

Japan Fails to Win Tariff Exemptions During Washington Visit

The country's trade minister stressed its role as a top investor and employer in the United States in a bid to avoid being hit by new levies on metals and cars.

By River Akira Davis
New York Times

Japanese officials [visiting](#) Washington this week have failed to win assurances from the Trump administration that the country would be exempt from sweeping tariffs set to hit imports of metals and cars into the United States.

Japan's trade minister, Yoji Muto, told his American counterparts that the country should not be targeted by the new tariffs because it invests large amounts in the United States and employs many people there.

U.S. officials, Mr. Muto said, stressed that their priority was on "reciprocity," as well as reviving local manufacturing and preserving jobs. "It is not that case that Japan will be exempt from tariffs from tomorrow," Mr. Muto said in a news conference held in Washington on Monday evening.

Mr. Muto's meeting with Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and other officials came ahead of a 25 percent tariff on all steel and aluminum imported into the United States that is set to come into effect on Wednesday. Japan had also been aiming for relief from a [potential 25 percent tariff on foreign cars](#) that President Trump has indicated could take effect as soon as April 2.

The auto tariffs are expected to hit Japan's economy the hardest. Automobiles are the country's largest export, and the United States is the top destination.

Before Mr. Muto's trip to the United States, Japan's prime minister, Shigeru Ishiba, had held talks with Mr. Trump in early February. Seeking to curry favor during his first meeting with the new president, Mr. Ishiba made a number of pledges to increase Japanese investment in the United States.

One was to boost Japanese purchases of U.S. liquefied natural gas. In the weeks since, officials have been [considering](#) using potential investments in a \$44 billion project to produce and export natural gas from Alaska as a negotiating tool.

Mr. Muto said on Monday that he had discussed the Alaska plan with U.S. officials during his visit and that the two countries would continue discussions aimed at establishing a "win-win" relationship that would boost economic ties.