

India, Australia talk addition of 15 new chapters in proposed deal

Collaboration in space, mining and sports are among 15 new areas mutually identified by India and Australia for negotiations under the comprehensive free trade agreement, a senior government official said on Thursday.

For the first time, these new segments would become part of a trade pact being negotiated by India.

Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal said that the third round of

talks for the proposed comprehensive economic cooperation agreement (CECA) will end on June 16 and the next round of talks is scheduled in July.

India and Australia have already implemented an interim trade pact in December last year and now negotiations are underway to expand the base of that pact for a CECA.

"In addition to five areas which we had committed and which will be taken up under CECA, there are 15

new areas where mutual interest has been shown by both sides," Agrawal told reporters here.

The official teams on both sides are discussing these areas to finalise the scope of discussions and cooperation that can be taken up in these areas, he said. "Some of these are very new areas like space and sports, which we have not done (earlier) in any FTA (free trade agreement) till now. These are under discussion and we will see

how it evolves," he added.

These areas may also include mining and defence collaboration.

On Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), he said that India has observer status on the trade pillar and it is observing the developments "very" closely.

IPEF was launched jointly by the US and other partner countries of the Indo-Pacific region on May 23 last year in Tokyo. **PTI**