

ECONOMIQUITY

News Wrap – #2/November, 2025



A Shifting Trade Order and India's Strategic Choices

As global trade enters a period of deep uncertainty, the past week's developments reveal a world grappling with geopolitical realignment, supply-chain stresses, and rising protectionism. WTO Chief Ngozi Okonjo Iweala has urged countries to seize the moment for meaningful reform. Despite turbulence, she reminded leaders that most global commerce still runs on WTO rules. The warning is timely. Major economies are turning inward, and the US's absence from multilateral forums only adds to instability.

Japan's exports show the same tension. Shipments to the world are rising, but exports to the US continue to fall due to tariff pressures. Australia, meanwhile, is leaning toward India for deeper critical minerals ties, signalling a shift toward secure battery and EV supply chains. Yet across Asia, the US is reshaping regional trade through deals that offer little certainty. Frequent renegotiations and new tariff caps are forcing partners like Korea and Malaysia to adapt to Washington's shifting priorities.

Global trade momentum is also cooling. The WTO's Goods Trade Barometer shows a slowdown as early-year import surges fade. Freight activity remains slow, and agriculture continues to struggle. US-China tariff diversion is reshaping flows across Asia, but not enough to lift the overall outlook.

Regionally, connectivity initiatives are gaining political backing. Italy's launch of an IMEC Parliamentary Friendship Group reflects Europe's growing interest in stabilising links with India and the Middle East. At the same time, the Red Sea crisis has hit global shipping hard. Rerouting adds costs and delays, exposing the fragility of global supply chains. Nigeria's new partnership under the AATB framework and the EU's support for the Zangazur Corridor show how countries are searching for new trade routes and financing systems. Afghanistan's participation in the ECO summit also indicates renewed interest in regional integration.

At home, India faces a pivotal moment. Parliament will review updates on the India-US trade talks as a possible Bilateral Trade Agreement inches forward. But concerns are rising. India's services sector remains highly exposed to the US. Clauses that limit digital regulation threaten India's digital sovereignty. The government's rapid rollback of QCOs shows the risks of regulatory overreach.

This edition of the Economiquity News Wrap captures these stories and other prominent developments across the global trade landscape.

International Trade

1.	<p><i>WTO Chief Urges Urgent Trade Reform as G20 Summit Wraps Up</i></p> <p>https://www.enca.com/</p> <p>November 23, 2025</p>	<p><u>Despite the global trade upheaval, 72% of world trade still runs on World Trade Organisation rules.</u> That is according to Director-General Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. “This is the time to seize the opportunity in this crisis, to really try to reform the system, to ask ourselves, what is it that works, what doesn’t work? And how do we solve it?” she said. On the absence of the United States from the summit, Okonjo Iweala said South Africa was “managing it well”, adding that the US remains a G20 and a WTO member.</p>
2.	<p><i>Japan's exports to world rise but drop to US due to tariffs</i></p> <p>The Economic Times</p> <p>November 21, 2025</p>	<p><u>Japan's global exports saw a 3.7 percent increase in October.</u> However, exports to the United States experienced a decline for the seventh consecutive month. This trend is linked to potential impacts from US tariffs. Japan's trade deficit narrowed significantly in October compared to the previous year.</p>
3.	<p><i>Australia eyes deeper critical minerals partnership with India, keen on Quad Summit in New Delhi: Aussie Envoy</i></p> <p>The Economic Times</p> <p>November 21, 2025</p>	<p>Australia is keen to boost cooperation with India in critical minerals, especially lithium and cobalt, according to High Commissioner Philip Green. Discussions during Foreign Minister Penny Wong's visit highlighted this, with Australia, a major lithium producer, aiming to support India's growing battery and EV manufacturing ambitions. <u>The partnership seeks to facilitate Indian private sector investment in five key projects.</u></p>
4.	<p><i>US trade deals multiply but are offering little certainty or durability</i></p> <p>Business Standard</p> <p>November 27, 2025</p>	<p><u>The article shows how recent US trade deals are becoming unpredictable.</u> Many agreements look one-sided, with the US pushing tariff caps and tighter rules. Partners like Korea, Vietnam, and Malaysia face new conditions that may affect market access. Constant renegotiation risks weaken trust and create policy uncertainty. Overall, shifting US priorities are reshaping trade dynamics in Asia.</p>
5.	<p><i>Global Trade Momentum Eases As Early-Year Tariff Rush Fades: WTO</i></p> <p>Business World</p> <p>November 29, 2025</p>	<p><u>Global merchandise trade slowed in the September quarter as the early surge from front-loaded US imports faded,</u> pulling down the WTO’s Goods Trade Barometer to 101.8. This easing momentum was reflected in softer freight activity and continued weakness in agriculture, even as export orders showed a mild uptick. With US tariffs redirecting imports away from China toward other Asian economies, the WTO expects global trade growth to remain subdued in near future.</p>

Regional Trade		
1.	<p><i>IMEC Parliamentary Friendship Group launched in Italy giving mega boost to connectivity initiative</i></p> <p>ET Bureau</p> <p>November 25, 2025</p>	<p>Italian Parliamentarians have launched an IMEC Parliamentary Friendship Group to foster parliamentary diplomacy for the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor. This initiative, supported by over forty MPs, aims to deepen trade and political ties between India, GCC countries, and Europe, with Italy playing a proactive role.</p>
2.	<p><i>The Red Sea Crisis: Disruptions to Global Shipping and Regional Trade</i></p> <p>Maritime News</p> <p>November 27, 2025</p>	<p><u>The Red Sea crisis has turned a major global trade route into a high-risk zone</u>, as Houthi attacks force ships to avoid the Suez Canal. Rerouting increases costs, delays goods, and strains supply chains worldwide. Regional economies suffer falling revenues and uncertainty. Without stability, disruptions may persist.</p>
3.	<p><i>Nigeria: FG signs AATB membership deal to deepen regional trade, strengthen value chains</i></p> <p>Nigerian Tribune</p> <p>November 28, 2025</p>	<p><u>Nigeria has joined the Arab Africa Trade Bridges (AATB) Programme, signing a major agreement in Abuja to boost trade competitiveness and diversify exports</u>. The partnership will support agribusiness, SMEs, logistics, and digital trade, while expanding access to regional markets and trade finance. Backed by key development banks, the AATB aims to strengthen trade and investment links between African and Arab states, with Nigeria now a central partner.</p>
4.	<p><i>EU official highlights Zangazur Corridor's role in strengthening regional connectivity</i></p> <p>Azernews</p> <p>November 27, 2025</p>	<p><u>EU Commissioner Jozef Sikela said the Zangazur Corridor could complement Trans-Caspian transport routes by adding capacity</u>, easing congestion, and strengthening regional trade resilience. He stressed that digitalisation through tools like e-certificates and interoperable customs is key to making the corridor competitive. With rising political commitment and investment, the Middle Corridor is accelerating, and Azerbaijan expects the Zangazur link to be operational by 2028.</p>
5.	<p><i>Afghanistan strengthens regional trade ties at ECO summit</i></p> <p>Ariana News</p> <p>November 27, 2025</p>	<p><u>Afghanistan's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Nooruddin Azizi, has actively participated in the Fifth Trade Ministers' Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) held in Istanbul</u>, emphasizing the country's readiness to engage in regional trade and transit projects. During the summit, member states approved key documents, including the ECOTA Trade Agreement Adjustment Strategy, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) framework, and the ECO 10-Year Development Vision for 2026–2035.</p>

National Trade		
1.	<p><i>Commerce Secretary to share India-US trade deal updates with Parliamentary panel</i></p> <p>Lokmat Times</p> <p>November 27, 2025</p>	<p><u>Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal will brief Parliament on India-US trade talks as both countries edge closer to the first tranche of a Bilateral Trade Agreement.</u> Negotiations are progressing quickly amid positive signals from Washington, with President Trump hinting at tariff reductions. India remains cautious about protecting farmers and workers, while expanding US energy imports to rebalance trade.</p>
2.	<p><i>India's merchandise exports aren't too exposed to the US—we need to watch out for services</i></p> <p>Livemint</p> <p>November 27, 2025</p>	<p><u>India's trade vulnerability with the US lies less in goods and far more in services, where over half of India's exports depend on the American market.</u> Most merchandise exports are diversified and face limited tariff risks, but rising US barriers—higher H-1B fees and proposed outsourcing taxes—threaten India's service exports. India must urgently diversify service markets while negotiating a fair deal with Washington. Failure to do so could pressure the rupee, widen the trade deficit, and slow growth.</p>
3.	<p><i>Shashi Tharoor writes: India must choose digital sovereignty or submit to the new, subtle digital raj</i></p> <p>The Indian Express</p> <p>November 27, 2025</p>	<p><u>Global power now hinges on data, forcing India to choose between digital ascendancy, capitulation, or sovereignty.</u> The US dominates digital systems and pressures countries, including India, into concessions that weaken autonomy. Some nations have surrendered rights over data and regulation; a path India must avoid. Instead, India should build digital sovereignty through strong laws, domestic tech development, and strategic use of its talent. Any FTA clauses limiting digital regulation would undermine this goal.</p>
4.	<p><i>Rollback of quality control orders is good, but don't make haste</i></p> <p>Indian Express</p> <p>November 28, 2025</p>	<p><u>India's rapid withdrawal of over 20 QCOs corrects past overreach but repeats the same haste that created the problem.</u> Earlier rules hurt MSMEs, distorted prices, and disrupted supply chains; sudden rollbacks now risk import surges especially from China. India needs phased reforms, transparent BIS processes, and a targeted, safety-focused quality regime to protect industry competitiveness.</p>
5.	<p><i>India must defend strategic autonomy in US trade negotiations</i></p> <p>Hindustan Times</p> <p>November 19, 2025</p>	<p><u>India faces US pressure through 'poison pill' clauses that link trade benefits to distancing from Russia and China.</u> Accepting them would erode strategic autonomy, limit policy choices, and undermine core partnerships. Sovereignty must remain non-negotiable for any meaningful India-US trade deal.</p>