

Jaishankar rebuts Trump's assertion on zero tariffs

STRONG COUNTER. Foreign Minister says trade talks are on, and must be mutually beneficial

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US President Donald Trump's aggressive posturing on tariffs and assertion that New Delhi had agreed to a trade deal charging no tariffs on American products was strongly countered by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday.

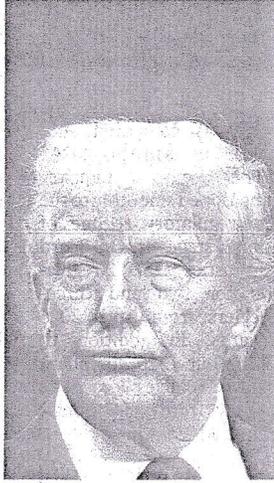
In a nuanced but strongly-worded statement, the Foreign Minister said, "Between India and the US, trade talks have been going on, negotiations have been going on. The team is going at this point. These are complicated negotiations. Nothing is decided till everything is. Any trade deal has to be mutually beneficial, any trade deal has to work for both countries. That would be our expectation from the trade deal. Until that is done, any judgment on it would be premature."

TRUMP TALK

At an event in Doha, Trump said: "I had a little problem with Tim Cook (CEO of

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US President



Apple Inc) yesterday. I said to him, 'My friend, I am treating you very good. You are coming up with \$500 billion, but now I hear you are building all over India. I don't want you building in India. You can build in India, if you want to take care of India because India is one of the highest tariff nations in the world, so it is very hard to sell

in India. They (India) have offered us a deal where basically they have agreed to charge us literally no tariffs'."

PRESSURE ON GOYAL

However, sources said that Trump's tough posturing mounts pressure on Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, who is heading to

Washington this weekend for negotiations on the India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement.

Goyal, who will meet US Trade Representative James Greer and US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick to advance the BTA talks during his visit on May 17-20, will seek to reach a deal before July 8, whether full or partial, in order to avoid the reciprocal tariffs.

"Commerce Minister Goyal and the negotiating team would have to step carefully in the face of such pressure from the US President to protect the interests of Indian industry and agriculture. All sensitive sectors, including agriculture, dairy and MSMEs, have to be protected," the source said.

On April 2, US President announced reciprocal tariffs on most countries that have trade surpluses with the US, including India which got slapped with 26 per cent levies. But he paused them for 90 days to give time for trade deals.