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## Pakistan Pushes for US Trade Deal as Deadline Looms

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Pakistan is making a final push to secure a landmark trade agreement with the United States, its largest trading partner, as Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb engages in high-stakes negotiations in Washington. With an August deadline fast approaching, Pakistani officials are working to address longstanding trade barriers while promising significant economic reforms to attract American investment. The talks come as the US demands concrete action from Islamabad before committing to any bilateral pact.

During meetings with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutonk and Trade Representative Jameson Grey, Aurangzeb emphasized Pakistan's readiness to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers hindering trade growth. The discussions focused on boosting Pakistan's export competitiveness in key sectors like textiles and agriculture while creating conditions for increased US investment in energy and technology. However, sources indicate the US remains cautious, seeking verifiable reforms rather than verbal commitments from Pakistan's new government.

The negotiations face significant hurdles, including Pakistan's \$3 billion trade deficit with the US and Washington's concerns about intellectual property protections. Pakistani officials are preparing a comprehensive policy roadmap to address these issues, including potential import quota increases for American agricultural products. Aurangzeb hinted at imminent domestic reforms, suggesting Islamabad may soon announce measures to streamline business regulations and strengthen investor protections. 

As the deadline approaches, this trade mission represents a critical test for Pakistan's economic diplomacy. Success could unlock new growth opportunities, but failure would reinforce perceptions of Pakistan's declining global competitiveness. The outcome will hinge on whether Islamabad can translate promises into measurable action, something that has eluded previous administrations. With geopolitical tensions rising in Asia, a strong US-Pakistan trade partnership could provide stability, but only if both sides move beyond rhetoric and deliver concrete results. The coming weeks will reveal whether this is the start of a new economic chapter or another missed opportunity.