

India's bureaucracy posing hurdles: New Australia trade minister

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Melbourne: Australia's new trade minister has criticised India's "strong" bureaucracy for posing hurdles for a favourable business environment, saying sometimes one has to "roll up sleeves and apply a little elbow grease" to make things happen.

"India is a country that has a huge amount of potential and a huge amount of opportunity, but there is a fairly strong amount of bureaucracy. Sometimes it requires you to roll up your sleeves and apply a little elbow grease," said Steven Ciobo early last week.

Ciobo, 41, who recently succeeded former minister Andrew Robb, said Australian government was committed towards a free trade agreement with India and free trade with will continue to remain its area of focus.

"There are a number of different pokers in the fire. We are looking at, of course, ongoing negotiations around a free trade agreement with India, that continues to be an area of focus," Ciobo told CNBC in New York where he is attending a business week to promote Australia as an investment destination.

Ciobo, who will be now be taking over ongoing negotiations over a free trade agreement with India, had said last week before his swearing in ceremony that the free trade deal with India would be hard to close on.

"It's not easy. It is going to be hard - there's no doubt about that," Ciobo was quoted as saying by media reports. He also said there was a commitment to secure the deal from the prime Ministers of both the sides.

His predecessor Robb, who will stay on as a special envoy, had been actively pursuing the trade deal with India. Ciobo has been a member of the Australian House of Representatives representing the Division of Moncrieff, Queensland for the Liberal Party since November 2001.

He served in the Abbott ministry as a parliamentary secretary to the Treasurer between September 2013 and December 2014 and as a Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and to the Minister for Trade and Investment from December 2014 until September 2015.

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