

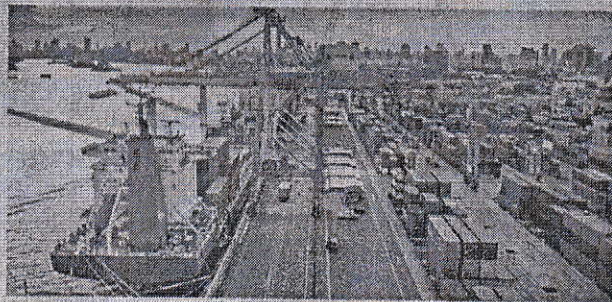
Next round of India-EU FTA talks to kick off next week, stock-taking meet to follow

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Negotiators from India and the EU are set to kick off the next round of talks on the proposed India-EU FTA next week focussing on multiple areas such as market access for key industrial and agricultural goods, intellectual property, digital trade, government procurement, data secure status and environment & sustainability issues including labour and gender.

The third round of negotiations, between November 28 and December 9, will also include separate discussions on an investment protection agreement and geographical indications, an official told *businessline*.

"This will be followed by a stock-taking meeting at the Commerce Secretary/Director General level next month or beginning of January 2023," the official said. About 75 sessions on 19



ON THE TABLE. About 75 sessions on 19 policy areas are scheduled in the third round, to be hosted by India GETTY IMAGES

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CAUSE OF CONCERN

India and the EU re-started negotiations on an FTA in June this year after a gap of nearly nine years. Negotiations which started in 2007 were suspended in 2013 due to differences over several issues.

While India has now agreed to include several new areas as it already has ef-

ficient domestic laws, EU's demand for binding commitments could be of concern. "India is also open to bringing down tariffs on wines and spirits and automobiles. But there has to be compatibility between the EU's expectations and India's comfort levels," said a source.

Similarly, in areas such as intellectual property, digital trade and government procurement, ambitions of India and the EU need to be matched. "In the third round

of negotiations, both sides would try to bridge the existing gaps in key areas and by the end of it a clearer picture is expected to emerge on where things stand," the source added.

India may also press the EU to extend to it data secure status, as part of the FTA, as it would help the country attract more sophisticated data outsourcing business, the source said. The EU does not want to make deep concessions in the work visa regime, as it says that work permits are under the remit of individual EU states, but India may insist on some commitments.

India is hopeful of making gains in areas such as textiles, leather, sports goods and processed food as the proposed FTA could place Indian exporters at par with exporters from competing countries such as Bangladesh and Vietnam that already have preferential access into EU markets.