

Lutnick meets Goyal, holds ‘highly productive’ trade talks

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US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on Thursday made a surprise visit to Delhi and held “highly productive” discussions with India’s Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, days after the US Supreme Court overturned the sweeping tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump.

“Hosted US Secretary of Commerce @HowardLutnick & @USAmbIndia Sergio Gor. Engaged in very fruitful discussions to expand our trade and economic partnership,” Goyal posted on X.

US Ambassador Gor also made a similar post on X: “A highly productive lunch with @howardlutnick and @PiyushGoyal. So many areas of cooperation for our two nations!”

An Indian official,



Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal (centre), with US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick (left) and US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, in New Delhi on Thursday

PHOTO: @PIYUSHGOYAL/X

requesting anonymity, said Lutnick is on a personal trip to India. Later in the day, news agency ANI put out a video of Lutnick arriving in Jodhpur.

The visit came a day after the US Department of Commerce imposed a 126 per cent duty on imports of solar power equipment from India. Turn to Page 6 ▶

PAGE 7

US solar levy spurs SEZ mfg benefit demand

After the US’ 126 per cent levy on solar power equipment imports, the domestic industry has demanded that the government act immediately on the Budget’s provision to allow the sale of SEZ units in the domestic market.

PAGE 2

‘US imports’ impact on animal feed market speculative’

Ravinder Balain, country president of Cargill India and senior managing director of Cargill Animal

Nutrition and Health,

South Asia, in a video interview with Sanjeeb Mukherjee, discuss the impact of the US-India trade

deal on India’s animal feed markets.



New smartphone PLI may be linked to value additions

However, based on stakeholder estimates, actual value addition is now expected to reach only 18-20 per cent by FY26.

The PLI scheme was earmarked a budget of ₹34,193 crore over five years. However, based on estimates of disbursements and allocations in the latest Budget, total payouts are likely to be around ₹20,000 crore. The bulk of this is expected to go to Apple vendors Tata Electronics and Foxconn (Hon Hai Technology Group), as well as Samsung and Dixon Technologies (India).

After the Galwan border skirmishes with China in 2020 and the subsequent imposition of Press Note 3, India effectively shut the door on foreign direct investment from China. This included Chinese component manufacturers, which dominate the global supply chain for mobile phone makers such as Apple Inc, restricting their ability to set up operations independently or through joint ventures.

As a result, Apple Inc — one of the chief beneficiaries of the PLI scheme — had to rework its strategy, abandoning plans to bring its existing Chinese component suppliers to India. Instead, it opted to build a supply chain based on domestic and non-Chinese firms, a slow process that clearly affected the govern-

ment's value-addition ambitions. Over the past three years, Apple has built a supply chain of around 40 such companies in India.

In the interim, the government also realised through stakeholder discussions that without achieving economies of scale first, component producers would find it unviable to set up operations in India. Ambitious targets such as 40 per cent value addition — achieved by China only after three decades — could not realistically be met within five years, as originally envisaged.

The government has since taken steps to push value addition through the electronics component manufacturing scheme (ECMS), which has attracted more than 82 players to set up manufacturing facilities for components as well as machinery required to make those components domestically. Budgetary allocation for the six-year scheme in the latest Budget has been increased by 75 per cent, from ₹22,919 crore to ₹40,000 crore, to deepen manufacturing capacity.

Smartphone companies eligible under the PLI scheme have been seeking a few years' extension to give India time to neutralise its cost disadvantage compared with countries such as Vietnam and, more radically, China.

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Speaking at the *Business Standard* Manthan event on Tuesday, Goyal had said India would resume trade deal talks with the US as soon as there is "more clarity" regarding the tariff situation in Washington.

A team headed by India's chief trade negotiator for the US, Darpan Jain, earlier this week postponed its visit to Washington, DC, amid uncertainty over tariffs. The team was scheduled to travel on Sunday for

three days of talks to finalise the legal text of the negotiated interim trade deal.

Starting February 24, Trump imposed a blanket 10 per cent surcharge on all countries for 150 days under Section 122 of the Trade Act. He also ordered new investigations under other laws that could allow him to re-impose tariffs agreed under trade deals.

In his State of the Union address on Wednesday, Trump said that despite the "unfortunate" ruling by the Supreme Court, almost all countries and corporations want to keep the deals they had already made. "Knowing that the legal power that I, as President, have to make a new deal could be far worse for them. And, therefore, they will

continue to work along the same successful path that we had negotiated before the Supreme Court's unfortunate involvement," he added.

Trump said the tariffs would remain in place under fully approved and tested alternative legal statutes such as Section 301 and Section 232. "They're a little more complex, but they're actually probably better, leading to a solution that will be even stronger than before," he said.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, in an interview with *Fox Business* on Wednesday, said he has been in constant contact with trading partners to help them understand how the "replacement tools" align with the trade deals the US has made.

Social media platforms must take responsibility for content: Vaishnav

During the AI Impact Summit earlier this month, Vaishnav told reporters that the government was in talks with social media platforms and internet intermediaries to impose a complete age-based ban on children below a certain age from using social media.

"This is something that has now been accepted by many countries that age-based regulation has to be there. It was part of our DPDP (Digital Personal Data Protection) Act when we created age-based differentiation in the content accessible to young people," he had said.

Apart from a ban on children below a certain age using social media platforms, the government is also in discussions with intermediaries on the best possible solutions to contain deepfakes, he had said.

The call for a ban on children below a certain age using social media has gained ground after Australia became one of the first countries to implement it nationwide. In India, Andhra Pradesh's IT Minister Nara Lokesh also

hinted at the possibility of implementing such a rule in the state, following which other states said they could consider a similar move.

To make platforms more accountable for hosted content, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology earlier this month amended the Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code, 2021, reducing the response time for social media platforms and internet intermediaries to take down objectionable and unlawful content from 36 hours to three hours. The new rules came into effect on February 20.

On Thursday, Vaishnav also said social media and internet intermediaries must share revenue with content creators in a fair manner so that conventional media, large and small influencers, professors, researchers and news channels, including those in far-flung areas, benefit proportionately.

"Everywhere, the principle now has to be set right, and there has to be a fair share of revenue with the people