

KOLKATA

businessline.

TUESDAY - MAY 7 - 2024

EC to hold talks with civil society on proposed India-EU free trade pact

Amiti Sen

New Delhi

The European Commission will hold dialogue with its civil society representatives on recent developments in the EU's trade relations with India, particularly the state of play of negotiations for the proposed India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), in a virtual meeting later this month.

"The meeting offers an opportunity for an exchange of views with civil society organisations (CSOs) on the EU's trade policy with India and its future," according to the EC.

The meeting, scheduled on May 22, is important as the EU has been actively taking inputs from its civil society for its FTAs, especially for the 'trade and sustainability' chapters that includes labour and environment.

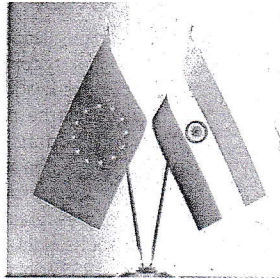
Civil society in the EU has also been active in pursuing issues related to IPRs and access to medicine as well as health.

NEGOTIATIONS

"The EU is keen to conclude its FTA with India soon, possibly by the year-end. Consultation with the civil society will help the bloc in firming up its offers and requests in several areas," a source tracking the matter told *businessline*.

The seventh round of the India-EU negotiations were completed in February 2024 and the eight rounds will take place in Brussels soon.

"In the interim, the two sides are meeting inter-sessionally through virtual



modes," the source said. The proposed India-EU FTA covers over 20 chapters including digital trade, government procurement, IP, State-Owned Enterprises, SMEs, energy, good regulatory practices and sustainable development.

RAISING AWARENESS

CSOs, including prominent entities including Doctors Without Borders, have been instrumental in raising awareness about the potential impact of trade pacts. Last year, civil society dialogue was organised on the FTA, where CSOs shared their inputs. The FTA talks, initiated in 2007, faced challenges but resumed in 2022 and have been progressing steadily.