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U.S. and Japan Signal Constructive Talks Toward Fair Tariff Deal

July 18, 2025

— Categories: Finance



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U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba expressed optimism about reaching a mutually beneficial trade agreement during a meeting in Tokyo on Friday (Japan time). While the talks did not outline specific terms, both sides emphasized the importance of ongoing dialogue amid the backdrop of proposed tariffs set to begin in August.

The meeting comes as the United States reasserts its trade priorities under a renewed focus on reciprocity and fair competition. President Donald Trump has proposed a 25% tariff on certain Japanese imports, a move aimed at addressing persistent trade imbalances and protecting American industries. Although this proposal has sparked concern among some international partners, it aligns with the administration's commitment to strengthening U.S. economic security and promoting fair trade practices.

Prime Minister Ishiba, speaking to reporters after the meeting, stated that while the proposed 25% tariff was not discussed in detail, he urged Secretary Bessent to continue active negotiations with Japan's chief tariff negotiator, Ryosei Akazawa. Akazawa confirmed that both nations had agreed to maintain a "constructive dialogue" going forward, signaling that diplomacy remains a central component of the evolving trade dynamic.

Secretary Bessent made a courtesy visit to Ishiba ahead of a U.S. national celebration scheduled for this weekend at World Expo 2025 in Osaka. He did not make public remarks after the meeting. The White House has yet to issue a formal statement, but sources familiar with the matter suggest the administration is aiming to solidify terms that prioritize American manufacturing and address concerns over market access.

This development is part of a broader U.S. strategy to rebalance trade relationships through assertive, but cooperative, negotiation. By engaging allies like Japan in high-level discussions, the U.S. aims to avoid long-term conflict while ensuring that American workers and industries are no longer disadvantaged by lopsided agreements.

As Japan remains a key strategic and economic partner, the outcome of these negotiations could set the tone for future trade agreements with other major economies. For now, both sides appear committed to pursuing a solution that reflects the shared interest in stability, growth, and economic fairness.