

Confident of 6th round of BTA talks

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Top government officials on Monday told a parliamentary panel that India's relations with the US were multifaceted, and not restricted to trade issues. They were, however, confident that the sixth round of negotiations on the India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) would take place as a US trade team is scheduled to visit India on August 25 for talks.

To questions by panel members on India's defence ties, the officials rejected recent reports that have claimed that New Delhi has halted its purchases of defence equipment from the US. They said the government-to-government engagement between the two countries on all other issues remains normal, but conceded to rough spots over trade that need ironing out.

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What officials said

- Rejected reports claiming India has halted purchases of defence equipment from the US
- Said govt-to-govt engagement between the two on all other issues remains normal
- Conceded that rough spots over trade need ironing out
- Noted that US imposing unilateral, punitive measures on third countries erodes trust and distorts global trade norms
- Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said India-US ties are multi-dimensional, and trade is just one aspect of this

industry briefed the members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs on "the current development in India's foreign policy with special reference to the US-India trade negotiations and tariffs". Congress Lok Sabha member Shashi Tharoor heads the panel.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Tharoor said that Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told the panel that India's relationship with the US is multi-dimensional, and trade is just one aspect of this, but New Delhi continues to engage with

Washington DC on many subjects. Tharoor said that negotiations on the proposed trade deal between the two countries will continue.

The members asked more than 50 questions on India-US relations, including on trade, which the commerce secretary answered in detail.

Tharoor said the Alaska meeting between US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin could pave the way for the lifting of the 25 per cent penalty that the White House has imposed on India for its purchase of

Russian oil. However, the impact of the 25 per cent tariff that the US has slapped on India is impacting the country, and needs to be reduced.

The officials said the US imposing unilateral, punitive measures on third countries, in the context of India's purchase of Russian oil, only serves to erode trust and distorts global trade norms. "Despite the recent developments, we remain committed to engaging constructively with our partners, including the US, to resolve all outstanding issues through dialogue and mutual respect," one of the officials told the members.

Members of the panel asked questions about the Trump administration hosting Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir twice in a span of one-and-a-half months. They also wanted to know whether Trump has imposed a high tariff and penalty on India for not being "credited" for mediating the peace between India and Pakistan.