

G20 MEET

FTA talks with UK, EU, Canada next week

All platforms being used to flag non-tariff barriers

SHREYA NANDI

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India plans to hold free-trade agreement (FTA) talks with the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, and the European Union (EU) on the sidelines of the two-day G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial meet in Jaipur beginning August 25.

Besides, India will take up bilateral trade issues with the United States Trade Representative (USTR), World Trade Organization's director general, and the Russian delegation next week.

"This G20 meeting will also be useful for us to conduct some of the important bilaterals with respect to our FTAs. There will be high-level meetings with the UK, and discussions on what we have done so far with respect to Canada. They will also be discussing some of the issues related to the EU," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal told reporters on Friday.

"But of course, the focus will be on the G20 ministerial declaration. We are very hopeful that all the Indian priorities and the groundwork we have done will get converted into definite outcomes after the discussions," Barthwal said.

The secretary said India was using all multilateral and bilateral platforms, including G20, to flag concerns with regard to non-tariff barriers affecting the free flow of trade. India has raised its concerns on issues, such as the EU's carbon tax, on different platforms, including the WTO.

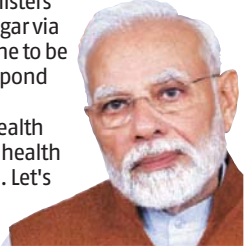
Such measures by G20 member-countries are also likely to figure in the Jaipur meeting next week.

Must be ready to prevent next health emergency: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged G20 nations to facilitate equitable availability of technology and also appealed to them to open innovations for public good.

Addressing the G20 Health Ministers' meet in Gujarat capital Gandhinagar via video link, he called upon everyone to be ready to prevent, prepare and respond to the next health emergency.

"Global initiatives on global health will bring together various digital health initiatives on a common platform. Let's open our innovations for public good," the PM said. PTI



'Covid-19 still global threat, new variant under scanner'

Director-General of World Health Organization (WHO) Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus on Friday said though Covid-19 is no longer a health emergency for the world, it is still a 'global health threat' and a new variant of coronavirus is already under the scanner. The chief of the WHO was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the

G20 Health Ministers' Meeting in Gujarat's capital Gandhinagar.

"Although Covid-19 is no longer a global health emergency, it remains a global health threat. WHO has recently classified a new variant (BA.2.86 variant) with a large number of mutations," he said. PTI

"We are discussing those non-tariff barriers and how to find a good solution, a platform where we can coordinate on these issues, and we can understand these issues," Barthwal said.

The Jaipur G20 meeting will be preceded by the fourth and last Trade and Investment Working Group meeting under India's G20 Presidency, which will take

place on August 21-22.

Both the meetings will be attended by more than 300 delegates, including trade ministers/secretaries and heads of delegations from G20 member-countries, invitee countries, regional groupings, and international organisations.

"The deliberations will focus on building consensus on global trade and investment-related issues, along with accomplishing action-oriented proposals put forward by the Indian Presidency," an official statement said.



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