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## Trump Pressures India on Trade Deal, Warns of Up to 25% Tariffs

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Former U.S. President Donald Trump has issued a sharp warning to India, threatening to impose tariffs as high as 25% on Indian imports if long-standing trade negotiations do not result in a fair agreement. The comments come amid ongoing discussions between Washington and New Delhi over market access, regulatory barriers, and what the Trump administration previously described as one of the most imbalanced trade relationships in the world.

During a press interaction, Trump stated bluntly, “They are going to pay 25%,” when asked whether India could face steep tariffs. “Yeah, I think so. India has been, they’re my friends,” he added, reinforcing his typical strategy of pairing tough trade talk with diplomatic overtures. Trump’s remarks follow his consistent criticism of India’s high import duties and non-tariff barriers, including burdensome testing requirements and digital service taxes that have historically disadvantaged U.S. exporters.

Jamieson Greer, former U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) advisor, emphasised the need for more in-depth discussions to finalise a deal, noting that while India has shown “strong interest” in opening parts of its market, meaningful progress hinges on continued negotiation. “We need some more negotiations to see how ambitious they want to be,” Greer told CNBC.

Under Trump’s trade doctrine, fairness means reciprocity. In 2019, his administration raised concerns over India’s treatment of U.S. goods and, on April 2, set a 26% tariff on Indian imports before pausing those levies. While no formal letter of tariff imposition has been issued yet, similar tactics were employed with several of America’s other trading partners during Trump’s first term, often leading to last-minute breakthroughs or escalations.

The trade imbalance between the two countries remains a sticking point. According to U.S. Department of Commerce figures, America imported \$87 billion worth of goods from India in the previous year, while India imported only \$42 billion from the U.S. The top Indian exports to the U.S. included pharmaceuticals, communications technology, and apparel sectors, where India remains globally competitive.

Trump has long maintained that India imposes some of the highest tariffs in the world, making it “very hard to sell into India.” He also revealed he confronted Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the matter directly, telling him, “You’re not treating us right.” While India’s Commerce Ministry offered cautious optimism about reaching a deal before Trump’s previously stated August 1 deadline, Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar later described Trump’s claim of a no-tariff offer as “premature” and underscored the “complicated and intricate” nature of the talks.

The broader concern from the U.S. side stems from what the Trump administration called “non-tariff trade barriers,” such as restrictions on digital services and stiff regulatory hurdles for foreign products. These issues have drawn particular ire from American businesses, which see India as a promising but frustratingly closed market.

Trump's renewed rhetoric is likely intended to reassert a tough-on-trade platform ahead of the upcoming election cycle, once again framing foreign partners as needing to do more to open up their markets fairly to U.S. goods. For India, the warning may be a calculated pressure tactic, but one that underscores the high stakes in navigating trade relations with an administration known for unpredictability and hard bargaining.