

11 May 2022

Personal details removed for proactive release

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I refer to your email of 8 April 2022 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

I request under the Official Information Act what efforts in the last 12 months have been made to secure increased trade and defence agreements with the Republic of India.

New Zealand's relationship with India is a priority and its importance to New Zealand is growing. India's strong economy, large population and international influence make it a key partner in the Indo-Pacific region. [India-New Zealand 2025: Investing in the Relationship \(PDF\)](#) sets out a framework for New Zealand Government agencies and partners to grow the relationship with India.

In terms of New Zealand's efforts in the last 12 months to secure increased trade and defence agreements with the Republic of India:

- Concluding a full free trade agreement (FTA) between New Zealand and India is not a realistic short-term prospect. Intensive negotiations were held between India and New Zealand in the context of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) FTA negotiations before India withdrew from the RCEP negotiations in November 2019. RCEP contains provisions enabling expedited accession by India should it wish to re-join RCEP in the future.
- New Zealand and India also continue to work together to strengthen our bilateral relationship. This includes broader security and defence cooperation, and people to people and cultural links, as well as engagement across the trade and economic agenda.
- On 23 June 2021, the Minister of Foreign Affairs told the India New Zealand Business Council Summit that New Zealand wants stronger defence and security ties with India. The full text of the Minister's speech is available here:
<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech-india-new-zealand-business-council-summit>
- New Zealand engages regularly with India on defence and security issues of mutual interest including sharing perspectives on regional security trends and exploring opportunities for greater cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and Pacific regions. While there are currently no agreements underpinning defence ties with India, as the defence relationship continues to grow, efforts may be made to formalise cooperation.

Please note that we may publish this letter (with your personal details redacted) on the Ministry's website.

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Julie-Anne Lee
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade