK businesses anticipate India to take steps to strengthen data protection and uphold agreements.

India and the UK Trade:

With a total of almost USD 31.92 billion invested in India between FY 2000 and FY 22 by the UK, it remained the sixth largest investor in the country.

This made up around 5.4% of all the foreign direct investment (FDI) that India received.

In FY 2022, India's trade with the UK in goods and services totaled USD 31.34 billion, up from USD 19.51 billion in 2015.

A total of 4.66 lakh people are employed by the 618 UK companies that have been located in India, and they generate a combined annual revenue of Rs 3,634.9 billion.

What recent changes have there been in India's relationship with the UK?

The conclusion of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2021 is evidence that the India-UK relationship has been improving despite the challenge given by the Ukraine conflict.

In addition, a 2030 Roadmap for India-UK relations was formed, which largely specifies the cooperation goals for the two-way relationship.

Both nations conducted discussions on expanding their defence and cyber security cooperation as well as on trade relating to the military.

In order to safeguard the online infrastructure in both India and the UK, a new cooperative cyber security programme is about to be announced.

The first Strategic Tech Dialogue, a ministerial-level forum on new technologies, will also be held by India and the UK.

The UK will join India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and become a significant partner on marine security problems in Southeast Asia, thereby strengthening the two countries' maritime relations.

India and the UK finished the first phase of negotiations for a free trade agreement in January 2022.

The discussions revealed common goals between the sixth-largest economy in the world (India) and the fifth-largest economy in the world (the UK).

A free trade agreement is what?

It is an agreement between two or more countries to lower import and export restrictions.

Under a free trade policy, there are little to no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies, or prohibitions that prevent the exchange of products and services across international borders.

The idea of free trade is the antithesis of economic or trade protectionism.

FTAs between India and Australia ECTA: Australia will grant India preferential market access across all of its tariff lines.

Over 70% of India's tariff lines will grant Australia preferential access.

SAFTA, the South Asian Free Trade Area:

an FTA limited to products but not to any services, such as information technology.

By signing this agreement, all traded commodities will have zero customs fees by the year 2016.

What other trade agreements has India signed?

India-UAE CEPA: The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) establishes a framework for promoting and enhancing commerce between the two nations.

India and Mauritius have a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA).

It is a form of free trade agreement that intends to offer a formal system for promoting and enhancing trade between the two nations.

Countries decrease or do away with the levies on the products under this agreement. To encourage the trade in services, the nations also ease their regulations.

The South Asia Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA), which went into effect in 1995, is a trade promotion agreement for the member nations of South Asia.

APTA: Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement

It was formerly known as the Bangkok Agreement and was a preferential tariff system designed to encourage intra-regional trade through the exchange of mutually acceptable concessions between member nations.

Vivek Raj

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)

- CSIR was established in September 1942 as an autonomous body.
- CSIR now has become the largest research and development organisation in India with over 38 laboratories/institutes, 39 outreach centers, 3 Innovation Centers and 5 units throughout the nation.
- Its parent institution is the Ministry of Science and Technology, but it operates as an autonomous body through the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- Its research and development activities include life sciences, aerospace engineering, structural engineering, food, ocean sciences, metallurgy, petroleum, chemicals, mining, leather and environmental science.

- According to the Scimago Institutions Ranking World Report 2021. CSIR ranked 37th among 1587 government institutions worldwide and it is the only Indian organization among the top 100 global government institutions.
- CSIR also holds the 7th rank in Asia and leads the country at the first position.
- CSIR has put in place CSIR@80: Vision & Strategy 2022 – New CSIR for New India. Its mission is “to build a new CSIR for a new India”, and vision is to “Pursue science which strives for global impact, the technology that enables innovation-driven industry and nurtures trans-disciplinary leadership thereby catalyzing inclusive economic development for the people of India”.
- Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) Prize for Science and Technology is named after the founder Director of the CSIR, the late Dr. Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar.

Organizational Structure

- **President:** Prime Minister (Ex-Officio)
- **Vice President:** Minister of Science & Technology, India (Ex-Officio)
- **Governing Body:** The Director General is the head of the governing body. The other ex-officio member is the finance secretary (expenditures). Other members' terms are three years.
- **CSIR Advisory Board:** 15-member body composed of prominent members from respective fields of science and technology. Its function is to provide S&T inputs to the governing body. Member terms are three years.

Vision

The changed R&D scenario has inspired CSIR towards:

- Science and Engineering leadership;
- Innovative technology solutions;
- Open innovation and crowdsourcing;
- Nurturing talent in transdisciplinary areas;
- Science-based entrepreneurship; and
- Socio-economic transformation through S&T intervention

Objectives:

- To promote scientific and industrial/applied research of national importance. It covers various areas like radio and space physics, nanotechnology, oceanography, biotechnology etc.

- To establish, maintain, and manage laboratories, institutions, workshops, and organizations to further scientific and industrial research.
- To provide significant technological intervention in different areas with regard to societal efforts which include the health, environment, energy, food, drinking water, housing, farm and non-farm sectors.

Notable achievements of CSIR over the years

- Developed India's first synthetic drug, methaqualone in 1950.
- Design of the first India Tractor – Swaraj – in 1967
- Developed Optical Glass for defense purposes.
- Developed a Bacterial Blight Resistant Rice i.e. Samba Mahsuri Rice Variety.
- Established 'Traditional Knowledge Digital Library' which can be accessed in five languages – English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish.
- Developed Solar Tree which occupies minimum space to produce clean power.
- Successfully completed the sequencing of the Human Genome in 2009.
- Designed India's first ever parallel processing computer, Flosolver.

Anoop Singh

PESA Act – A case of good governance or a hinderance to development

• GS Paper II

Gandhiji always said that India lives in its villages. He further argues that village republic is the solution for the independent India to become more prosperous. Keeping that in Mind parliament of India enacted the 73rd and 74th amendment to provide local self-governance. Later on, PESA act was enacted to expand the scope of 73rd constitutional amendment act 1993 to the 5th schedule states.

PESA Act 1996

- It expands the Panchayats (Part IX of the constitution) to the Fifth Schedule Areas. There are many tribal people living in these locations.
- It guarantees **self-governance** for those residing in Scheduled Areas through **Gram Sabhas (village assemblies)**.

Powers provided to Gram Sabha under PESA:

- It is necessary to consult before the land acquisition, prior approval of all developmental projects and control over tribal sub-plan, maintenance of cultural identity and tradition, control over schemes affecting the tribals etc.
- It also gives gram sabhas judicial powers in form of dispute resolution as per traditional laws and customs.
- Ownership and management of natural resources: E.g. water, forest, common lands ('Jal, Jangal, and Zameen'), minor forest produce, minor minerals, etc.

Status of implementation of PESA:

- Out of 10 states (Andhra, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, HP, Jharkhand, MP, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan) who have notified 5th Schedule Areas, only 7 states (including Chhattisgarh and Gujarat) have notified Rules to implement the PESA Act.

About 5th Schedule States:

- Every year, the President must receive a **report from the governor of each state with Scheduled Areas (SA)** on how those areas are managed there.
- It allows for the **creation of a Tribes Advisory Council (TAC)** in Scheduled Areas on the direction of the president.
- The Union Government shall have **executive powers to make directions to the States as to the management of the Scheduled Areas.**
 - It must consist of **not more than twenty members** of whom, three-fourths shall be the representatives of the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly of the State.
 - If the MLAs of the STs in the Legislative Assembly of the State is less than the number of seats in the TAC, then the **remaining seats shall be filled by other members of those Tribes.**
- The **Governor may enact regulations governing the Council.**
- The **TAC shall advise the Governor** on the welfare and advancement of the STs in the State.
- The Governor may direct that **any particular Act of Parliament or of the Legislature of the State shall or shall not apply** to a SA.
- The Governor may **enact regulations to maintain the peace and promote good governance** in any SA region, including restrictions on land transfers and rules governing money-lending activities. After receiving the President's approval, the Governor may repeal or modify any Act of the State Legislature or the Parliament.
- No regulations shall be made unless the Governor, in case a TAC exists, consults such TAC.

Issue with respect to PESA Act:

XAXA committee has found out following issues –

- Government notifies rural areas as urban areas to keep them out of PESA coverage.
- The PPP (Public private partnership) model, is simply a backdoor method of tribal land alienation.
- Government agencies acquire land for “public purpose” but later transfer it to private companies at throwaway prices.
- Government has signed such MoUs with companies, Government officials became “dealers and negotiators” of tribal land. “Neutrality of the State” is forgotten.
- In scheduled areas, tribal’s land cannot be transferred to non-tribals. YET Cabinet Committee on Investment (CCI) sometimes hastens project files which directly/indirectly violate this provision.
- Development projects lead to influx of outsiders to tribal areas, thus harm tribal interests by money landing activities and pollution.
- They are being subjected to Predatory tourism.
- There are some tribes which do needs protection but are not covered under the three categories viz., ST, SC and OBC. Their population is dwindling fast.
- The creation of dams and subsequent submergence of the nearby tribal areas do account as alteration of boundary.

Thus, as can be seen from above analysis the PESA act was enacted with the intention of providing self-governance to the tribal regions of the country. However as highlighted by the XAXA committee it has been diluted by the government after government in name of development. Sometime this kind of development breeds separatism, Naxalism and radicalization.

Vikas Gupta