

FTA talks: India, UK balancing mobility, migration concerns

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New Delhi, 15 December

With the proposed India-United Kingdom (UK) free-trade agreement (FTA) reaching the last leg, both countries are trying to strike a balance between their concerns over mobility and migration-related issues, a senior government official said on Friday.

“We have to balance the UK’s migration concerns with our (India’s) mobility issues. The point is we would like our companies to be given mobility so that they can perform over there and their concern that migration doesn’t go unchecked,” the official said, without divulging details since the discussions are confidential.

Easy visa norms for the movement of professionals has been one of India’s key demands, where both sides are yet to reach a common ground.

The discussions assume significance, considering that the UK has recently announced significant tightening of the country’s immigration policy.

Apart from movement of skilled professionals, the UK’s demand for greater market access for electric vehicles, whiskey, gin, among other issues, continue to remain unresolved.

After a high-level UK delegation visited India to iron out the differences, currently, an Indian delegation is in London to advance discussions. Both sides already missed the Diwali deadline last year, set by former UK prime minister Boris Johnson. With general elections expected in both countries next year, the window for a trade deal is fast shrinking.

Other FTA

The negotiations on the text of most of the chapters for the proposed India-Oman FTA have concluded, government officials said on Friday. Two rounds of negotiations have been completed till now. The commerce department has set an internal deadline of finalising the deal by month-end. Oman is India’s 29th largest trading partner and the third largest export destination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Russian diamond import ban may not impact India much

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India may not be majorly impacted by G7’s decision to impose direct import restrictions on Russian-origin diamonds from January, and on diamonds processed by third countries from March as most of the country’s major concerns have been addressed, a senior government official said on Friday.

“India’s thinking was that there should be control on the rough diamonds, which are coming from Russia but as far as diamonds are processed in India, there should be no further checks on that. They (G7) have agreed to that. In that respect, perhaps, it is a respite to our diamond industry,” the official cited above said.

“If rough Russian diamonds that will be coming from Antwerp and other areas, they will be used in our diamond processing. We should be able to see that

without disturbing the sanctions on Russian diamonds we should be able to export our processed diamonds,” the official said.

India-EU WTO dispute

India has appealed against a ruling of the World Trade Organization’s (WTO’s) trade dispute settlement panel in a case filed by the European Union (EU) against New Delhi’s import duties on nine information and technology products.

India’s move came after both sides were not able to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution. “India and the EU have negotiated to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution for the past seven months, but the EU has now filed for adoption of panel report on December 7 and therefore, India has appealed against it on December 8 in the WTO,” Peeyush Kumar, additional secretary in the commerce ministry, told reporters.

