

# High duty on aluminium, steel to stay till capacity issue is addressed: US

**EYEING OPPORTUNITIES.** US Commerce Secretary's New Delhi visit in March expected to enhance bilateral ties

**Amiti Sen**  
New Delhi

The Biden-led US government will not remove the high import duties imposed by the Trump regime on Indian steel and aluminium products until the "fundamental issue" of excess capacity and the behaviours that gave rise to the problem are addressed, a senior US government official has said.

Washington has, however, taken note of the delays in issuance of visas due to disruptions caused by the pandemic and is doubling direct hires at its embassy in India to speed up the process, said Arun Venkataraman, US Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Global Markets, at a media briefing in New Delhi on Tuesday.

## UPBEAT ON TIES

Venkataraman said Washington was upbeat about its grow-



**FULLY COMMITTED.** Arun Venkataraman, US Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Global Markets, briefs the media ahead of the India-US CEO Forum in New Delhi on Tuesday PTI

ing economic relations with New Delhi and the forthcoming visit of US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo in March — to convene the India-US CEO Forum and the US-India Commercial Dialogue with her Indian counterpart Piyush Goyal — will be a launchpad to enhance engagement between the two governments.

Indo-US trade crossed the \$160-billion threshold in 2021, but both governments

believe it is far short of the potential, he said.

"...we are working with the private sector to identify what are the strategic elements that we can change, to create the environment to not just hit that \$500-billion (India-US bilateral trade) target but move well past that in the long term... what barriers we can remove and what steps the governments can take... It's our job as government to maximise the opportunities for

businesses," he said. On the long-pending issue of resolving the additional import duties of 25 per cent and 10 per cent imposed by the Trump government on certain steel and aluminium products, respectively, from India and some other countries in 2018, Venkataraman said the US was committed to working with all its trading partners to address the problem at its source.

"The situation that gave rise to the duty is a global situation caused by very few players that have distorted the global market through non-market practices and, as a result, created a situation of global excess capacity. The Section 232 investigations in the US identified the global excess capacity and the consequences for how steel from other countries was being pushed into the US as a national security threat, posing an existential crisis for our steel and aluminium industry. The duties have been put in

place to address those concerns and to ensure a certain capacity utilisation on the part of those industries," he said.

Without addressing the fundamental issue of excess capacity and the behaviours that gave rise to the problem, the US will be unable to move forward towards a system where steel and aluminium can be traded, he added.

## ON VISA ISSUE

On the delays in issuance of US visas, including business visas, Venkataraman pointed out that while the government was continuing to take steps to improve the situation, some progress has already been made and the country was issuing more visas than it ever did before.

"We are doubling the number of direct hires we have to facilitate the issuance of visas here at the embassy and we are working also to bring on diplomatic spouses to work in the process..." he said.