

**BRICS meet in Agra today to discuss pacts on MSME, services**

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*Talks on cooperation in e-commerce, IPR also on agenda*

New Delhi, July 27:

BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – will try to thrash out an agreement on cooperation amongst micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and a pact on services, including facilitation of business visas, in a meeting of senior officials in Agra this week.

“Officials would try to finalise policy frameworks in the two areas for trade ministers to officially agree to when they meet in October,” a government official told *BusinessLine*.

The two-day meeting, which begins on Thursday, will also have discussions on e-commerce, being pushed by Russia, and intellectual property championed by China.

The BRICS Summit, to be attended by heads of States of all five nations, will be held in Goa on October 15-16, which will be preceded by the trade ministers meeting.

“Since India is the chair this year, we are keen to have at least two agreements, one on MSMEs and the other on services, to be formalised. How ambitious the two agreements would be will depend on what happens at the Agra meeting this week,” the official said.

The BRICS economies comprise 43 per cent of the world population and account for more than a third of the world gross domestic product. The five countries contribute about 17 per cent to global trade.

For MSMEs, New Delhi has proposed a framework of cooperation to regulate tariffs, check non-tariff measures (NTMs), ensure transparency in sanitary and phytosanitary measures and exchange information on regulatory mechanisms.

**MSME round table**

“On the first day there will be a round table on MSMEs where all issues will be discussed. The feasibility of setting up a portal on NTMs that affect trade between BRICS nations will also be taken up,” the official said.

In services, India wants a special dispensation for business visas from member countries that would be cheaper and of longer duration.

Russia, on the other hand, is likely to make a case for an agreement on cooperation in e-commerce that would include development of a trans-boundary trust space (by setting up common trust infrastructure such as servers) for acceptance of e-documents between member countries.

“While members would be ready for a loose agreement on cooperating in developing e-commerce, it might be difficult for countries, including India, to agree on a trans-boundary trust space at the moment,” the official said.

China wants an agreement on working together on common interests in IPR, including Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which, too, would be discussed by members.

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