

# US Can't Ignore a Big Market Like India: Sitharaman

Commerce minister says India will soon engage with Trump administration on totalisation, pharma, IT and visa fee issues

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**New Delhi:** India would be among the first to approach the Donald Trump administration with a complete dossier of all the issues that New Delhi has been engaging with the Obama administration, commerce and industry minister Nirmala Sitharaman told ET.

India will talk on totalisation, pharma, IT and visa fee issues since it is concerned about the US' move to drastically hike the H-1B

and L-1 visa charges, which is estimated to quadruple the Indian IT industry's annual visa costs to \$400 million.

"I would continue to have the same approach of talking to the US because India is a very big market. They can't ignore us. They shouldn't ignore us in the sense that we are the only economy with the growth potential that we have. The US can't but engage with India on our strength. I'm not assuming that they should, but our strengths are such that they sho-

uld engage with us," she said. In 2015, total India-US trade was over \$109 billion.

■ **The US' move may quadruple Indian IT industry's annual visa costs**

regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade bloc. "I agree there are seven mem-

bers in RCEP who are also members of TPP. But that doesn't take away the importance of RCEP and the discussion will go on. It is going on. I think we are getting closer. So, RCEP should go on and I don't see that getting affected adversely," Sitharaman said.

US president-elect Donald Trump has announced to pull out from the 12-member mega trade deal and whose impact on India would be mixed, according to experts. While some expect RCEP talks to fast forward and comple-

te soon without much pressure from the common members, others suggest India to not hurry with the talks. "India shouldn't feel relieved that TPP is not getting signed. It must complete RCEP as soon as possible," said a Delhi-based expert.

RCEP comprises 16 countries including 10 members of Asean plus China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India and the minister's statement comes before the next round of talks in Indonesia later this week.