

India to help bring in consensus among nations at G20 meet

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India hopes to play a constructive role to help build a middle ground consensus among the world's major economies if the US and China spar over a final statement of the G20 summit at Buenos Aires beginning Friday, said a senior government official.

Leaders are wary of discord after the failure of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Papua New Guinea to agree on a joint statement — following Chinese objections on trade.

And if the leaders fail to reach a consensus in Buenos Aires, it will be the second such failure of a summit hosted by Argentina after members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) failed to make any headway last December.

The official who is involved in finalizing India's G20 strategy said the focus of the latest summit is "future of work" in the context of robotics, automation and artificial intelligence, infrastructure for development and sustainable food future. "Obviously other issues

like trade, climate change, international financial architecture, all these issues have come up for discussion," he said, requesting anonymity.

The draft declaration is being negotiated by Sherpas this week before the 20 leaders sit down and sign it on 1 December. India will be represented by former economic affairs secretary Shaktikanta Das.

Trade major bone of contention

The G20 members make up 85% of the world's economic output

One country is chosen by G20 members to hold the presidency over group

2019 summit will focus on 'future of work', infra for development, food future

However, trade may take centre stage due to policy disagreements

Leaders are wary US and China may spar over final statement of G20 summit at Buenos Aires starting today

The official quoted earlier said differences of opinion in discussions so far have been the sharpest in trade. "I hope there will be consensus on all the issues including trade. India will play a constructive role to have a consensus-based outcome," he added.

Deep divisions between the US and China over international trade issues stymied cooperation at the APEC, leaving the 21 member-nations failing to agree on a customary

joint statement on shared goals for the first time in the group's 25-year history.

With China and the US engaged in a trade war marked by spiralling tit-for-tat tariff hikes, their positions

on free trade and WTO have diverged wide. While China and other countries have dragged the US to the WTO against its move to justify tariff hikes on grounds of national security, the US has repeatedly stopped efforts to appoint judges to the highest adjudicating body in the WTO and has even suggested evicting China from the WTO as an option.