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India-UK CETA Enters into Force on July 15, 2026

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WHY IN NEWS

The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will enter into force on July 15, 2026. Signed in July 2025 and ratified by both countries, it is India's first major free trade agreement with a developed European economy.

The CETA marks a strategic shift in India's trade policy, which had long been cautious about deep free trade agreements. Its entry into force opens up the British market for Indian goods and services while carefully protecting India's sensitive agricultural sectors.

WHAT IS CETA?

CETA is a comprehensive free trade agreement covering goods, services, investment, intellectual property, government procurement and movement of professionals. It goes beyond a narrow tariff deal to address services and labour mobility, which are India's areas of comparative strength.

FEATURE	DETAIL
Signed	July 2025
Entry into force	July 15, 2026
India's exports getting duty-free UK access	About 99%
Services sectors opened	137
Companion agreement	Double Contribution Convention (social security)
Protected Indian sectors	Dairy, cereals, millets, edible oils, apples

WHAT INDIA GAINS

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Goods

About **99% of India's exports** will get duty-free access to the United Kingdom. This benefits labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, footwear, gems and jewellery, marine products and engineering goods, where tariff elimination improves price competitiveness against rivals.

Services and Professionals

The agreement opens **137 services sectors** to Indian suppliers, covering IT, financial and professional services. Crucially, the companion **Double Contribution Convention** on social security takes effect the same day.

The Double Contribution Convention

Under this convention, Indian professionals temporarily working in the UK, and their employers, are exempted from paying UK social security contributions for a defined period, since they continue contributing in India. This avoids double payment and significantly lowers the cost of posting Indian talent to the UK, a long-standing Indian demand.

WHAT INDIA PROTECTED

India shielded its politically and economically sensitive agricultural sectors. **Dairy, cereals, millets, edible oils and apples** were kept out of tariff concessions, protecting Indian farmers from cheaper imports. This selective approach reflects India's defensive interests in agriculture, where livelihoods of millions are at stake.

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

A Template for Future Deals

As India's first comprehensive FTA with a major developed Western economy, CETA serves as a template for ongoing negotiations with the European Union and others. It signals India's growing confidence in opening up while safeguarding sensitive sectors.

Post-Brexit Britain

For the United Kingdom, the deal is a flagship of its post-Brexit "Global Britain" trade strategy, deepening ties with one of the world's fastest-growing large economies.

UPSC RELEVANCE

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- **GS2 International Relations:** India's bilateral (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/bilateral/>) economic diplomacy, India-UK relations and the architecture of free trade agreements.
- **GS3 Economy:** Trade policy, export competitiveness, balance of trade, services trade and the protection of agriculture.
- **Mains angle:** Aspirants should be able to analyse the gains for labour-intensive exports and services against the strategic decision to protect agriculture, and the demonstration effect for the India-EU FTA.
- **Prelims angle:** Year of signing, entry into force, the Double Contribution Convention and the list of protected sectors are likely facts.

Way Forward

India must build the domestic capacity, including quality standards and certification, to fully use the duty-free access; ensure smooth implementation of the social security convention; and apply the lessons learned to conclude balanced deals with the EU and other partners.

FACTS CORNER

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CETA: Signed July 2025; enters into force July 15, 2026.

Goods: About 99% of India's exports get duty-free UK access.

Services: 137 sectors opened.

Double Contribution Convention: Exempts Indian professionals and employers from UK social security contributions for a defined period; effective the same day.

Protected sectors: Dairy, cereals, millets, edible oils, apples.

Significance: India's first major FTA with a developed European economy; a template for the India-EU FTA.

Sources: *Press Information Bureau* (<https://pib.gov.in>), *LiveMint* (<https://www.livemint.com>)

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