



Will RCEP and India still hold each other?

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India's decision of not joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement when the leaders of member countries met in Bangkok, Thailand on 4th November has provoked mixed responses. While some countries in the bloc react positively in addressing India's concerns, leading trade policy experts reflect on the opportunity costs, roadblocks and roadmap to improve negotiations skills and enhance domestic productivity. RCEP aims at covering goods, services, economic and technical cooperation, competition and intellectual property rights. With India, it was going to be the world's largest economic block with around 3.5 billion people and GDP (in PPP terms) of \$50tn. In times, when the global economy is afflicted by increasing protectionism, can RCEP be an antidote.

News/Op-ed	Key Takeaway
<p>Modi says talisman of Gandhiji didn't permit him to join RCEP while PM Lee hopes India will one day The Online Citizen</p>	<p>At the ASEAN summit in Bangkok on Monday (4 Nov), India announced that it will opt out of the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) Agreement. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong told reporters that with 15 economies on board (without India), the agreement was a substantial one. He said he understood India's decision to "not yet" join in, but hoped that one day it will come on board.</p>
<p>RCEP countries committed to work with India to resolve trade deal issues: China Press Trust of India</p>	<p>China played down India's decision not to join the mega Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade deal, saying that the members of the grouping are prepared to work together to address New Delhi's concerns. Chinese Vice-Commerce Minister and top trade negotiator Wang Shouwen expressed confidence that the differences would be resolved by the end of this year.</p>
<p>View: Staying out of RCEP is not in India's economic interests The Economic Times</p>	<p>Earlier this week, India announced that it was dropping out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Its exit came amid a wide array of assertions from commentators — with some claiming that India's past trade agreements had harmed its economy and that RCEP would do worse, others going further to demand a return to the inglorious days of 'self-sufficiency', and yet others insisting that the withdrawal reflected the weakness of the government against the efforts of protectionist.</p>

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<p>Why India Shouldn't View its Refusal to Join RCEP as a Victory By Pradeep S. Mehta and Amol Kulkarni The Wire</p>	<p>India has opted for a status quo by refusing to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). While the fears of cheap import surges hurting our dairy and agriculture sectors have been abated for the time being, the decision does nothing to enhance the competitiveness of our domestic industries or to make them ready for global competition.</p>
<p>RCEP pullout: How can Indian industry be made more competitive? The Print</p>	<p>PM Narendra Modi pulled out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership over fears that India's trade industry would have been deluged with agricultural imports from Southeast Asia and cheap goods from China. The Print brings a compilation of opinions for steering domestic reforms.</p>
<p>These states are happiest with India pulling out of RCEP; industry leaders have this to say By Samrat Sharma Financial Express</p>	<p>After the Narendra Modi-led government refused to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), businesses in India have got a reason to cheer. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has said that India's move on RCEP would help to protect the interests of many different sections of the economy, especially industry and agriculture.</p>
<p>Why opting out of the RCEP deal was a Hobson's choice for India By Harsha Jethmalani Live Mint</p>	<p>Two trade deals have been grabbing headlines in the past few days. One, of course, was the US-China trade negotiations. The second, equally important one was the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)—a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between 16 Asian nations. Although RCEP will be the world's largest economic bloc, India has opted out of it. Considering India's past FTA experiences and RCEP's terms and conditions, pulling out was a Hobson's choice for us.</p>
<p>Keep the door open for India on RCEP trade deal: Iswaran The Straits Times</p>	<p>Keep the door open for India, even though it has rejected the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) deal for now, said Singaporean Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations, S. Iswaran on Thursday (Nov 7). Mr Iswaran added that the countries which have already come to an agreement on RCEP will be considering to "keep the door open for India to come in at the appropriate time, but without compromising the disciplines and protocols that we have all agreed to".</p>
<p>The RCEP as a trade opportunity rather than threat By Pradeep S. Mehta Live Mint</p>	<p>India has been poor in accessing Global Value Chains (GVCs)—about 16%—but the opportunity to change that is knocking on our doors by way of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) deal. Furthermore, the RCEP is important for our strategic interests, and to resuscitate a rules-based international trading order.</p>
<p>Modi's decision to opt out of RCEP reflects India's prudence on dairy trade By Rakesh Mohan Joshi Financial Express</p>	<p>Realising the concerns of farmers and industry, at large, India pulled out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) FTA. Contrary to earlier sentiments of the country's intelligentsia and bureaucracy, PM Modi took a conscious decision to opt out of RCEP. This will make millions of small farmers and industry stakeholders, especially the dairy farmers and their co-operatives alike happy.</p>