



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
Only IAS Academy by Grandson of "Perunthalsivam Kamarajar"

INDIA - UK RELATIONS:

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Introduction:

India and the United Kingdom share a relationship deeply rooted in history, evolving from a colonial past to a dynamic 21st-century partnership. In recent years, this relationship has gained significant momentum, marked by high-level diplomatic exchanges and a tangible commitment to deepening cooperation. A pivotal development, **the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on July 24, 2025, during Prime Minister Modi's visit to the UK**, signifies a major step towards strengthening bilateral trade and investment.

Historical Perspective of India-UK Relations

Colonial Era (1858-1947): India came under direct **British rule after the 1857 rebellion**. The British monarch held the title of Empress/Emperor of India.

Post-Independence: India chose to remain in the **Commonwealth** after becoming a **Republic in 1950**.

Cold War Strain: Diverging foreign policies **during the Cold War strained relations**, with India pursuing non-alignment and the UK aligning with NATO.

Economic Reforms (1990s): Post-Cold War, **economic liberalisation** improved ties, focusing on trade and investment.

Strategic Partnership (2004): Upgraded relations with **regular high-level visits**, enhancing cooperation in trade, defence, and cultural exchanges.

Significance of INDIA-UK relations:

1. Economic and Trade Partnership (especially the recent FTA):

Economic cooperation is a cornerstone of the relationship. The recently signed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) aims to significantly boost bilateral trade and investment, creating jobs and fostering economic growth in both countries.

Recent Example: On July 24, 2025, India and the UK signed a landmark **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** during Prime Minister Modi's visit to the UK. This deal is projected to increase annual bilateral trade by approximately \$34 billion.

2. Strategic and Defence Cooperation:

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Both nations share a commitment to global security and a rules-based international order. Cooperation in defence and security addresses shared threats like terrorism and contributes to stability, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Recent Example: The "India-U.K. Vision 2035" framework, building on the "Roadmap 2030," emphasizes defence and security cooperation, including military exchanges and collaboration on emerging technologies like AI.

People-to-People Ties and Education:

The "living bridge" of the Indian diaspora in the UK (around 1.8 million people) forms a strong cultural and social link. Education is another crucial pillar, with the UK being a popular destination for Indian students.

Recent Example: The FTA includes provisions for simplified visa procedures and liberalized entry categories for Indian professionals, including architects, engineers, chefs, and yoga instructors.

Science, Technology, and Innovation:

Collaboration in these cutting-edge fields is vital for addressing global challenges and driving economic growth. Both countries recognize the importance of shared research and development.

Recent Example: The "India-U.K. Vision 2035" outlines plans for a UK-India joint centre for AI, efforts to advance next-generation telecommunications (including 6G).

Climate Change and Health:

India and the UK are committed to addressing global challenges like climate change and health security, aligning their efforts to promote sustainable development and prevent future crises.

Recent Example: The "Vision 2035" includes a transformative Climate Partnership focused on accelerating clean energy and mobilizing climate finance.

India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

*The election of a Labour govt. under **PM Keir Starmer** in the **U.K.** brings renewed momentum and political stability to the long-drawn **India-U.K. Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** negotiations. It offers a fresh opportunity **to resolve outstanding issues** towards a mutually beneficial FTA.*

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"Our Free Trade Agreement negotiations is the floor not the ceiling of our ambitions to unlock our shared potential and deliver growth, from Bengaluru to Birmingham."- Foreign Minister of India remarked.

Key Benefits For India

Enhanced Market Access: **Tariff reductions** on **textiles, pharmaceuticals, and agricultural goods** will boost Indian exports.

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Strengthening IT and Services:Facilitated mobility for IT professionals and service providers to the UK, expanding India's global IT footprint.

Attracting Investments:**Increased FDI inflows**from the UK in technology, infrastructure, and [renewable energy](#) sectors.

Job Creation:Employment in textiles, manufacturing & agriculture due to expanded exports.

Green Energy:Boost to**India's renewable energy**and**climate action goals**through UK partnerships.

Geopolitical and Strategic Gains:Enhanced diplomatic ties and a template for future FTAs with the EU.

Key Benefits For UK

Expanding Market:Access to**India's 1.4 billion consumer base**, especially for products like**Scotch whisky**and financial services.

Post-Brexit Strategy:A significant win for diversifying trade relations with**emerging economies**.

Investment Opportunities:Access to India's booming infrastructure and renewable energy markets.

Strategic Partnership:Aligning interests on**global forums**and cooperation in areas like climate change.

Challenges in India-UK relations

Colonial Hangover: "**Anti-colonial posturing prevents**the establishment from seizing the full range of possibilities with Britain." C. Raja Mohan.

Failure to tacklevandalization of the Indian flag by protesters

oRecent rioting where immigrants were targeted

UK's Hyphenating India-Pakistangoes against India's interests. E.g., raising Kashmir as an issue in UN.

Absence of specific deadlinefor concluding negotiations on FTA

Conclusion

India and the UK are forging stronger bonds across multiple sectors, leveraging their historical ties and complementary strengths. This partnership promises mutual economic benefits, strategic alignment, and increased global influence for both nations.