

INDIA-GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC) DECIDE TO PURSUE RESUMPTION OF FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (FTA) NEGOTIATIONS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India- West Asia

Shri Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution and Textiles, Government of India, and His Excellency Dr. Nayef Falah M. Al-Hajraf, Secretary General, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), held a Joint Press Conference, in New Delhi today, to announce the intent to pursue negotiations on the India-GCC FTA.

With forward-looking and solution-oriented deliberations, bilateral engagements witnessed significant progress on all matters of mutual interest across the entire gamut of bilateral economic relations between India and the GCC nations.

Both sides agreed to expedite conclusion of the requisite legal and technical requirements for formal resumption of the FTA negotiations. The FTA is envisaged to be a modern, comprehensive Agreement with substantial coverage of goods and services. Both sides emphasized that the FTA will create new jobs, raise living standards, and provide wider social and economic opportunities in India and all the GCC countries. Both sides agreed to significantly expand and diversify the trade basket in line with the enormous potential that exists on account of the complementary business and economic ecosystems of India and the GCC.

It may be noted that the GCC is currently India's largest trading partner bloc with bilateral trade in FY 2021-22 valued at over USD 154 billion with exports valued at approximately USD 44 billion and imports of around USD 110 billion (non-oil exports of USD 33.8 Billion and non-oil imports of USD 37.2 Billion). Bilateral trade in services between India and the GCC was valued at around USD 14 billion in FY 2021-22, with exports valued at USD 5.5 Billion and imports at USD 8.3 Billion.

GCC countries contribute almost 35% of India's oil imports and 70% of gas imports. India's overall crude oil imports from the GCC in 2021-22 were about \$48 billion, while LNG and LPG imports in 2021-22 were about \$21 billion. Investments from the GCC in India are currently valued at over USD 18 billion.

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