

BHARAT Matters

INDIA'S NARRATIVE OVERSEAS

INDIA DEEPENS GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

HIGHLIGHTS

India-New Zealand FTA | India's Cultural Footprint | Excellence Across Frontiers |
'Made-in-India' Moves the World



***“The world today looks at India with
new trust, new curiosity and new expectations.”***

नरेंद्र मोदी

- PM Shri Narendra Modi

From the CEO's Desk



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the May 2026 edition of Bharat Matters — an edition that captures India's growing influence in a rapidly changing world. From the landmark India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement to strengthened strategic partnerships with Austria, the Republic of Korea, and Vietnam, this issue highlights how India is deepening global engagement across trade, technology, defence, innovation, and culture.

This edition also showcases how India's achievements are gaining international recognition — from renewable energy leadership and digital governance innovations to global academic excellence and sustainable mobility solutions. You will read about India's expanding cultural footprint, the return of priceless antiquities, and Made-in-India products making their mark worldwide.

As India continues to emerge as a trusted global partner and a driver of innovation, Bharat Matters brings you stories that reflect the nation's confidence, capabilities, and growing role on the world stage. Happy Reading!

Happy Reading!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ajit Kumar'.

Ajit Kumar, IAS
CEO, MyGov

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India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement

Unlocking Opportunities: Trade, Mobility and Comprehensive Economic Partnership

The signing of the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) marks a historic milestone in India's expanding global trade engagement. Concluded in a record nine months after the launch of negotiations in March 2025, the agreement reflects a forward-looking and comprehensive framework to deepen bilateral economic ties and enhance economic resilience.



The FTA builds on strong economic complementarities and robust people-to-people ties, supported by a vibrant Indian diaspora in New Zealand. It aims to unlock opportunities for manufacturers, farmers, MSMEs, women entrepreneurs, students, and skilled professionals, while positioning India as a key partner in the Oceania and Pacific region.

India–New Zealand trade has shown steady growth in recent years, with merchandise trade reaching USD 1.3 billion in 2024–25 and services trade expanding across sectors such as IT, travel, and business services. The FTA is expected to significantly accelerate this trajectory.

Strengthening Trade and Market Access

The agreement significantly enhances market access and export competitiveness for Indian industries.



- » Duty-free access for 100% of Indian exports across all tariff lines
- » Boost to labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, footwear, and engineering goods
- » Phased tariff liberalisation by India while protecting sensitive sectors like dairy and agriculture

Unlocking Opportunities in Services and Mobility

The FTA opens new avenues for professionals, students, and service providers.

- » New Zealand's commitments across 118 services sectors, including IT, healthcare, and education
- » 5,000 Temporary Employment Entry visas for skilled Indian professionals
- » Expanded post-study work rights and Working Holiday Visa scheme
- » Recognition and promotion of AYUSH and wellness services globally

Driving Investment and Innovation

The agreement lays a strong foundation for long-term economic cooperation.

- » USD 20 billion investment commitment over 15 years
- » Collaboration in renewable energy, digital services, and infrastructure
- » Promotion of technology transfer, innovation, and skill development

Boosting Agriculture and MSMEs

A key pillar of the FTA is strengthening agricultural productivity and empowering small businesses.

- » Agricultural Productivity Partnership for kiwifruit, apples, honey, and horticulture
- » Centres of Excellence and technical collaboration for farmers
- » Export readiness support and global value chain integration for MSMEs
- » Focus on women- and youth-led enterprises

Sustainability and Cultural Cooperation



The FTA integrates sustainability and cultural engagement into economic cooperation.

- » Joint initiatives in climate action and sustainable agriculture
- » Engagement with Māori communities to promote cultural exchange
- » Modern trade facilitation, including faster customs clearance and digital certification systems

9 FTAs IN 6 YEARS



India-New Zealand FTA (April 2026)

Fastest negotiated FTA, concluded in just 9 months



India-US Interim Trade Framework (Feb 2026)

Step toward a comprehensive trade deal between India-US



India-EU FTA (Jan 2026)

India's largest-ever trade agreement with 27 EU member states



India-Oman CEPA (Dec 2025)

Highest-ever tariff coverage with a GCC nation



India-UK CETA (July 2025)

99% of Indian exports receive duty-free access



India-EFTA TEPA (Mar 2024- Oct 2025)

A landmark deal with a \$100 billion FDI commitment



India-Australia ECTA (Dec 2022)

India's first agreement offering 100% tariff elimination



India-UAE CEPA (May 2022)

Bilateral trade crossed the \$100 billion mark in FY25



India-Mauritius CECPA (2021)

India's first trade agreement with an African nation



India–Austria Ties

Innovation, Infrastructure and Strategic Cooperation at the Core



The visit of the Federal Chancellor of Austria, H.E. Dr. Christian Stocker, to India marked a major milestone in bilateral relations after a gap of four decades. Taking place in the backdrop of strengthened India–EU engagement following the 2026 Free Trade Agreement, the visit signalled the beginning of a new and dynamic phase in India–Austria ties.

Both leaders reviewed the full spectrum of cooperation and reaffirmed their commitment to expanding partnerships in innovation, infrastructure, sustainability, and emerging technologies. With Austria's technological expertise and India's scale and growth, both sides emphasised building resilient supply chains and advancing collaboration in high-tech sectors.

Key Outcomes:

Technology, Innovation and Trade

- » Establishment of a Fast Track Mechanism to address issues faced by businesses and improve ease of doing business.
- » Strengthened startup collaboration under the India–Austria Startup Bridge.
- » Identification of joint R&D projects in quantum technology, material science, machine learning, and advanced engineering.
- » Agreement on Audiovisual Co-production to promote creative collaboration and cultural exchange.

Strategic and Security Cooperation

- » Letter of Intent on military cooperation to deepen defence and technology partnerships.
- » Agreement to establish a Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism.
- » Partnership between India's Centre for UN Peacekeeping and Austria's AUTINT.



Sustainability and Sectoral Collaboration

- » Renewal of MoU on road infrastructure, focusing on intelligent transport systems and road safety.
- » MoU on Food Safety between AGES and FSSAI to enhance standards and facilitate trade.
- » Agreement to organise a bilateral space industry seminar in Vienna in 2026.

Education, Skills and Mobility

- » Joint Letter of Intent on vocational training and skills development.
- » Launch of a structured dialogue on education cooperation and academic partnerships.
- » Operationalisation of the Working Holiday Programme to promote youth exchange.
- » “Focus India” initiative by Austrian universities to deepen research and student mobility.

Overall, the visit infused new momentum into India–Austria relations, reinforcing a forward-looking partnership rooted in innovation, strategic cooperation, and people-to-people ties.

India–Republic of Korea Relations

From Trusted Partnership to Futuristic Collaboration

The State Visit of the President of the Republic of Korea (ROK), H.E. Mr. Lee Jae Myung, to India in April 2026 marked a significant step in advancing bilateral relations. Taking place after a gap of eight years, the visit reflected the shared commitment of the two democracies to transform their long-standing partnership into a “futuristic partnership,” anchored in technology, trade, and strategic cooperation.

Both leaders reviewed the full spectrum of India–ROK ties and reaffirmed their shared vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. With strong foundations in democratic values, market economies, and rule of law, the partnership has evolved into a dynamic and multi-dimensional engagement. The two sides also set an ambitious target to expand bilateral trade to USD 50 billion by 2030, alongside upgrading the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).



Technology, Trade and Industrial Cooperation

- » Launch of the India–Korea Digital Bridge to deepen cooperation in AI, semiconductors, and digital innovation.
- » Establishment of an Industrial Cooperation Committee and Economic Security Dialogue to strengthen supply chains and industrial collaboration.
- » Expansion of cooperation in shipbuilding, steel, ports, and critical technologies, supported by multiple MoUs.

Maritime, Infrastructure and Energy Cooperation

- » Adoption of a Comprehensive Framework for partnership in shipbuilding, shipping, and maritime logistics.
- » Collaboration on port development, shipyard modernisation, and maritime infrastructure.
- » Strengthened cooperation on energy resource security, including resilient supply chains and LNG collaboration.

Strategic and Security Engagement

- » Launch of Economic Security Dialogue to enhance resilience in critical supply chains.
- » Strengthening defence cooperation, including joint ventures and the launch of the Korea–India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X).
- » Commitment to counter-terrorism cooperation and a shared vision for Indo-Pacific peace and stability.

Sustainability and Emerging Domains



- » Joint initiatives on climate action under the Paris Agreement, including cooperation under Article 6.2.
- » Collaboration in critical minerals, renewable energy, and circular economy.
- » Expanded cooperation in space, including ISRO–KASA collaboration and joint innovation platforms.

Culture, Education and People-to-People Ties



- » Extension of the Cultural Exchange Programme (2026–2030) and declaration of 2028–29 as the Year of India–ROK Friendship.
- » Promotion of collaboration in film, animation, gaming, and creative industries.
- » Expansion of academic partnerships, scholarships, and student exchanges, particularly in STEM and AI.
- » Initiatives to strengthen linguistic, tourism, and youth exchanges.

Overall, the visit marked a transformative moment in India–ROK relations, reinforcing a forward-looking partnership built on innovation, strategic trust, and shared global priorities.

India–Vietnam Ties Renewed

Elevated to Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

The State Visit of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam and President of Vietnam, H.E. Mr. To Lam, India marked a significant milestone in bilateral relations. As the two countries celebrate a decade of their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the visit reflected a shared commitment to deepen cooperation across political, economic, defence, technological, and cultural domains.

Recognising growing strategic convergence in an evolving global landscape, both leaders agreed to elevate bilateral ties to an Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, guided by the principles of “shared vision, strategic convergence, and substantive cooperation.”

The partnership aligns with India's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision and Vietnam's Vision 2045, while reinforcing their shared commitment to a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.



Political and Strategic Cooperation

Both sides reaffirmed the importance of regular high-level engagement and institutional dialogues across sectors. They also agreed to establish a Strategic Diplomacy–Defence Dialogue (2+2) framework.

- » Elevation of ties to an Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership
- » Enhanced parliamentary and ministerial exchanges
- » Strengthened cooperation in multilateral forums, including the UN and ASEAN mechanisms

Trade, Investment and Economic Connectivity

India and Vietnam set an ambitious target of achieving USD 25 billion in bilateral trade by 2030. Both sides agreed to strengthen supply chains, facilitate market access, and encourage greater two-way investments.

- » Market access granted for Indian grapes and Vietnamese durians
- » Expanded cooperation in renewable energy, EVs, logistics, IT, healthcare, and smart agriculture
- » Greater collaboration between startup ecosystems and innovation centres

Defence, Maritime and Security Engagement

Defence cooperation continued to remain a cornerstone of bilateral ties, with both countries expanding collaboration in traditional and emerging security domains.

- » Enhanced cooperation in defence technology, maritime security, cybersecurity, and joint exercises
- » Vietnam joined the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)
- » Expansion of cooperation in hydrography, search and rescue, and maritime domain awareness

Digital, Technology and Innovation Partnership

The leaders underscored the importance of emerging technologies and digital transformation in driving future cooperation.

- » MoUs signed on digital technologies, fintech innovation, and cross-border QR payment interoperability
- » Cooperation in AI, 6G, semiconductors, space, biotechnology, and critical minerals
- » MoU signed on rare earth cooperation between India and Vietnam

Culture, Tourism and People-to-People Ties

Deep civilizational and Buddhist links continued to strengthen the people-centric dimension of the partnership.

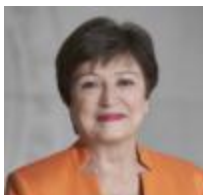
- » Signing of the Cultural Exchange Programme for 2026–2030
- » Expansion of tourism, wellness, and Buddhist circuit cooperation
- » Establishment of ICCR Chairs of India Studies in Vietnamese universities
- » Cooperation on digitisation of Cham manuscripts and conservation at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of My Son

India: A Defining Force in a Changing World

What Global Voices Are Saying

India is no longer merely an emerging economy—it has become a defining force shaping the global economic, technological, and strategic landscape. With strong macroeconomic fundamentals, digital transformation, and an expanding role in global governance, India is increasingly being recognised as a pillar of stability, innovation, and resilience in an uncertain world.

From pioneering inclusive digital public infrastructure and AI-driven solutions to championing the concerns of the Global South, India's growth story reflects both scale and substance. Its leadership in areas such as sustainability, technology, diplomacy, and development cooperation is drawing global attention.



**Kristalina
Georgieva,
IMF Chief:**



Today, world leaders, policymakers, and business voices are acknowledging India not just for its economic rise, but for its growing ability to shape global conversations, influence international cooperation, and contribute meaningfully to a more future-ready world order.

“Look at India today. India's growth rate is more than two times higher than the average global growth. That is happening because the country has strong fundamentals”



**Dr. Denzil Douglas, Foreign
Affairs Minister of St.
Kitts and Nevis**

“India is one of the largest countries in the world. But India has proven this is not a problem. Instead, India stood as a true champion of Global South cooperation.”



**Bob Sternfels, Global Managing
Partner at McKinsey & Co**

“In a shifting world order, this is India’s leadership moment on multiple dimensions, as it becomes a strategic imperative or organisation globally to re-orient towards India.”



**Austrian
Chancellor
Christian Stocker**

“The voice of India carries a lot of weight both bilaterally and in international forums. India has an impressive growth rate of about 7.6%. It’s one of the most dynamic global markets and a key strategic partner for us.

From economic dynamism to digital innovation and diplomatic agility, India’s rise is being acknowledged across continents and sectors. These global perspectives underline a consistent message: India is not just participating in global change—it is helping define it. As the world navigates uncertainty, India’s growth, leadership, and inclusive approach position it as a trusted partner and a central force in shaping a more balanced and resilient global order.



**Dr Leslie Vinjamuri, President
and CEO of the Chicago Council
on Global Affairs**

“India is playing multi-alignment well. They hosted the US Deputy Secretary of State at the Raisina Dialogue. The next day: Israel’s Foreign Minister. Then they had Iran’s deputy foreign minister. Guess what? India just got two tankers through Hormuz. “



**Finland President
Alexander Stubb**

“A seat in the UN security council for India is of utmost importance. India obviously is one of the world’s largest and most influential countries.



**Ajay Banga,
World Bank President “**

“I saw AI working in India’s Uttar Pradesh. Illiterate women farmers can take a photo of a disease on a leaf and an app will tell them how to kill it. “PM Modi was talking about small AI, and I want to do this with the world’s emerging markets.”

India's Cultural Footprint

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Legacy Honoured in Malawi



A bust of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the legendary founder of the Sikh Empire, was unveiled in Blantyre, Malawi, symbolising India's enduring cultural footprint abroad. Installed at a Sikh Gurudwara during Baisakhi celebrations, the sculpture—crafted by an Indian artist—brought together diaspora members and local leaders. The tribute honours Ranjit Singh's legacy of leadership, unity, and tolerance, while strengthening cultural ties between India and Africa. It also serves as a powerful symbol of identity and heritage for the Indian community in Malawi.

US Returns Over 650 Antiquities to India

In a major step towards restoring cultural heritage, the United States has returned 657 antiquities valued at nearly USD 14 million to India. These artefacts—ranging from ancient bronze sculptures to sandstone idols—had been stolen and trafficked over decades before being recovered through coordinated investigations. Key pieces include rare depictions of Buddha, Ganesha, and Avalokiteshvara. The repatriation, facilitated by US authorities and Indian officials, underscores growing global cooperation to combat illicit antiquities trade and restore cultural legacy to its rightful home.



Excellence Across Frontiers

From global academic excellence to culinary innovation, India continues to make its mark across diverse international platforms.

First-Ever Gold at European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad

India scripted history at the European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad (EGMO) 2026 as Mumbai's Shreya Shantanu Mundhada became the first Indian to win a gold medal at the prestigious global competition held in Bordeaux, France. The four-member Indian team also delivered its best-ever performance, securing one gold, one silver, and one bronze, and ranking sixth among 67 countries. This milestone highlights India's growing strength in global mathematics and reflects the impact of sustained training and mentorship in nurturing young talent, particularly encouraging greater participation of girls in STEM.



Indian Cheese Wins Global Recognition



India's artisanal cheese made a remarkable debut at the Mundial do Queijo do Brasil 2026, one of the world's most prestigious dairy competitions, winning four medals—one Super Gold, two Golds, and one Silver. Standout entries included a Brie-style cheese from Kashmir and yak milk-based cheese from Ladakh, showcasing India's diverse dairy heritage. With participation from over 30 countries, the achievement marks a significant step in placing Indian handcrafted dairy products on the global gourmet map and highlights the growing international appeal of India's niche food innovations.

‘Made-in-India’ Moves the World

From railways to electric mobility, India is emerging as a trusted partner in building modern and sustainable transport systems worldwide.



Powering Mozambique's Rail Network

Indian Railways has successfully completed the export of 10 high-powered diesel-electric locomotives to Mozambique, marking a major milestone in India's global rail manufacturing footprint. Built at Banaras Locomotive Works in Varanasi, these 3,300 HP engines were designed to suit African rail networks and delivered through a phased export contract. The project highlights India's capability to provide customised, high-performance railway solutions, reinforcing its position as a reliable partner in infrastructure development under the "Make in India, Make for the World" initiative.

100 E-Buses Delivered to Mauritius

India has achieved its largest electric bus export, delivering 100 Made-in-India e-buses to Mauritius under a government-to-government initiative. Manufactured by Switch Mobility, the buses will support the island nation's transition to cleaner public transport and reduced emissions. Equipped with advanced telematics and efficient battery systems, the fleet strengthens India's growing footprint in global electric mobility. The initiative not only enhances sustainable transport in Mauritius but also underscores India's role as a provider of future-ready mobility solutions worldwide.



Innovation for Impact

From transforming rural land governance to accelerating clean energy, India is shaping scalable solutions for a sustainable future.

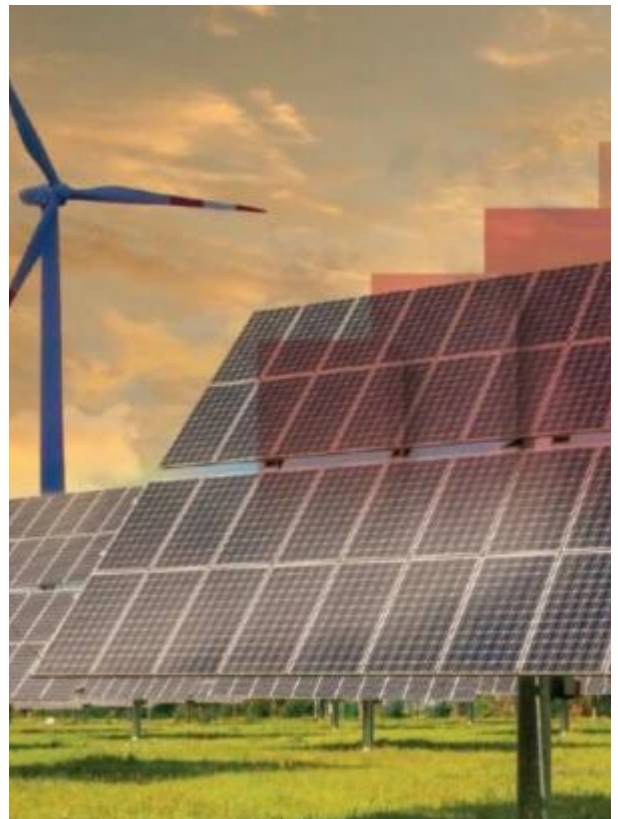


SVAMITVA Goes Global at World Bank Land Conference 2026

India's flagship SVAMITVA scheme took centre stage at the World Bank Land Conference 2026 in Washington, drawing global attention to its innovative approach to rural land governance. The initiative uses drone-based mapping and geospatial technology to digitise land records and issue property cards, enabling better planning, credit access, and dispute resolution. With over 3.3 lakh villages mapped and crores of property cards issued, the model has unlocked significant rural economic value and is being seen as a scalable solution for other nations.

India Rises to 3rd in Global Renewable Energy

India has emerged as the third-largest country globally in renewable energy installed capacity, reflecting its rapid progress in clean energy transition. Driven by large-scale solar and wind expansion, the country has consistently added record capacity, with renewable sources now forming a significant share of its energy mix. This milestone underscores India's commitment to sustainable development, energy security, and climate action, positioning it as a key player in the global green energy landscape and a leader among emerging economies.



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Historic City of Ahmadabad, Gujarat, Bharat's 36th UNESCO World Heritage Site



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