

INDIA, EU REAFFIRM COMMITMENT TO protect farmers, MSMEs in FTA talks

NEW DELHI, Jan 9 (PTI)

INDIA and the European Union (EU) on Friday held talks in Brussels on the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based trading framework and a modern economic partnership that safeguards the interests of farmers and MSMEs.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is on a



two-day official visit to the EU headquarters for the talks.

He has held high-level talks with EU Trade and Economic Security Commissioner Maros

Sefcovic for securing a mutually beneficial FTA.

“During this dialogue, we deliberated across key areas of the proposed agreement. We reaffirmed our commitment to a rules-based trading framework and a modern economic partnership that safeguards the interests of farmers and MSMEs while integrating Indian industries into global supply chains,” Goyal said in a social media post.

DRDO conducts long-duration ground test of scramjet engine for hypersonic missiles

NEW DELHI, Jan 9 (PTI)

DEFENCE Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has achieved a key milestone in the development of hypersonic missiles, as it successfully conducted a long-duration ground test of its actively cooled scramjet combustor, the Defence Ministry said on Friday.

Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), the Hyderabad-based laboratory of the DRDO, has achieved a "path-breaking milestone" in the development of such missiles, the ministry said, as it shared the update on scramjet-powered hypersonic technology.

"The DRDL successfully conducted an extensive long-duration ground test of its Actively Cooled Scramjet Full Scale Combustor, achieving a run time

of over 12 minutes at its state-of-the-art Scramjet Connect Pipe Test (SCPT) Facility on January 9," it said in a statement.

A hypersonic cruise missile is capable of exceeding five times the speed of sound (over 6,100 kmph) for extended periods, the Ministry said.

"The remarkable feat is achieved through cutting-edge air-breathing engine, which utilises supersonic combustion to sustain long-duration flight. The ground-tests conducted at SCPT facility have successfully validated the design of advanced scramjet combustor, as well as the capabilities of the state-of-art test facility," it said.

This significant achievement builds upon the earlier sub-scale test conducted on April 25 last year, for long duration, marking a crucial step forward in hypersonic missile development, the statement said.

China emerging as major export destination for India; shipments up 33 pc during Apr-Nov

NEW DELHI, Jan 9 (PTI)

CHINA is gradually emerging as a major export destination for India, with shipments rising 33 per cent to USD 12.22 billion during April-November of the current fiscal, according to Commerce Ministry data.

The data is signalling a structural shift in the bilateral trade relationship. The export increase was driven by products such as oil meals, marine products, telecom instruments and spices, the data showed. During April-November 2024-25, India exported goods worth USD 9.2 billion. It was USD 9.89 billion in Apr-Nov 2022-23, and USD 10.28 billion in 2023-24.

The sharp jump to USD 12.22 billion in 2025-26 not only reverses last year's decline but also marks the highest level in the past four years, the data showed.



In the electronics segment, the main items which registered growth during the first eight months included populated printed circuit boards (exports rose from USD 23.9 million to USD 922.4 million), flat panel display modules, and other electrical apparatus for telephony.

The main agriculture and marine products exported are dried chilies, black tiger shrimp, green gram, Vannamei shrimp, and oil-cake residues.

Similarly aluminium and

refined copper billets too contributed notably to export growth. "This spread across electronic goods, agriculture and base metals, indicates that the export surge is not narrowly concentrated but reflects a broader structural expansion of India's exports to China," an official said.

An exporter said that Indian industry is exploring opportunities in different markets as high tariffs in the US are making it difficult for them to ship goods at competitive rates in America.

India projected to grow at 6.6% in 2026: UN

Says resilient consumption, public investment to offset US tariffs impact

■ By Yoshita Singh

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 9 (PTI)

INDIA is projected to grow at 6.6 per cent in 2026, registering an "exceptionally high growth in a challenging global environment", with resilient private consumption and strong public investment largely offsetting the impact of high US tariffs, the United

Nations has said.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026 report, released on Thursday by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said that economic growth in India is projected to "moderate" from an estimated 7.4 per cent in 2025 to 6.6 per cent this year. India will remain the world's fastest major econo-

my, it said.

"Resilient private consumption, strong public investment, recent tax reforms, and lower interest rates are expected to support near-term growth. However, higher US tariffs could weigh on export performance in 2026 if current rates persist, as the US market accounts for about 18 per cent of total exports from India,"

the report said.

It added that while tariffs may adversely affect some product categories, key exports such as electronics and smartphones are expected to remain exempt.

"Moreover, strong demand from other major markets, including Europe and the Middle East, is projected to partially offset the impact," it said, adding

that on the supply side, continued expansion in manufacturing and services sectors will remain a key driver of growth throughout the forecast period.

The report stressed that India's growth will be supported by resilient consumption and strong public investment, which "should largely offset the adverse impact of higher US tariffs".

US will provide USD 45 million in aid to Thailand, Cambodia

BANGKOK, Jan 9 (AP)

THE United States, which played a major role in ending border clashes last year between Thailand and Cambodia, will be providing USD 45 million in aid packages to the two Southeast Asian countries in an effort to ensure regional stability and prosperity, a senior US State Department official said Friday.

US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Michael DeSombre made the announcement in an online media briefing in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, where he was meeting with senior Thai officials to discuss the implementation of last October's ceasefire, also known as the Kuala Lumpur Peace Accords.

Longstanding competing claims to territory along the Thai-Cambodian border was the root cause of the fighting.

"The restoration of peace at the Thai-Cambodian border opens new opportunities for the United States to deepen our work with both countries to promote regional stability and advance our interests in a safer, stronger and more prosperous Indo-Pacific," DeSombre said.

On Saturday, he's scheduled to hold discussions with top officials from Cambodia in the country's capital, Phnom Penh.

The United States "will be providing USD 15 million for border stabilisation to help communities recover and to support displaced persons; USD 10 million in demining and unexplod-

ed ordinance clearance operations; and USD 20 million for initiatives that will help both countries combat scam operations and drug trafficking, among many other programmes," DeSombre said.

But details of the aid packages were still under discussion, he said.

The fighting in July and December displaced hundreds of thousands of people in Thailand and Cambodia and killed about 100 soldiers and civilians. Land mines left over from decades of civil war in Cambodia are a continuing problem, while Thailand claims newly laid mines in frontier areas were responsible for wounding its patrolling soldiers in about a dozen incidents last year.