

India-Singapore Telecommunications Cooperation: A Boost for Bilateral Services Trade

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Summary

The decision by India and Singapore to deepen cooperation in telecommunication and broadcasting is an encouraging signal for the two low-traded services.

India and Singapore are working on deepening cooperation in [telecommunication and broadcasting](#). A letter of intent (LOI) in this regard was signed by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) of Singapore during the fourth and latest round of the annual [India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable](#), held in Singapore on 20 and 21 August 2026. The LOI entails the exchange of regulatory experiences for greater collaboration on radio and television broadcasts, satellite communications, and cellular transmissions.

India and Singapore enjoy a robust history of fruitful trade and economic engagement. Telecommunication and broadcasting, however, have not been notably bright spots in the engagement. This is despite cross-border satellite communications enlarging from greater aviation and maritime traffic flows; cellular mobile transmissions rising from use of social media platforms, mobility of people and use of cross-border data and mobile roaming services; and the increasing use of cellular services in several cross-border services like financial, healthcare and education services. Looked at in the broader context of the high growth trends in bilateral trade in commercial services, telecommunication and broadcasting services are insignificant.

Both Singapore and India are major global traders of commercial services. Singapore was the sixth largest global exporter of such services in 2025 while India was the eighth largest, with shares of [4.4 per cent and 4.3 per cent](#) respectively, in global commercial service exports. For the same year, Singapore was the sixth largest importer of commercial services with a share of 4.4 per cent in such imports. India, on the other hand, was the ninth largest importer with a share of 3.2 per cent. Overall shares of Singapore and India in global commercial services trade were 4.4 per cent and 3.8 percent respectively. The prominence of both countries in global commercial services trade is far higher than in global merchandise trade, where their shares are [2.2 per cent and 2.1 per cent](#) respectively. This feature, by itself, is strong empirical evidence supporting greater bilateral engagement in services.

According to latest available data provided by the World Trade Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, India's commercial service exports to Singapore were US\$13.7 billion (S\$17.4 billion) in 2024, while its imports were US\$12.8 billion (S\$16.25 billion). The total services trade of around [US\\$26.5 billion](#) (S\$33.6 billion) in 2024 was nearly thrice that of [US\\$9.6 billion](#) (S\$12.4 billion) in 2014. The

significant increase in commercial services trade is attributable to rapid growth in trade of digitally delivered services. Total trade in these services expanded more than thrice from [US\\$5.1 billion](#) (S\$6.5 billion) in 2014 to [US\\$17.7 billion](#) (S\$22.5 billion) in 2024. Furthermore, while digitally delivered services made up 53 per cent of the commercial services trade in 2014, their share increased to 67 per cent in commercial services in 2024. This overwhelming prominence of digitally delivered services has brushed off on various aspects of the India-Singapore economic partnership, including high trade in computer services, professional and management services and financial services.

How has the striking growth in commercial services trade, fuelled by growth in digitally delivered services, impacted trade growth in telecommunication services?

Telecommunication services are considered as a bundled part of telecommunication, computer and information services. Bilateral trade in these aggregated services was around [US\\$1.6 billion](#) (S\$2 billion) in 2014 and exceeded [US\\$5 billion](#) (S\$6.3 billion) in 2024. This increase, though, was not on account of exclusively telecommunication services. Trade in only telecommunication services was [US\\$69 million](#) (S\$87.6 million) in 2014 and increased to [US\\$126.7 million](#) (S\$160.9 million) in 2024. As a proportion of the total trade in telecommunication, computer and information services – telecommunication services accounted for only 4.3 per cent in 2014. The share declined to 2.5 per cent in 2024. The declining trend contrasts with the accelerating rate of growth in the broad category, digitally delivered services and overall commercial services.

Unlike telecommunication services, for which bilateral trade statistics are available at a disaggregated level, broadcasting service statistics are not available. Trends for the trade in the latter have to be approximated from those in audiovisual and related services. These services are distinctly marginal in overall India-Singapore bilateral services trade. Overall trade in these services was [US\\$32.5 million](#) (S\$41.3 million) in 2024 and has remained almost the same at [US\\$31.2 million](#) (S\$39.6 million) in 2014. Furthermore, Singapore's relative importance as an export destination for these services has sharply declined from fourth in 2014 to 29th in 2024.

On the whole, therefore, telecommunication and broadcasting services have been insignificant contributors to bilateral commercial services. While the latter has grown at a remarkable pace during the period 2014-2024, aided in large measure by digital services, telecommunication and broadcasting have hardly contributed to the growth. There are clearly regulatory and institutional issues restricting both services from playing bigger roles in bilateral services trade. The cooperative intent between the TRAI and IMDA was necessary and could not have come at a better time.

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