

G20 MEET

Modi, Xi could team up to fight protectionism

Trade, oil prices, food security norms and tax fugitives also on PM's mind

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New Delhi, 28 November

The G20 meeting in Argentina may see Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping team up to raise concerns of emerging market economies such as trade protectionism, volatility hitting oil prices and food security norms.

With the country headed for elections in May 2019, the Buenos Aires meet will be one of the last chances for Modi to drive home India's status as a foreign direct investment (FDI) hotspot and publicise his Make In India campaign.

The Donald Trump administration's strict stance on reaching trade parity with trading partners is expected to bring neighbours India and China closer on the global stage, senior government officials said.

Beijing has also shown an interest in teaming up with India on food security and export subsidies, sources said. "We have briefed the Prime Minister's Office on the current state of play the World Trade Organization where multiple challenges to India's subsidy program have been launched by US authorities even as it spearheads efforts to deny a permanent solution to the question of public stockholding of foodgrains," a commerce department official said.

India's G20 stakes rise

"The G20 today is more of a standards setting body for global economic policy in different domains, such as energy security, trade and cyber security. But its functioning has been different from a usual North-South or East-West divide, because we see very loose coalitions operating, depending on the issue being discussed," former foreign secretary Shyam Saran said.

The G20 chair has suggested three areas for the talks in Argentina — the future of work, infrastructure for development and a sustainable food future, areas where India has a lot at stake.

On Wednesday, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale confirmed that Modi will hold bilateral meetings with several



PM Narendra Modi leaves for Buenos Aires to attend the G20 summit

PHOTO: PTI

ON THE CARDS

New Delhi to reach out to Beijing as Donald Trump's tariff hikes pinch both

No solution to the food security issue is expected to amplify demands for WTO reform

G20 meet will also be one of Modi's last multilateral meets before general elections

As a result, PM will drive home India's status as an investment hotspot

leaders, including Jinping, on the margins of the G20. A trilateral meet with US President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is also on the cards.

However, experts also urged caution in creating new global alliances. "Once common ground is found, there is asymmetry in the way the agenda is carried forward, until China and India look at our institutional capacities to provide necessary support to implementing agencies. So, on diverse issues, we need to focus on strengthening institutions such as the New Development Bank," Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General of Research

and Information System for Developing Countries, a think tank under the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Domestic concerns to be aired

In last year's G20 summit in Germany, discussions were held on sustainable development and volatility in global currency markets at length. The event had also seen other nations acknowledge steps taken by India for sustainable and inclusive growth as well as support to the global economy. Countries had noted the initiatives in the country for promoting ease of doing business, start-up funding, and labour reforms.

Modi will also use the meet to raise concerns of India and other nations on the volatility of global oil prices and the way bodies such as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries have increasingly cartelised oil supplies, a senior government official said.

Saddled with back-to-back cases of major financial fraud, the Prime Minister also wants to utilise the summit to discuss ways to strengthen international cooperation and enhance coordinated action against fugitive economic offenders, he added.

US sets terms for fair trade deal with China