

# Govt seeks more industry inputs on India-EU FTA

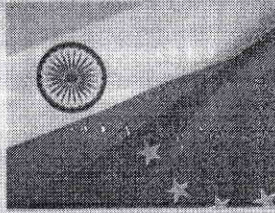
**CRUCIAL ROUND.** Talks to focus on building convergences

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The Commerce Department has started intensive industry consultations to prepare for the next round of India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations in October this year in Brussels. Inputs are being sought not just on tariff issues but also non-tariff barriers and discriminatory treatment faced in the EU in terms of inspection, registration requirements, labelling, authorisation and testing, sources have said.

Industry body CII has circulated questionnaires to various industry and exporters' bodies to get feedback in multiple areas of goods, services, rules of origin, digital trade and government procurement which are expected to be taken up in the sixth round of negotiations on October 16-20.

"The industry feedback will be used by the government to fine-tune its negotiating position in the sixth round where



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the focus will be on building convergences. It is going to be a crucial one as both sides are looking at concluding the negotiations by next year," a source tracking the matter told *businessline*.

#### IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

In the area of goods, where the average tariffs in the EU are low but certain items face steep tariffs, the industry has been asked to point out areas which hold growth potential. Businesses have also been asked to identify specific EU standards or regulations acting as barriers in areas ranging from registrations to testing.

In services, the industry has to indicate specific EU domestic regulations, FDI policies and immigration and visa requirements which may be acting as barriers. "Since India will be venturing into discussions on digital trade, a new area, the industry has also been asked to specify interests in digital trade with the EU," the source said.

In government procurement, where EU wants commitments, India is keen on extracting advantages for its industry. The questionnaire asks businesses to identify areas where they could benefit and also the barriers they face.

India and the EU are discussing an ambitious FTA which has about 21 proposed chapters.

Apart from chapters on goods and services, the talks focus on a host of other areas — digital trade, government procurement, Intellectual Property (going beyond TRIPS agreement—evergreening of patents), anti-competitive conduct, merger control and subsidies, among others.