

# India pauses trade team's visit, will assess US SC tariff ruling

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The Indian team was scheduled to visit the US from February 23 to 25

The Indian team negotiating the trade deal with the US has postponed its scheduled visit to Washington following the US Supreme Court's decision on Friday invalidating reciprocal tariffs imposed on partner countries, official sources said.

While exporters say that they can absorb the 15 per cent global tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump as long as no new tariffs are added, experts suggest that India should now pause negotiations or carefully recalibrate its position in light of the ruling.

"The two sides are of the view that the proposed visit of the Indian chief negotiator and the team be scheduled after each side has had the time to evaluate the latest developments and its implications. The meeting will be rescheduled at a mutually convenient date," sources in the Commerce Department said.

## US VISIT

The Indian team was scheduled to visit Washington on February 23-25 to finalise the legal text for the interim trade pact, the framework for which was agreed to by

to walk out of the ongoing negotiations, he added.

India's decision to not send its negotiating team right away is a welcome decision and India should carefully re-calibrate its position, said Abhijit Das, independent trade expert and former head of the Centre for WTO Studies.

## SOME RELIEF

Most Indian exporters of labour-intensive goods are relieved by the lowering of additional duties but are concerned about Trump's warning on duties under other heads in the future.

"After the duty correction from 50 to 18 per cent/25 per cent the prospects for India have improved again. Now with the 15 per cent global tariffs, it's on par with any nation. We just have to be sure that India does not get any further tariffs under the 301 or 201 Sections. Earlier closure of the bilateral trade agreement will help in this regard," said Israr Ahmed, a Chennai-based exporter of leather goods.

Garments exporter Sanjay Jain said the 15 per cent tariffs after the US Supreme Court's judgment are almost at the levels agreed to in the trade deal (of 18 per cent), so not too much had changed on the tariff front.

Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 2. Experts said that India must not accept the deal, in the form it was envisaged by Trump, as it places tough conditions on the country and things had changed, on the tariff front.

"In exchange for an 18 per cent reciprocal tariff rate, India was expected to offer major concessions — cutting tariffs, aligning economic policies with US interests, easing regulations affecting US goods and signalling large purchases of American products. Now, even without a trade agreement and without making any sacrifices, India, like other countries, faces a 15 per cent tariff on most goods, rendering the negotiated arrangement burdensome and one sided," pointed out Ajay Srivastava from trade research body GTRI.

The US Supreme Court ruling should prompt India