

UK team on way back to London; FTA talks still on

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A team of UK negotiators that was in New Delhi to try and iron out the remaining issues holding up a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) is on its way back to London on Friday with a deal yet to be finalised, according to officials familiar with the discussions.

The understanding is that the fourteenth round of negotiations remains “open and progress continues” but the team did not get what was needed to close all the outstanding issues.

Sources said the UK is “proud” of all that has been achieved so far and that the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak-led government remains committed to securing a “comprehensive and ambitious” FTA and bilateral investment treaty (BIT).

It comes as commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal told *PTI* in an interview

in New Delhi that long-term benefits for the economy were key in such FTA negotiations and that India was seeking a “balanced, fair and equitable” deal.

“I am very confident that we hear some good news in the days to come.

Our officers are relentlessly pursuing several engagements. Let us see who pips the others,” Goyal said.

Earlier, UK

Secretary of State for Business and Trade Kemi Badenoch said that while a trade deal with India is “possible” to be concluded before a general election in the country, Britain does not want to use that as a deadline.

“We can actually sign an agreement before the Indian election. I suspect that that is not necessarily going to be the case because I don't want to use any election as a deadline,” Badenoch said during a Global Trade conference at Chatham House in London on Thursday.

