

Few tariff exclusions in India-UK FTA: MEA

Agreement gets Cabinet approval, likely to be signed on Thursday; highest priority to ensure energy security: Misri

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On the eve of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to the United Kingdom (UK), Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said on Tuesday that the India-UK Free Trade Agreement was undergoing "last-minute work", such as "legal scrubbing".

In its meeting on Tuesday afternoon, the Union Cabinet approved the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or the bilateral FTA, between the two countries. It is likely to be signed in London on July 24.

Misri also suggested that the FTA was a comprehensive one with few, if any, exclusions of tariff lines.

The Prime Minister will leave for a four-day foreign tour to the UK and Maldives on Wednesday afternoon. With Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal accompanying the PM, there is



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anticipation that the two sides will sign the FTA on Thursday.

To a question whether any

tariff lines are being excluded from the India-UK FTA, Misri said that his understanding is

that it is a significant agreement, and the inclusions of tariff lines are likely to be equally significant.

"So, by implication, I think the exclusions may not be that many," he said.

Asked if issues relating to energy security in view of the fresh Western sanctions targeting the Russian energy sector will figure in the Modi-Starmer talks, the Foreign Secretary said India accords "highest priority" to ensure energy security for its people and it is important to have a "clear-eyed" perception on the broader global energy market.

Last week, the European Union unveiled new punitive measures targeting the Russian energy sector that included restrictions on the Vadinar refinery in Gujarat, in which Russian oil major Rosneft owns a 49.13 per cent stake.

"We have been very clear that insofar as energy security is concerned. It is the highest priority

of the government of India to provide energy security for the people of India," he said.

"We will do what we need to do with regard to that (energy security). On energy-related issues itself, as we have said previously, it is important not to have double standards and to have a clear-eyed perception of what the global situation is insofar as the broader energy market is concerned," Misri said.

The foreign secretary said it is important to have clarity on where the providers of energy goods are located and where they are going to come from and who needs energy at what point in time.

"We do understand that there is an important and serious security issue that is confronting Europe, but the rest of the world is also there and is also dealing with issues that are existential for the rest of the world," he said. "I think it's important to keep balance and perspective when

talking about these issues," he said.

To a question on whether the Indian side would discuss the extradition of fugitives, such as Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi and Vijay Mallya, the foreign secretary said New Delhi has continued to make the case for some of the fugitives to be rendered to India.

"Obviously, there is a legal process that such requests and such issues go through in the other country, and we continue to follow up very closely with our partners in the UK on these matters," Misri said.

During his visit to London, apart from his meeting with Starmer, Modi will also call on King Charles, and there is an interaction that is planned with business leaders, both from India and the UK. Misri said the India-UK partnership was upgraded to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2021, and continues to be a close one.