

Vance nudges India to drop non-tariff barriers for US biz



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United States Vice President JD Vance on Tuesday called for deeper energy and defence ties with India, while pressing New Delhi to remove non-tariff barriers and provide greater market access to American businesses.

Vance, currently on a four-day visit to India, acknowledged progress in ongoing trade talks, describing the finalisation of the broad contours of the agreement as “vital”. He also called Prime Minister Narendra Modi a “tough negotiator”.

“One suggestion I have is, maybe consider dropping some of the non-tariff barriers for American access to the Indian market. Now we have talked about this with

Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi. President (Donald) Trump, and I know that Prime Minister Modi is a tough negotiator. He drives a hard bargain. It’s one of the reasons why we respect him,” Vance said in a speech at the Rajasthan International Centre in Jaipur. “We don’t blame Prime Minister Modi for fighting for India’s industry. But we do blame American leaders of the past for failing to do the same for our workers. We believe we can fix that for the mutual benefit of both the US and India.”

Vance is accompanied by his wife, Second Lady Usha Vance, and their children on a largely personal visit that began on April 21. The family met with Modi and several senior officials on Monday. **Turn to Page 6 ▶**

Serious lack of reciprocity in trade with India, says USTR

United States Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer said that there is a “serious lack of reciprocity” in the trade relationship between the US and India, even as he welcomed the announcement of the finalisation of the terms of reference for the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vice President JD Vance. **6▶**

'Want India to buy more of our military equipment'

The American vice-president's remarks come ahead of trade talks beginning on Wednesday in Washington, where a delegation of Indian commerce department officials, led by chief negotiator and commerce secretary-designate Rajesh Agrawal, will meet their US counterparts.

Both sides aim to finalise the first phase of a mutually beneficial, multi-sectoral Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by the fall (September-October), while targeting an interim deal by July 9, when a 90-day pause on reciprocal tariffs expires. The US has temporarily paused reciprocal tariffs for all nations except China, which has drawn retaliatory measures from Beijing.

India and the US are also working to more than double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030.

Without naming any country, Vance delivered a pointed message that the US seeks trade partners based on "fairness" and those who do not act as "conduits" for transshipping goods from other nations.

"Today, I came here with a simple message. Our administration seeks trade partners on the basis of fairness and of



US V-P JD Vance with family at Jaipur's Amer Fort

PHOTO: PTI

shared national interests. We want to build relationships with our foreign partners who respect their workers, who don't suppress their wages to boost exports, but respect the value of their labour. We want partners that are committed to working with America to build things, not just allowing themselves to become a conduit for transshipping others' goods," he said.

Vance also defended Trump's trade policies, which have drawn criticism for igniting a "trade war," saying the measures are designed to bring jobs back to the US and rebalance global trade.

He warned of "dark times" without a strong partnership

between India and the US. "I believe that if India and the US work together successfully, we are going to see a 21st century that is prosperous and peaceful. I also believe that if we fail to work together successfully, the 21st century could be a very dark time for all of humanity," the visiting American leader said.

Vance further advocated for greater defence and security collaboration, highlighting the India-US Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnerships (COMPACT) initiative announced by Trump and Modi in February. "We want your nation to buy more of our military equipment, which, of course, we believe is

the best in class. The F-35, for example, would give the Indian Air Force the ability to defend your airspace and protect your people like never before," he said.

Beyond defence and technology, Vance said India could benefit from increased American energy exports. By expanding these exports, India would be able to build, produce and grow more at lower energy costs.

A senior commerce ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said India and the US are not only close strategic allies but complementary market economies. "While India and the US have deep trade and economic ties, the spread and depth of these ties still have a long way to go before they can match the true potential for economic cooperation between the two countries. The BTA aims to enhance and expand bilateral trade, technology and economic ties in a mutually beneficial manner so that the India-US ties, which have been called the defining partnership of the 21st century by Vance, can deliver greater prosperity and well-being for the people of the two countries," the official added.