October 28, 2026

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF FOREIGN TRADE

India's import policy: free, restricted and prohibited goods

India's import policy treats every import as free unless Schedule I of ITC (HS) marks its eight-digit item prohibited, restricted or reserved for State Trading Enterprises. A restricted item needs a DGFT authorization. Rules for goods made in India also apply, unless exempted. The policy on the date of import decides.

FIND THE PRODUCT'S eight-digit ITC (HS) code and read its import policy, and any policy condition, in Schedule I. Then check the other Indian laws that apply, whether a minimum import price covers the code, and the policy on your date of import.

KEY FACTS

POLICY

Foreign Trade Policy 2023

PROCEDURES

Handbook of Procedures 2023

LAW

Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992

UPDATED

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How do you check whether a product is free to import?

Find the product's eight-digit ITC (HS) code and read its import policy, and any policy condition, in Schedule I. Then check the other Indian laws that apply, whether a minimum import price covers the code, and the policy on your date of import.

1. Find the eight-digit code.

ITC (HS), the Indian Trade Classification (Harmonized System), classifies goods at eight digits. Its Schedule I sets the import policy (Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023, Chapter 2, para 2.02(c)).

2. Read its policy and conditions.

Look the code up on DGFT's ITC (HS) search. Schedule I covers new goods; second-hand goods follow para 2.31 (para 2.02(d)).

3. Note its status.

Free, restricted, prohibited or reserved for State Trading Enterprises (STE). The next section explains each.

4. Check other Indian laws.

Rules for goods made in India apply to imports too, unless exempted (para 2.03(a)). A free item can carry conditions under another law (para 2.01(b)).

5. Check for a minimum import price.

Some codes are restricted only when the import price is below a set floor. See minimum import prices in India.

6. Go by the date of import.

The policy on that date decides, and the bill of lading is the key document for it (FTP 2023, Chapter 1, para 1.05(b)).

Our DGFT guide covers the rest, and foreign suppliers can start with DGFT's import rules for foreign companies.

What do free, restricted, prohibited and STE mean?

Free means you need no DGFT authorization to import. Restricted means you import only against a DGFT authorization or a notified procedure. Prohibited means the item can't be imported. STE means only the State Trading Enterprise concerned may import it, unless DGFT authorizes another entity.

The four import statuses

Status	What it means	What you need	Paragraph
Free	No authorization or permission needed	No authorization; policy conditions and other laws still apply	FTP 11.23 and 2.01(b)
Restricted	Imported only against an authorization or notified procedure	An authorization in form ANF 2M (DGFT import authorization), or the notified procedure	FTP 11.48 and 2.08; Handbook of Procedures (HBP) 2.47(a)
Prohibited	Import isn't permitted	Not applicable	FTP 11.41
STE	Only the STE concerned may import it (Appendix 2J lists STEs)	The STE concerned, or a DGFT authorization for another entity	FTP 2.21(a) and (c)

Agricultural urea on government account is one STE item. Indian Potash Limited may import it as an STE until March 31, 2027 (Notification 68/2025-26).

Some guides still say "Open General License". FTP 2023 calls these goods "Free" (para 2.01(a)) and never uses the older term.

What if the policy changes after you've signed a contract?

Goods imported before an item moves from free to restricted, prohibited or STE aren't affected. Later shipments may still come in against an irrevocable letter of credit opened before the change, within its balance. You must register it with the Regional Authority within 15 days of the change. High-sea sales aren't covered.

The rule is para 1.05(b) of FTP 2023, Chapter 1, and a notification can switch it off. Notification 02/2026-27 did on April 1, 2026: its heading 7113 jewelry restriction applied whatever the contract, letter of credit, advance payment or shipment status.

Do Indian standards and quality control orders apply to imports?

Yes. Indian laws, technical rules and safety norms that apply to goods made in India apply to imports too, unless exempted (FTP 2.03(a)). Quality control orders (QCOs) are among them. DGFT may exempt goods used to make exports, and Export Oriented Units (EOUs), Special Economic Zone (SEZ) units and Advance Authorization holders have exemptions with conditions.

- **Goods used to make exports:** Appendix 2Y lists the ministries whose QCOs DGFT exempts them from (FTP 2023, para 2.03(b) and (c)).
- **EOUs:** inputs for export production may skip QCOs, but neither they nor goods made from them may go into India's domestic market (para 2.03(A)(ii)).
- **Advance Authorization:** inputs under a QCO may skip it only if the exemption is endorsed on the authorization (para 2.03(A)(i)(b)). See the Advance Authorization scheme.

See our guide to quality control orders in India and a past case: imports cleared under a quality control order.

Which imports are banned outright?

Items marked prohibited in ITC (HS) can't be imported, and the Foreign Trade Policy adds bans of its own. All goods made in or shipped from Pakistan are prohibited, directly, indirectly or in transit (FTP 2.20A). So are goods made wholly or partly with forced labor (FTP 2.20B, added by a notification of July 13, 2026).

- **Pakistan:** any exception needs the Government's prior approval (FTP 2023, para 2.20A).
- **Forced labor:** the notification's English text applies the ban at once, while its Hindi text says 30 days after Gazette publication, as some reports did (Notification 23/2026-27 of July 13, 2026).

Forced labor is work demanded under threat of a penalty and not offered voluntarily, as ILO Convention No. 29 of 1930 defines it (FTP 11.64).

- **DGFT's enquiry:** DGFT may open one on its own, or on information or a complaint backed by credible material. It can ask importers, exporters and manufacturers for information, and reports to the Government, which may then name goods (HBP 2.50A). Our register holds no notification naming goods as of October 28, 2026.

See our note on the forced labor ban.

Do you need to register imports in a monitoring system?

Some imports need an automatic registration number from an import monitoring system, such as SIMS, CIMS, NFMIMS or PIMS. DGFT charges ₹500 for each number. Since June 30, 2026, copper and aluminum importers may register under NFMIMS any time before Customs issues the Out of Charge order (Notification 22/2026-27).

The fee is item 18 of Appendix 2K, as of DGFT's copy last changed May 14, 2025. Check the policy conditions against your code. Our note: NFMIMS until Out of Charge.

What do metal scrap imports need?

Metal waste and scrap must be free of hazardous, radioactive and explosive material (FTP 2.32(a)), and each consignment needs a pre-shipment inspection certificate from the country of origin. Since October 21, 2026, scrap from the USA, the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the EU needs none through eleven named sea ports.

The eleven ports are Chennai, Tuticorin, Kandla, JNPT, Mumbai, Krishnapatnam, Mundra, Kattupalli, Hazira, Kamarajar and Adani Gangavaram. Clearance at an inland container depot (ICD) is covered too (Public Notice 35/2026-27).

The scrap needs a supplier's certificate of no radioactive material or explosives, and it's checked at the port. Scrap transshipped through those countries doesn't qualify.

DGFT's compiled Handbook of July 30, 2026 still lists eight ports; the notice replaced that text. Our notes: scrap through eleven ports and pre-shipment inspection certificates.

Do samples, gifts, prototypes and repair returns need an authorization?

Mostly not. Bona fide samples of a restricted item need no authorization, with four exceptions, and capital goods repaired abroad come back without one unless restricted. An industrial actual user may import a prototype on a self-declaration. Gifts by post or courier are prohibited unless you pay full duty.

Imports that may not need an authorization

Case	Rule	Paragraph
Samples of a restricted item	No authorization for bona fide technical and trade samples, except defense or security items, seeds, bees and new drugs	FTP 2.25; HBP 2.62(a)
Gifts by post or courier, e-commerce buys included	Prohibited unless full duty is paid; life-saving drugs and rakhis excepted	FTP 2.26
Capital goods repaired, tested or upgraded abroad	Return without an authorization, unless restricted	FTP 2.28
A prototype for an industrial actual user	New or second-hand, on payment of duty and a self-declaration	FTP 2.30
Second-hand goods in for repair or refurbishing	Free, if re-exported and the waste is handled under Indian law	FTP 2.31, row III

The Policy excludes "seeds" from the sample rule (para 2.25), while the Handbook says "vegetable seeds" (HBP 2.62(a)). For used machinery, see second-hand machinery rules.

Which documents does an import need?

An import needs three documents: a bill of lading or airway bill (or a lorry, railway or postal receipt), a commercial invoice cum packing list, and a bill of entry (FTP 2.06(b)). A regulator may

notify more for restricted or regulated goods, and ask for more in a specific case (FTP 2.06(c) and (d)).

A restricted item also needs its DGFT authorization (how to import a restricted item).

Which import rules changed in 2026?

In 2026, DGFT restricted jewelry under heading 7113 and silver bars, banned goods made with forced labor, and set or extended minimum import prices. It also eased rules: SEZ imports skip QCOs inside the zone, NFMIMS registration got more time, and the scrap exemption gained three ports.

Selected import changes in DGFT documents, as of October 28, 2026

Date	Goods	Change	Document	Read more
December 17, 2025	Restricted IT hardware under HSN 8471, such as laptops and servers	2026 import system: applications to December 15, authorizations valid to December 31, 2026	Policy Circular 08/2025-26	Import authorization
January 29 to October 12, 2026	Clear float glass, glufosinate, PVC resin and others	Minimum import prices set or extended	Eleven DGFT notifications	Minimum import prices
March 31, 2026	Yellow peas, urad and tur	Free to import up to March 31, 2027	Notifications 70, 71 and 72/2025-26	Yellow peas, urad, tur
April 1, 2026	Jewelry under heading 7113	Free lines restricted, with no transitional protection	Notification 02/2026-27	Heading 7113; Chapter 71, April 2
May 16, 2026	Silver bars, 71069221 and 71069229	Free to restricted	Notification 17/2026-27	Silver bars notice
June 2, 2026	Listed silver items	Authorization needed even through nominated banks, agencies or IIBX	Notification 19/2026-27	Silver under four codes
June 2, 2026	SEZ unit and developer imports	Exempt from QCOs for use inside the SEZ	Notification 20/2026-27	SEZ QCO exemption
June 30, 2026	Copper and aluminum	NFMIMS registration allowed until Out of Charge	Notification 22/2026-27	NFMIMS change
July 13, 2026	Goods made with forced labor	Prohibited: at once in the English text, 30 days after publication in the Hindi	Notification 23/2026-27	Forced labor ban

August 20 and October 19, 2026	Raw sugar	Duty-free quota of 10 lakh metric tons, open until December 31, 2026	Notifications 31 and 45/2026-27	Raw sugar quota
October 13, 2026	Silver, silver dore excluded	Self-declaration route from October 15 if duty is paid at the general rate; valid six months, no extension	Trade Notice 30/2026-27	Simplified silver route
October 21, 2026	Metal scrap from six safe countries or regions	No inspection certificate through eleven sea ports, ICD clearance included	Public Notice 35/2026-27	Scrap ports

Our DGFT tracker lists DGFT's 2026 Gazette notifications and notices.

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Latest notices and insights

- DGFT makes import of low ash metallurgical coke under four ITC HS codes free (Notice, January 3, 2026)
- DGFT restricts imports of low ash metallurgical coke from January 1 to June 30, 2026 (Notice, December 31, 2025)

Frequently asked questions

If an item is free to import, can it still be stopped?

Yes. A free item can carry conditions under other laws, and rules for goods made in India apply to imports unless exempted (FTP 2.01(b) and 2.03(a)). The Pakistan and forced labor bans apply whatever the code's policy says.

Are yellow peas, tur and urad free to import, and until when?

Yes, until March 31, 2027 (Notifications 70, 71 and 72/2025-26 of March 31, 2026). Yellow peas also need import monitoring registration, and their bill of lading must be issued by then.

Do quality control orders apply to imports by SEZ units?

Not inside the zone. Since June 2, 2026, SEZ units and developers may import all permissible goods for authorized operations in the SEZ without meeting QCOs (Notification 20/2026-27). Goods moved into the rest of India, or made from them, must meet the QCOs in force then.

Sources

- Foreign Trade Policy 2023, Chapter 2 (compiled July 30, 2026): paras 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.03(A), 2.06, 2.08, 2.20A, 2.20B, 2.21, 2.25, 2.26, 2.28, 2.30, 2.31 and 2.32 (PDF, 873 KB)
- Foreign Trade Policy 2023, Chapter 1 (compiled July 30, 2026): para 1.05(b)
- Foreign Trade Policy 2023, Chapter 11 (compiled July 30, 2026): paras 11.23, 11.41, 11.48 and 11.64
- Handbook of Procedures 2023, Chapter 2 (compiled July 30, 2026): paras 2.47, 2.50A and 2.62(a)
- Appendix 2K, scale of application fees (DGFT copy last changed May 14, 2025): item 18
- DGFT: ITC (HS) import and export policy search
- Policy Circular 08/2025-26, dated December 17, 2025: Import Management System for restricted IT hardware in 2026

- Notification 68/2025-26, dated March 27, 2026: urea through Indian Potash Limited (PDF, 1.0 MB)
- Notification 70/2025-26, dated March 31, 2026: yellow peas (PDF, 1.0 MB)
- Notification 71/2025-26, dated March 31, 2026: urad (PDF, 1.1 MB)
- Notification 72/2025-26, dated March 31, 2026: tur (PDF, 1.0 MB)
- Notification 02/2026-27, dated April 1, 2026: jewelry under heading 7113 (PDF, 1.1 MB)
- Notification 17/2026-27, dated May 16, 2026: silver bars (PDF, 577 KB)
- Notification 19/2026-27, dated June 2, 2026: silver through nominated agencies and IIBX (PDF, 1.2 MB)
- Notification 20/2026-27, dated June 2, 2026: QCOs and SEZ imports, revised para 2.03A(iii) (PDF, 561 KB)
- Notification 22/2026-27, dated June 30, 2026: NFMIMS registration until Out of Charge (PDF, 641 KB)
- Notification 23/2026-27, dated July 13, 2026: forced labor, new paras 2.20B and 11.64 (PDF, 702 KB)
- Notification 31/2026-27, dated August 20, 2026: raw sugar tariff rate quota (PDF, 1.2 MB)
- Notification 45/2026-27, dated October 19, 2026: raw sugar quota window to December 31, 2026 (PDF, 443 KB)
- Trade Notice 30/2026-27, dated October 13, 2026: simplified silver import authorizations, paras 2, 5, 6 and 8 (PDF, 195 KB)
- Public Notice 35/2026-27, dated October 21, 2026: scrap without inspection certificates, amended HBP 2.51(d)(v)(iv) (PDF, 643 KB)

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