

'India-UK FTA offers strategic benefits for rules-based trade'

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The "historic" free trade agreement (FTA) with India offers strategic benefits and stability to businesses at a particularly challenging time for international commerce and rules-based trade, according to a UK parliamentary scrutiny report.

The House of Lords International Agreements Committee had opened its review of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) in the months after it was agreed last July.

The cross-party committee charged with scrutinising all treaties laid in Parliament hailed CETA as a "considerable achievement" given that negotiations took place against a challenging geopolitical backdrop of trade tariffs under US President Donald

Trump. "The UK has reached a landmark deal with a key strategic partner at a time of considerable geopolitical turbulence," said Lord Peter Goldsmith, who was chair of the committee during the inquiry period.

The committee, which reviewed evidence from stakeholders, found that the FTA will be helpful to UK businesses. However, it did highlight some shortcomings in areas of legal services, investment protection and "little new market access" for financial or professional services.

The report, which will now be debated by the Upper House early next month as the India-UK CETA progresses towards parliamentary ratification and implementation, struck a cautionary tone that the FTA agreed between India and the European Union (EU) last month may have future implications for the pact.