

India, U.S. to take up 'high tariff', visa curbs in Washington meet

Suresh Prabhu

India and the U.S. are slated to hold high-level talks this week to boost bilateral trade and investment. On the agenda of the India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum (TPF), scheduled to be held in Washington DC on October 26, are ways to iron out irritants including 'visa curbs' of the U.S. and India's 'high tariffs' on manufactured products and 'restrictions' on e-commerce, as well as steps to expedite the conclusion of negotiations on a bilateral social security pact (or totalisation agreement).

IPR issues

The TPF, which is the main forum to resolve bilateral trade and investment issues, is also likely to take up the 'challenges' that American innovative industries face due to India's 'weak' Intellectual Property Rights regime. It would also discuss the 'non-tariff barriers' of the U.S. that are adversely impacting India's agriculture, pharmaceuticals and other industrial exports.

Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu will meet U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and a few other senior Trump administration officials including U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. He will also hold discussions with U.S Congress members, business leaders and industry bodies such as the US-India Business Council (USIBC). Both countries aim to increase bilateral goods and services trade to \$500 billion soon, from about \$115 billion in 2016.

Industry bodies including USIBC and US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) are working with the governments of both the countries on mechanisms to ensure greater engagement at the State-level, instead of focusing entirely on the Central/Federal-level discussions.

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