India and the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA): State of Play and Way Forward

RIS
Research and Information System for Developing Countries
विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

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Prabir De

Arpita Mukherjee

Tahseen Ahmad Khan

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Zone IV B, 4th Floor, India Habitat Centre
Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110 003, India
Tel.: +91-11-24682177-80
E-mail: dgoffice@ris.org.in
Website: www.ris.org.in

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Preface

Professor Sachin Kumar Sharma
Director General, RIS

The mission of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. The RIS remains a cornerstone for international trade cooperation, and is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues. RIS has also been engaged with several inter-governmental processes, regional economic cooperation initiatives and think-tanks led platforms across the world.

Developing countries have been facing common challenges in the present global order, including rising trae barriers and supply chain disruptions. In these uncertain times, trade facilitation has become essential to safeguard economies and ensure resilience. RIS remains committed to developing a focus on forward-looking approaches for promoting trade facilitation. Over the years, India has undertaken multiple domestic reforms for improving its logistics performance to boost trade facilitation. In this regard, promoting cross-border trade by addressing various gaps assumes greater significance.

Cross-border paperless trade is an extension of the general concept of paperless trade and refers to "trade taking place on the basis of electronic communications, including exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form". Paperless trade systems involve having interoperable legal/regulatory and technical frameworks conforming to international standards in which paperless trade transactions take place – for example, digital customs system, electronic single window facility, e-port management systems, etc. The concept has been covered under multiple global agreements such as the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce (JSI), etc., but the most significant of them all is the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA). The CPTA is solely dedicated to promoting cross-border paperless trade amongst its members.

The present study titled "India and the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA): State of Play and Way Forward" provides an overview of paperless trade in global discussions leading up to the CPTA and going beyond it, reviews measures already taken by India to facilitate paperless trade, and discusses the rationale for India to accede to the CPTA. It presents the gains for India from joining the CPTA and the steps to be taken to take the agenda forward. The study underlines that in the current global scenario of geo-political tensions and rising logistics costs, accession to the CPTA will give some certainty to India's exporters and MSMEs and help reduce overall logistics costs, ensuring better integration with the GVCs and improving competitiveness.

An earlier version of the study was presented at a special session on "India and the CPTA: Moving towards Cross-border Paperless Trade" which was organised by the RIS at the UNESCAP, Bangkok in June 2025.

I welcome the publication of this Report which will serve as a very useful reference for all stakeholders, scholars, practitioners, academicians and policy makers. My compliments to Professor Prabir De, Professor Arpita Mukherjee and Mr Tahseen Ahmad Khan for writing this Report. Thanks are also to the RIS publication team for elegantly bringing out the Report.

Sachin Kumar Sharma

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The views are the authors' own. The usual disclaimers apply.

About the Authors

Dr Prabir De
Professor
Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)
New Delhi

Dr Arpita Mukherjee
Professor
Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER)
New Delhi

Mr Tahseen Ahmad Khan
Member, Advisory Committee
United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT)
New Delhi

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List of Abbreviations

ACCS	Authorized Computerised Cargo Clearance
AEO	Authorised Economic Operator
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AMS	ASEAN Member States
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation
AQ	Animal Quarantine
AR	Autonomous Regime
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BE	Bill of Entry
CBIC	Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs
CDSCO	Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation
CEPA	Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
CII	Confederation of Indian Industries
CIP	Compliance Informational Portal
COO	Certificate of Origin
CPTA	Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific
DEPA	Digital Economy Partnership Agreement
DGFT	Directorate General of Foreign Trade
DPA	Digital Partnership Agreement
DTS	Digital Trade Standard
ECCS	Express Cargo Clearance Systems
ECTA	Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement
ECTS	Electronic Cargo Tracking System
EDI	Electronic Data Interchange
EEPC	Engineering Export Promotion Council
EODES	Electronic Origin Data Exchange System
e-SANCHIT	e-Storage and Computerised Handling of Indirect Tax
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FIEO	Federation of Indian Export Organisations

FSSAI	Food Safety and Standards Authority of India
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
G20	Group of 20
HTTP	Hypertext Transfer Protocol
ICC UK	International Chamber of Commerce, United Kingdom
ICEGATE	Indian Customs Electronic Gateway
ICES	Indian Customs EDI System
IEC	Importer-Exporter Code
IoT	Internet of Things
IP	Internet Protocol
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IT	Information Technology
ITP	Indian Trade Portal
JSI	Joint Statement Initiative
KYA	Know Your Approvals
KYC	Know Your Customer
LDC	Least Developed Country
LLDC	Land-locked Least Developed Country
LPAI	Land Ports Authority of India
LPI	Logistics Performance Index
LPMS	Land Port Management System
ML	Machine Learning
MPLS	Multi-Protocol Label Switching
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement
MRT	Ministers Responsible for Trade
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
NICDC	National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Limited
NLDSL	National Logistics Data Services Limited
NLP	National Logistics Portal
NSW	National Single Window
NSWS	National Single Window System
NTFAP	National Trade Facilitation Action Plan
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committee

PCS	Port Community Systems
PGAS	Participating Government Agencies
PMGS-NMP	Prime Minister Gati Shakti National Master Plan
PQ	Plant Quarantine
RBI	Reserve Bank of India
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RFID	Radio Frequency Identification
RMS	Risk Management System
SWIFT	Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
UAE	United Arab Emirates
ULIP	Unified Logistics Interface Platform
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNTF	UNESCAP Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation
VAHEI	Virtual Assistant to Help Exporters and Importers
VPN	Virtual Private Network
WCCB	Wildlife Crime Control Bureau
WCO	World Customs Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

Trade facilitation matters for exports. Apart from reducing trade costs and bringing ease and efficiency in trade, paperless trading can also have significant environmental benefits, given that global supply chains usually involve the printing, dispatching, processing, exchanging and ultimately, discarding of vast quantities of paper documents. Further, it can also reduce red tape at the border via simplification, modernisation and harmonisation of customs procedures. India has taken multiple domestic reforms to improve its logistics performance and boost trade facilitation, which has been visible in its performance in global surveys and indices, as is discussed in the paper. Some of the major reforms in paperless trade by India include the introduction of Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade (SWIFT), e-Storage and computerised handling of indirect tax documents (e-SANCHIT), Importer-Exporter Code (IEC), etc. The outcomes of these have been positive and there is potential for India to improve its cross-border paperless trade. India also launched the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) 3.0 2024-27 to plug the existing gaps in paperless trading systems in India.

Background

Cross-border paperless trade is an extension of the general concept of paperless trade and refers to "trade taking place on the basis of electronic communications, including exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form". Paperless trade systems involve having interoperable legal/regulatory and technical frameworks, conforming to international standards in which paperless trade transactions take place –for example, digital customs system, electronic single window facility, e-port management systems, etc. The concept has been covered under multiple global agreements such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce (JSI), etc., but the most significant of them all is the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA). The CPTA is solely dedicated to promoting cross-border paperless trade amongst its members.

The CPTA negotiation was initiated by the Republic of Korea through a resolution adopted by consensus at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2014 [Resolution 70/6]. India played an important role in the development of the treaty. The feasibility study underpinning the negotiation was facilitated by the Department of Commerce, Government of India, and customs experts from India, and India played an active role throughout the negotiation of the text of the treaty, including as Chair of the Technical Working of the Interim Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation, the intergovernmental body that negotiated the text of the treaty.

Cross-border trade has been referred to in trade facilitation literature but discussions at the global level started in 2012, when UNESCAP's member states adopted Resolution 68/3, titled "Enabling Paperless Trade and Cross-Border Recognition of Electronic Data and Documents for Inclusive and Sustainable Intraregional Trade Facilitation". It invites members to work towards developing regional arrangements on cross-border paperless trade, and provides guidelines and capacity support to develop such arrangements.

In 2013, the WTO initiated negotiations on the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which concluded in 2017. The TFA includes key provisions promoting paperless trade, urging member countries to enable the electronic submission of documents, accept digital copies of trade documents and implement a single-window clearance system for streamlined processing. These measures aim to simplify trade procedures, reduce delays in trade transactions and enhance efficiency in cross-border trade. India is a signatory to the WTO TFA and has already adopted policies that improve procedures and regulations, enhance trade efficiency by reducing border red tape, increasing transparency and leveraging new technologies. In fact, the current regime in India is WTO TFA plus. The CPTA is a step further as it provides the architecture for governance and the adoption of common guidelines and principles. This framework allows participating countries to establish a dedicated inter-governmental structure to develop legal and technical solutions, enabling cross-border paperless trade through the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form. It enhances the scope for cross-border regulatory co-operation and mutual recognition. It may be added that WTO TFA provisions are supported by the CPTA.

The CPTA is designed as an inclusive and enabling platform that will benefit all participating economies, regardless of where they stand in terms of trade facilitation or single window/paperless trade implementation. Achieving cross-border paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific is expected to cut the trade costs of economies in the region by about 25 per cent, greatly enhancing the trade competitiveness of collaborating countries while increasing government revenue. As of January 2025, 16 countries are a part of the CPTA.

The objective of the CPTA is to "promote cross-border paperless trade by enabling the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form and facilitating interoperability among national and sub-regional single windows and/or other paperless trade systems, for the purpose of making international trade transactions more efficient and transparent while improving regulatory compliance".

Cross-border paperless trade has great potential not only to increase trade competitiveness, but also to address new challenges associated with cross-border e-commerce and the rise of the digital economy.

Objective of the Study

This study aims to present an overview of paperless trade in global discussions leading up to the CPTA and going beyond it, review measures already taken by India to facilitate paperless trade and discuss the rationale for India to accede to the CPTA as the basis for proposing a way forward for the country.

Study Recommendations

There are certain benefits that will accrue to India if the country joins the CPTA. These include the following.

- India is already implementing paperless trade and signing the CPTA will help India to reduce the time and cost of trade
- India's autonomous regime (AR) is aligned with international best practices – WTO TFA and CPTA will help this further
- India has already implemented many components of paperless trade, which have shown positive results
- India can be a regional leader in capacity building in paperless trade
- India is already negotiating paperless trade with its bilateral trade agreements
- CPTA entails soft commitments giving India the policy space to implement reforms gradually
- CPTA can help in increasing India's participation in GVCs
- Geostrategic benefits for India if it joins the CPTA

The Next Steps

Becoming a member will help India showcase its best practices, enhance digitalisation and digital trade, participate in capacity building, and drive decisions in the plurilateral framework of CPTA. The country can leverage on its digital competence, take a leadership role in the region, enhance its share in GVCs and strengthen economic relations.

While adopting paperless trade requires domestic procedural changes, inter-governmental collaborations and consultations with relevant stakeholders, the long-term advantages include reduced trade costs, improved export competitiveness and enhanced integration into GVCs. In an era of a changing global strategic order and trade uncertainties, a UN agreement like the CPTA creates a collaborative framework for trade facilitation.

Unlike other trade agreements, the CPTA does not impose rigid, time-bound commitments, allowing India to gradually implement necessary reforms. By joining, India can contribute to shaping the framework rather than adapting to standards set by others. Proactive participation will also position India as a leader in global trade facilitation discussions, ensuring its interests are well represented. As paperless trade was a part of discussions during India's G20 Presidency, it indicates that geopolitical concerns regarding its adoption are overstated. The government's emphasis on digital trade facilitation suggests a recognition of the economic advantages of paperless trade measures.

What follows is that India stands to gain significantly by embracing digital trade facilitation and strengthening its trade ecosystem through CPTA membership.

Way Forward

Today, India has fully implemented the TFA and has gone beyond commitments there in terms of digitalisation, making India ready to take a leading role in shaping cross-border paperless trade initiatives. This study shows that India has undertaken multiple domestic reforms to improve its logistics performance and boost trade facilitation, which has been visible in its performance in global surveys and indices. The outcomes of these have been positive and there is a potential for India to further improve its cross-border paperless trade by addressing the remaining and new gaps through the CPTA. Acknowledging that India has some legal and technical gaps in cross-border paperless trade, it will still be in India's interest to accede the CPTA as there are no difficult or binding commitments, the agreement is easy to enter into, and the agreement provides enough flexibility to countries to implement reforms at their own pace. Joining the CPTA will signal India's commitment to embracing digital technologies and promoting sustainable trade practices and narrowing the gaps in paperless trade facilitation. Therefore, acceding to the CPTA could boost not only cross-border paperless trade but also accumulate India's economic heft.

Moving ahead, this study has presented the gains for India from joining the CPTA and the steps to be taken to take the agenda forward. In the current global scenario of geo-political tensions and rising logistics costs, accession to the CPTA will give some certainty to India's exporters and MSMEs and help reduce overall logistics costs, ensuring better integration with the GVCs and improve competitiveness.

1 Introduction

Cross-border paperless trade is an extension of the general concept of paperless trade and refers to "trade taking place on the basis of electronic communications, including exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form" [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia (UNESCAP), 2014]. Paperless trade systems involve having interoperable legal/regulatory and technical frameworks, conforming to international standards in which paperless trade transactions take place – for example, digital customs system, electronic single window facility, e-port management systems, etc. (UNESCAP, 2024). The concept has been covered under multiple global agreements such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce (JSI), etc., but the most significant of them all is the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA). The CPTA is solely dedicated to promoting cross-border paperless trade amongst its members.

The CPTA negotiation was initiated by the Republic of Korea through a resolution adopted by consensus at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2014 [Resolution 70/6]. India played an important role in the development of the treaty. The feasibility study underpinning the negotiation was facilitated by the Department of Commerce, Government of India, and customs experts from India,[1] and India played an active role throughout the negotiation of the text of the treaty, including as Chair of the Technical Working of the Interim Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation, the intergovernmental body that negotiated the text of the treaty.[2]

Trade facilitation matters for exports. Apart from reducing trade costs and bringing ease and efficiency in trade, paperless trading can also have significant environmental benefits, given that global supply chains usually involve the printing, dispatching, processing, exchanging and ultimately, discarding of vast quantities of paper documents (Duval and Hardy, 2021). Further, it can also reduce red tape at the border via simplification, modernisation and harmonisation of customs procedures (Posada et al., 2022). India has taken multiple domestic reforms to improve its logistics performance and boost trade facilitation, which has been visible in its performance in global surveys and indices, as is discussed in the paper. Some of the major reforms in paperless trade by India include the introduction of Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade (SWIFT), e-Storage and computerised handling of indirect tax documents (e-SANCHIT), Importer-Exporter Code (IEC), etc. The outcomes of these have been positive and there is potential for India to improve its cross-border paperless trade. India also launched the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) 3.0 2024-27 to plug the existing gaps in paperless trading systems in India. Yet, as of today, the country has not joined the CPTA. Some key features of the NTFAP 3.0 are presented in Appendix 1.

Trade facilitation matters for exports. Apart from reducing trade costs and bringing ease and efficiency in trade, paperless trading can also have significant environmental benefits, given that global supply chains usually involve the printing, dispatching, processing, exchanging and ultimately, discarding of vast quantities of paper documents.

Objective of the study

It is in this context that this study aims to present an overview of paperless trade in global discussions leading up to the CPTA and going beyond it, review measures already taken by India to facilitate paperless trade and discuss the rationale for India to accede to the CPTA as the basis for proposing a way forward for the country.

The rest of the report is organised as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the chronology of paperless trade in the world. Chapter 3 presents the objectives, accession and post-accession measures of the CPTA. The benefits of cross-border paperless trade are then discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 analyses India's performance in paperless trade while Chapter 6 presents gains for India from joining the CPTA. The steps that are needed for accession to the CPTA are presented in Chapter 7 and include a gap analysis of legal and technical readiness assessment. Finally, recommendations and conclusions are drawn in Chapter 8.

Endnotes

1 Refer, Study on Regional Arrangements for Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (Shashank Priya and Chittaranjan Satapathy, 2013). Available at: https://www.unescap.org / sites / default / d8files / knowledge - products / bpatf-report.pdf

2 Technical Working Group reports are available at: https://www.unescap.org/event-series/cross-border-paperless-trade-facilitation#Working-Groups-Activities

2

Chronology of Paperless Trade in Global Discussions

Cross-border trade has been referred to in trade facilitation literature (UNESCAP, 2014) but discussions at the global level started in 2012, when UNESCAP's member states adopted Resolution 68/3, titled "Enabling Paperless Trade and Cross-Border Recognition of Electronic Data and Documents for Inclusive and Sustainable Intraregional Trade Facilitation".[1] It invites members to work towards developing regional arrangements on cross-border paperless trade, and provides guidelines and capacity support to develop such arrangements.

In 2013, the WTO initiated negotiations on the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA),[2] which concluded in 2017. The TFA includes key provisions promoting paperless trade, urging member countries to enable the electronic submission of documents, accept digital copies of trade documents and implement a single-window clearance system for streamlined processing. These measures aim to simplify trade procedures, reduce delays in trade transactions and enhance efficiency in cross-border trade. India is a signatory to the WTO TFA and has already adopted policies that improve procedures and regulations, enhance trade efficiency by reducing border red tape, increasing transparency and leveraging new technologies. In fact, the current regime in India is WTO TFA plus. The CPTA is a step further as it provides the architecture for governance and the adoption of common guidelines and principles. This framework allows participating countries to establish a dedicated inter-governmental structure to develop legal and technical solutions, enabling cross-border paperless trade through the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form. It enhances the scope for cross-border regulatory co-operation and mutual recognition. It may be added that WTO TFA provisions are supported by the CPTA.[3]

Following a series of informal consultations between 2012 and 2014, the formal intergovernmental negotiation process on CPTA was initiated in 2014 with a group of more than 25 countries and culminated with the adoption of a treaty text on May 19, 2016.[4] The Interim Steering Group (ISG) that had negotiated the text continued its work and prepared a draft implementation roadmap for the CPTA, including legal and technical checklists. The ISG aimed to identify gaps that countries could use to develop their own individual action plans.[5] The Group was terminated when the CPTA came into force in 2021.[6]As of June 2025, 16 countries are a part of it, with Uzbekistan being the latest country to accede in November 2024 (Table 1.1).The CPTA is designed as an inclusive and enabling platform that will benefit all participating economies, regardless of where they stand in terms of trade facilitation or single window/paperless trade implementation. Achieving cross-border paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific is expected to cut the trade costs of economies in the region by about 25

Achieving cross-border paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific is expected to cut the trade costs of economies in the region by about 25 per cent, greatly enhancing the trade competitiveness of collaborating countries while increasing government revenue.

per cent, greatly enhancing the trade competitiveness of collaborating countries while increasing government revenue.

Table 1.1: Members of the CPTA*

Sr. No	Country	Signature / Ratification/ Acceptance / Approval / Accession
1	Armenia**	2017
2	Azerbaijan	2018
3	Bangladesh	2020
4	Cambodia**	2017
5	China	2020
6	Iran	2020
7	Kyrgyzstan	2023
8	Mongolia	2022
9	Philippines	2019
10	Korea	2022
11	Russia	2023
12	Tajikistan	2022
13	Timor-Leste	2022
14	Turkmenistan	2022
15	Tuvalu	2022
16	Uzbekistan	2024

Note: *As on June 30, 2025 **Signed but not yet ratified.

Source: United Nations, available at https://treaties.un.org/pages/viewdetails.aspx?src=treaty&mtdsg_no=x-20&chapter=10&clang=_en(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).

During this period of ongoing multilateral discussions, regional organisations have also taken stands on promoting paperless trade. For example, in June 2021, the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade (MRT) directed officials to accelerate the implementation of the WTO TFA and highlighted the importance of articles relating to the accelerated use of digitalisation for border processes, pre-arrival processing of electronic declarations, electronic documents, electronic certification, electronic payments, etc. (APEC, 2021).

In the Outcome Document of the Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting in Jaipur, on August 25, 2023 during India's G20 Presidency countries agreed that "widespread adoption of paperless trade will drive productivity

Recognising the challenge to digitalisation, such as insufficient digital infrastructure, limited digital connectivity, high costs associated with digital tool adoption and a significant digital skills gap, especially for MSMEs, the G20 Trade and Investment Ministers identified 10 high-level principles for the digitalisation of trade documents, which include neutrality, security, trust, interoperability, data privacy and sharing of data related provisions, etc.

gains and economic growth by reducing trade costs and lowering barriers to entry for MSMEs, including women-owned or women-led MSMEs."[7] Following this, Annex C on "High Level Principles on Digitalisation of Trade Documents" states that digitalisation can reduce trade costs significantly.[8] Recognising the challenge to digitalisation, such as insufficient digital infrastructure, limited digital connectivity, high costs associated with digital tool adoption and a significant digital skills gap, especially for MSMEs, the G20 Trade and Investment Ministers identified 10 high-level principles for the digitalisation of trade documents, which include neutrality, security, trust, interoperability, data privacy and sharing of data related provisions, etc.

On July 26, 2024, members of the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce[9] (henceforth, JSI) agreed to a "stabilised text" called the JSI Agreement (henceforth, the JSI text) which covers provisions on paperless trade and its related aspects such as electronic invoicing, electronic signature and authentication, electronic payments, single window systems, etc. According to Duval and Wang (2024), the provisions related to paperless trade in the JSI text are found to be consistent with the general principles and other provisions included in the CPTA.

Endnotes

1. For more information, visit https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/b21/105/91/pdf/b2110591.pdf (last accessed on November 7, 2024)
2. Refer,https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/WT/L/940.pdf&Open=True (last accessed on November 7, 2024)
3. Refer, for example, https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/WT/L/1056.pdf&Open=True
4. For the list of countries that have officially nominated focal points (i.e., which means they were actively involved), see: https://bit.ly/3T4a2Cf. S. P. Sahu, at the time an official from India leading development of national single window system, was one of the Chairs/Vice-Chairs of the Technical Working Group during negotiation of the CPTA treaty text.
5. See, readiness.digitalizetrade.org
6. Text of the Framework Agreement and related documents can be found here: https://www.unescap.org/resources/framework-agreement-facilitation-cross-border-paperless-trade-asia-and-pacific

7 Refer, https://g20.utoronto.ca/2023/230825-trade.html#:~:text=High%20level%20principles%20for%20digitalisation,owned%20or%20women%2Dled%20MSMEs (Last accessed April 24, 2025).

8 Refer, https: // g7g20 - documents. org/fileadmin / G7G20 _ documents / 2023 / G20 / India/Sherpa-Track/Trade%20and%20Investment%20Ministers/2%20Ministers'%20Annex/G20_Trade%20and%20Investment%20Ministers%20Meeting_AnnexC_25082023.pdf (Last accessed April 24, 2025).

9 At the 11th Ministerial Conference in December 2017, like-minded groups of members issued joint statements on advancing discussions on e-commerce. As of June 25, 2024, there are 91 WTO members participating in these discussions, accounting for over 90 per cent of global trade. For more, visit https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/ecom_e/joint_statement_e.htm (Last accessed on November 7, 2024)

3

CPTA: Objectives, Accession and Post-Accession Measures

This section gives a brief introduction to the CPTA, providing its broad objectives and analysing the current and potential membership to the framework agreement.

3.1 Objective of the CPTA

The objective of the CPTA is to "promote cross-border paperless trade by enabling the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form and facilitating interoperability among national and sub-regional single windows and/or other paperless trade systems, for the purpose of making international trade transactions more efficient and transparent while improving regulatory compliance".[1] Some of its key provisions are given in Box 3.1.

3.1.1 Accession to the CPTA

The implementation of paperless trade is still ongoing, and the CPTA is designed to support this process, no matter how prepared a country is. Governments do not need to fully modernise their laws or technical systems before ratifying or joining the CPTA. The agreement expects its members to ensure their legal systems support the use of electronic communication and to gradually update their laws to enable cross-border paperless trade. The checklist is not meant to evaluate whether a country is ready to join the CPTA.

The ESCAP provides technical and legal readiness assessment guidance to countries for their accession to the cross-border paperless trade agreement. Cross-border paperless trade has great potential not only to increase trade competitiveness, but also to address new challenges associated with cross-border e-commerce and the rise of the digital economy. The Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation and its legal and technical working groups have developed legal and technical readiness checklists as part of their support to implement the substantive provisions of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific by facilitating self-assessments of legal and technical readiness for cross-border paperless trade. The guide contains explanatory notes, good practices, references and other relevant information to assist users to conduct self-assessment using the checklists.

3.2 Steps taken by CPTA members after joining

As of June 2025, 16 countries have signed and/or ratified the treaty (Table 1.1). After joining the CPTA, countries have been implementing paperless trade and discussing it under trade agreements.[2]

CPTA member countries have already taken various measures towards paperless trade. For example, China has established the "eCert" System for international co-operation on electronic certificates, signing agreements with 18 countries and granting query permissions to 66 regulatory bodies. It is also promoting

Box 3.1: Key Provisions of CPTA

- Establish principles such as functional equivalence, non-discrimination of electronic communications, technological neutrality, promotion of interoperability, improving trans-boundary trust environments, co-operation between public and private sectors, and improved trade facilitation and regulatory compliance.
- Encourage parties to establish a national policy framework and an enabling domestic legal environment for cross-border paperless trade.
- Encourage parties to develop single-window systems and use them for cross-border paperless trade
- Encourage the application of international standards and guidelines to ensure interoperability in paperless trade.
- Develop a comprehensive action plan with implementation schedules, based on each party's self-assessment of readiness.
- Promote technical support and assistance among parties to facilitate the implementation of the agreement, with special consideration for least developed and landlocked developing countries.

Source: For more information, visit, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/2021-01/CPTA.pdf (Last accessed on 13 March, 2025)

Cross-border paperless trade has great potential not only to increase trade competitiveness, but also to address new challenges associated with cross-border e-commerce and the rise of the digital economy.

electronic bills of lading and integrating paperless trade provisions into its free trade agreements (FTAs). There are special articles on digital economy in the China-Nicaragua FTA, which includes provisions on paperless trade.

The Republic of Korea is discussing paperless trade in its trade agreements. The country has entered into many digital trade agreements including the Korea-Singapore Digital Partnership Agreement (DPA), effective from January 2023, and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA), effective from June 2023. The Republic of Korea recognises the importance of the Electronic Origin Data Exchange System (EODES) for cross-border paperless trade.

The Philippines in ASEAN is in the process of testing the exchange for ePhyto, which may be implemented soon. In South Asia, Bangladesh is aligning CPTA implementation with its "Smart Bangladesh 2041" vision by developing regulations and institutional support for cross-border paperless trade. It is also enhancing information-sharing through the National Single Window (NSW) and integrating paperless trade into its National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) (UNESCAP, 2024).

The India-Korea Electronic Origin Data Exchange System (EODES) for faster clearance of imported goods was

Box 3.2: Articles under WTO TFA covering Paperless Trade

Article 1: Publication and availability of information

Article 7: Release and clearance of goods

Article 8: Border agency co-operation

Article 10: Formalities connected with importation, exportation and transit

Article 11: Freedom of transit

Article 12: Customs co-operation

Source: UNESCAP (2024)

launched in 2023. The EODES aims at facilitating the smooth implementation of the India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) by way of electronic exchange of certificate of origin (COO) information between the two customs administrations in respect of goods traded under the CEPA. The data-fields in a COO are electronically shared by the exporting customs administration with the importing customs as soon as the certificate is issued.

The ASEAN-Australia digital trade standard (DTS) initiative was undertaken in 2018 to support faster implementation of digital trade standards by ASEAN member states (AMS) to increase digital trade for regional prosperity and security. It aims to raise awareness of DTS development processes in AMS, better engage national standards bodies and digital trade agencies in international DTS and eventually, the faster adoption of priority by AMS[3].

3.3 Paperless Trade Encompassed in the WTO TFA and JSI on E-commerce

The CPTA complements the WTO TFA (see Box 3.2).The "stabilised" text agreed upon by the WTO members of the JSI on E-commerce on July 26, 2024, has provisions for paperless trade. Duval and Wang (2024) have highlighted the linkages between the CPTA and the JSI text. They have argued that while the JSI agreement is different in nature as well as much broader in scope than the CPTA, it also covers paperless and cross-border paperless trade under a section, "enabling electronic commerce", which has different articles such as electronic single window and interoperability, and a separate article on paperless trade itself. Articles such as "electronic contracts", "electronic invoicing" and "electronic authentication and electronic signatures" also facilitate cross-border paperless trade. The provisions related to paperless trade in the JSI text are found to be consistent with the general principles and other provisions included in the CPTA and have been discussed in standing committee meetings of the CPTA. They remain essentially non-binding in nature and provide parties with considerable flexibility on how they may be implemented. An important point to be noted is that although "electronic payments" is not explicitly excluded from the scope of the CPTA, it has not been incorporated into the joint action plan developed by the parties.

Given the similarities between the JSI and CPTA, particularly in cases of paperless and cross-border paperless trade, some of the ESCAP member countries who are part of the JSI on e-commerce such as Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, and Thailand could be the possible candidates for the CPTA. Negotiations are currently advancing with Thailand and Indonesia, with Thailand announcing expected CPTA accession before the end of the year during the Paperless Trade Week held in June 2025.

The ASEAN Work Plan for Implementation of ASEAN E-Commerce Agreement states that "a coordinated effort for AMS to accede to the UNESCAP Framework Agreement will send a strong global signal of ASEAN's intention to accelerate paperless trade." Therefore, accession to the CPTA may appear to be a doable project for the AMS. As noted by ESCAP (2022), there are potential benefits for AMS to join the Framework Agreement. Furthermore, regardless of whether a country is a party to the CPTA, readiness assessments should be conducted to identify legal and technical gaps for cross-border paperless trade.[4]

Endnotes

1. Refer, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/2021-01/CPTA.pdf
2. Refer, cross-border paperless trade database, available at https://www.digitalizetrade.org , for a detailed discussion on cross-border paperless trade and recent updates (Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
3. Refer, https:// www . dfat . gov . au / publications/trade-and-investment/asean-australia-digital-trade-standards-dts-initiative-mid-term-review-report-and-management-response (Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
4. Refer, https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/implications-cpta-asean-and-readiness-assessment (Last accessed date June 09, 2025).

4

Benefits of Cross-Border Paperless Trade

Global trade has seen a transformation over the past two decades and has come to be guided by new digital technologies. Modern commerce is no longer an exchange between two parties but rather an extended collaboration between critical interdependent partners executed over vast geographic expanses, time zones and borders (UNECE, 2023). This can be aided by the principles of paperless trade. The following section discusses some major benefits that paperless trade brings and how joining the CPTA can help the acceding country.

4.1 Reduced trade costs and potential boost to exports

Studies show that the implementation of paperless trade measures has the potential to decrease trade costs and promote exports.[1] The scatter plot and significant statistical fit of a set of cross-section pooled data of 117 countries in log scale clearly indicates that improvement in trade facilitation leads to higher exports (Figure 4.1). However, the decrease in trade costs may vary according to the extent of implementation.

The *Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2024* underscores the potential benefits of advancing cross-border paperless trade through enhanced efficiency achieved by streamlined and digital processes (UNESCAP-ADB, 2024).[2] The full implementation of digital trade facilitation measures, surpassing the commitments outlined in the WTO TFA, could lead to an approximately 11 per cent reduction in average trade costs in the region (UNESCAP-ADB, 2024). This reduction is 6 percentage points more than the expected reduction from compliance with the WTO TFA's binding and nonbinding requirements.

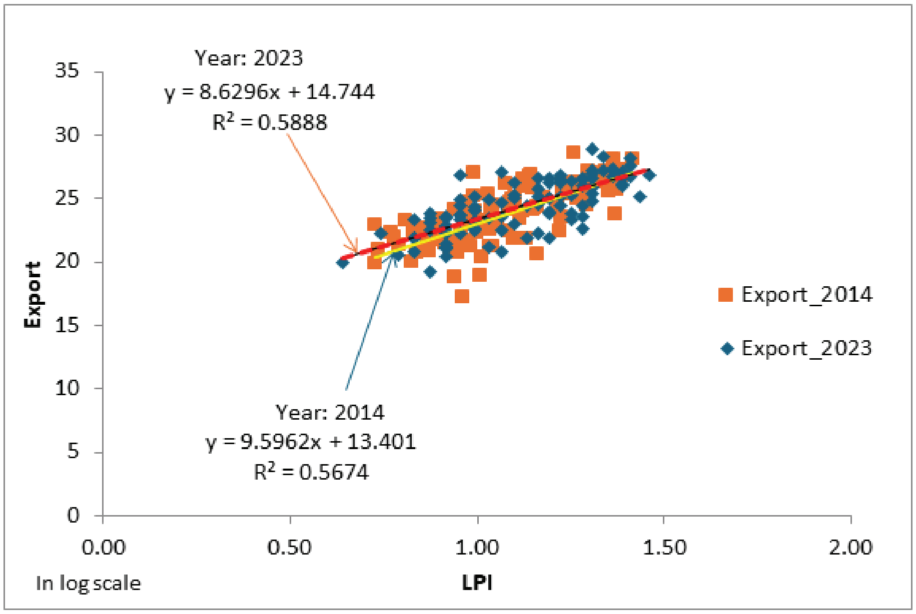
4.2 Boost micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) participation in global trade

Reductions in trade costs and efficiency via paperless trade can be particularly helpful for MSMEs to access international markets. According to a study, digitising transferable documents could boost MSME trade by 25 per cent and lead to a 35 per cent improvement in business efficiency [International Chamber of Commerce United Kingdom (ICC UK) and Coriolis, 2021]. Paperless trade simplifies processes by removing the need for multiple copies of the same document and enabling immediate electronic transmission. This approach reduces the time and effort involved, making it easier for all traders, particularly MSMEs, to handle trade-related tasks like trade finance requests and logistics operations.[3] The attendance observed at the most recent Paperless Trade Week organised in Bangkok around the CPTA intergovernmental meetings in June 2025 suggest that the MSME platform has grown significantly.

4.3 Promote cross-border regulatory co-operation

The CPTA provides for the architecture of governance and common guidelines

Figure 4.1: Trade Facilitation Leads to High Exports



Notes: OLS (log form) counts cross-section pooled data for the years 2014 and 2023, with a total 117 countries including 15 CPTA participating countries. Trade facilitation is represented by Logistics Performance Index (LPI), taken from the World Bank.

Data source: Authors' own based on World Development Indicators, The World Bank

Paperless trade simplifies processes by removing the need for multiple copies of the same document and enabling immediate electronic transmission.

and principles, the adoption of which would allow participating countries to step out of their digital silos and facilitate regulatory coherence, enabling effective co-operation between border agencies and regulators. In other words, for trade to be truly paperless, it has to be paperless on both sides, and both sides would have to accept the same digital documents and messages and apply similar principles. As more and more countries join CPTA, there can be harmonisation of their regulatory systems, which will boost trade amongst them. The CPTA envisages providing a region-wide multilateral intergovernmental platform, which can help participating countries to streamline their paperless trade systems and learn from each other's best practices.

Endnotes

1. Refer, for example, UNESCAP (2014, 2017)
2. Refer, https: // www.adb.org / sites / default / files /publication/954501/asia-pacific-trade-facilitation-report-2024.pdf
3. Source: https: // trade4msmes.org / guides / cross-border-paperless-trade/ (Last accessed on November 12, 2024)

5

India in Paperless Trade: Measures, Status and Performance

5.1 Steps taken by India to improve trade facilitation and paperless trade

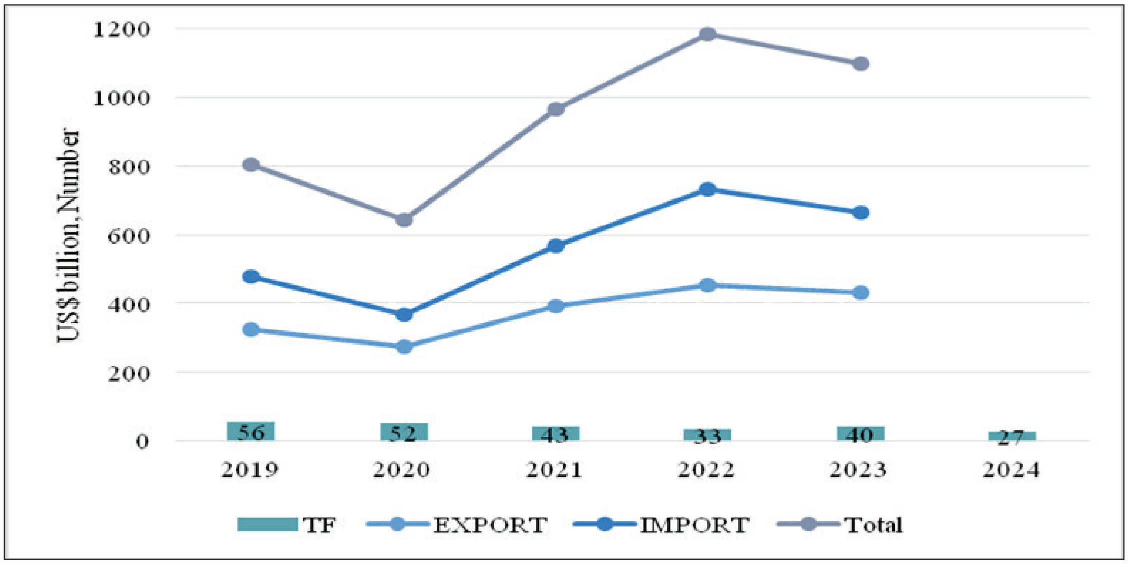
India has made significant strides in trade facilitation in recent years,[1] and it has been a major longstanding priority area of reform of the Government of India over the last few years. There was a sharp decline in India's trade following the COVID-19 pandemic. However, trade recovered later from December 2020 onward, in part because India introduced new types of TF measures to bring back the growth momentum (Figure 5.1). In other words, to improve the business regulatory climate and expedite trade processes, the government has been proactively working towards reducing transaction time and costs of trade through the rationalisation of documentation and border compliance procedures.[2]

At the global level, India ratified the WTO TFA in 2016 and has implemented all the provisions of the agreement. Chauhan and Vijayakumar (2024) note that "India has been at the forefront of trade facilitation, having fulfilled all its commitments within the stipulated time by February 2022". As on date, India's current rate of implementing commitments stands at 100 per cent with a time-frame spanning from February 2017 to October 2021.[3] By February 2020, India completed the designation of all Category A and Category B commitments; 72.3 per cent of Category A commitments have already been implemented, and 5.9 per cent of Category B commitments were implemented during the intervening period of the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) 2017-2020 under which India notified the WTO regarding the implementation of the Single Window Interface for Facilitation of Trade (SWIFT) under the Single Window Project (TFA Article 10.4 - Establishing a Single Window) to facilitate trading across-borders under India's ease of doing business initiative.[4]

As part of the WTO TFA, India has also set up the National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF) in 2016. Under Article 23.2 of the TFA, establishing the NCTF is a mandatory obligation for domestic coordination and implementation. The NCTF is a three-tiered body that coordinates and implements the TFA. To meet the implementation timelines, the NCTF formulated the NTFAP 2017-2020, which contained 96 specific measures under two distinct sets of measures. The first set of measures focused on compliance with India's Category B and Category A commitments. The second set of measures has identified TFA Plus measures that go beyond the ambit of TFA (CBIC, 2019). The TFA Plus category includes infrastructure and technology augmentation measures as they play a pivotal role in India's trade facilitation strategy. India recently also launched the third edition of the NTFAP, i.e., NFTAP 3.0, for the period 2024-2027 (CBIC, 2024).

Domestically, India has taken many steps to boost logistics in trade and promote trade facilitation. For example, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has enabled end-to-end paperless exports under the Turant Customs scheme. Further, it has developed a

Figure 5.1: India's Year-wise Export and Import and TF Measures: October 2019 to August 2024



Note: TF measures based on the number of notifications per year

Sources: DOTS for trade and DGFT for TF measures

secure QR coded shipping bill that would be electronically sent to exporters after the customs allows export. This eliminates in one stroke the requirement for exporters to approach the customs officers for proof of export. This also makes the end-to-end customs export process fully electronic, from the filing of the shipping bill to the final order to allow export. Some of these such as the Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade (SWIFT), e-SANCHIT (e-Storage and Computerised Handling of Indirect Tax documents) are presented in Figures 5.2 and 5.3.[5]

India has further introduced an Electronic Cargo Tracking System (ECTS). The ECTS allows for the lodging of standardised information and documents at a single point of entry. India has also developed an electronic health certification system. This system is necessary to ensure adequate biosecurity measures for livestock imports. Besides, India has established a mechanism to monitor detention of goods. This mechanism ensures that the importer and carrier are informed of any detentions. However, the coverage of current implementation of paperless trade measures is limited due to several complicated procedures and bottlenecks.

Table 5.1: Current Status of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in India

Particular	Status*
Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	Fully implemented
Recognised certification authority	Fully implemented
Electronic exchange of customs declaration	Work in progress
Electronic exchange of certificate of origin	Partly implemented
Electronic exchange of sanitary & phyto-sanitary certificate	Partly implemented
Paperless collection of payment from a documentary letter of credit	Partly implemented
Technical readiness for CBPT	Fully implemented

**As on 15* June 2025

Source: Authors' own based on UNTF Survey 2023

India has made significant strides in trade facilitation in recent years, and it has been a major longstanding priority area of reform of the Government of India over the last few years.

India has taken many steps to boost logistics in trade and promote trade facilitation. For example, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has enabled end-to-end paperless exports under the Turant Customs.

Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation Measures

To facilitate cross-border paperless trade, India has signed mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) for authorised economic operators (AEOs) with Hong Kong (China), South Korea, Taiwan, the US, the UAE, Australia, Russia, Japan and Singapore. India has also signed Joint Action Plans (JAP) to conclude an AEO MRA with Uganda, the East African Community, South Africa, Japan, Bahrain, New Zealand, the UK, Belarus BRICS, etc.[6]

India has fully implemented the laws and regulations for electronic transactions and the recognised certification authority. The Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA) is the regulatory body responsible for overseeing electronic signature and trusted services in the country. However, the electronic exchange of SPS certificates, COO and customs declarations have been only partly implemented. For example, as of January 1, 2025, the electronic filing of non-preferential certificates of origin has become mandatory via the eCoO 2.0 platform. Some of the initiatives, such as the electronic submission of cross-border Bill of Lading, paperless collection of payment from a documentary letter of credit, etc., are works in progress.

5.2 Current Status of Paperless Trade and Single Window in India

Earlier, customs clearance processes were manually operated, complex and time-consuming, involving the preparation and sharing of a large number of documents to border agencies. In addition, the importers and exporters were required to submit the documents separately to border agencies and other relevant authorities. Gradually, the customs clearance process was automated and a digital risk management system was introduced for the examination and clearance of cargo with minimal checks. In February 1995, India's first electronic bill of entry (BE) was filed at New Customs House, New Delhi, which was a stepping stone towards migrating the customs clearance process to a digital platform and opened up opportunities to reform the customs clearance ecosystem (CBIC, 2020a). Further, to expedite the clearance process, customs formed several participating government agencies (PGAs) for transmission and processing of documents.

To facilitate cross-border paperless trade, India has signed mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) for authorised economic operators (AEOs) with Hong Kong (China), South Korea, Taiwan, the US, the UAE, Australia, Russia, Japan and Singapore.

In recent times, technological advancements through artificial intelligence (AI)/machine learning (ML) and the Internet of Things (IoT), among others, have increased the possibility of enhancing trade facilitation. The Government of India recently announced four key initiatives in the Union Budget 2025-26.[7] These include the following:

i. Export Promotion Mission with sectoral and ministerial targets to facilitate easy access to export credit, cross-border factoring support, and support to MSMEs to tackle non-tariff measures in overseas markets

ii. BharatTradeNet, a digital public infrastructure, 'BharatTradeNet' (BTN) for international trade being set-up as a unified platform for trade documentation, financing solutions, and support for integration with global supply chains

iii. The National Framework for GCC that provides guidance to Indian states to promote global capability centres (GCCs) in emerging tier-2 Indian cities

iv. Warehousing facility for air cargo to facilitate upgradation of infrastructure and warehousing for air cargo including high-value perishable horticulture produce.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) of the Indian Ministry of Finance has been catalysing automation of trade facilitation in India. It is also the administrative authority of Custom Houses, which mandates customs clearance of cross-border trade. Over the years, CBIC has taken the lead to improve the overall business environment and implement paperless trade measures in India by introducing a series of reforms. The CBIC has executed multiple projects to automate customs clearance processes and introduced electronic data interchange (EDI) with all PGAs. For example, the government has designed the Indian Customs EDI System (ICES) to exchange customs clearance related information electronically using EDI. A large number of trading documents, which were earlier submitted during the process of live customs clearance, are now being processed online. Until 2024-25, 288 EDIs were operational at major customs locations, handling nearly 98 per cent of India's exports and imports (Figure 5.4).[8]

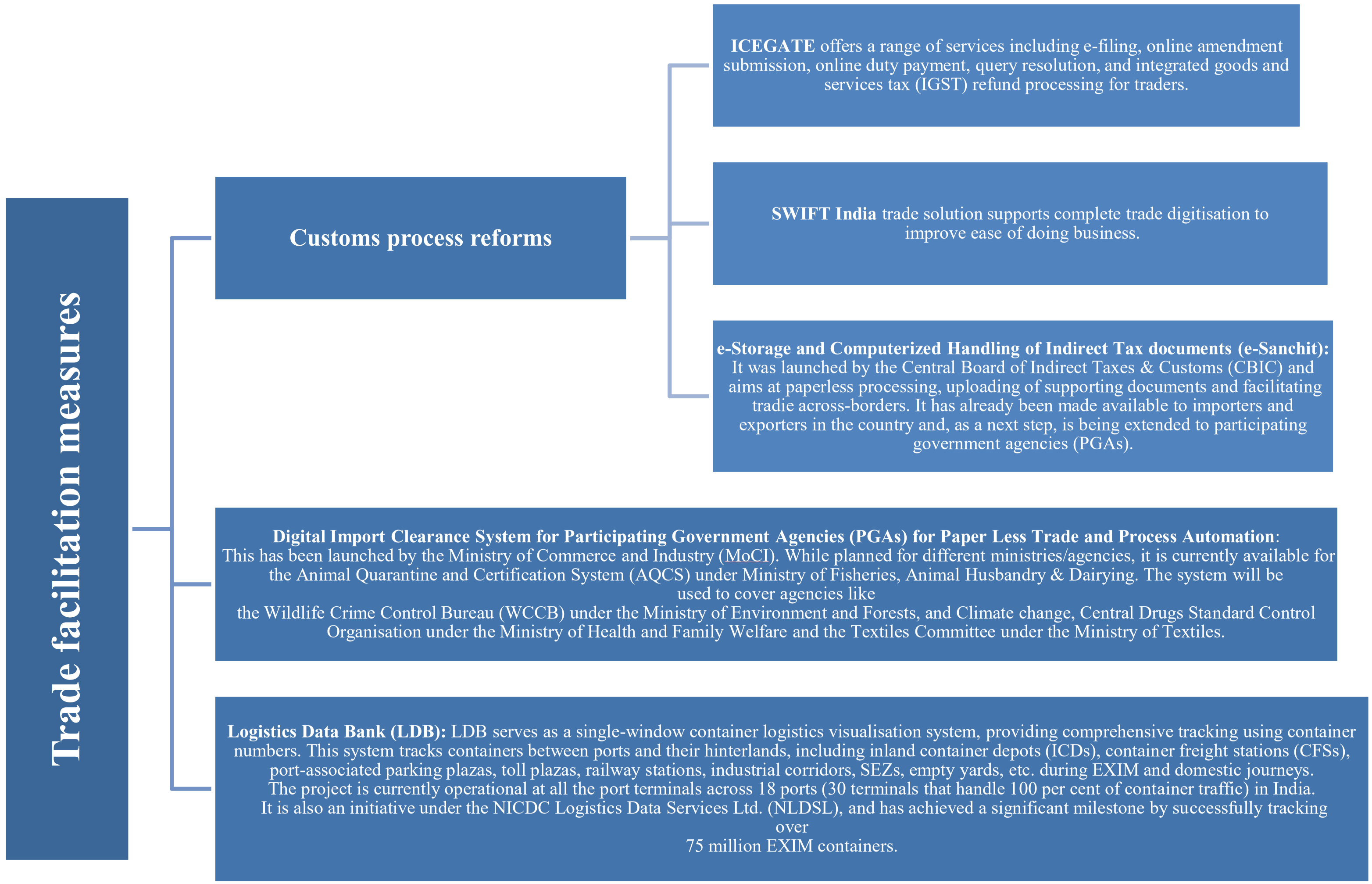
Figure 5.2: Measures Taken by India to Improve Logistics

Prime Minister (PM) Gati Shakti	• PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) was launched in 2021 to provide multimodal connectivity infrastructure to various economic zones. Some of the key reforms to improve logistics efficiency includes reforms in the state logicistic policies of 23 states/UTs, creating a Land Port Management System (LPMS), digitisation at ports, National Logistic Portal (NLP) Marine, and FASTag.
National Logistics Policy	• The targets for the policy are to (i) reduce cost of logistics in India to a level comparable to global benchmarks by 2030, (ii) improve the Logistics Performance Index ranking and endeavour is to be among the top 25 countries by 2030 and (iii) to create a data-driven decision support mechanism for an efficient logistics ecosystem.
Unified Interface Logistics Platform (ULIP)	• ULIP is an initiative of the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Limited (NICDC) Logistics Data Services Ltd. (NLDSL) and aims to create a nationwide single window logistics platform for end-to-end visibility and develop a logistics gateway by integrating information available with various government. agencies across the value chain, provide visibility for optimal usage of various modes of transportation, provide data that can be utilised by stakeholders for simplification of complicated processes like compliance, document filing, certifications and approvals, and offer a platform for data exchange among government and private entities who are directly or indirectly involved in the Indian logistics eco-system.
National Single Window System (NSWS)	• The **NSWS** is a digital platform providing guidance to investors apply for approvals as per their business requirements. It has a Know Your Approvals (KYA) module that provides information across 32 central departments and 14 states for businesses. It aims to be a one-stop shop for business approvals, boost transparency in the approval process and make it easier to do business in India.

Sources: https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2000701 (last accessed on November 8, 2024); https://logistics.gov.in/media/download/239205.pdf (last accessed on November 7, 2024); https://www.nsws.gov.in (Last accessed on November 12, 2024)

Note: FASTag is a device that employs Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to enable toll payments directly while the vehicle is in motion. For more, visit https://www.npci.org.in/what-we-do/netc-fastag/product-overview (Last accessed on November 8, 2024)

Figure 5.3: Trade Facilitation Measures by India



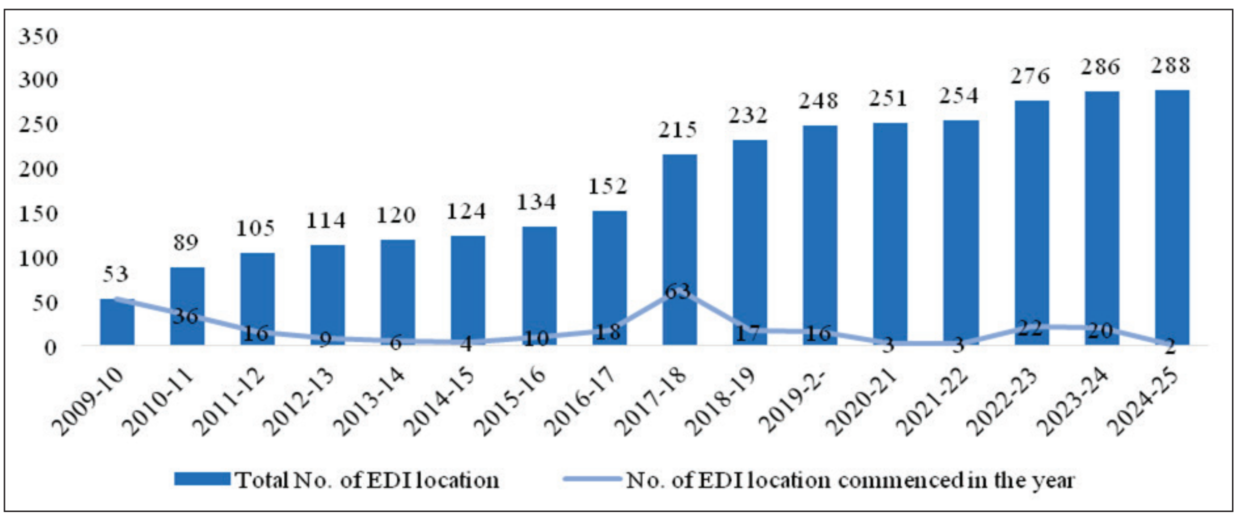
Sources: https://www.icegate.gov.in/about-us/icegate ; https://www.icegate.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-04/eSANCHIT_Process_Guide_updated.pdf; https://indialog-pga.logistics.gov.in (Last accessed date June 09, 2025).

The SWIFT has introduced paperless processes, which enables exporters and importers to submit, scan, digitally sign and upload supporting documents (such as invoices, packing lists, licenses, certificates, permits, etc.) electronically.

The ICES is supported by a risk management system (RMS).It also manages bonds and guarantees online.

On April 1, 2016, the CBIC launched the SWIFT (Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade) under the single window project, where exporters and importers can lodge their clearance documents at a single point and obtain required permissions from different regulatory authorities online without approaching these agencies.[9] India's single window project gained momentum with the implementation of WTO's TFA in 2017, which requires its members to establish a single window facility to facilitate trade. The SWIFT integrates nine forms required by six PGAs and enables traders to submit a common electronic 'Integrated Declaration' at a single point, replacing the separate form requirements.[10] These PGAs are Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Drug Controller, Plant Quarantine (PQ), Animal Quarantine (AQ), Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and the Textile Committee. The SWIFT has dispensed the requirement of approval from multiple agencies. The declaration is directly routed to the concerned PGAs

Figure 5.4: Number of EDI Locations in India



Source: ICEGATE, Central Board of Excise & Customs, New Delhi through the 'PGA Corridor', located within the platform's risk management system (RMS) (CBIC, 2020a). The SWIFT has several other features such as automated routing, integrated risk assessment, e-payment of fee and charges, online message exchange, etc., which enable exporters and importers to lodge trade-related documents online. So far, the single window interface is one of the most complex system integration efforts of the CBIC.

The SWIFT has introduced paperless processes, which enables exporters and importers to submit, scan, digitally sign and upload supporting documents (such as invoices, packing lists, licenses, certificates, permits, etc.) electronically. In addition, routine printouts at the customs are being eliminated, electronic-led export order and out of charge are issued with digital signatures. To complement SWIFT's paperless processing feature, CBIC has launched e-SANCHIT (e-Storage and Computerised Handling of Indirect Tax documents) to upload supporting documents by exporters and importers and to facilitate trading across-borders (CBIC, 2020b). The e-SANCHIT also enables PGAs to upload document clearance certificates for exporters and importers, who are notified in the due time.

All e-filing processes under SWIFT are carried out on the Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE), which is the national portal of CBIC that provides e-filing services to exporters, importers and other trading partners and clients of customs. At present, 1.25 million importers and exporters are being served by 43,542 registered users of ICEGATE.[11] The portal's user growth increased from around 1000 per month in 2019-20 to over 4000 per month in 2024-25.[12] ICEGATE is also the interface of ICES for providing customs related messages and sharing trade and customs clearance data with banks and regulatory agencies involved in customs clearances.

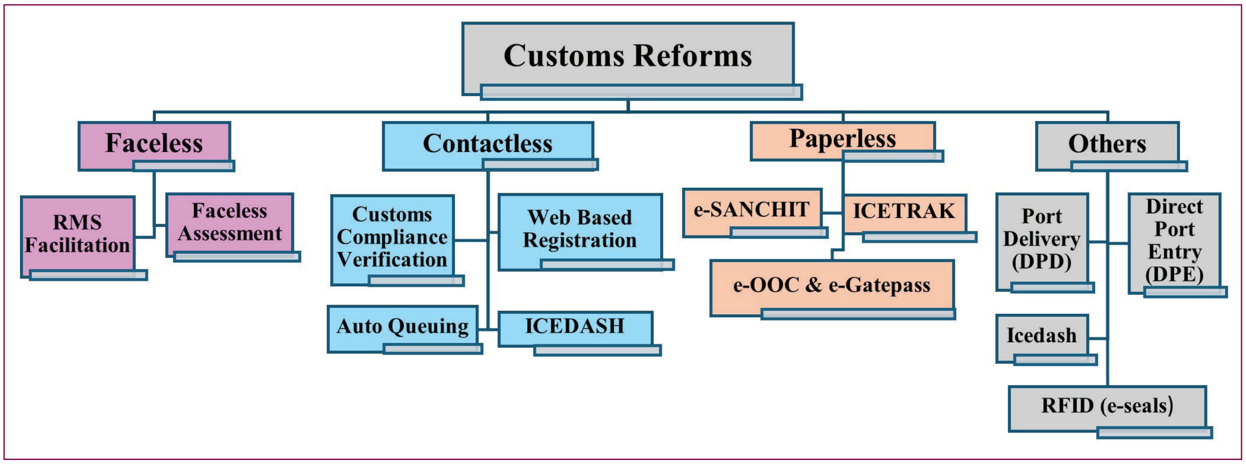
Through ICEGATE, CBIC fulfils its EDI and data communication requirements and offers a host of services such as e-filing of the bill of entry (import goods declaration), shipping bills (export goods declaration), e-Payment of customs duty, a free of cost web-based common signer utility for signing all the customs documents, facility to file online supporting documents through e- SANCHIT, end-to-end electronic IGST refund, etc., for exporting and importing through customs.[13] In addition to e-filing, ICEGATE also provides a host of other services like a 24X7 helpdesk facility for its trading partners, e-payment of central excise and service tax, on-line registration for intellectual property rights (IPR), document tracking status at customs EDI, online verification of licenses, IE code status, PAN based CHA data, IGST refund status and links to various other important websites/information related to trade.[14]

The ICEGATE is linked to multiple PGAs as well as customs, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), banks, DGFT, the Directorate of Valuation involved in trade for expediting customs clearance and exchanging data. SWIFT, ICES and ICEGATE have been an integral part of the digital revolution journey of Indian customs and e-Governance initiatives in the country.

So far, the CBIC has introduced 33 paperless trade facilitation policy measures through ICEGATE under the Single Window Project, which include information about pilot implementation of paperless process under SWIFT, uploading of supporting documents through e-SANCHIT for exports, publishing of service level standards, acceptance of digital signature, implementation of integrated declaration, extending SWIFT to EDI locations/other PGA, implementation of PGA e-SANCHIT system, online exchange of message between customs and other regulatory agencies etc. Appendix 2 presents the list of such notifications issued by the CBIC and other PGAs on paperless trade facilitation.

The CBIC also launched the Express Cargo Clearance Systems (ECCS) in 2017 for automating the courier clearance process under

Figure 5.5: Faceless, Contactless, Paperless Customs Reforms in Recent Years



Source: De (2024)

the Courier Imports and Exports (Electronic Declaration and Processing) Regulations, 2010, and hastening the delivery of goods at the exporter and importer doorsteps.[15] Digitalisation of express cargo system has helped the e-commerce industry in India by expediting the courier clearance process. So far, CBIC has implemented 33 paperless trade facilitation measures related to ECCS, which includes the establishment of the ECCS for clearance of export and import goods in different Indian ports of India like Mumbai, Cochin, etc., electronic clearance of courier exports and imports, contactless delivery of international courier consignments, auto out of charge and auto led export and import orders, etc. However, documentation requirements and procedures for export and import through courier are only partially electronic.

In addition, the CBIC has digitised application filing and processing and provides digitally-signed delivery of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) certification to seamlessly facilitate the ever-growing flow of goods in international trade and ensure the safety and security of supply chains.[16]AEOs help ease overseas trade by avoiding dual certifications. The AEO programme enables the customs administration to identify safe and compliant exporters and importers and to provide them with better facilitation. It thus reduces compliance costs, simplifies compliance requirements by adhering to only one regulation and enhancing trade opportunities. As a result, AEO entities have been able to reduce the time and cost of international trade by accessing a wide range of benefits (such as expedited processing and clearance of goods, deferred duty payment, direct port delivery and entry) provided by the customs. India has been actively engaged with over 30 nations for mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) through the AEO programme. As of May 2025, India has successfully signed MRAs with several key trading partners including the US, South Korea, the UAE, Taiwan, Australia, Malaysia and Singapore.[17]

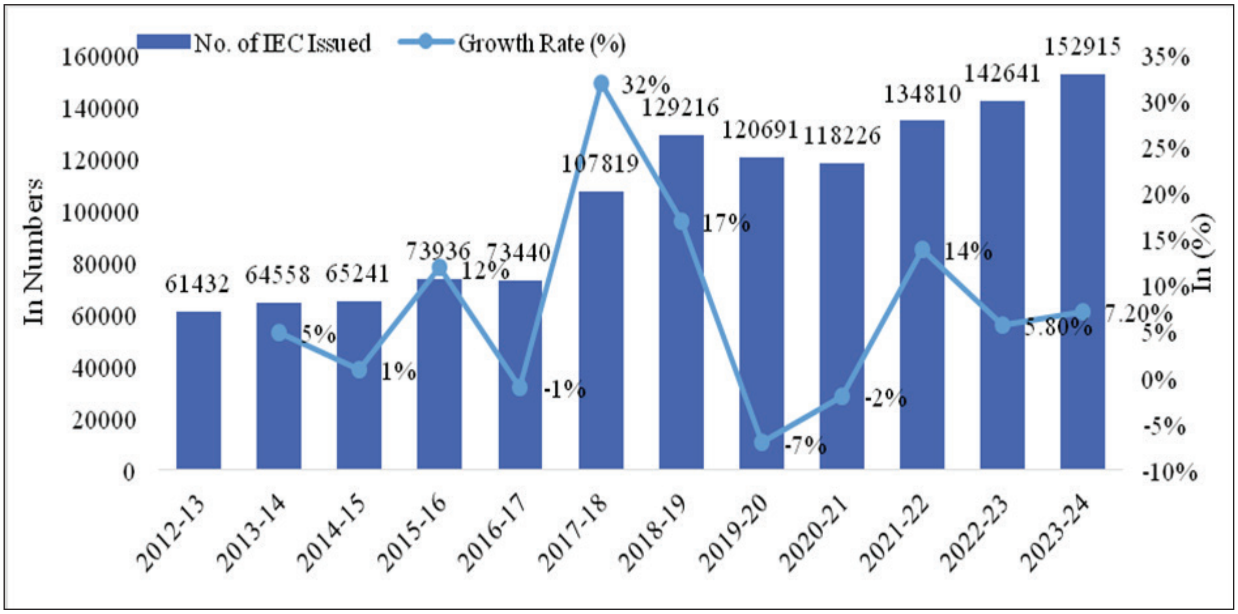
To improve the ease of doing business for cross-border trade, the CBIC has developed the Indian Customs Compliance Informational Portal (CIP), which provides free access to up-to-date information on all procedures and regulatory requirements of customs and PGAs (FSSAI, AQIS, PQIS, Drug Controller, etc.), covering nearly 12,000 customs tariff items.[18] To further facilitate ease of doing business, CBIC has launched the 'Turant' Customs in 2020, which aims to make customs and border regulatory processes faceless, paperless and contactless with the enhanced use of digital technology (such as Secure QR coded Shipping Bill, etc.) and reduce the time and cost for traders (CBIC, 2020a). Figure 5.5 illustrates the major faceless, contactless, paperless customs reforms adopted by India in recent years. The faceless customs reforms aims to eliminate physical interaction between traders and customs authorities through faceless assessment and risk management system, and increase transparency (CBIC, 2020a). The paperless customs reforms aims to reduce the interface between traders and customs officers by digitizing customs processes through e-SANCHIT, ICETRAK, e-COO and e-Gatepass. To make customs faceless, customs has eliminated the requirement to physically approach customs officers for clearance of goods. The contactless initiatives aim at enhancing the efficiency of customs clearance processes by automating the process of registration, documents submission, verification and issuing electronic gate-pass. The CBIC has introduced several other initiatives such as a facilitation centre for direct port delivery and entry, radio frequency identification (RFID) of containers through e-seals, online Know Your Customer (KYC) verification, paperless processing of warehouse procedures, non-intrusive inspection through container scanners, container scanner analytics application, etc. (CBIC, 2020a).

To complement CBIC's paperless trade facilitation reforms, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has also embarked on paperless trade facilitation initiatives and automation of trade related formalities through a single portal to simplify and expedite trade clearance procedures. The DGFT is responsible for issuing and managing the profile of Import-Export Code (IEC), which is a key business identification number mandatorily required for exporting or importing to India.[19]The DGFT offers a 24/7 online service to automatically issue e-IECs, usually within 30 minutes of applying (DGFT, 2021).Figure 5.6 shows the trends in the number of IECs issued by the DGFT from 2012-13 to 2023-24. The issuance of IEC by the DGFT increased from 61,435 in 2012-13 to 73,936 in 2015-16. However, IEC issuance dropped by 1 per cent in 2016-17 and again spiked at a growth rate of 32 per cent and 17 per cent in 2017-18 and 2018-19. Following the COVID-19 outbreak in 2019-20, IEC issuance declined until 2020-21 and rebounded with a growth of 14 per cent in 2021-22 (Figure 5.6).

In addition, the DGFT has taken several measures to simplify trade clearance procedures through real-time electronic communication and electronic data exchange, including electronic issuance of preferential certificates of origin, issuance of e-licences for export and import of restricted products through the export/import management system, providing helpdesk services to address international trade issues, allowing duty free imports of intermediate inputs that are physically incorporated in export products through the advance authorisation scheme, providing for filing quality complaints and trade disputes, providing online issuance and transfer of export duty benefits, paperless processing and (e-verification) rules-based risk management for IEC, online payment of user fees and charges, etc. In 2020, DGFT has launched Virtual Assistant to Help Exporters and Importers (VAHEI), which is an AI-powered chatbot to cater to queries related to India's foreign trade policy. The VAHEI users can also check new notifications, trade notices, public notices and circulars as well as the status of various applications and authorisations. The DGFT has taken 16 paperless trade facilitation measures for online filling and issuance of preferential certificate of origin and for extension of dates for mandatory electronic filing of Certificate of Origin (Figure 5.7).

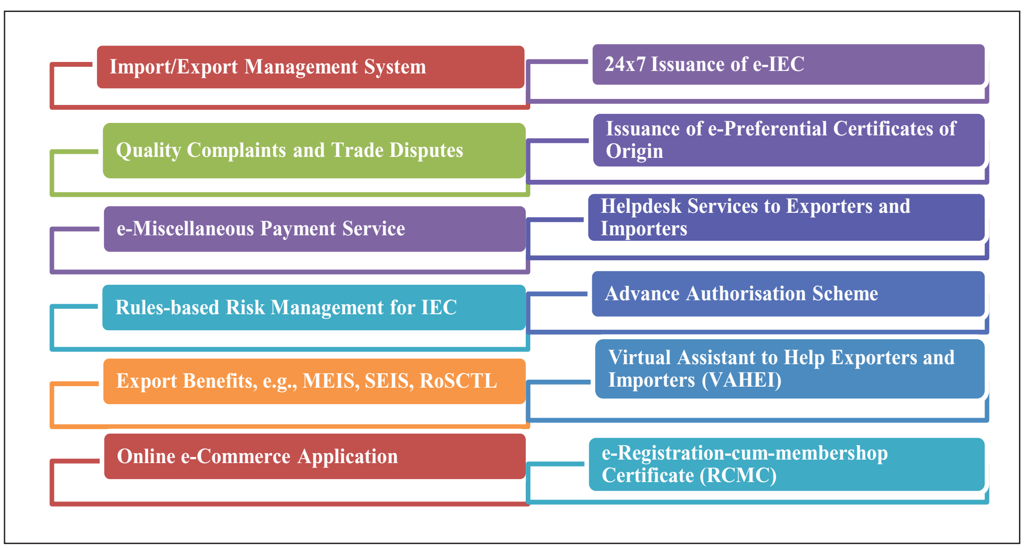
In addition, the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) under the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, provides a crucial interface between the international trading community in India and other stakeholders (such as the central and state governments, financial institutions, ports, railways and surface transport) engaged in export trade facilitation). Set up in 1965, the FIEO is the apex body of the government-recognised Export Promotion Councils, Commodity Boards and Export Development Authorities in India.[20] The FIEO web portal provides access to

Figure 5.6: Trends of Number of IECs Issued from 2012-13 to 2023-24



Source: DGFT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India

Figure 5.7: Key Paperless Trade Facilitation Measures Provided by DGFT



Source: De (2024)

The DGFT has taken 16 paperless trade facilitation measures for online filling and issuance of preferential certificate of origin and for extension of dates for mandatory electronic filing of Certificate of Origin.

updated trade policies, publications, global business opportunities, 24x7 global exposure to FIEO members, links to global trade promotion organisations and facilitates redressal of exporter' problems, among other services. Over the years, the FIEO has also undertaken several paperless trade facilitation initiatives such as the India Trade Portal, NIRYAT MITRA Mobile App, a platform for exporters to create their own free online store etc., to facilitate international trade and encourage exporters to expand their market access globally.

The FIEO has developed the Indian Trade Portal (ITP), which is India's first web-based trade information portal that provides vital and up-to-date information for exporters and importers on all trade-related matters available in one page. The key features of ITP include information about the MFN or preferential tariffs of 90 countries, rules of origin to avail preferential tariff, SPS-TBT measures mapped at tariff line of 90 countries, trade statistics of 87 countries, item-wise export and import policy of the Government of India and duty drawback, export promotion schemes, etc., interest equalization rates, GST and other levies, and several other export benefit schemes.

India has also made substantial progress in implementing the single window system in transportation sector, resulting in a fall in transportation time and costs.

India has also made substantial progress in implementing the single window system in transportation sector, resulting in a fall in transportation time and costs. For example, Indian ports have implemented the Port Community System (electronic single window system at ports), the Air Community System (electronic single window system at airports), the Indian Railways Freight Management System, the Indian Railways Wagon/Container Management/Movement System, CONCOR's Container Management System, electronic payment for freight services by the IR, etc.

Besides, India's transportation sector is increasingly adopting electronic payment systems, moving away from cash transactions; some of the key initiatives include the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) for a unified transit payment experience across different modes and locations, and the FASTag system for electronic toll collection, mobile wallets, QR codes, and various digital payment methods like UPI, etc.

To conclude, India has shown significant progress in paperless trade facilitation, and some of the major reforms in paperless trade by India includes introduction of Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade (SWIFT), e-Storage and Computerized Handling of Indirect Tax documents (e-SANCHIT), Importer-Exporter Code (IEC), among others. India continues to conduct further reforms in trade facilitation and positioning itself as a leader in global trade facilitation.

5.3 Status of India's Legal and Technical Readiness for Cross-Border Paperless Trade

The forgoing analysis has illustrated India's performance in paperless trade, but it does not reveal much about India's current status and the level of readiness to implement paperless trade systems and cross-border data exchange.[21] The ESCAP has noted that paperless trade implementation is a work in progress, and the CPTA is a tool meant to support such progress regardless of the level of readiness of a country. In other words, the ESCAP readiness checklist is not intended to assess the readiness of a country to join the CPTA. The CPTA expects that its parties will ensure that their legal and technical systems support the use of electronic communications and will gradually adapt their laws for the purpose of cross-border paperless trade. It is not necessary for governments to modernise/reform their laws before ratifying or acceding to the Agreement.

To assess the current status, key stakeholders in the public and private sectors involved in trade facilitation and cross-border trade activities were requested to provide the answers needed to fill up both the legal and technical readiness checklists.[22] Box 5.1 presents the basic features of the readiness checklists. While India has made important strides in fulfilling legal and technical readiness commitments, there are still a few gaps in certain areas. The following gaps in technical and legal readiness are worth noting.

Technical readiness:

1. The electronic port community systems have been implemented in major seaports (PCS), airports (ACCS), container handling units and some land ports. However, they have not yet been fully implemented in the cases of road, rail and inland ports.
2. India has partly implemented electronic licences, electronic permits and electronic

Box 5.1: Legal and Technical Readiness Checklist

In line with the substantive provisions of the Framework Agreement, the ESCAP checklist organises legal issues into four major parts: (i) electronic transactions and signatures law (ii) laws regarding paperless trade systems (iii) cross-border aspects and (iv) other considerations. In the case of technical issues, the checklist takes into consideration national issues such as the implementation of electronic and paperless transactions at the national level (Section A) and the importance of a single window for cross-border paperless trade data exchange (Section B). Section A focuses on technical issues related to the implementation of electronic trade systems and paperless environment at the national level. Technical issues are grouped into the following eight categories: (a) institutional and governance bodies for electronic data exchange in a paperless environment (b) level of automation (c) information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure (connectivity, sustainability and recovery) (d) security (e)business process re- engineering (f) data harmonisation and standardisation; (g) capacity-building and (h) other matters. Section B is aimed at assessing the ability of a country or an organisation to embark on cross-border paperless trade data exchange. The questions are related to various issues and challenges in the implementation of paperless trade systems and cross-border data exchange.

Source: https://readiness.digitalizetrade.org(Last accessed on June 09, 2025).

The Indian electronic single window system can receive, process and issue documents electronically, and is integrated with an electronic payment system.

Data harmonisation, process re-engineering and standardisation are prerequisites for seamless data exchange. India has already implemented 100 per cent online submission of e-DO (electronic Delivery Order).

certificates. For example, India has implemented the e-COO.[23] As of January 1, 2025, the electronic filing of non-preferential certificates of origin has become mandatory via the eCoO 2.0 platform. Access to this facility is available to exporters at https://trade.gov.in under the "Get Certificate of Origin" section. This is a commendable step taken by India in fulfilling its commitments to cross-border trade facilitation, many such more measures are required to be initiated to facilitate cross-border trade.

3. The Indian electronic single window system can receive, process and issue documents electronically, and is integrated with an electronic payment system. It also has the capability to authenticate users electronically. Once the mutual recognition arrangement (MRA) with trading partners is signed, the Indian system will authenticate all users electronically. As on date, India is yet to make an official announcement for any targeted timeline to cover all trade transactions through an electronic single window system (i.e., e-customs, e-port, e-certificates, e-licences, e-permits and others).

4. When it comes to information and communications technology infrastructure for paperless trade, India has fulfilled most of the criteria that are essential for an efficient and resilient paperless trade system. India's ICT infrastructure network has implemented multiprotocol label switching (MPLS), Internet protocol (IP), virtual private network (VPN) and secure hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP). Regardless of the choice of options, the Indian network allows connectivity and interoperability between heterogeneous platforms and supports various protocols and exchange paradigms within a secure operating environment, which is at present restricted to only national usage. However, there are delays in electronic exchange of documents and the ICT network in systems located in remote areas, particularly in land customs stations. India has robust ICT infrastructure and disaster recovery systems. Nonetheless, India's ICT systems have to continuously evolve by adopting new technology.

5. Data harmonisation, process re-engineering and standardisation are prerequisites for seamless data exchange. India has already implemented 100 per cent online submission of e-DO (electronic Delivery Order).[24] However, data compatibility is still one of the main issues that needs to be addressed in various connectivity projects in and around the region. Although India has made good progress in data harmonisation and standardisation, it is still a work in progress at the national level.

6. Capacity building is important to ensure that all stakeholders have a common understanding of cross-border paperless trade and their role and responsibilities to make it a success. Many countries have started capacity building even before they acceded to the CPTA. India has made considerable progress in capacity building to implement paperless trade. The cross-border leg will call for more capacity building exercises during the implementation phase.[25]

7. Cross-border paperless trade has to be connected with partner countries to ensure seamless cross-border transit. India has made some progress in implementing some of the international transit obligations. For example, India has implemented a paperless customs declaration for national transit procedures (inbound transit, outbound transit, inland transit). However, India has not yet implemented a paperless customs declaration for international transit. India is also yet to implement a one-stop inspection system by all controlling agencies at the borders at the time of exit/export. India may agree on a regional/sub-regional format and content of a single guarantee.[26]

8. Awareness programmes are important for stakeholders to understand how cross-border data exchange could be carried out to reduce their anxiety and prepare them to address any issues that may arise. Although this gets addressed at the time of its adoption, greater momentum in awareness programmes is needed.

Legal readiness:

1. India has enacted a law to govern electronic transactions, and most of the provisions are covered under the IT Act, which is predominantly based on the UNCITRAL model. However, rules related to the adoption of electronically transferable records leading to the adoption of electronic bill of lading are yet to be framed.

2. India is one of the frontrunners in introducing electronic signatures and trust services. Indian laws provide for the legal recognition of electronic signatures. All the provisions under this section have been successfully implemented by India. Besides, Indian laws fully protect privacy and data protection, with special attention to those relevant to paperless trade. India offers best practices in electronic signatures and trust services to partner countries and is willing to discuss paperless trade in its trade agreements with trusted trade partners. However, with complex global supply chains, exporters and importers will benefit from a common agreement across many trade partners.

3. Indian law partially requires data localisation, particularly in case of paperless trade. Although there are no special rules on privacy and data protection for paperless trade in India, general rules exist. As per the privacy in law, India may by notification restrict the processing of personal data to certain specific countries as notified.[27]

4. A key issue in achieving seamless cross-border paperless trade is the legal recognition of trade-related electronic data and documents of one country by the authorities of another. Recognition involves attributing a legal status to electronic messages exchanged across-borders. The Indian legal system provides for such legal recognitions if systems are compatible.

5. India has signed international treaties and model laws relevant to cross-border paperless trade facilitation but no specific international agreements relevant to paperless trade facilitation are in force in India. However, India has signed an MOU with the Republic of Korea to recognise each other's digital certificates if they meet technical compatibility requirements.

6. There are a set of multilateral agreements that are up for signature. Some of them are as follows: (i) Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (2016) (ii) International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls (1982) (iii) Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road Concerning the Electronic Consignment Note (2008) (iv) Convention Concerning International Carriage by Rail (1980) (v) United Nations Convention on the Carriage of Goods by Sea (Hamburg Rules) (1978) (vi) United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Carriage of Goods Wholly or Partly by Sea (Rotterdam Rules) (2008) (vii) United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts (2005) (viii) UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Signatures (2001) (ix) UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (2017),etc. India may like to understand the benefits of signing the aforesaid agreement in terms of cross-border paperless trade. This is also not to deny that connecting India's national single windows with that of key trade partners may help reduce transaction costs. For example, data exchange protocols will allow India to leverage the benefits of a fully operational ASEAN Single Window.

India is one of the frontrunners in introducing electronic signatures and trust services. Indian laws provide for the legal recognition of electronic signatures. All the provisions under this section have been successfully implemented by India.

7. India is yet to recast its national laws dealing with choice-of-forum and choice-of-law issues relevant to paperless trade facilitation. This has to be firmed up.

8. India is yet to recognise the online dispute resolution mechanisms used in paperless trade facilitation.

9. Electronic payments are the backbone of the digital economy, and laws must support the paperless trade system accepting electronic transferable records. Although legal provisions exist in India, these are yet to be implemented.

5.4 Improvements in India's performance in paperless trade measures over time

To study India's performance in paperless trade measures at the global level, we have used the UNESCAP Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (referred to as UNTF) and the Logistics Performance Index (LPI).

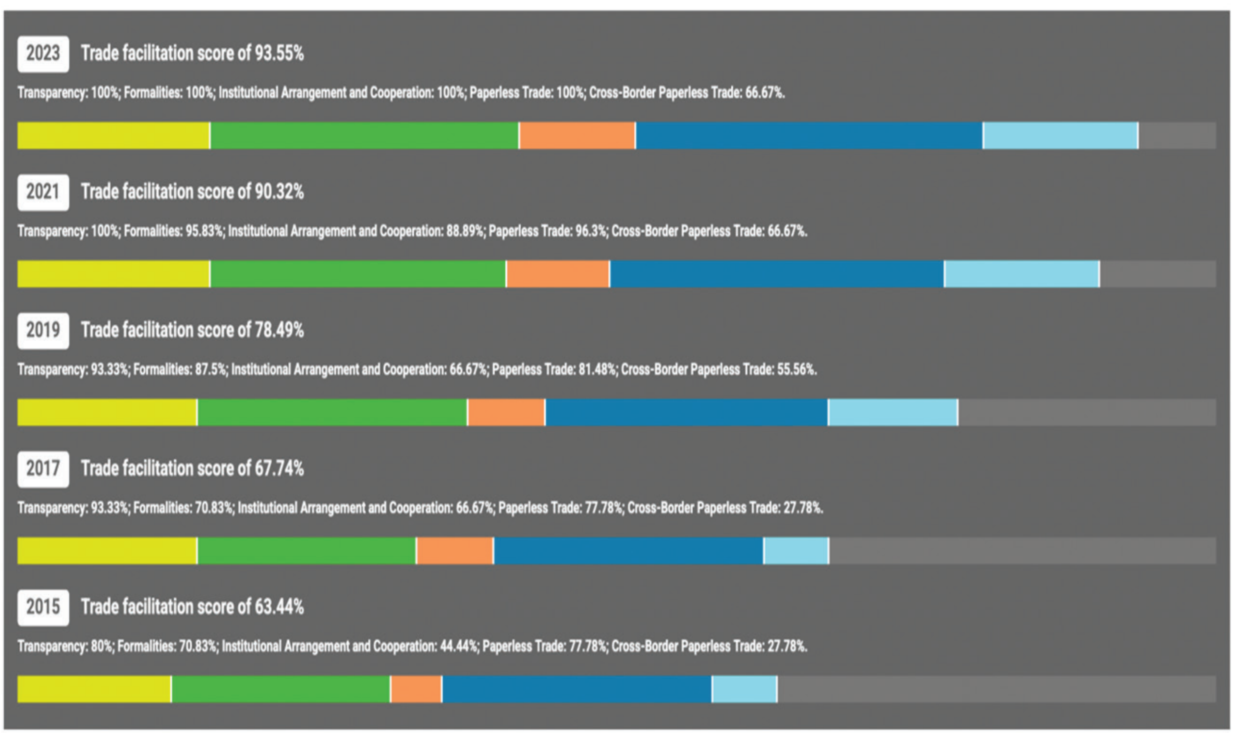
India's performance in the UNESCAP Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (referred to as UNTF) has improved over the years. In the UNTF, 2015, India's score with respect to cross-border paperless trade was only 27.78 per cent, which later has increased more than three times to 66.67 per cent in UNTF, 2023. This is shown in Figure 5.8. Details on India's progress in performance on the parameters of cross-border paperless trade (and trade facilitation) used by the survey are presented in Appendix 5 and Appendix 6.

According to the LPI, India's ranking improved from 44th in 2018 to 38th in 2023 across 139 countries. The LPI score is calculated based on seven indicators, and India has improved its score on all of these over the two years for which LPI was calculated (see Figure 5.9).[28]

5.5 Some considerations for India in joining the CPTA

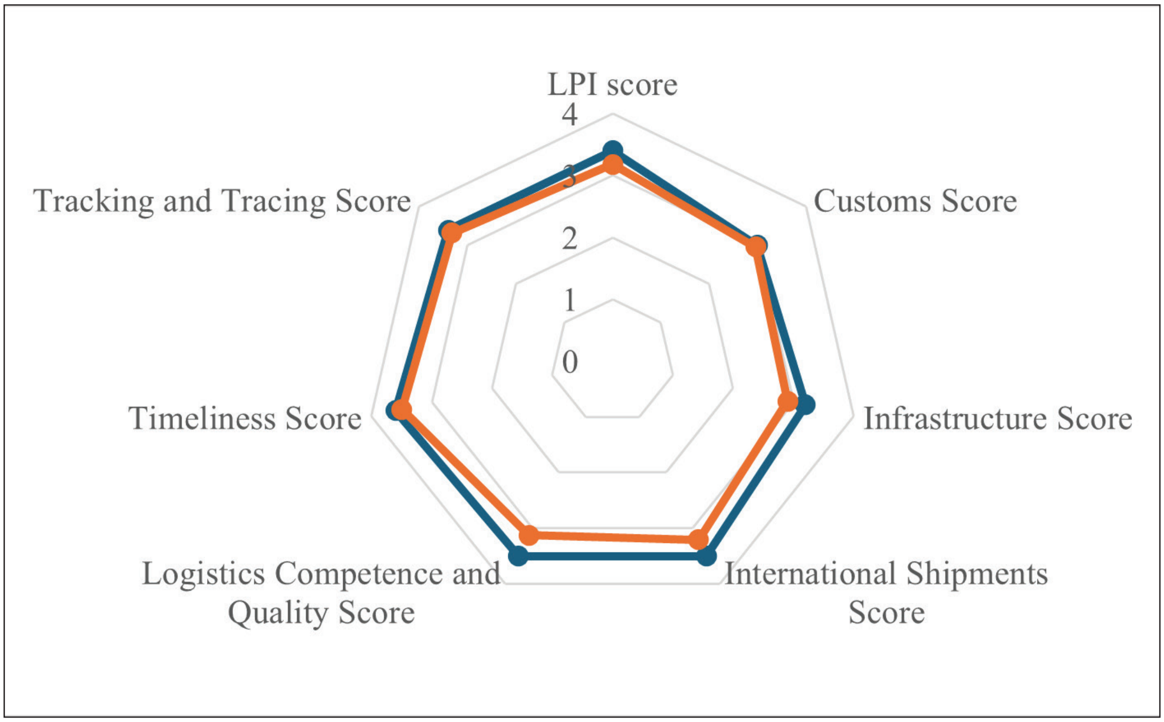
India has made considerable progress in paperless trade facilitation in a gradual manner. It is also at the forefront of global trade facilitation efforts. As discussed in the previous section, India's outstanding performance in trade facilitation has been acknowledged in several rounds of the UNTF Survey. However, there are some areas that require greater attention if trade facilitation is to be sustained. At the same time, there are newer challenges, particularly on the digital trade facilitation front. For example, India is still way behind in implementing electronic land port systems.

Figure 5.8: India's Performance in the UNTF: 2015 - 2023



Source: United Nations, www.untfsurvey.org, accessed 28 May 2025.

Figure 5.9: India's Logistics Performance Index (LPI) Score Across Indicators



Source: Extracted from https://lpi.worldbank.org/international/global (Last accessed on March 15, 2025)

Although this is a commendable step taken by India in fulfilling its commitments to cross-border trade facilitation, many such more measures are required to be initiated to facilitate trade. Next, data compatibility is still one of the main issues that needs to be addressed in various connectivity projects in and around the region. Although India has also made good progress in data harmonisation and standardisation, it is still a work in progress at the national level. While India has enacted laws to govern electronic transactions, and most of the provisions are covered under the IT Act, which is pre-dominantly based on the UNCITRAL model, the rules related to bill of lading (BL) are yet to be framed. India has signed international treaties and model laws relevant to cross-border paperless trade facilitation but no specific international agreements relevant to paperless trade facilitation are in force in India. At the same time, India is yet to recast national laws dealing with choice-of-forum and choice-of-law issues relevant to paperless trade facilitation. This has to be firmed up. Let's explain these issues a bit more, thus adding to the policy formulations and continuing the reforms.

1. Digitalisation of export and import processes in India extends beyond customs to include various Partner Government Agencies (PGAs) such as food and pharmaceutical regulators, quarantine departments and wildlife protection authorities. These agencies are responsible for clearing goods within their respective domains (see Figure 5.10 for an example from India). Each PGA has its own procedural requirements for scrutiny and clearance, which operate independently from customs-specific procedures.

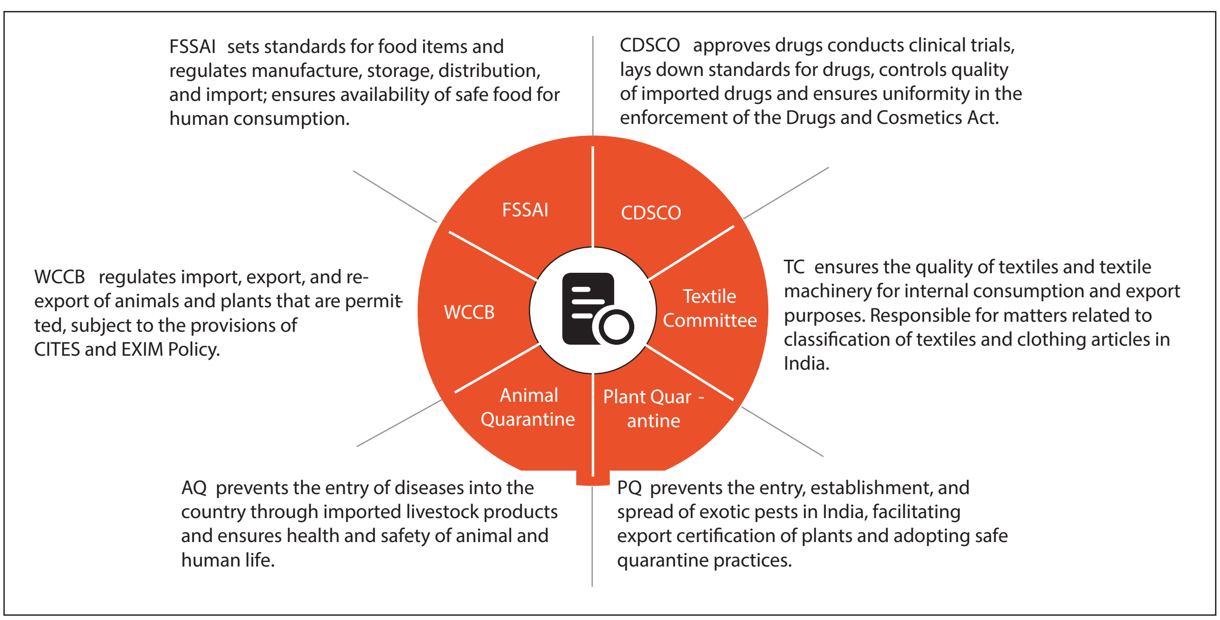
   Although customs have adopted digital systems and PGAs have developed their own platforms, integration with the customs' SWIFT system remains limited. Many PGAs still lack advanced digital clearance systems or centralised digital databases that could be upgraded over time. While sea ports benefit from integration through the Port Community System (PCS), land ports operate on individual systems without a unified platform. To address this, the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) is working on developing an integrated land port management system.

However, full system integration is not a prerequisite for joining the CPTA. As reflected in the legal and technical readiness index, India faces a mix of regulatory and implementation gaps. For instance, under Rule 48(4) of the CGST rules, e-invoices are mandatory for certain categories of businesses and are accepted by Indian customs. Yet, some experts argue that there is no specific legal provision affirming the validity and acceptability of e-invoices (Banerjee et al., 2024). According to the Indian IT Act, however, electronic documents have the same legal status as paper-based ones – implying that e-invoices should logically be considered valid.

Some studies suggest that delays in India's accession to the CPTA stem from difficulties in securing alignment among various authorities (Banerjee and Sanganeria, 2021). Nevertheless, there is broad consensus among government agencies and the private sector that paperless trade will benefit India's exports. India is already pursuing paperless trade measures in its bilateral agreements.

2. Given geopolitical tensions and trade deficit related considerations, India is concerned about joining a plurilateral agreement where it might have to exchange sensitive trade data with and experience increased imports from certain CPTA member countries. There are concerns related to cybersecurity and data privacy that probably contributed to

Figure 5.10: Roles and Responsibilities of Key PGAs in India



Source: Extracted from Banerjee and Sanganeria (2021).

Box: 5.2: Why to Accede to the CPTA

Q: Does my country need to fulfil technical and legal requirements to become a party to the Framework Agreement?

A: No. The Framework Agreement is designed to be an enabling treaty to support developing countries to plan and move towards cross-border paperless trade, and it does not involve changes in laws and regulations prior to accession.

Q: If my country becomes a party, does my country have to exchange electronic data and information with all other parties?

A: Not necessarily. The Framework Agreement is a "framework", meaning it promotes general principles but does not contain detailed legal and technical specifications that Parties are obliged to adhere to. Following entry into force, Parties will together decide what priorities or tools they will work on to achieve the objectives set out in the Framework Agreement.

Source: UNESCAP, https://www.unescap.org/projects/cpta

India's decision not to join several other agreements such as the RCEP and the WTO JSI on E-commerce. There is a fear that some CPTA member countries could dominate the decision-making process. However, this fear is incorrect because CPTA gives each member full flexibility to choose its partners for implementing cross-border paperless trade provisions.

3. In recent years, India has preferred to pursue bilateral negotiations on cross-border trade digitalisation rather than commit to a plurilateral framework like the CPTA. As of now, India has signed agreements with some countries covering certain aspects of paperless trade and trade facilitation. For example, it has signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 2022, which has a chapter on digital trade and e-commerce that covers paperless trading.[29] India has a "Common Digital Platform for Issuance of Certificates of Origin", which is a single point access for certificates of origin (CoO) for all FTAs/PTAs for all agencies and all products.[30]The CPTA too provides the option to do this bilaterally with select partners.

4. The framework agreement of CPTA is a "best endeavour" agreement urging members to abide by the different provisions. However, in such an agreement, dispute resolution becomes problematic. If a member country defaults on its commitment, it will be difficult for other countries to ensure that the defaulting country abides by the principles. While the CPTA has an article on dispute resolution, the recommendations of the conciliator(s) resolving the dispute is not binding on the parties. This becomes a major concern for India in joining the agreement as it is concerned that some CPTA member countries may use the provisions to their own advantage at the expense of others.

Overall, the discussions show that the concerns are primarily related to the following two areas: (i) the domestic regime is still evolving and (ii) there is a lack of understanding on the benefits of the agreements and there is limited knowledge about this agreement among beneficiaries in India, especially the exporters and importers. The PGAs have not participated in such discussions either.

Endnotes

1. Reforms indeed helped India to improve the country's global ranks in the UN Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (ESCAP, 2021). Also refer De and Kumarasamy (2021) for a comprehensive review of India's trade facilitation.
2. Refer, CBIC for further details, available at https://www.cbic.gov.in/htdocs-cbec/home_links/trade_agreement(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
3. Rate of current and future implementation commitments according to notification data available at https://www.tfadatabase.org/en/members/india
4. Refer, for example, https://www.tfadatabase.org/en(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
5. The list is not exhaustive. However, one can refer https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1633525 (Last accessed on November 10, 2024)
6. Refer, https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2079189
7. Refer, https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/union-budget-2025-2026
8. Based on https://ices.nic.in/ices/aboutus(Last accessed date June 09, 2025). Also refer, https://old.icegate.gov.in/SWIFT/about-us.html
9. Refer, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/India-Presentation.pdf(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
10. Refer, https://www.ciiblog.in/trade-facilitation-reforms-in-india/(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
11. Refer, https://www.icegate.gov.in/about_icegate.html(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
12. Refer, https://www.icegate.gov.in/services/statistics-reports
13. ibid
14. ibid
15. Refer, https://courier.cbic.gov.in/Aboutus.jsp(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
16. Refer, https://www.cbic.gov.in/resources//htdocs-cbec/edited_Fact%20Sheet_05122018.pdf(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
17. Refer, for example, https://aeoindia.gov.in/(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
18. Refer, For more information, https://cip.icegate.gov.in/CIP/static/images/doc/CIP-Tutorial.pdf(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
19. Refer, for more information, https://www.dgft.gov.in/CP/?opt=iec-profile-management(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
20. Refer, for more details, https://www.fieo.org/(Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
21. Based on the checklist that serves to identify potential legal gaps and highlight what may need to be done to ensure the laws support engagement in cross-border paperless trade, as envisaged in the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, which was adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2016. Refer, the Legal and Technical Working Group of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation available at www.unescap.org/resources/readiness-assessments-cross-border-paperless-trade (Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
22. The completed questionnaires of legal and technical readiness are presented as Appendix 3 and Appendix 4, respectively.
23. The DGFT has launched the enhanced Certificate of Origin (eCoO) 2.0 System, a significant upgrade designed to simplify the certification process for exporters and enhance trade efficiency. Referhttps://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2096786#:~:text=As%20of%201st%20January%202025,Get%20Certificate%20of%20Origin%E2%80%9D%20section (Last accessed date June 09, 2025). This trade facilitation initiative has streamlined the certification process, and improved turnaround times for exporters, marking a significant advancement in enhancing the ease of doing business. The platform processes over 7,000 eCoOs daily, including both preferential and non-preferential certificates, connecting 125 issuing agencies that includes 110 national and regional chambers of commerce & industry, over 650 issuing officers and all Indian exporters under one unified system. Reference Public Notice 43/2024-25, dated January 27, 2025, DGFT has introduced the procedure for availing online back-to-back certificates of origin (non-preferential). These certificates cater to goods not of Indian origin, intended for re-export, transhipment or merchanting trade. Issued based on documentary evidence from the foreign country of origin, the back-to-back CoO ensures transparency and accuracy by explicitly mentioning details of origin and supporting documents.
24. Refer, National Trade Facilitation Action Plan 3.0 (2024 – 2027), p. 17
25. However, we also acknowledge that some PGAs do conduct several initiatives on paperless trade capacity building, especially the FFFAI, ICCand AMTOI.
26. The caveat is that there are paperless trade opportunities in existing initiatives, which require a calibrated approach to unlock them. For example, India's membership of the TIR, but there are no such cross-border paperless trade option. Given that India is a member of the TIR, it is possible to utilise the TIR to address cross-border paperless trade issues. Accession to the CPTA can help the 'paperless' aspect by ensuring all submissions related to meeting the TIR compliance.

27. Partial localization is due to prudential laws by sector specific regulators. This is very common in many countries. For example, financial regulators strictly adhere to privacy of data and localization.
28. https://lpi.worldbank.org/2018 (Last accessed date June 09, 2025).
29. Source: https://commerce.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Chapter-9.pdf (Last accessed on November 13, 2024)
30. Source: https://coo.dgft.gov.in (Last accessed on November 13, 2024)

6

Gains for India from Joining the CPTA

There are certain benefits that will accrue to India if the country joins the CPTA. These include the following.

i. **India is already implementing paperless trade and signing the CPTA will help India to reduce the time and cost of trade**

India has been already implementing paperless trade, which has been at the core of logistics and trade facilitation policy for India. The Government of India has recognised benefits, such as empowering business through reduction in logistics' costs, integrating them into GVCs, etc., of trade facilitation and paperless trade. Paperless trade is mentioned in the Group of 20 (G20) discussions under India's Presidency in 2023. One of the documents has endorsed the "High-Level Principles on Digitalisation of Trade Documents"[1] and recognised that "widespread adoption of paperless trade will drive productivity gains and economic growth by reducing trade costs and lowering barriers to entry for MSMEs, including women-owned or women-led MSMEs". There is significant room to cut trade costs through trade digitalisation. The CPTA may help India in expediting digital trade.

Therefore, through the CPTA, India can leverage the initiatives taken such as National Single Window System (NSWS)[2] and digitisation of customs procedures through the Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE),[3] to reduce the cost of cross-border trade transactions. It will help to sign mutual recognition agreements and showcase India's best practices. It will accelerate India's paperless trade facilitation reforms. With rising geo-strategic uncertainties and the tariff threat by trade partners such as the USA, cross-border paperless trade will help reduce trade costs and benefit exporters and importers.

ii. **India's autonomous regime (AR) is aligned with international best practices – WTO TFA and CPTA will help this further**

India ratified the WTO TFA in 2016 and has already implemented all provisions of the agreement and even gone beyond the TFA provisions to include WTO+ TF measures in the India-Australia Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement (India-Australia ECTA).[4]Given that India has benefited from the TFA, acceding to the CPTA can give it complementary benefits. According to Duval et al. (2018), if India implements the WTO TFA together with cross-border paperless trade measures, it could achieve trade cost reductions of 22 per cent, instead of only about 7 per cent if it aims at basic compliance with the TFA. The difference is equivalent to a trade cost saving of more than US$ 3.4 billion per year. If multiple countries implement a common framework for paperless trade, it will lower trade and transactions costs.

India has been already implementing paperless trade, which has been at the core of logistics and trade facilitation policy for India.

India can also help other countries to implement paperless trade.

iii. **India has already implemented many components of paperless trade, which have shown positive results**

In the past, logistics costs in India have been in the range of 14-18 per cent of GDP against the global benchmark of 8 per cent (Kumar and Shah, 2016). However, the country has introduced several measures to improve competitiveness. These include the adoption of digital trade facilitation measures, which have yielded positive outcomes. Munjal and Pohit (2023) estimated that aggregated logistics costs for India fell within the range of 7.8–8.9 per cent of GDP for 2021-22, reflecting an improvement compared to previous estimates. With further implementation of paperless trade measures and infrastructure upgrades, logistics costs are expected to decline, which will reduce overall time and total trade costs, enhancing India's trade efficiency and global competitiveness. Joining the CPTA will further accelerate India's progress in these reforms.

While India continues to implement domestic reforms, there are some gaps which remain, as can be seen by India's score of 66.67 per cent in the cross-border paperless component of the UN global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023.These can be addressed if India joins the CPTA.

With rising geo-strategic uncertainties and the tariff threat by trade partners such as the USA, cross-border paperless trade will help reduce trade costs and benefit exporters and importers.

iv. **India can be a regional leader in capacity building in paperless trade**

India is also a strong developer of technology products, the third largest start up hub, and a leader in the Information Technology (IT) sector, which puts it in a position to train countries in the Association of Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as least developed countries (LDCs) and land-locked least developed countries (LLDC) in the region under the CPTA. The CPTA includes an article on capacity building (Article 14) that encourages parties to provide technical support and assistance to each other to facilitate the implementation of the CPTA Framework Agreement.

Measures such as paperless trade ensure smoother cross-border flows of goods and services, reducing transaction costs and can be a game changer for India.

India also has a potential opportunity to incorporate emerging paperless trade considerations of other trading partners through structured and regular sharing of best practices to ensure interoperability and future cross-border data exchange in a seamless manner. India is a global leader in technology services and a number of Indian start-ups have niche products and services supporting paperless trade. Indian IT companies can get the business of developing systems for CPTA for developing and least developed member states.

Under the New Zealand-Singapore Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA),* the countries have adopted the Pan-European Public Procurement Online (PEPPOL) framework for e-invoicing. PEPPOL is a set of artefacts and specifications enabling cross-border e-procurement, governed by a multi-lateral agreement structure maintained by OpenPeppol. It allows trading partners to exchange standards-based electronic documents such as e-orders, e-advance shipping notes, e-invoices, and e-catalogues over the Peppol network.

*The New Zealand-Singapore Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA), signed in June 2020 and entering into force on January 7, 2021. For more, visit https://surli.cc/ougchq; To know more about Peppol, visit https://peppol.org (last accessed on March 11, 2025)

As more and more countries in South Asia and the rest of Asia, including strategic sub-regions such as North and Central Asia join the CPTA, India stands to benefit geo-strategically from joining the CPTA.

v. **India is already negotiating paperless trade with its bilateral trade agreements**

Paperless trade has featured in various trade agreements across the Asia-Pacific region, streamlining cross-border transactions and enhancing trade efficiency. As India reviews its trade agreements with key partners like ASEAN and South Korea, paperless trade can be a key component of its trade negotiations, and joining the CPTA will help India share the best practices in paperless trade that it has adopted, ensuring seamless integration with GVCs and strengthening its trade competitiveness.

vi. CPTA entails soft commitments giving India the policy space to implement reforms gradually

One of the key advantages of the CPTA is its flexible and phased implementation approach. It provides enough space and time for India to gradually link its national initiatives towards paperless trade with the provisions of the CPTA, and prioritise which sectors can go fully paperless first. There are no binding commitments, large penalties, etc., which can coerce countries into abiding by the agreement, giving them ample space and time to adopt the agreement.

Further, India can also negotiate any carve outs for industries or transition periods to protect domestic industries, such as textiles, gem and jewellery, which are labour intensive and parts of which are in the unorganised sector, from potential disruptions while still benefiting from digital trade integration. This is because there are no rigid timelines that a country has to follow.

vii. CPTA can help in increasing India's participation in GVCs

India's exports have risen from US$466.22 billion in 2013-14 to US$778.21 billion in 2023-24, showing a 67 per cent rise,[5] and the country aims to achieve a US$2 trillion export by 2030.[6] However, as of 2023, India's share in global trade was 2 per cent [Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI, 2024)], one reason for which is high trade and logistics costs. International trade is getting increasingly fragmented, with countries not just trading bilaterally but also becoming part of the GVCs. If India can offer lower trade costs, it will have a competitive edge to become a part of GVCs. Measures such as paperless trade ensure smoother cross-border flows of goods and services, reducing transaction costs (ESCAP and ADB, 2024) and can be a game changer for India.

The Foreign Trade Policy of India, 2023 has the objective of integrating India into GVCs and making India an export hub [Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), 2023], and paperless trade can be a factor in achieving this goal.

viii. Geostrategic benefits for India if it joins the CPTA

As more and more countries in South Asia and the rest of Asia, including strategic sub-regions such as North and Central Asia join the CPTA, India stands to benefit geo-strategically from joining the CPTA.

Many central Asian countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan are members of the CPTA (see Table 1.1).India's 'Connect Central Asia Policy', as reinforced by Indian Prime Minister in 2015 (Menon and Rajiv, 2019), the signing of the Ashgabat Agreement in 2018 and India's initiatives to improve connectivity through Chabahar port in Iran and the INSTC in the region (MEA, 2024), paperless trade and trade facilitation measures can further boost this engagement. It can also help increase India's trade with Central Asia, which was less than 1per cent of India's total trade in 2023, amounting to around US$2 billion, in stark contrast with that of countries like China, whose trade with the region was about US$100 billion.[7]

It can be a tool to counterbalance geo-economic pressures and secure strategic interests. There is a long-standing economic relationship between India and Russia and the countries aim to increase bilateral trade from US$68 billion to US$100 billion by 2030 (Bajpaee and Toremark, 2024). Russia is one of India's most trusted trade partners and India has maintained this relationship despite rising geo-political tensions resulting from measures such as the sanctions being announced against Russia. As the countries aim to diversify their exports, trade facilitation through paperless trade will be a catalyst for trade with Russia, which is already a member of the CPTA.

Endnotes

1 Source:https://www.g20.in/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/ G20_Trade_and_ Investment _ Ministers_ Meeting.pdf (Last accessed on November 7, 2024)

2 The National Single Window System (NSWS) is a digital platform to guide businesses in identifying and applying for approvals according to their requirements in India. For more, visit https://www.nsws.gov.in (Last accessed on March 11, 2025).

3 ICEGATE is the national portal of CBIC that provides e-filing services to exporters, importers and other trading partners and clients of customs. It is also the interface of ICES to provide customs related messages.

4 It came into effect on December 29, 2022. For more, visit https://www.commerce.gov.in/international-trade/trade-agreements/ind-aus-ecta/ (Last accessed on March 11, 2025)

5 Source:https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2098447 (Last accessed on March 12, 2025).

6 Source:https://indbiz.gov.in/india-aims-to-achieve-us-2-trillion-in-total-exports-by-2030/ (Last accessed on March 11, 2025)

7 Source:https://www.india-briefing.com/news/indias-trade-prospects-with-turkmenistan-uzbekistan-and-azerbaijan-22680.html/(Last accessed on March 11, 2025)

7

The Next Steps

The foregoing discussion shows that the benefits of participation in CPTA by India far outweigh the concerns. Becoming a member will help India showcase its best practices, enhance digitalisation and digital trade, participate in capacity building, and drive decisions in the plurilateral framework of CPTA. The country can leverage on its digital competence, take a leadership role in the region, enhance its share in GVCs and strengthen economic relations. For fast-tracking the process of signing of the CPTA, stakeholders suggested the following:

- It is important to highlight that India already meets many CPTA provisions, and full compliance remains a key policy goal even if it has not been achieved yet.
- Industry and trade bodies such as Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), Apparel Export Promotion Council (APEC), etc. need to be consulted to apprise them of the benefits and seek their support. At present, information and knowledge about the benefits of joining CPTA that would accrue to them is limited.
- There should be multi-stakeholder partnerships and interactions. For example, academics and trade bodies can jointly organise events on CPTA. There should be forums for consultations between Indian stakeholders, and between UNESCAP member countries and technical experts.
- The DPIIT, MOCI, customs and MEA are among some of the key government agencies that support India's joining the CPTA. We need to gain the support of PGAs such as the NITI Aayog and the PMO. This can be done through a closed-door meeting of relevant stakeholders to identify roadblocks, if any, and to proceed towards the next steps.

While adopting paperless trade requires domestic procedural changes, inter-governmental collaborations and consultations with relevant stakeholders, the long-term advantages include reduced trade costs, improved export competitiveness and enhanced integration into GVCs. In an era of a changing global strategic order and trade uncertainties, a UN agreement like the CPTA creates a collaborative framework for trade digitalization.

Unlike other trade agreements, the CPTA does not impose rigid, time-bound commitments, allowing India to gradually implement necessary reforms. By joining, India can contribute to shaping the framework rather than adapting to standards set by others. Proactive participation will also position India as a leader in global trade facilitation discussions, ensuring its interests are well represented. As paperless trade was a part of discussions during India's G20 Presidency, it indicates that geopolitical concerns regarding

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its adoption are overstated. The government's emphasis on digital trade facilitation suggests a recognition of the economic advantages of paperless trade measures.

Thus, India stands to gain significantly by embracing digital trade facilitation and strengthening its trade ecosystem through CPTA membership.

7.1 Post-accession work plan[1]

With reference to Article 12 of CPTA on the action plan and the explanatory note of the CPTA, India has to come out with an action plan consisting of both collective and individual components. While the collective action plan outlines joint measures to be implemented by all Parties, the individual action plan is created and implemented by each Party at the national level, based on a self-assessment.

Each Party is invited to share its individual action plan with other Parties through the Standing Committee to share success stories and facilitate a participatory process rather than to compare progress between Parties. It is anticipated that no country will need to create such a plan from scratch, as all countries in the Asia and the Pacific have already implemented measures for paperless trade, with some also advancing cross-border paperless trade.

The individual action plans can incorporate all ongoing and planned activities and projects related to paperless and cross-border paperless trade that are already in place within a country. Additionally, countries may include new activities and initiatives in their individual action plans as part of the implementation of the CPTA. Each country may establish a mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of such individual actions by various government agencies and stakeholders. Additionally, each country should develop a system to monitor implementation and regularly update the plan to ensure its continued effectiveness. To support the parties to prepare such individual action plans, the Standing Committee, at its second session, adopted a template for developing individual action plans (refer to Annex 1).[2] The secretariat has also prepared a current note to support parties to fill in the template.

This institutional arrangement underscores the critical importance of establishing a national committee to oversee the implementation of the CPTA. In the absence

India stands to gain significantly by embracing digital trade facilitation and strengthening its trade ecosystem through CPTA membership.

of such a committee, the government may designate a lead agency to co-ordinate the efforts. Ideally, a senior government official with the authority to issue directives to all relevant government agencies should spearhead this initiative to ensure comprehensive collaboration and effective development of the action plan. If needed and whenever resources are available, national consultants or experts may be hired to support data collection and preparation of the first draft.

7.2 Key steps to making the individual action plan

- Stocktaking and incorporating existing plans on paperless or cross-border paperless trade: If existing plans related to trade facilitation and paperless trade are in place, integrate them into the individual action plan to maintain continuity. This means that each government agency may provide inputs on its ongoing or planned activities for paperless or cross-border paperless trade by filling out relevant sections of the form in Annex 1.
- Planning new activities for the individual action plan: Each party may include new activities and initiatives in their individual action plans as part of the implementation of the CPTA. In planning such new activities or making new plans, a party may wish to take all the above listed guiding principles as reference.
- Drafting, consultation, validation and finalisation: An initial draft of the action plan may be prepared and circulated among government agencies and stakeholders for feedback. National consultation meetings to invite public comments may be organised to ensure inclusivity. The government may decide to make the finalised individual action plan into official (policy) documents to ensure effective implementation. Progress of implementing and updating the national plan should be shared with national stakeholders.
- Sharing the individual action plans and the progress of implementation with other parties of CPTA: This step involves sharing the individual action plan and reporting the progress of implementation with other parties of CPTA, especially during the regular sessions of the Standing Committee.

- Updating the individual action plan: This should be carried out at least once a year, and the updated individual action plan should be shared with other member countries during the regular sessions of the Standing Committee or Paperless Trade Council.

7.3 Required actions

- Establish a national policy framework for paperless trade: India has already announced the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan and set-up the National Trade Facilitation Committee. In view of India's progressive activities on paperless trade, it is possible to roll out a national policy framework in the short run, potentially under this existing committee.
- Create an enabling domestic legal environment for paperless trade: India's legal environment has already been upgraded to enable paperless trade. To foster an enabling domestic legal environment for paperless trade, India has already ensured that electronic transactions and documents are legally recognised as equivalent to their paper counterparts, promoting efficient governance, and engaging stakeholders while providing technical assistance. However, this is a work in progress and further reforms and legal updating to comply with paperless trade obligations are needed from time to time.
- Develop or upgrade paperless trade systems consistently with the general principles: India is one of the countries, which has successfully upgraded its paperless trade system over time. However, additional work is needed to scale up the paperless trade environment in terms of capacitating related agencies and stakeholders.
- Develop and agree on a mutual recognition scheme for exchange of trade-related data in electronic form: India has already signed the MRAs for the AEO with Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the USA, the UAE, Australia and Russia, enabling reciprocal recognition of AEO status and trade facilitation benefits. Of these, Korea and Russia are already members of the CPTA. Accession to the CPTA may help facilitate MRAs with other CPTA members. India has already signed an MoU with Republic of Korea for mutual recognition of each other's digital certificates that are used for electronic signature recognition. India can sign more MRAs and MoUs within the CPTA framework.
- Select and use relevant international standards and guidelines: India's trade facilitation has been guided by international standards and best practices. Accession to the CPTA will help India promote the international standards and best practices it has adopted or developed in other countries, which will enhance interoperability across systems. India will also be able to work with participating countries to shape implementation guidelines for cross-border paperless trade and to select among emerging and overlapping international standards currently not adopted by India.
- Consider and adopt available and accepted international legal instruments: Accession to CPTA will provide India a better understanding of how various partner countries are adopting and implementing relevant international legal instruments. This includes, for example, the series of model laws and related instruments issued by UNCITRAL in this area, as well as the various conventions involving exchange of trade-related documents.
- Initiate and launch pilot projects: India may have to plan and implement pilot projects soon after accession and report the progress of pilot projects to the Standing Committee. In doing so, India may take up a leadership role in facilitating cross-border paperless trade in the region.

- Co-operate in providing technical support and assistance: As a leader in legal knowledge and technology services in the region, India may provide assistance to other developing and LDCs to develop both legal and technology processes for paperless trade and to implement cross-border paperless trade. Within South Asia, India's neighbouring landlocked countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal will benefit from paperless trade and working with such countries on paperless trade will also strengthen India's geo-strategic interests.

Endnotes

1 Post-accession work plan for India has been drawn based on https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/A%20note%20to%20support%20the%20parties%20to%20prepare%20Individual%20Action%20Plans%20to%20implement%20the%20Framework%20Agreement%20on%20Cross-Border%20Paperless%20Trade%20in%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific%20%28CPTA%29_0.pdf (Last accessed date June 09, 2025).

2 Annexure is available at https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/A%20note%20to%20support%20the%20parties%20to%20prepare%20Individual%20Action%20Plans%20to%20implement%20the%20Framework%20Agreement%20on%20Cross-Border%20Paperless%20 Trade % 20 in% 20 Asia%20 and%20the%20Pacific% 20% 8 CPTA % 290. pdf (Last accessed date June 09, 2025).

8

Conclusions

Cross-border paperless trade is an extension of the general concept of paperless trade and refers to "trade taking place on the basis of electronic communications, including exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form". Paperless trade systems involve having interoperable legal/regulatory and technical frameworks conforming to international standards in which paperless trade transactions take place – for example, digital customs system, electronic single window facility, e-port management systems, etc. The concept has been covered under multiple global agreements such as the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce (JSI), etc., but the most significant of them all is the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA). The CPTA is solely dedicated to promoting cross-border paperless trade amongst its members.

India is one of the leading founder developers of the CPTA. Negotiation of the CPTA was initiated by the Republic of Korea through a resolution adopted by consensus at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2014. India indeed played an important role in the development of the treaty. The feasibility study underpinning the negotiation was conducted by the experts of Indian Department of Commerce, and India played an active role throughout the negotiation of the text of the treaty, including as Chair of the Technical Working Group of the Interim Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation, the intergovernmental body that negotiated the text of the treaty.

Today, India has fully implemented the TFA and has gone beyond commitments there in terms of digitalisation, making India ready to take a leading role in shaping cross-border paperless trade initiatives. This study shows that India has undertaken multiple domestic reforms to improve its logistics performance and boost trade facilitation, which has been visible in its performance in global surveys and indices. The outcomes of these have been positive and there is a potential for India to further improve its cross-border paperless trade by addressing the remaining and new gaps through the CPTA. Acknowledging that India has some legal and technical gaps in cross-border paperless trade, it will still be in India's interest to accede the CPTA as there are no difficult or binding commitments, the agreement is easy to enter into, and the agreement provides enough flexibility to countries to implement reforms at their own pace. Joining the CPTA will signal India's commitment to embracing digital technologies and promoting sustainable trade practices and narrowing the gaps in paperless trade facilitation. Therefore, acceding to the CPTA could boost not only cross-border paperless trade but also accumulate India's economic heft.

Moving ahead, this study has presented the gains for India from joining the CPTA and the steps to be taken to take the agenda forward. In the current global scenario of geo-political tensions and rising logistics costs, accession to the CPTA will give some certainty to India's exporters and MSMEs and help reduce overall logistics costs, ensuring better integration with the GVCs and improve competitiveness.

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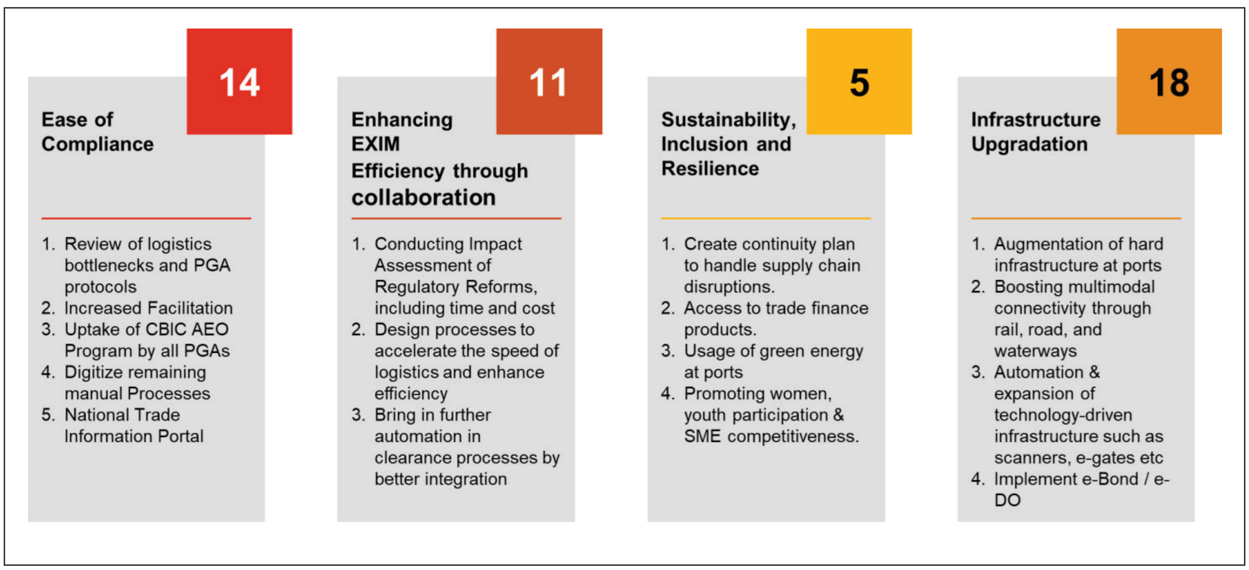
Appendices

Appendix 1

National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) 3.0
2024-2027

India has been implementing Trade Facilitation (TF) plus measures since 2017 through the creation of NTFAP 2017-2020 and NTFAP 2020-2023. Its path-breaking reforms in trade facilitation have highlighted India's role as one of the frontrunners in implementing and adopting TF measures. The implementation of these reforms has led to a substantial reduction in the average release time (ART) across all the port categories. The NTFAP 3.0 has been prepared to provide a way forward to implement the next generation of trade facilitation reforms. It aims at furthering progress on key themes pivotal to enhanced trade facilitation. A 360-degree approach, including learnings from implementation of previous NTFAP 2017-2020 and 2020-2023, and interaction with private stakeholders, industry associations and line ministries, has been adopted to prepare the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan 3.0 (for the period 2024 to 2027). The framework of the NTFAP 3.0 is illustrated in the exhibit given below.



The NTFAP 3.0 (for the period 2024-2027) is a live document prepared to accelerate growth through efficient infrastructure, simplified regulatory compliance, collaboration amongst all stakeholders and the promotion of sustainable resilient trade facilitation measures. It recommends measures to reduce the overall time taken to clear goods, aiming for the following targets:

- Imports – less than 48 hours for Sea / ICD / ICP and less than 24 hours for Air
- Exports – less than 24 hours for Sea / ICD / ICP and less than 12 hours for Air

Source: National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF) Secretariat, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), New Delhi

Appendix 2

India's Major Trade Facilitation Initiatives

Sl. No.	Initiatives/Schemes	Year of Implementation and Link/Notification No.
1	Electronic Submission of Appendix 4H Certificates by DGFT	2024 https://amethyst-nancy-94.tiiny.site/
2	The ICETRACK mobile app was launched by the CBIC	2024 https://old.icegate.gov.in/privacy_policy.html
3	The Indian Customs Tablet (ICETAB)	August 23, 2024 https://chennaicustoms.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/PN-40-of-2024-Use-of-ICETABS.pdf
4	The Automatic System-based Issue of Status Holder Certificate (e-SHC)	2023 https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/b20d3441-7d0c-4c05-8362-9b80fba32897/TN.pdf
5	Electronic Bank Realisation Certificate (eBRC) (Upgraded)	November 15, 2023 https://www.dgft.gov.in/CP/?opt=eBRC
6	Centralized Video Conference Facility at DGFT Headquarters[1]	November 8, 2023 32/2023
7	Deferred Payment of Import Duty (amendment) 2023. Deferred Payment Scheme of 2016	August 3, 2023 16th November 2016
8	Introduction of Online facility to RequestAppointment for Virtual Meeting/ Personal Hearing to Exporters from Offices of the DGFT[2]	June 1, 2023 06/2023-24
9	Electronic Filing and Issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin (CoO) under the India-Australia Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement	December 29, 2022 23/2022-23
10	Anonymised Escalation Mechanism (AEM) Introduced by the Directorate of Systems' ICEGATE Advisory.	August 2, 2022 http://45.79.121.144/kolkata_customs/public/storage/uploads/custom_notice_order/20231117111616.pdf
11	The Suvidha Pass Facilitation System for Vehicles	August 2022 https://abhinavpahal.nic.in/uploads/96pSOjnThXSuvidha%20Vehicle.pdf

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12	Electronic Filing and Issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin (CoO) for India's Exports under India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.	May 1, 2022 (05/2022-23)
13	Issuance and Electronic Verification of Pre-Shipment Inspection Certificate (PSIC)	May 1, 2022 https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/c0dcb9d9-598f-44bc-bdb8-fb93eb088145/Trade%20Notice%203%20-%20Go-Live%20of%20Inspection%20Agency%20Recognition%2026%20Apr%202022.pdf
14	Online Applications for EODC/Closure under Advance Authorisation Scheme (AAS)	December 31, 2021 28/2021-22- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/691a804e-c502-4196-bc43-c49fbceca46a/Trade%20Notice%2028.pdf
15	Electronic Filing of Registration-cum-Membership Certificate (RCMC)[3]/ Registration Certificate (RC) through the Common Digital Platform.	November 30, 2021 27/2021-22- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/a0ecf3e1-efe0-4e56-adda-429cd96a152a/TN.pdf
16	The Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti (PMGS) National Master Plan	October 13, 2021 https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1988824
17	The National Single Window System (NSWS)	September 22, 2021 https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1880251
18	Mandatory Recording of Information about Transfer of DFIA (Duty Free ImportAuthorization) Scrips and Paperless Issuance of DFIA Scrips	May 25, 2021 06/2021-22- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/59b3ae8a-473b-4410-9939-e971e78e150f/Trade%20Notice%20No%2006%20dated%2025%20May%202021_DFIA.pdf
19	Electronic Filing of Non-Preferential Certificate of Origin (CoO) through the Common Digital Platform for India's Exports	April 15, 2021 48/2020-21 https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/a95d163c-759a-4e2a-b87f-e77f82fa25a9/Trade%20Notice%2048%20-Launch%20of%20NP%20CoO.pdf
20	Issuance of Certificate of Origins (Non-Preferential) [CoOs(NP)] through Common Digital Platform (CDP).	April 1, 2021 42/2020-21- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/2dc19ed7-3e7e-4e4b-aecc-a0bb5a5056fb/TN%2042%20dt%2019-02-2021.pdf

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21	The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Made its Virtual Offices Paperless, Contactless and Faceless.	March 2021 https://commerce.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Electronic-Governance-and-Trade-Facilitation-Reforms.pdf
22	Electronic Filing and Issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin (CoO) for India's Exports under India-Mercosur PTA and India-Thailand EHS.	February 25, 2021 43/2020-21- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/76533379-16b1-4fca-b113-fb831c448a79/Trade%20Notice%2043%20-%20eCoO%20-%20IMPTA%20and%20ITEHS.pdf
23	Introduction of Online E-certificate Management System for Imports	February 22, 2021 41/2020-21- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/b03618c6-2a74-430b-b2ea-764ebf3b0fcf/Trade%20Notice%2041-%20e-Certificate%20Management.pdf
24	Introduction of Online E-tariff Rate Quota System for Imports	February 8, 2021 40/2020-21- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/7c95bca8-1524-463b-9cfa-fef49449d6c4/Trate%20notice%20no.40.pdf
25	Introduction of Online e-PRC System for Application Seeking Policy[4]	January 25, 2021 38/2020-21- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/a4931de0-8b61-438b-833b-79e8b432ebba/Trade%20Notice%20No.38%20dt%2015.01.2021.pdf
26	Auto Renewal of AEO-T1 validity for Continuous Certification Based on Continuous Compliance Monitoring	2021 https://aeoindia.gov.in/SourceCode/Website/pdf/downloads/circulars/Circular_No_18_2021_dated_310721.pdf
27	Linking/Registration of IECs in The New Revamped DGFT Online Environment	October 28, 2020 33/2020-21- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/6d43e4ea-8c2e-4309-ac99-840ee71adfa6/Trade%20Notice%2033%20for%20Stage%201B%20go-live.pdf
28	Electronic Issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin (CoO) for India's Exports to UK under Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)	October 13, 2020 37/2020-21- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/a27a68f5-308c-4ea6-889e-0dafb8739752/Trade%20Notice%20-%2037.pdf
29	CBIC Enables End-to-End Paperless Exports under Turant Customs.	June 22, 2020 https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1633525

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30	TurantSuvidha Kendra (TSK)	June 8, 2020 https://www.mumbaicustomszone1.gov.in/writereaddata/images/publicnotice/PN_TSK-Amended_12_copy.pdf
31	Electronic Filling and Issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin for India's Exports under AIFTA, IJCEPA, SAPTA, SAFTA, APTA, ISLFTA	April 7, 2020 01/2020-21- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/Trade%20Notice%201%20eCoO%20go-live%207Apr2020.pdf
32	Paperless Customs – Electronic Communication of PDF-based GatePass and OOC Copy of Bill of Entry to Custom Brokers/Importers.	2020 https://www.matexil.org/gallery/view/65243
33	The Common Digital Platform for the Issuance of Electronic Certificates of Origin (CoO)	September 2019 34/2015-2020 https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/Trade%20Notice%20No%2034.pdf
34	Online Filling of Applications for Claiming Assistance under Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) for Specified Agriculture Products Scheme	June 25, 2019 29/2019-20- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/trade-notice.pdf
35	Online Filing and Tracking of Quality Complaints/Trade Disputes[5]	April 26, 2019 05/2015-2020- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/Public%20Notice%20No%2005%20dt%20260419%20English.pdf
36	Online Filing, Processing and System-based Approval of MEIS Applications in respect of SEZ Shipping Bills[6]	April 8, 2019 51/2015-2020- https://apeda.gov.in/apedawebsite/DGFT_Tradenotice/trade%20notice_51_0.pdf
37	Online Filing and Processing of Applications for Export of Restricted items (Non-SCOMET) at DGFT HQ	March 19, 2019 50/2018-19- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/Trade%20Notice%2050%20dated%2018.03.2019_0.pdf
38	Online Facility for Obtaining Import License for Restricted Items from March 18, 2019	March 18, 2019 49/2015-2020- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/scan0086.pdf
39	Online Module for Filing & Tracking Quality Complaints/Trade Disputes relating to International Trade.	February 11, 2019 47/2015-2020- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/Trade%20Notice%20No.%2047%20dated%2011-02-2019.pdf
40	Online Issuance of RCMC[7] by EPCs and Its Uploading on the DGFT Server	December 31, 2018 37/2018-19- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/TN%20No-37%20dt-2.11.2018.pdf

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41	New E-Com Module for SEIS, ANF 3B[8] to be Available from September 20,2018, for Application	September 1, 2018 28/2018-19- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/Trade%20Notice%20No.%2028_0.pdf
42	Acceptance of Installation Certificate under EPCG Scheme[9] by the RAs, wherein Installation Certificate is Submitted Beyond 18 months, Without Penalty	14th August 2018 30/2015-2020- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/PUBLIC%20NOTICE%2030%20english.pdf
43	Online Application for Importer Exporter Code (IEC) Number	August 8, 2018 27/2018-19- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/Trade%20Notice-27.pdf
44	Online IEC Applications	January 1, 2015 83 (RE-2013)/2009-2014- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/pn8315.pdf
45	AEO Programme Digitalisation – Development of Web-based Application for AEO-T1	2018 https://aeoindia.gov.in/SourceCode/Website/pdf/downloads/circulars/circular_no_51_of_2018_customs.pdf
46	Online Issuance of RCMC (Registration-cum-Membership Certificate)	April 2, 2017 01/2018- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/TN0118.pdf
47	Single Application for Filing Claim under MEIS for Shipments from Different EDI Ports	May 27, 2016 13/2015-2020- https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/PN1316_0.pdf
48	Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade (SWIFT)	2016 https://old.icegate.gov.in/SWIFT/index.html
49	Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme	2011 https://upload.indiacode.nic.in/showfile?actid=AC_CEN_2_2_00042_196252_1534829466423&type=circular&filename=Circular%20No.37-11docx.pdf

1. Centralised Video Conference Facility at DGFT Headquarters – To enhance trade facilitation and provide efficient grievance redressal mechanisms, DGFT has introduced thenew facility of centralised Video Conference facility at DGFT HQs for the benefit of the exporting community.
2. To facilitate trade and to extend proactive hand holding and support to the exporting community, an online facility of requesting appointment for virtual meeting/personal hearing to exporters is introduced.
3. A Registration-cum-Membership Certificate (RCMC) is a document that allows an exporter to import or export restricted products under the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

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4. An "e-PRC System" refers to an online platform where businesses can submit applications seeking policy relaxation or "Policy Relaxation Committee" (PRC) approvals, essentially facilitating trade by allowing for streamlined requests to modify existing trade regulations when facing specific challenges, all done digitally through a dedicated government portal.
5. A digital system where businesses or individuals can submit complaints related to the quality of goods or services in international trade, and then monitor the progress of their complaint through an online portal.
6. Online filing, processing and system-based approval of MEIS applications in respect of SEZ shipping bills" refers to the process where exporters operating within a special economic zone (SEZ) can submit applications to claim benefits under the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) electronically through a dedicated online platform.
7. RCMC stands for Registration-cum-Membership Certificate. Itis a certificate that validates an exporter's registration with an export promotion council (EPC) or other authorised agencies.
8. The e-commerce module for the Service Exports from India (SEIS) scheme is used to apply for SEIS benefits online. The ANF 3B (AayatNiryat form) is the application form for the SEIS scheme. The relevant forms, including the ANF 3B and the Annexure to ANF 3B, are available online. The SEIS scheme encourages and maximises the export of services from India.
9. The Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) scheme allows exporters to import custom-duty free capital goods and spare parts for exports. The DGFT is the licensing authority for the EPCG scheme.

Appendix 3

Cross-Border Paperless Trade: A Technical Readiness Checklist India Assessment by Authors, May 2025

Legal and Technical Working Group of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation

Introduction

1. The checklist will help users to assess the degree to which the technical environment of their country is ready to support cross-border paperless trade, identify existing technical gaps and design actions to improve the technical environment. The checklist will also help to raise the awareness of its users on technical issues in cross-border paperless trade.
2. It should be noted that the checklist is not intended to assess the readiness of a country to join the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, which was adopted as a United Nations treaty in 2016. This treaty enables parties to gradually adapt their trade procedures and related systems for the purpose of cross-border trade without paper. It is not necessary to modernize procedures and systems before ratifying or acceding to the Agreement.[1] Paperless trade implementation is a work in progress, and the Framework Agreement is a tool meant to support such progress regardless of the level of readiness of a country.
3. The checklist is in the form of a questionnaire on technical issues and motivation factors in implementing paperless trade systems and cross-border data exchange. Itis necessary to assess the status of paperless trade systems implementation at the national level before looking into readiness for cross-border data exchange. The checklist takes into consideration national issues such as the implementation of electronic and paperless transactions at the national level, and the importance of a single window for cross-border paperless trade data exchange. The questionnaire is structured into two sections: section A – paperless trade system at the national level and section B – national status towards cross-border data exchange.
4. Section A focuses on technical issues related to the implementation of electronic trade systems and paperless environment at the national level. Technical issues are grouped into the following eight categories: (a) institutional and governance bodies for electronic data exchange in a paperless environment; (b) level of automation; (c) information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure (connectivity, sustainability and recovery); (d) security; (e)business process re- engineering; (f) data harmonization and standardization; (g) capacity-building; and (h) other matters.
5. Section B is aimed at assessing the ability of a country or an organization to embark on cross-border paperless trade data exchange. The questions are related to various issues and challenges in the implementation of paperless trade systems and cross-border data exchange. The answers to these questions will help to reveal the current status and assess the level of readiness to implement paperless trade systems and cross-border data exchange.
6. The questions in sections A and B may be answered by the relevant government personnel involved in trade facilitation and cross-border trade activities. It is recommended that all relevant government personnel engaged in elements of paperless trade and key private stakeholders collaborate in completing the checklist.

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A. Paperless trade system at the national level

No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
A1.	**Governance bodies**[2] One of the critical success factors for implementation of paperless trade systems is strong commitment from the Head of Government, without which many projects of this magnitude tend to stall. When top management is committed to spearhead a project, issues of financial support and access to other resources may be addressed more readily. Coordination among government agencies and between the government and the private sectors is not an easy task but it can be carried out more efficiently and effectively with the establishment of an institutional body equipped with a strong governance structure. The institutional set-up provides avenue for relevant officials to come to get her to discuss functionalities and other technical as well as legal matters. By establishing the role and responsibilities of each unit/group as well as reporting mechanisms, the governance structure expedites the implementation of paperless trade systems.		
A1.1	Is there a governance structure established for paperless trade, (e.g. national trade facilitation council)?	Yes	
A1.2	Does it include all the community partners/stakeholders (government and private sector)?	Yes	
A1.3	Who chairs this governance structure?	Cabinet Secretary, Government of India	
A2.	**Level of automation** It is not feasible for an organization or agency to consider implementing paperless trade systems without the ability to process electronic documents, information or data, let alone the subsequent cross-border data exchange.		
A2.1	Electronic systems	Work in progress	
A2.1.1	Has your country implemented electronic customs (and other services that facilitate customs declarations in an electronic format)? *If yes, please answer A2.1.1.1 – A2.1.1.6.*	Yes, e-Single Window has been implemented	
A2.1.1.1	Does it have the capability to receive, process and issue documents electronically?	Yes	
A2.1.1.2	Is it integrated with an electronic payment system?	Yes	
A2.1.1.3	Does it have the ability to authenticate users electronically?	Yes	
A2.1.1.4	Does it ensure data/document security?	Yes	
A2.1.1.5	What is the percentage of trade covered under this system?		
A2.1.1.6	Are community partners/stakeholders connected to it electronically?	Yes	

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
A2.1.2	Has your country implemented electronic port systems (including air, sea, road, rail, and inland ports)? *If yes, please answer A2.1.2.1 – A2.1.2.6.*	Yes, partly. Electronic port community systems have been implemented in major seaports (PCS), airports (ACCS), Container handling units and some land ports.	
A2.1.2.1	Does it have the ability to receive, process and issue documents electronically?	Yes	
A2.1.2.2	Is it integrated with an electronic payment system?	Yes	
A2.1.2.3	Does it have the ability to authenticate users electronically?	Yes	
A2.1.2.4	Does it ensure data/document security?	Yes	
A2.1.2.5	What is the percentage of trade covered under these systems?		
A2.1.2.6	Are community partners/stakeholders connected to it electronically?	Yes	
A2.1.3	Has your country implemented electronic licenses, electronic permits and electronic certificates? (Please fill out the appendix for this question.)	Yes, partly. For example, e-COO	
A2.1.4	Has your country implemented any cross- border trade systems other than those specified above? *If yes, please answer A2.1.4.1 – A2.1.4.5.*	Yes, partially	
A2.1.4.1	Does it have the ability to receive, process and issue documents electronically?	Yes	
A2.1.4.2	Is it integrated with an electronic payment system?	Yes	
A2.1.4.3	Does it have the capability to authenticate users electronically?	Yes but Mutual recognition arrangements (MRA) are being worked out.	
A2.1.4.4	Does it ensure data/document security?	Yes but MRAs are being worked out.	
A2.1.4.5	What is the percentage of trade covered under these systems?	Very minimal for want of MRAs and trading partner's interest.	

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
A2.1.5	What is your country's targeted timeline to cover all trade transactions through these systems (i.e., e-customs, e-port, e-certificates, e-licenses, e-permits and others)?		
A2.2	Has a single window system been implemented in your country to expedite cargo movement/clearance and to facilitate the international trade supply chain? *If yes, please answer A2.2.1 – A2.2.4. If no, please answer A2.2.5.*	Yes	
A2.2.1	How does it receive data electronically, i.e., what kind of user interface and communication channel is used (Internet- based network or dedicated/ secured private network)?	Both	
A2.2.2	Does it support a paperless environment?	Yes	
A2.2.3	How many agencies are connected to the single window? Please list them.		
A2.2.4	Who operates this system?	CBIC, MoF, IPA, Airports etc	
A2.2.5	What is your country's future plan and the targeted timeline to implement a single window system?	Not applicable	
A3.	**Information and communications technology infrastructure for paperless trade** Good information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure is an essential element of an efficient paperless trade system. The primary function of the network is to serve as a secure channel for information exchange between the participating parties. The lack of Internet service could be one of the obstacles to full implementation of a trade facilitation system when the business process is incomplete due to missing parties in network connectivity. There are various options of network, such as multiprotocol label switching (MLPS), Internet protocol (IP), virtual private network (VPN) and secure hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP). Regardless of the choice of options, the network should allow connectivity and interoperability between heterogeneous platforms and support various protocols and exchange paradigms within a secure operating environment. It is not uncommon that different stakeholders have different levels of computerization and systems on different platforms. To ease integration, interfacing and interoperability between these systems, a single window system which connects them needs to support interface with heterogeneous systems. Putting in place a strategic plan to address ICT infrastructure issues and a disaster recovery plan should be part of a business continuity plan. It is essential to ensure the effects of operating disruptions are properly mitigated.		

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
A3.1	Is network service available at all border posts, including ports, airports and cargo clearance facilities, in your country? If not, what is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to connect the stakeholders of the logistic and supply chain, including controlling agencies?	Yes	
A3.2	Are any of the systems mentioned in A2.1, "Electronic systems", connected via a common or single network? *If yes, please answer A3.2.1 – A3.2.6.*	Hybrid	
A3.2.1	Is it integrated and secure?	Yes	
A3.2.2	Is it able to provide a high availability rate of minimum 99.9 per cent in terms of service level agreement for trade data exchange in paperless environment?	Yes	
A3.2.3	Is it able to support various communication protocols?	yes	
A3.2.4	Is it able to provide secure information exchanges that ensure confidentiality and data integrity?	yes	
A3.2.5	Is it designed to take into account future requirements such as device and technology upgrades?	yes	
A3.2.6	If any of the above (A3.2.1–A3.2.5) is lacking, what is your country's future plan to upgrade it and what is the targeted timeline?		
A3.3	Is the single window system, if implemented, interoperable with other systems?	yes	
A3.3.1	Is it able to integrate, interface and/or interoperate with other existing heterogeneous systems (i.e., with systems on a different platform)?	yes	
A3.3.2	If it does support (i.e., is interoperable with) heterogeneous systems, what is the method of integration/interfacing?		
A3.4	Strategic plan to address ICT infrastructure issues	To connect single window with partner countries and regions	

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
A3.4.1	Does your country have a strategic plan to address ICT infrastructure issues (for paperless trade)?	Yes, National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP).	
A.3.4.2	If not, what is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to establish a strategic plan?		
A3.5	Disaster recovery		
A3.5.1	Is there a policy for the establishment of a disaster recovery plan at the agency level?	yes	
A3.5.1.1	If yes, please indicate the level of implementation for the disaster recovery plan (specify percentage of agencies).	100	
A3.5.2	Is there a policy for the establishment of a disaster recovery plan at the national level?	yes	
A3.5.2.1	If yes, please indicate whether the disaster recovery plan is implemented at the national level.	yes	
A3.5.3	If there is no policy for the establishment of a disaster recovery plan, what is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to set up a disaster recovery plan?		
A3.6	Does your country have a business continuity plan for paperless trade systems?	This has been covered in NTFAP and ICES.	
A3.6.1	If yes, is it regularly tested at an established frequency?	yes	
A3.6.2	If not, what is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to develop a business continuity plan?		
A4.	**Security** The confidence of users to replace paper-based document with electronic information or data depends to an extent on the security of the information technology system that manages electronic data.		

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
A4.1	Is there an information technology security policy for your country? If yes, please specify.	National Cyber Security Policy (2013); National Cybersecurity Strategy (2020); Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act):; Technology (Amendment) Act 2008; Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:	
A4.2	If any of the systems mentioned in A2.1, "Electronic systems", have been implemented, what kind of security measures are in place to protect them from unauthorized access?	Data Security and Protection: India is committed to ensuring robust data security measures in its digital landscape, recognizing the importance of trust and resilience in the digital economy. Cybersecurity Software and Equipment: The Indian government is increasingly focused on modernizing security equipment and supporting the growth of the safety and security sector, which includes cybersecurity software and equipment. International Cooperation: The National Cybersecurity Strategy emphasizes international cooperation as a key element in building a robust cybersecurity ecosystem.	

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
A4.3	What kind of authentication mechanism is used to ensure security of information transmitted electronically?	Password-based authentication, multi-factor authentication (MFA), biometric authentication, token-based authentication, and certificate-based authentication	
A4.4	What kind of communication protocol is used for electronic data exchange currently?	For electronic data exchange (EDI), common communication protocols include AS2 (Applicability Statement 2), FTP (File Transfer Protocol), SFTP (Secure File Transfer Protocol), and HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure).	
A4.5	What is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to enhance the security level in A4.1 and A4.2?	It's an ongoing process	
A5.	**Business process re-engineering** Failure to review and re-engineer a manual procedure/process in the development of an electronic system will often lead to inefficiency of the system. It will jeopardize integration/interfacing with other systems if business processes across the board are not streamlined to ensure the seamless flow of information. Implementation of an electronic system often begins with parallel processing of paper documents, but the ultimate goal is to discontinue the usage of paper documents.		
A5.1	Have the stakeholders in your country conducted re-engineering and streamlining of business processes to support paperless trade or a national single window:	Yes	
A5.1.1	At the agency level? (Please list them.)	Yes	
A5.1.2	At the national level?	Yes	
A5.2	Has your country implemented any paperless trade transactions?	Yes	
A5.2.1	If yes, what kind of transactions have been implemented, and what type of electronic documents are exchanged?	Filling export and import documents.	
A5.2.2	If not, what is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to do away with paper- based documents?	Not applicable	

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
A6.	**Data harmonization and standardization** Data compatibility is one of the main issues that needs to be addressed in various connectivity projects in and around the region. Thus, if data harmonization and standardization can be carried out as early as possible, seamless data exchange will be achieved without compatibility issues especially if it is based on international standards.		
A6.1	Has data harmonization and standardization been conducted for the data elements for paperless trade:	Work in progress	
A6.1.1	At the agency level?	Yes	
A6.1.2	At the national level?	Yes	
A6.1.3	If yes, has a data model been adopted and is it based on international standards/guidelines such as the United Nations Rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport, United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations, Core Component Technical Specification, core component library and/or the World Customs Organization Data Model?	Based on WCO data model & UN/CEFACT standards/specifications/ recommendations	
A7.	**Capacity-building** Capacity-building is an ongoing activity in most projects but is important particularly at the outset to ensure stakeholders have a common understanding of the project and their respective roles and responsibilities to make it a success.		
A7.1	Has your country conducted any awareness programme and/or workshop to ensure the stakeholders, including government agencies and traders, have a common understanding on paperless trade as well as the irrespective roles to help realize cross-border paperless trade data exchange?	Yes	
A7.2	Do the stakeholders of cross-border trade in your country fully understands the single window approach?	Yes	
A7.3	Has your country conducted any awareness programme or workshop on single window?	Yes	

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
A7.4	What is your country's future plan and timeline to enhance capacity-building for cross-border paperless trade data exchange?	It's an ongoing process	
A8.	**Other matters**		
A8.1	Computer literacy		
A8.1.1	What is the level of computer literacy in the trading community in your country as a whole to support electronic transactions? (70–100%=high, 20–69%=medium, 0–19%=low)	High	
A8.1.2	Are they ready to accept changes arising from re-engineered business processes in implementing paperless trade systems?	yes	
A8.2	Budget constraints		
A8.2.1	Does your country encounter budget constraints in implementing paperless trade systems?	No	
A8.2.2	If yes, what is your country's future plan to overcome this financial constraint and what is the targeted timeline?		

B. National status towards cross-border data exchange

No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
Ideally, all stakeholders of cross-border trade should be on board the cross-border data exchange project to bring forth full benefits. In this respect, it is important that their information technology systems support cross-border data exchange. A single window system is meant to connect systems of the stakeholders via a single point of connectivity providing more efficient integration/interfacing. Likewise, a national single window, which acts as the national single point of connectivity, will ease integration/interfacing for cross-border data exchange with dialogue partners.			
B1.	**Electronic systems**		
B1.1	If any of the systems mentioned in A2.1, "Electronic systems" have been implemented, what percentage support cross-border data exchange?	Minimal	
B2.	**Single window system**		
B2.1	IfasinglewindowsystemmentionedinA2.2 has been implemented, does it support cross- border data exchange?	Yes	

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/ issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
B2.2	If yes, does it function as the national single window, which acts as the national single point of connectivity for any cross-border data exchange with other dialogue partners?	Yes	
When business process re-engineering is done on domestic procedures/processes for paperless transactions at the national level, it has to take into consideration requirements for cross-border data exchange whereby paper documents will not be exchanged across-borders.			
B3.	**Business process re-engineering**		
B3.1	If your country has implemented paperless transactions at the national level, as mentioned in A5.2, has re-engineering and streamlining of business processes been conducted to support cross-border data exchange?	Partial	
B3.2	If not, what is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to develop a regional business process for cross-border data exchange?		
If data harmonization and standardization is done based on international standards which are adopted by most organizations or countries in the region, it will minimize changes in the national system process and database structure when implementing cross-border data exchange electronically.			
B4.	**Data harmonization and standardization**		
B4.1	Has data harmonization and standardization been conducted based on international standards/guidelines, such as the United Nations Rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport, United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations, single window recommendation of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, to support cross-border paperless trade data exchange?	Partial	
B4.2	If not, what is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to minimize changes in your system process and database structure for cross-border data exchange electronically?		

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/ issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
B5.	**International transit** The issues transit traders face under the current international transit procedure in many countries in the region include the following: (a) Repetitive submission of a customs transit declaration at entry to every country of transit; (b) A security document needs to be registered at every country of transit. To address the above issues, the following could be considered: (c) A single customs transit declaration to be valid for the whole transit route: data and information of the customs transit declaration could be submitted and approved at the country of departure and shared across-borders with the countries of transit and the country of destination. (d) A single guarantee to be valid for the whole transit route: relevant data/ information of the guarantee could be registered at the country of departure and shared across-borders with countries of transit and the country of destination. If single stop inspection is done by all controlling agencies in the exporting country and data of the inspection results are shared with the importing country, it will definitely expedite cargo clearance.		
B5.1	Has the country implemented a paperless customs declaration for national transit procedures (inbound transit, outbound transit, inland transit)?	Yes	
B5.2	Has the country implemented a paperless customs declaration for international transit?	No	
B5.2.1	If yes, is the customs regime in your country able to support the implementation of a single customs transit declaration and single guarantee valid for the international transit route taking into consideration the following: (i) To agree on a guarantee registered at the country of departure, covering the highest duty amount calculated based on the duty rate of each country in the transit route, to be valid and accepted throughout the transit route? (ii) To agree on a regional/ subregional format and content of the single guarantee?		
B5.2.2	If not, what is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to address this issue?	Cross-border paperless trade has to be connected with partner countries	

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/ issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
B5.3	Has your country implemented a one-stop inspection system by all controlling agencies at the borders at the time of exit/export?	Not yet	
B5.3.1	If yes, are the inspection results shared with the importing country?		
B5.4	If not, is there any intention to implement a single-stop inspection and what is the timeline?	Yes, it is being planned selectively at some border points	
B6.	**Awareness programme** Awareness programmes are important for stakeholders to understand how cross-border data exchange could be carried out to reduce their anxiety and prepare them to address any issues that may arise. If a country lacks the expertise to carry out business process analysis, data harmonization and simplification, system development, project management, etc., it may look for technical assistance from external parties.		
B6.1	Does your country have an awareness programme (for example, capacity-building, training, workshops) for stakeholders to have a better understanding of the following issues?	Yes	
B6.1.1	How could cross-border data exchange be implemented?	Not yet	
B6.1.2	Potential business transactions and documents for cross-border data exchange?	Being explored	
B6.1.3	Methods of identifying inhibitors that need to be addressed?		
B6.2	If your country has not conducted any awareness and capacity-building programmes		
	related to B6.1.1–B6.1.3, what is your country's future plan and targeted timeline to conduct an awareness programme?		
B6.3	Does your country have the capacity to carry out the following: (a) business process analysis; (b) data harmonization and simplification; (c) system development; and (d)project management?	Yes. Country has the capacity.	

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/ issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
B7.	**Other matters** Some countries which are ready for cross-border data exchange may not be willing to participate in a pilot project. One of the reasons is a lack of trust in the economic operators of their dialogue partners. If your economic operators are able to comply with the authorized economic operator scheme and are mutually recognised by their dialogue partners, it will expedite cross-border data exchange.		
B7.1	Authorized Economic Operator (AEO)		
B7.1.1	In general, what is the level of compliance of traders in your country (high, medium or low)?	Medium	
B7.1.2	Has the authorized economic operator scheme been implemented in your country	Yes	
B7.1.2.1	If yes, how extensive is the implementation in terms of the percentage of economic operators registered for the scheme?		
B7.1.3	Is your country ready to sign any mutual recognition agreements for authorized economic operators with dialogue partners?	Yes	
In the preparatory stage, it is useful to assess the readiness of stakeholders to accept changes arising from cross-border data exchange and the availability of funds for any potential cross-border paperless trade project.			
B7.2	Are the stakeholders and the trade community ready to accept changes arising from the re-engineered processes towards cross-border data exchange? · Regulatory agencies · Agents/customs brokers · Traders · Port community · Financial institutions · Other (please specify)	Yes	
B7.3	Has your country's government budget provisioned for the transition to cross-border paperless trade data exchange?	It is part of the ongoing automation process	
B7.3.1	If not, what is your targeted timeline?		
Sharing information on a country's preferences on the prioritized documents for cross-border data exchange can help identify potential participants having the same or similar preferences to work together on pilot projects.			

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No.	Questions	Elaboration on status/ issues/future plan	Timeline (if relevant) for future plan
B7.4	Is your country considering cross-border data exchange for any of the documents and related processes? (Y=Yes, N=No. Please select the top five prioritized documents) (i) Seaway bill (ii) (Advance)Manifest (iii) Customs transit declaration (iv) Transit bond (v) Phytosanitary certificate (vi) Sanitary certificate (vii) Fumigation certificate (viii) Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora certificate (ix) Certificate of origin(preferential) (x) Certificate of origin(non-preferential) (xi) Pharmaceutical certificate (xii) National standard and quality certificate (xiii) International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and other international standards and quality certificates (xiv) Certificate for medical devices (xv) Certificate of electrical and electronic components, equipment and products (xvi) Dangerous Goods List (xvii) Material safety data sheet (xviii) Letter of credit (xix) Bill of lading (xx) Invoice (xxi) Packing list (xxii) Import permit	(i) Yes (ii) Yes (iii) Yes (iv) Yes (v) Yes (vi) Yes (vii) Yes (viii) Yes (ix) Yes (x) Yes (xi) Yes (xii) Yes (xiii) Yes (xiv) Yes (xv) Yes (xvi) Yes (xvii) Yes (xviii) Yes (xix) Yes (xx) Yes (xxi) Yes (xxii) Yes	
	(xxiii) Others (please specify)		
B7.5	For each of the five prioritized documents identified in B7.4, please provide/specify further information on the following: document name; implementing agency; and percentage of the paperless documents and related processes.		

Form for implementation of paperless trade by the other government agencies

<table>
<tr><td>Name of ministry or agency</td><td colspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Permit type IL = Import License
EL = Export License
C/O = Certificate of Origin
SC = Sanitary / Health Certificates
PS = Phytosanitary Certificates OT = Other Types</td><td colspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td>1 Has business process re-engineering been conducted and completed?</td><td>Completed []</td><td>Ongoing []</td><td>Not conducted []</td><td>Don’t know []</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">1.1 If it is on-going, when is it going to be completed? [Year/Month]

1.2 If it is not implemented, is there a plan to conduct it? [] Yes [] No [] Don’t know

If 1.2 is yes, when is it going to commence? [Year/Month]</td><td>Please provide further information, such as website, date of implementation, etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2 Has e-application (capability to receive, process and issue document electronically) been implemented?</td><td>Fully implemented []</td><td>Partially implemented []</td><td>Not implemented []</td><td>Don’t know []</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">2.1 If it is not implemented, is there a plan to implement it? [] Yes [] No [] Don’t know

If 2.1 is yes, when is it going to be implemented? [Year/Month]

2.2 If it is implemented, how the supporting documents are being submitted? [] MSD = Manual Supporting Documents [] EDHC = Electronic Declaration/Application but hardcopy still required [] any other methods (Please specify __)</td><td>Please provide further information, such as website, date of implementation, etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3 Has e-application been connected to the e-customs system and/ or the single window?</td><td>e-customs system []</td><td>SingleWindow []</td><td>Not connected []</td><td>Don’t know []</td></tr>
</table>

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3.1. What is the level of integration between e-application and a single window and/or an e-customs system, if connected? [] Partially connected [] Fully connected [] Don't know *Note*: Partially connected means electronic transfer of information is one-way, while fully connected means electronic transfer of information is reciprocal between an e-application and a single window and/or an e-customs system.			Please provide further information, such as website, date of implementation, etc.
4 Is e-payment available for the e-application?	Yes[]	No[]	
4.1. What are the available payment options for the e-Application? [] EFT = electronic funds transfer [] CD = cash deposit [] CC = credit card [] CSH = cash [] Other options (please specify_)			Please provide further information, such as website, date of implementation, etc.

Endnotes

1. Detailed information on the Framework Agreement, including an explanatory note of the text and answers to frequently asked questions, is available at www.unescap.org/resources/framework- agreement-facilitation-cross-border-paperless-trade-asia-and-pacific.
2. This is an issue of policy nature.

Appendix 4

Cross-Border Paperless Trade: A Legal Readiness Checklist
India Assessment by Authors, May 2025

Legal and Technical Working Group of the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross- border Paperless Trade Facilitation

Introduction

1. The checklist serves to identify potential legal gaps and highlight what may need to be done to ensure the laws support engagement in cross-border paperless trade, as envisaged in the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, which was adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2016.
2. It should be noted that the checklist is not intended to assess the readiness of a country to join the Framework Agreement. This treaty contemplates that its parties ensure that their legal systems support the use of electronic communications and gradually adapt their laws for the purpose of cross-border paperless trade. It is not necessary for Governments to modernize their laws before ratifying or acceding to the Agreement.[1]Paperless trade implementation is a work in progress, and the Agreement is a tool meant to support such progress regardless of the level of readiness of a country.
3. In line with the substantive provisions of the Framework Agreement,the check list organizes legal issues into four major parts as follows: (a)electronic transactions and signatures law; (b) laws regarding paperless trade systems;(c) cross-border aspects; and(d) other considerations Each part is divided into sections. In each part and section of the checklist, key legal issues are highlighted, and a list of focus questions is proposed.
4. The checklist is intended for use by all stakeholders involved in paperless trade facilitation and not only for legal specialists. While it includes references to legal concepts, it does so in general terms in order to reach a broad audience. Each question should be seen as the starting point for a broader reflection on the state of the law in the given area.
5. The term "law" should be understood to include statutes, regulations, administrative measures and any other binding rules. All questions about national laws can be applied to subnational laws as appropriate. In completing the checklist, it is recommended that the user indicate, where possible, the legal authority for the answers, for example the statute, regulation or other rule relevant to the answers. Some relevant obligations may arise through contracts as well.
6. Additional guidance on how to use this checklist is provided in a separate online guide.[2]A number of examples of country reports on readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade carried out by ESCAP are also available online.[3]In addition, a general introduction on legal issues related to cross-border paperless trade may be found in the ESCAP publication *Electronic Single Window Legal Issues: A Capacity-Building Guide*.[4]

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A. Electronic transactions and signatures law

7. Part I of the checklist is focused on laws related to electronic transactions and electronic signatures. These concerns are addressed either directly or indirectly in articles 5, 6and 7ofthe Framework Agreement. In particular, the first three principles included in article 5 (on general principles) represent the principles guiding the legislative texts on electronic commerce prepared by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and, as such, are an expression of international consensus.5Approximately half of the Governments in Asia and the Pacific have adopted at least one UNCITRAL text on electronic commerce.6

8. In order to promote interoperability to the extent possible, similar rules should apply to electronic communications exchanged among commercial operators and between commercial operators and public authorities. In the paperless trade facilitation environment, this means that trade-related data exchanged in commercial documents may be reused for submission to single windows. This should ensure high data quality with respect to its origin, integrity, accuracy, completeness and other characteristics.

No.	Focus Questions	Response
	Related provisions of the Framework Agreement: Article 5 on general principles. Article 6 on the national policy framework, enabling domestic legal environment and paperless trade committee. Article 7 on the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade and development of single-window systems (more specific questions on the single window appear below in part II).	
I.A	Electronic transactions law: general principles This section is aimed at identifying the general features of electronic transactions law, including whether they implement internationally recognised general principles.	
I.A.1	What is the legal status of electronic transactions?	Law exists
I.A.2	If an electronic transactions law exists, is it based on uniform models?	Most of the provisions are covered under the IT Act which is predominently based on UNCITRAL model law.
I.A.3	What are the conditions, if any, for the legal recognition of electronic transactions?	It should conform to the IT Act and its rules.
I.A.4	Does the law establish functional equivalence between paper documents and electronic communications?	yes
I.A.5	What is the legal status of electronic contracts?	accepted
I.A.6	Are there special rules for the use of electronic communications in paperless trade?	Yes
I.A.7	In particular, are there special rules for the use of trade-related data and documents in electronic form, such as certificates of origin, invoices and phytosanitary certificates?	Yessubject to confirmation with the IT Act provisions

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I.A.8	Are there special rules for the use of electronic transferable records such as bills of lading?	Yes, IT Act has provisions, but the rules related to bill of lading are yet to be framed
I.B	Electronic signatures and trust services Electronic signatures serve to identify the originator of an electronic communication and ascertain their intention with respect to that communication. Certain types of electronic signatures, namely digital signatures based on public key infrastructure certificates, may provide additional information, for instance on the integrity of the data message and on timestamping. Many laws deal with the legal recognition of electronic signatures. However, legislative approaches may vary significantly, in particular with respect to technological neutrality and the recognition of service providers. Trust services are electronic services that provide assurance on the quality of data. Trust services are often used to establish confidence in the use of electronic communications.	
I.B.1	Does the law address how electronic signatures, including for identification, authorization and authentication, are added in an electronic environment? Does it require the use of a specific technology or method for electronic signatures or is it technology neutral?	Yes
I.B.2	Does the law adopt a functional equivalence approach for electronic signatures?	Yes
I.B.3	Is the law based on international standards?	Yes
I.B.4	Does the law recognise foreign electronic signatures?	Yes, if it meets the defined IT Act provisions
I.B.5	Are there special rules for the use of electronic signatures in paperless trade?	Yes, IT Act provides for such rules
I.B.6	Does the law deal with trust services?	Yes
I.C	Privacy and data protection Privacy and data protection are important elements of the legal landscape of electronic commerce as they may impose conditions to data transfer between the parties. This section is aimed at identifying laws relating to privacy and data protection, with special attention to those relevant to paperless trade.	
I.C.1	Is there a law on privacy and data protection? If so, what are its features? Is it based on international standards?	Yes. Some marquee provisions cover aspects including but not limited to Notice/ Consent; Legitimate Uses; Data Controller (Fiduciary) - Data Processor & their obligations; personal data processing of Children (<18 years); Data Subject Rights; and Penalties. Additionally from a governance standpoint, it also covers provisions for setting up a Data Protection Board.

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I.C.2	Does domestic law address the transfer of data abroad?	Yes
I.C.3	Do international agreements contain provisions relevant to privacy and data protection?	It's an ongoing process
I.C.4	Does the law require data localization? If so, does it apply to paperless trade?	Partially. Per the privacy law, the Government of India may by notification restrict the processing of personal data to certain specific countries as notified.
I.C.5	Are there any special rules on privacy and data protection for paperless trade?	General rules exist
I.C.6	Does the law protect the confidentiality of commercial information in electronic form?	Yes
I.C.7	Are there provisions on cyber-crimes that are applicable to paperless trade?	yes
I.D	Data sharing Paperless trade systems are often built around the notion of a single window for customs operations, which involves collecting trade-related data and documents and sharing them among participants. This process raises delicate issues. Besides general rules on privacy, data protection and data retention, specific legal texts may address data sharing, especially among public entities.	
I.D.1	Are there agreements or policies for collecting, accessing, using and sharing data among government agencies participating in a paperless trade system?	Yes
I.E	Data retention and electronic evidence The legal effect of electronic records often depends on their evidentiary value, i.e. the ability to use those records before a court to substantiate a legal claim. This section is aimed at clarifying which retention and evidence rules apply.	
I.E.1	Does the law establish general requirements for data retention, including a minimum and maximum retention period? Do they apply to electronically stored data?	Yes
I.E.2	Does the law require or favour the use of specific trust services or service providers for data retention?	No
I.E.3	Do data custodians, such as data centres, assume liability for loss or damage to electronically stored information? Is such liability contractual, statutory or both?	Yes, contractual.
I.E.4	Is electronic evidence admissible in judicial and other proceedings?	Yes
I.E.5	Is electronic evidence that is generated, stored or collected abroad admissible? If so, under which conditions?	Yes, if it meets the IT Act provisions and the Evidence Act.

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B. Laws regarding paperless trade systems

9. Part II of the checklist is focused on laws related to implementing and developing a paperless trade system (including but not limited to a single window system). These matters relate in particular to articles 6 and 7 of the Framework Agreement. The wide scope of article 6 can encompass several aspects of creating an enabling national policy framework for paperless trade. In article 7, parties are specifically encouraged to implement and develop a cross-border paperless trade system, in particular a single window. Accordingly, in part II, issues related to the implementation of a single window and/or other paperless trade system(s) are covered first. Part II also includes questions on end-user agreements, service-level agreements and memorandums of understanding on paperless trade.

No.	Focus questions	Response
	Related provisions of the Framework Agreement: Article 6 on the national policy framework, enabling domestic legal environment and paperless trade committee. Article 7 on the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade and development of single-window systems.	
II.A	Establishment of a paperless trade system The establishment and operation of a paperless trade system often requires a set of dedicated laws and regulations. This section is aimed at identifying those laws and regulationsaswellasthebasicfeaturesofgovernanceofthepaperlesstradesystems.	
II.A.1	Does a dedicated paperless trade system, such as a single window, exist? If so, what legal instruments are used to establish and operate it? How do these instruments define the rights and obligations of the participants?	Yes, broadly covered under IT Act.
II.A.2	Which government agencies participate in the paperless trade system? On what legal basis?	All those who regulate or facilitate paperless trade. The IT Act supports this.
II.A.3	Is there a central body tasked with setting up and managing the paperless trade system?	Yes
II.B	Quality of information exchanged with the paperless trade system The main function of the paperless trade system, including the single window, is to facilitate the exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form. The information is originally submitted on paper or electronically by commercial operators that have a duty to make complete and correct statements. Moreover, in an electronic environment, there could be special procedures to attribute the declarations originating from the various participants. Electronic signatures may play a significant role in the attribution of the declarations.	
II.B.1	Does the law on the substantive requirements of trade- related data and documents also apply to paperless trade?	Yes
II.B.2	Are there specific rules for the exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form?	Yes, covered under different statutes

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II.C	Service-level agreements and memorandums of understanding A number of legal texts, such as service-level agreements, memorandums of understanding, end-user agreements and other contractual agreements, are relevant to the operation of a paperless trade system. These legal texts define the obligations of the participants in the paperless trade system. For instance, service-level agreements define the obligations of the service provider with respect to the availability of the system, response time, processing time and other technical requirements that are critical to define to ensure the availability and smooth operation of the system.	
II.C.1	Are there service-level agreements or memorandums of understanding governing paperless trade operations? If so, who are the parties and what is the legal authority for concluding these agreements?	Yes, generic provisions exist in different statutes.

C. Cross-border aspects

10. Part III of the checklist is focused on the cross-border aspects of paperless trade, which directly relate to the ultimate goal of the Framework Agreement. Certain cross-border aspects are already raised in part I as they relate to general matters that may be relevant to paperless trade facilitation. The questions in part III are specific to cross-border paperless trade facilitation. They are inspired by the Agreement, in particular article 8oncross-border mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form; article 9oninternationalstandards for exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form, and article 10 on the relation to other legal instruments enabling cross-border paperless trade.

11. A key issue in achieving seamless cross-border paperless trade is the legal recognition of trade- related data and documents of one country by the authorities of another. Recognition involves attributing a legal status to electronic messages exchanged across-borders. A variety of legal mechanisms may achieve that goal. Some of them will apply to certain types of transactions (for instance, business-to-business or business-to-government transactions), while other legal mechanisms will apply only to specific types of documents or datasets, or to specific types of trust services (for example, electronic signatures). Some legal mechanisms will establish legal recognition in a technology-neutral manner, or without regard for the method or technology used, while others will do so in a technology-specific manner. With respect to legal form, some mechanisms are treaty-based and therefore may be directly legally binding. Other mechanisms favour the harmonization of legal systems through the adoption of uniform laws, while still others are based on bilateral or regional agreements or memorandums of understanding and similar technical arrangements.

12. In article 8 of the Framework Agreement, the mutual legal recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form is promoted and the notion of substantially equivalent level of reliability is used to indicate that mutual legal recognition can be based on the general principle of technology neutrality. However, no specific legal recognition mechanism is established. Rather, the expression of this criterion is left open to various options. Accordingly, many of the questions in part III are aimed at identifying which laws

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and technical arrangements may contribute to achieving mutual legal recognition. The scope of the questions also extends to include the broader focus of articles 9 and 10 on laws and other relevant agreements that prohibit, restrict or facilitate cross- border data flows for paperless trade and any related activity. An indicative list of relevant international instruments is provided at the end of part III for ease of reference.

No.	Focus questions	Response
	Related provisions of the Framework Agreement: Article 8 on cross-border mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form. Article 9 on international standards for exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form. Article 10 on relation to other legal instruments enabling cross-border paperless trade.	
III.A	International agreements relevant for cross-border paperless trade facilitation	
III.A.1	Which international agreements relevant to paperless trade facilitation are in force in your country?	No specific agreements are in force.
III.A.2	Are there technical or operational international agreements providing for legal recognition of electronic communications or documents?	Rules exist to facilitate.
III.A.3	Are contracts used to provide for mutual recognition of electronic communications and signatures?	Provisions exist under the IT Act rules.
III.B	International standards, guidelines and recommendations	
III.B.1	Which standards, regulations or guidelines are in use for the cross-border exchange of trade-related electronic communications?	UN/CEFACT, WCO and UNCITRAL

D. Treaties and model laws relevant to cross-border paperless trade facilitation

13. A number of international treaties are relevant to cross-border paperless trade facilitation, because their adoption and implementation may provide a significant contribution to addressing some or several of the legal challenges arising from cross-border paperless trade facilitation. In particular, those treaties may be useful in achieving legal recognition, usually on a multilateral basis. Model laws may also be useful in facilitating mutual recognition as their enactment by jurisdictions brings national laws closer. Sharing legal concepts and provisions significantly enhances mutual understanding of how the law operates, which may pave the way to granting legal recognition. Additional important provisions may be found in bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements, namely in the chapters on electronic commerce and on customs or trade facilitation. Those agreements and any other relevant legislative texts should be added to the list. [User may add or delete from the list as necessary

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Legal Readiness Checklist: Non-exhaustive List of Treaties and Model Laws

Treaty/Model Law	Implementation status
Customs and trade facilitation	
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Single Window Agreement (2005) and Legal Protocol (2017)	India is not part of this initiative.
Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (2016)	Not yet
World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation (2013)	Implemented
Protocol of Amendment to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (Revised Kyoto Convention, 2006)	Implemented
International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls (1982)	
Transport	
Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR Convention) (1956)	Implemented.
Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road concerning the electronic consignment note (2008)	
Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (1975)	Implemented
Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail (1980)	
International Maritime Organization Amendments to the Annex to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic, 1965, as amended (2005)	Implemented
InternationalMaritimeOrganizationGuidelinesfortheUseofElectronicCertificates (2016)	Implemented
United Nations Convention on the Carriage of Goods by Sea (Hamburg Rules) (1978)	Not yet
UnitedNationsConventiononContractsfortheInternationalCarriageofGoods Wholly or Partly by Sea (Rotterdam Rules) (2008)	Not yet
Electronic transactions	
United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts (2005)	Not yet
UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Commerce (1996)	Implemented
UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Signatures (2001)	Not yet, but provisions exist in the IT Act
UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (2017)	Not yet, but the IT Act was amended to accommodate MLETR provisions.

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Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe (Budapest Convention)(2001)	Not yet, but provision exists to address Cybercrime in our statutes.
Others(please specify):	

E. Other considerations

14. For paperless trade to be conducted in the best possible manner, the Framework Agreement requires parties to create an enabling national legal framework (article 6) and remove all legal barriers. It is therefore recommended that the parties aim to build a national policy framework to implement the Agreement that addresses all the pertinent legal issues and is consistent with international legal instruments and standards for cross-border electronic data and document exchange. Besides the topics specifically addressed in substantive provisions of the Agreement, parties may also wish to deal with related issues, such as data ownership, liability, dispute settlement, electronic payment and competition, which in some cases may have been addressed in other legal agreements (see article 10). These matters may affect the effective operation of single window and other paperless trade systems, particularly in the cross-border environment.

15. These legal issues may be addressed in different sets or sources of legal rules. Therefore, there is no one-size-fits-all solution or approach. The legal framework, action plan and capacity-building programmes may and should be customized at the national level, depending on the various levels of awareness and preparedness of different member States, as already envisaged in article 6, 12 and 14 of the Framework Agreement. The list of legal issues in part IV is not exhaustive, and other relevant issues may emerge.

No.	Focus questions	Response
	Related provisions of the Framework Agreement: Article 6 on the national policy framework, enabling domestic legal environment and paperless trade committee. Article 10 on the relation to other legal instruments enabling cross-border paperless trade. Article12ontheactionplan. Article14oncapacity-building.	
IV.A	Ownership of information in the paperless trade system Paperless trade facilitation involves the collection and exchange of a large amount of information. Delicate issues arise with respect to data subject rights, confidentiality and other rights on that information. For instance, the paperless trade system operator may acquire the right to use, analyse and redistribute the information submitted to the system. In other cases, the system may be designed to avoid the storage of any information, so as to simplify compliance with privacy and data retention laws.	
IV.A.1	What defines rights regarding information exchanged in the paperless trade system, the law or contractual agreements?	Contractual agreement

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IV.B	Liability issues related to cross-border paperless trade systems Trading parties and other concerned entities may suffer losses from the incorrect transmission of information and may seek compensation for those losses from those liable for them under contracts among the transacting parties or, if this is not possible, under the general law of civil wrongs. This form of liability is separate from any sanction that may apply under criminal and administrative law.	
IV.B.1	May the operator of the paperless trade system be held liable for providing its services?	Yes
IV.B.2	May government agencies participating in the paperless trade system be held liable for their interaction with the system?	Yes
IV.B.3	May service providers, such as internet service providers and trust services providers, be held liable for interacting with the paperless trade system?	Yes
IV.B.4	May other participants in the paperless trade system (e.g. customs brokers) be held liable for their interaction with the system or their role in the passage of information or data passing through their systems?	Yes
IV.C	**Dispute settlement and conflict to flaws** Thefollowingsectionisaimedatexaminingthedisputesettlementmechanismsfor the operators of a single window or other paperless trade system.	
IV.C.1	Donation allows deal with choice-of-forum and choice-of-law issues relevant to paperless trade facilitation?	Yes, need to be firmed up
IV.C.2	Does the law contemplate alternative means of resolving disputes in international trade, such as arbitration and mediation? Are the results of any such means clearly enforceable across-borders?	Yes.
IV.C.3	Are online dispute resolution mechanisms used in paperless trade facilitation?	Not yet
IV.D	Electronic payments and electronic transferable records Electronic payments are the backbone of the digital economy. To the extent that electronic payments are available, they could be incorporated in the paperless trade system. Usually, this is done by using electronic funds transfers, i.e. by ordering a bank to transfer money (wire transfer) or by using credit or debit cards. In other cases, certain commercial documents may be used to perform payment or give guarantee of payment.	
IV.D.1	Does the paperless trade system accept or initiate electronic payments?	Yes
IV.D.2	Does the paperless trade system accept electronic transferable records?	Legal provisions exist but yet to be implemented
IV.E	Competition laws Thefollowingsectionisaimedatexaminingthecompetitionlawissuesinvolvedina single window or other paperless trade system.	
IV.E.1	Does a competition law exist? If so, is it applicable to single window operators or other paperless trade services providers?	Yes, uniformly applicable to all.
IV.E.2	Does the law give authorized economic operators preferential access to the paperless trade system?	Yes
IV.E.3	Are paperless trade service providers selected on a competitive basis? Are foreign providers admitted?	The provisions are open.

Appendix 5

UN Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation since 2019 (Fully Implemented)

Sr. No.	Particulars	Year
1	Risk management	2023
2	Electronic application and issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin	2023
3	Transit facilitation agreement	2023
4	Limit the physical inspections of transit goods and use risk assessment	2023
5	TF measures to benefit women involved in trade	2023
6	Agency in place to manage TF in times of crises and emergencies	2023
7	Publication of existing import-export regulations on the internet	2021
8	Expedited shipments	2021
9	Acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export or transit formalities	2021
10	Electronic Single Window System	2021
11	Electronic submission of Customs declarations	2021
12	Electronic application and issuance of import and export permit	2021
13	Trade-related information measures for SMEs	2021
14	Special treatment for perishable goods	2021
15	Online publication of emergency TF measures	2021
16	Additional trade facilitation measures to facilitate trade in times of emergencies	2021
17	Plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises	2021
18	Pre-arrival processing	2019
19	Post-clearance audits	2019
20	Separation of Release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges	2019
21	Establishment and publication of average release times	2019
22	Electronic Application for Customs Refunds	2019
23	Recognised certification authority	2019
24	Other special measures for SMEs	2019
25	Variety of trade finance services available	2019
26	Stakeholders` consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)	2017
27	Advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation	2017
28	National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar body	2017

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29	National legislative framework and/or institutional arrangements for border agencies cooperation	2017
30	SMEs in AEO scheme	2017
31	SMEs in National Trade Facilitation Committee	2017
32	Testing and laboratory facilities available to meet SPS of main trading partners	2017
33	National standards and accreditation bodies to facilitate compliance with SPS	2017
34	Advance ruling on tariff classification and origin of imported goods	2015
35	Independent appeal mechanism	2015
36	TF measures for authorized operators	2015
37	Automated Customs System	2015
38	Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies	2015
39	Electronic Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests	2015
40	Electronic Submission of Air Cargo Manifests	2015
41	E-Payment of Customs Duties and Fees	2015
42	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	2015

Source: Global Trade Facilitation Survey, UNESCAP

Appendix 6

India's Progress in Trade Facilitation Outlined in UNTF Survey

Measure	Survey 2015	Survey 2017	Survey 2019	Survey 2021	Survey 2023
Transparency					
Publication of existing import-export regulations on the internet	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Stakeholder consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalisation)	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Advance publication/ notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation*	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Advance ruling on tariff classification and origin of imported goods*	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Independent appeal mechanism	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Formalities					
Risk management	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Pre-arrival processing	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Post-clearance audits*	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Separation of release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Establishment and publication of average release times	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
TF measures for authorised operators*	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Expedited shipments	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export or transit formalities*	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation					
National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar body*	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
National legislative framework and/or institutional arrangements for border agencies cooperation*	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented

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Government agencies delegating border controls to Customs authorities*	Not implemented	Not implemented	Not implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Alignment of working days and hours with neighbouring countries at border crossings	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
Alignment of formalities and procedures with neighbouring countries at border crossings	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
Paperless Trade					
Automated Customs System*	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies*	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Electronic Single Window System	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Electronic submission of Customs declarations	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Electronic application and issuance of import and export permit*	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Electronic Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Electronic Submission of Air Cargo Manifests	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Electronic application and issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin	Planning stage	Planning stage	Planning stage	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
E-Payment of Customs Duties and Fees	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Electronic Application for Customs Refunds	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Cross-Border Paperless Trade					
Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Recognised certification authority	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Electronic exchange of Customs Declaration*	Not implemented	Not implemented	Planning stage	Planning stage	Planning stage
Electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin	Not implemented	Not implemented	Planning stage	Planning stage	Planning stage
Electronic exchange of Sanitary & Phyto-Sanitary Certificate	Not implemented	Not implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
Paperless collection of payment from a documentary letter of credit*	Not implemented	Not implemented	Not implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented

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Transit Facilitation					
Transit facilitation agreement(s)*	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Limit the physical inspections of transit goods and use risk assessment*	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
Cooperation between agencies of countries involved in transit	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
Trade Facilitation for SMEs					
Trade-related information measures for SMEs*	Not available	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
SMEs in AEO scheme*	Not available	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
SMEs access Single Window*	Not available	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
SMEs in National Trade Facilitation Committee*	Not available	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Other special measures for SMEs*	Not available	Not available	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Agricultural Trade Facilitation					
Testing and laboratory facilities available to meet SPS of main trading partners*	Not available	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
National standards and accreditation bodies to facilitate compliance with SPS*	Not available	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates*	Not available	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
Special treatment for perishable goods	Not available	Not available	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Women in Trade Facilitation					
TF policy/strategy to increase women's participation in trade*	Not available	Do not know	Do not know	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
TF measures to benefit women involved in trade*	Not available	Do not know	Do not know	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Women membership in the National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar bodies*	Not available	Not available	Do not know	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
Trade Finance Facilitation					
Single window facilitates traders access to finance*	Not available	Not available	Do not know	Do not know	Partially implemented
Authorities engaged in blockchain-based supply chain project covering trade finance*	Not available	Not available	Do not know	Do not know	Partially implemented

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Variety of trade finance services available*	Not available	Not available	Do not know	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis					
Agency in place to manage TF in times of crises and emergencies	Not available	Not available	Not available	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Online publication of emergency TF measures	Not available	Not available	Not available	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Coordination between countries on emergency TF measures	Not available	Not available	Not available	Partially implemented	Partially implemented
Additional trade facilitation measures to facilitate trade in times of emergencies	Not available	Not available	Not available	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises	Not available	Not available	Not available	Fully implemented	Fully implemented
Trade Facilitation for E-Commerce					
TF measures for cross-border e-commerce*	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Partially implemented
Trade Facilitation and Wildlife Protection					
Electronic application, issuance and exchange of eCITES*	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not implemented

Source: Global Trade Facilitation Survey, UNESCAP

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विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

Core IV-B, Fourth Floor, India Habitat Centre
Lodhi Road, New Delhi -110 003
Tel:. +91-11-24682177-80
E-mail: dgoffice@ris.org.in
Website: www.ris.org.in

ICRIER

The Isher Building, Plot No. 16-17
Pushp Vihar, Institutional Area, Sector 6
New Delhi -110 017
Tel. : +91-11 43 112400; +91-11-24620180
E-mail: info@icrier.res.in
Website: www.icrier.org

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