

Modi heads to US in attempt to avoid Trump trade war

Penelope MacRae

Delhi

The Indian prime minister is heading to Washington for high-stakes talks in an attempt to avoid a trade war with Donald Trump.

Narendra Modi is considering tariff cuts in at least a dozen sectors in the hope of dodging US levies that would pile pressure on its slowing economy.

Today's meeting will test the much-hyped "bromance" between Trump and Modi, with the two leaders exchanging hugs during the president's first term. Trump has called Modi "the nicest human being", while the Indian prime

minister has said the president was his "dear friend". Both are populists who rose to power on anti-establishment and nationalist policies.

India's foreign secretary, Vikram Misri, said the fact that Modi had been invited to the US "within barely three weeks of the new administration taking office, shows the importance of the India-US partnership".

But Trump has not held back his frustration over India's high tariffs, labelling it a "very big abuser" and accusing it of blocking US imports.

Modi's two-day visit will take place just after Trump announced a 25% tariff on global steel and aluminium imports into the US. Calling the tariffs "the first of many", the president