

# Virtual Talks, Real Progress: India & US Near Trade Pact

No deadline yet; commerce secy says deal will materialise when both sides are ready

## Our Bureau

**New Delhi:** India and the US are very close to a trade agreement and it would materialise when both sides are ready, commerce secretary Rajesh Agrawal said Thursday but stopped short of putting a deadline, adding that the negotiating teams are talking "virtually" and that the discussions had never broken down. In the last week of December, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal had a virtual meeting with US Trade Representative Jameson Greer.

Despite the 50% tariff imposed by the US on India since August 27, the exports to US are still holding on. In December 2025, India's merchandise exports to the US were \$6.89 billion as against \$7.01 billion in December 2024, down 1.8% and \$6.98 billion in November 2025.

"All I can say is that with the US we are always in discussions... we are engaged. Negotiating teams are talking virtually on issues which are still pending. It is very near, but we can't put a deadline because that will happen when both sides are ready and they feel that this is the right time to announce a deal," Agrawal said.

The December meeting between



Goyal and Greer took place after the visit of a delegation of officials from the office USTR to New Delhi on December 10-11 led by Deputy USTR Rick Switzer. This week, the US ambassador to India Sergio Gor took office and presented his credentials to the President on January 14. On January 13, external affairs minister S Jaishankar had a telephonic conversation with the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio where trade-related issues were also taken up.

### TARIFFS, OIL, IRAN

"US exports we have been holding well, we are in positive territory. Electronics and pharma exports

are not under tariff. Going forward, we hope that we will be in positive territory," he added.

The US continued to be India's top export market in April-December FY26 with exports at \$65.88 billion compared to \$60.03 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal.

"High tariffs are definitely putting pressure on some sectors so it is a mixed bag but we are working on how to make exports competitive, diversify to balance the losses and new markets. We have been able to hold overall numbers despite tariffs," the secretary said, adding that the bilateral trade between the countries is registering

positive growth.

When asked if it is possible that there may not be a trade deal, he said: "We get into all (trade pact) negotiations with a very positive and optimistic mindset... we are engaged with the US. Both sides are engaged. So, I think both sides feel that this can be done".

### EUFTA

On the India-EU FTA, he said that 20 out of 24 chapters have been finalised, with a few issues remaining under ongoing negotiations. Agrawal said that the two sides are trying to see if they can meet the January deadline because "that's a good occasion when our leaders are meeting, but we can only make efforts". He cautioned, however, that "coming near is not good enough".

He said both parties are "virtually engaged on a day-to-day basis", and are trying to see if we can meet the timeline before the leaders can meet, he said. The India-EU summit is scheduled for January 27.

The secretary further resolved that they were expecting to conclude the negotiations and have the "deal ready".

"We can have a deal ready and some kind but that depends on how we make progress in the next five days," he said.