

Sensitive farm issues kept out of India-EU trade pact

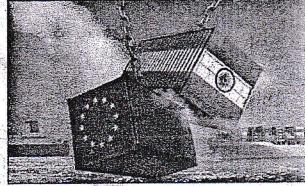
MUKESH JAGOTA
New Delhi, January 15

WITH SENSITIVE AGRICULTURE issues kept out of the prospective free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union (EU), the negotiators from both sides are working on the last few remaining matters so that the deal is ready for announcement when the top leadership of the 27-member bloc visits New Delhi from January 25-27.

"There are few issues where negotiations are still ongoing. We are virtually engaging on a day-to-day basis and are trying to see if we can meet the timeline before our leaders can meet. That will be a good occasion (to announce the conclusion). We are making the right endeavour," Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said.

He said, contrary to the impression created by some news reports from Europe that agriculture has been kept out of the agreement, the FTA covers all aspects of trade. "My sense is, if I would guess, the DG Trade (of EU) Sabine Weyand, who has been quoted in that report, meant that sensitive agricultural issues on both the sides are

GETTING DEAL-READY



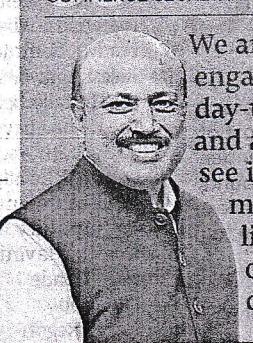
■ Merchandise trade between India and EU stood at \$90.7 bn in 2024-25

■ India's exports to EU stood at \$51.0 bn

■ The 16th India-EU Summit will be held on January 27

■ Imports were at \$39.7 bn

RAJESH AGRAWAL
COMMERCE SECRETARY



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out of it (FTA)," Agrawal added.

President of the European Council António Luís Santos da Costa and the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen will be on a visit to India from January 25-27, 2026, as chief guests at the 77th Republic Day celebrations.

During the visit, the leaders will also co-chair the 16th India-EU Summit on January 27, 2026, a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs said. The announcement of the conclusion could be made during the summit and signing could happen on a later date.

The 15th India-EU Summit was held virtually on July 15,

2020. Bilateral ties have expanded and deepened across a wide range of areas, particularly following the historic visit of EU College of Commissioners to India in February 2025, the MEA statement added.

Trade, security and defence, the clean transition and people to people cooperation will top the agenda of the discussions, a statement by da Costa's office said.

Negotiations on 20 of the 24 chapters or policy areas covered by the FTA have been completed, Agrawal said.

To give a last mile push to the negotiations, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush

Goyal visited Brussels last week for a meeting with EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic on January 8-9. Prior to his visit, high-level discussions between Agrawal and Weyand were held on January 6-7.

India and the EU started FTA negotiations in July 2022. Since then, they have held 14 rounds of negotiations and have been constantly in negotiations since October last year.

The EU is currently India's largest trading partner. Bilateral merchandise trade between India and EU stood at \$ 90.7 billion in 2024-25 with India's exports at \$ 51.0 billion and imports at \$ 39.7 billion.