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India & Gulf Cooperation Council Sign Joint Statement to Launch FTA Negotiations

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India and the GCC formally launched negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the signing of a Joint Statement in New Delhi. The statement was signed by Union Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi, marking a significant step in strengthening economic cooperation.

Purpose of the Joint Statement:

The signing formally launches FTA negotiations between India and all six GCC member countries, paving the way for a comprehensive trade pact that will facilitate freer movement of goods, services, and investment and enhance economic integration.

Framework Established:

The negotiations build on the Terms of Reference (ToR) signed earlier on 5 February 2026, which set out negotiation guidelines and priority areas such as trade in goods, customs procedures, services, digital trade, and investment.

Significance of the GCC:

The GCC includes Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain — a strategic grouping with deep historical and economic ties to India.

Trade and Economic Stats:

In FY 2024-25, India-GCC bilateral trade was USD 178.56 billion, accounting for about 15.4% of India's global trade. India's key exports include engineering goods, rice, textiles, machinery, and gems & jewellery, while imports consist mainly of crude oil, LNG, petrochemicals, and gold.

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Investment and People-to-People Linkages:

The GCC has been a major source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India (over USD 31 billion), and the region hosts about 10 million Indians, reinforcing economic and cultural ties.