

# With fewer tariffs, India could be first to sign trade deal: US Treasury Secretary

Our Bureau  
New Delhi

Delhi may be the first to finalise a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) with Washington DC, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said.

Negotiations with India could be nearing completion because of the latter's relatively open trade practices. And also because of the fact that India "does not impose so many high tariffs", making it a probable frontrunner for an expedited trade pact, he said.

According to US media reports, Bessent said he expects India to strike the first bilateral trade deal, while a potential agreement with China has been "set aside" for now.

Bessent told the media that the trade talks with India were "very close" to reaching a successful conclusion as the sub-continent does not have "so many high tariffs."

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"India also has fewer non-tariff trade barriers, obviously, no currency manipulation, very minimal government subsidies, so reaching a deal with the Indians is much easier," Bessent said. He was speaking at a Washington DC event on the sidelines of the annual World Bank and In-

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## SCOTT BESSENT

US Treasury Secretary



ternational Monetary Fund meetings. Currently, the 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on India imposed by the US is under a 90-day suspension. This pause expires on July 8. However, India still faces a 10 per cent tariff, similar to other nations, under the US trade policy.

The higher tariff is part of a broader strategy by President Trump to exert pressure on trading partners to lower trade barriers and narrow the US' trade deficit. Previously, US Vice-President JD Vance, during his visit to India, had urged the country to drop non-tariff barriers, provide access to its market and buy more American energy and defence hardware. "India, we believe, can go a long way to enhance energy ties between our nations. And one suggestion I have is maybe consider dropping some of the non-

tariff barriers for American access to the Indian market," he had said during an event in Rajasthan.

## BTA ON FAST-TRACK

The comments of Bessent and Vance come in the backdrop of New Delhi and Washington DC taking up discussions to finalise the terms of reference for their BTA, with negotiations expected to gain momentum in the coming weeks.

*businessline* had previously reported that top officials from India and the US will discuss the agenda for an "early tranche" of the BTA that can be delivered within the 90-day tariff pause period in Washington DC next week. The Indian team, travelling to the US for the three-day meeting, will be led by Additional Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal.