

RIA highlights importance of UK Free Trade talks with India

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The Railway Industry Association (RIA) has welcomed the official launch of negotiations with India for a Free Trade Deal.

The UK Government has announced that talks have started with the country at an event in New Delhi, with our contribution headed by the international trade secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan. She met with her counterpart, Indian minister of commerce and industry Piyush Goyal.



The UK Government said in a statement that India is one of the world's biggest and fastest-growing economies and that a bold new deal would put UK businesses at the front of the queue to supply India's growing middle class, forecast to increase to a quarter of a billion consumers by 2050. India is set to become the world's third-biggest economy by 2050, with a bigger population than the US and EU combined.

Currently, the economy in India is worth £2 trillion and has a market of 1.4 billion consumers.

On hearing the news, RIA said that both countries have a strong tradition in rail, and India is a top priority market for UK suppliers.

The UK Government said a deal could almost double UK exports to India, boost our total trade by as much as £28 billion a year by 2035, and increase wages across the UK by up to £3 billion.

Investment from Indian companies already supports 95,000 jobs across the UK.

Neil Walker, exports director at RIA, said: "Many UK railway businesses will welcome negotiations starting on a new Free Trade Agreement with India.

"Both nations have a strong railway history and have Governments seeking to expand their networks through rail investment in the future. India is one of the top priority markets for UK rail suppliers, where they believe railway goods and services can be exported with further assistance, showing that with the right conditions there is a real opportunity to increase rail trade between the two nations.

"We look forward to working with the UK Government to support the negotiations and to ensure rail plays a central role in any agreed trade deal, supporting more exports growth, jobs and investment across the UK."

The first round of negotiations is expected to start next week – making it the UK's quickest start of formal talks between negotiating teams following a launch.

Removing duties alone would increase exports to India by up to £6.8 billion, supporting tens of thousands of jobs across the UK. Important UK exports like Scotch whisky and cars currently face duties of 150% and

125% respectively.