

India-US to resume trade talks in January

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Talks on the proposed trade deal between India and the United States will resume after the year-end holidays, coinciding with Sergio Gor — a close aide of American President Donald Trump--taking charge as the US Ambassador to India in early January, according to a person privy to the development.

Discussions are currently on a pause due to the year-end holiday

season. “No talks are happening at the moment (even virtually),” the person cited above said.

India and the US have missed the ‘Fall’ deadline to finalise the first phase of a bilateral trade agreement (BTA). Talks are going on for the last nine months, with no outcome in sight, despite over a half dozen rounds of in-person formal and informal negotiations. The US trade team headed by the Deputy US Trade Representative (USTR) Rick Switzer visited New Delhi last

week. According to a *Bloomberg*, USTR Jamieson Greer recently critiqued the practices of two trade partners, including India, signalling that the contentious talks could spill over into the new year. Greer also said that negotiations with India that began earlier this year still haven’t resulted in an agreement, noting that the US had concluded deals with a slew of other trade partners in the interim.

For close to two months now, the Indian side has been reiterat-

ing that there’s no need for a fresh round of negotiation and most differences have been narrowed down. The US side, however, has been insisting that agriculture-related market access, digital trade, and non-tariff barriers are some of the issues that still need to be sorted.

Commerce secretary Rajesh Agrawal had said that both nations are close to finalising a framework trade agreement, which is likely to be concluded “soon”.