India’s 8th WTO Trade Policy Review (TPR) – Reaffirming Commitment to an Inclusive Multilateral Trading System

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WTO Trade Policy Review (TPR) Latest News

- India’s 8th Trade Policy Review (TPR) commenced at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva on 21 July 2026 (~65 WTO Members participated), covering the review period 1 January 2021–31 December 2025.
- Led by Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal, India presented its trade policy **achievements**, economic **performance** and **reform** agenda while responding to questions from WTO members.
- The review serves as a transparency mechanism to assess members’ trade policies and their consistency with WTO principles.

What is the WTO Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TRPM)?

- The TPRM is a **transparency exercise** under the WTO. It enables members to periodically examine each other’s trade policies and practices.

- The objective is to improve transparency, predictability and accountability in the multilateral trading system rather than to enforce compliance.

India’s Economic and Trade Performance

- India highlighted its resilience despite geopolitical tensions, supply-chain disruptions and rising global protectionism.
- **Key achievements:**
    - Recorded nearly 8% average annual GDP growth during 2021–2025.
    - Achieved record exports of USD 863.1 billion in 2025–26.
    - Continued pursuing the vision of **Viksit Bharat @2047** while addressing the developmental needs of nearly one-fifth of the world’s population.

Major Trade and Economic Reforms Highlighted

- India showcased a broad range of structural and trade-related reforms aimed at enhancing competitiveness and integration with the global economy.
- **Key initiatives:**
    - **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**: Strengthening domestic manufacturing while integrating with Global Value Chains (**GVCs**).
    - **Jan Vishwas initiative:** Regulatory simplification and ease of doing business.
    - Digital customs and trade facilitation measures.
    - Logistics modernisation and quality infrastructure development.
    - Expansion of Digital Public Infrastructure (**DPI**) for financial inclusion and trade efficiency.
    - Promotion of Artificial Intelligence (**AI**), innovation and startups.
    - Focus on sustainability, agricultural resilience and inclusive development.
    - Expansion of Regional Trade Agreements (**RTAs**).
    - Continued support through South-South Cooperation and the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (**ITEC**) Programme.
- India reiterated its support for balanced, development-oriented WTO reforms that strengthen the multilateral trading system while safeguarding the interests of developing countries.

Recognition from WTO Leadership and Members

- **WTO TPR Body (TPRB):**
    - Recognised India as one of the fastest-growing major economies.
    - Appreciated India’s leadership in digitally delivered services exports.
    - Commended reforms in DPI, financial inclusion and trade facilitation.
    - Welcomed India’s acceptance of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, following the deposit of its Instrument of Acceptance.
    - Praised India’s timely responses to advance questions, reflecting transparency under the TPR mechanism.

- **Active participant (Brazil):** Brazil's representative highlighted –
    - Success of the Goods and Services Tax (**GST**) in creating a unified domestic market.
    - India's digital trade reforms and expanding export strategy.
    - Importance of recent RTAs.
    - India's Duty-Free Tariff Preference (**DFTP**) Scheme for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
    - India's DPI as a model for other developing countries.

Key Area of Conflict

- India and key WTO members are at loggerheads over the 66-nation Agreement on Electronic Commerce (**ECA**), with India challenging the legality of **bypassing** multilateral consensus.
- **Core arguments and objections:**
    - **Consensus rule:**
        - India maintains that adding any new plurilateral pact to **Annex 4** requires the agreement of all WTO members under the Marrakesh Agreement.
        - It failed to pass during General Council meetings in 2025.
        - **Annex 4** contains plurilateral trade agreements that are binding only on the specific member countries who choose to accept them.
        - It currently includes **two** active pacts: the Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft and the Revised Agreement on Government Procurement.
        - **Interim validity**: Following the deadlock, 66 participating countries issued a declaration, establishing an interim arrangement to operationalize the e-commerce pact.
    - **Institutional overreach**: New Delhi formally questioned the institutional and legal basis, challenging a partial-membership deal.
- **Broader multilateral divide:**
    - **Plurilateral push:** Proponent nations argue that coalition-based "Joint Statement Initiatives" are necessary to prevent total paralysis on new-age trade rules when complete consensus is unachievable.
    - **Systemic risk:** India contends that allowing subsets of countries to operationalize unapproved agreements undermines the core multilateral character of the global trading system.

Significance of TPR for India

- **Soft power and cultural diplomacy:** On the sidelines of the review, India organised an exhibition showcasing diverse Indian products, and traditional papier-mâché handicrafts.
- **Reinforces:** India's image as a responsible stakeholder in the multilateral trading system.
- **Demonstrates:** India's attempt to balance self-reliance (Aatmanirbhar Bharat) with greater global economic integration.
- **Highlights:** India's growing role in digital trade, services exports, and South-South cooperation.
- **Strengthens:** India's credibility in ongoing WTO negotiations and reform discussions.
- **Reflects:** India's emphasis on inclusive, transparent and development-oriented global trade governance.

Source: PIB