



Business and Trade Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Seema Malhotra MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Indo-Pacific)
King Charles Street
London
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United Kingdom
[By email]

23 October 2025

Dear Minister,

UK–India Free Trade Agreement

I write on behalf of the Business and Trade Committee to request further information regarding the Government’s approach to the UK–India Free Trade Agreement (FTA), particularly in respect of its geopolitical and strategic implications.

While the Department for Business and Trade leads on trade negotiations, the Committee would like to understand what assessment the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has made of the FTA’s broader foreign policy significance, including its alignment with the UK’s strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific and relationships with other regional partners.

The Committee notes the Prime Minister’s first official visit to India in October 2025, following the visit of Prime Minister of India to the United Kingdom in July 2025, during which both sides signed the India–UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and adopted the India – UK Vision 2035 and a Defence Industrial Roadmap.

The *National Security Strategy 2025* reaffirms the United Kingdom’s commitment to a “free and open Indo-Pacific” and identifies India as one of a small group of countries that are “geographically dispersed but economically vibrant and technologically advanced”, on which the UK intends to “sharpen our diplomatic focus” and build “modern partnerships”. As part of this agenda, the NSS suggests the UK should seek a “genuine strategic partnership” with India, including through the Free Trade Agreement and the UK–India Tech Security Initiative. The Committee further notes that the *2025 Strategic Defence Review* reaffirmed India’s growing role in UK strategy, including as a key partner in the Indian Ocean region and through the development of the UK–India Defence Partnership announced in February 2025.

In light of these developments, the Committee would welcome clarity on how the FCDO views the UK–India FTA within this evolving strategic context. In particular, the Committee would like to understand how the FCDO assesses the FTA’s contribution to the UK’s wider Indo-Pacific objectives, its economic security priorities, and its bilateral relationship with India.



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Geo-political assessment:

1. What was the FCDO's assessment of the ways in which the UK–India FTA can support the UK's wider Indo-Pacific strategy and its relationship with India?
2. To what extent did the Foreign Office consider India's foreign-policy and values record, including on human rights, labour standards, and energy policy, when advising on the decision to conclude the FTA?
3. What progress has been made to strengthen investment between the UK and India, as referenced in the 2030 Roadmap, including through the negotiation of a separate bilateral investment treaty (BIT)?
 - a) What are the negotiating objectives for the Bilateral Investment Treaty between the UK and India?

Implementation:

4. What role, if any, will the FCDO play in supporting implementation of the agreement, including through its High Commission and Consulates in India?
 - a) If so, which areas or chapters of the FTA will the FCDO in New Delhi lead on, and how will those be prioritised within the wider bilateral framework?
5. What key foreign policy priorities will the FCDO pursue with India following conclusion of the FTA, and which mechanisms will it use to do so? In particular, the Committee would welcome further detail on:
 - a) Labour and human rights issues;
 - b) Environmental and climate cooperation;
 - c) Other areas of diplomatic engagement relevant to the UK–India relationship
6. Does the FCDO intend to use the committees and mechanisms established under the FTA to pursue the Government's wider foreign policy objectives, or will these primarily be led by the Department for Business and Trade?
 - a) What outcomes does the Government expect these FTA committees and sub-committees to deliver in practice, and what mechanisms are in place to ensure they have a meaningful role in advancing the UK's strategic interests?

The Committee would appreciate a response by **13 November** to inform its ongoing scrutiny of the UK's trade strategy and foreign policy coherence.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of the Business and Trade Committee