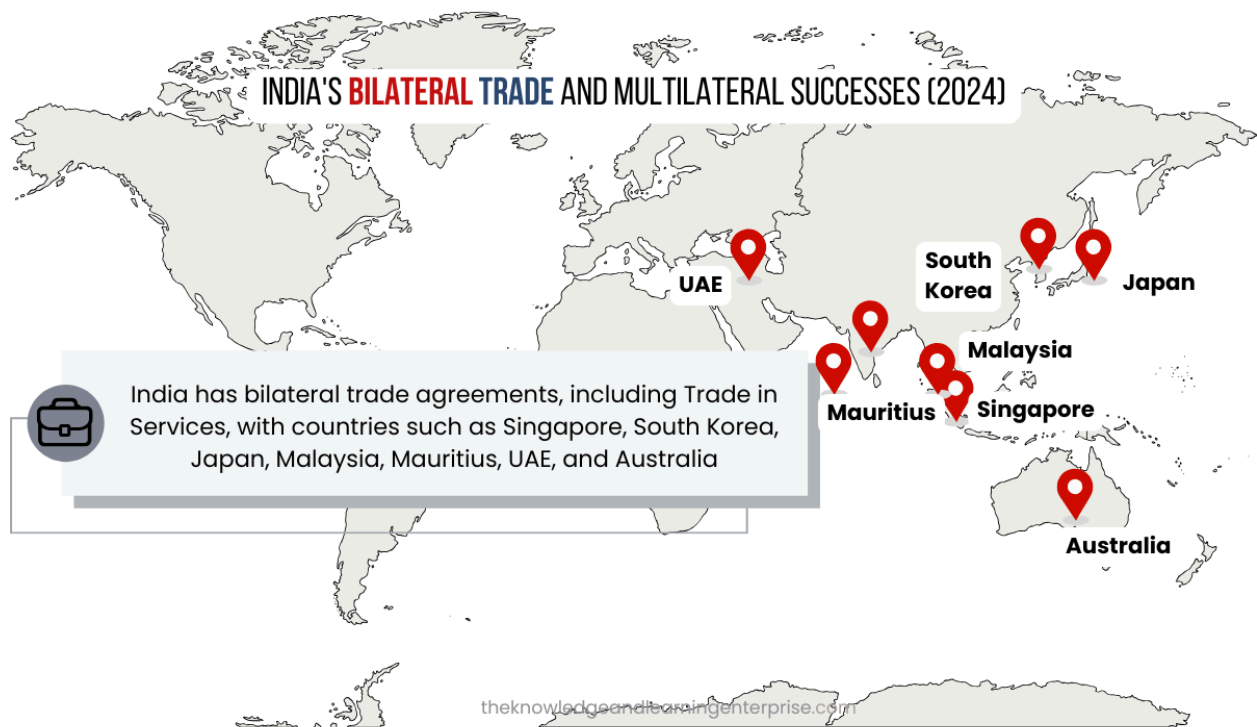


Enhancing Services Trade through Free Trade Agreements

Bilateral Trade Agreements



India has bilateral trade agreements, including Trade in Services, with countries such as Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, UAE, and Australia. Additionally, India has an FTA in Services and Investment with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) was signed in March 2024.

India is actively negotiating FTAs, including Trade in Services, with the UK, EU, Oman, Peru, and Sri Lanka. It is also working on a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Australia, building on commitments under the India-Australia Economic Cooperation Trade Agreement (ECTA). These negotiations aim to secure market access, non-discriminatory treatment, and a transparent regulatory environment for India's Services exports.

Multilateral Engagements

World Trade Organization (WTO)

The 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) of the WTO took place in Abu Dhabi, UAE, from February 26 to March 2, 2024. India actively defended its interests in agriculture, sustainable development, fisheries, investment, e-commerce, and SPS/TBT negotiations, while addressing concerns of developing nations and the Global South.

- **New Members:** Comoros and Timor-Leste joined the WTO, increasing membership to 166.
- **Agriculture:** India successfully blocked attempts to divert attention from critical issues like the Permanent Solution on Public Stockholding for Food Security.
- **E-Transmissions:** India contributed to extending the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions until MC14 (or March 31, 2026), with no further extensions planned.
- **Dispute Settlement:** Ministers adopted [WT/MIN(24)/37, March 4, 2024], committing to a fully functional dispute settlement system for all Members by 2024.

India plays a proactive role in the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Committee, safeguarding its interests and advancing key proposals. India raised 20 Specific Trade Concerns (STCs) and addressed 6 STCs. During the sixth SPS Agreement review, India submitted three proposals:

- Challenges posed by stringent Maximum Residual Limits (MRLs).
- Adapting SPS measures to regional conditions.
- Increasing transparency.

India's thematic sessions on Maximum Residual Limits (MRLs) and Regionalization will occur in March 2025. In the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee, India raised 15 STCs and responded to 17 STCs.

India's paper on Technology Transfer for environmentally sound technologies received positive feedback from the Committee of Trade and Environment (CTE). It may form the basis for a Ministerial Declaration at MC14 on climate-resilient technologies.

Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations

India remains an active participant in fisheries subsidies negotiations, prioritizing the needs of its fishing communities. Key proposals include:

- Extended transition periods for developing countries.
- Permanent carve-outs for small-scale and artisanal fishers without geographical limits.
- Protection of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) to safeguard sovereign rights.

- Disciplines on non-specific fuel subsidies and government-to-government access arrangements.

India submitted four proposals to ensure balanced outcomes in the fisheries subsidies agreement, highlighting these critical concerns.

Reference

Press Information Bureau: [2024 Year End Review for Department of Commerce](#)

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