

# Amazon, Future agree to talk to end the bitter legal battle

Supreme Court gives them 12 days to arrive at a settlement

## FORUM GANDHI

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The Supreme Court has given Amazon and Future Retail 12 days to arrive at an amicable solution to the 18-month-long tussle over the latter's ₹24,713-crore deal with Reliance Industries.

Lawyers of the warring companies agreed on Thursday to try and resolve the dispute through discussions. The top court asked other courts not to pass any orders during this period.

## Dragging litigation

Amazon's lawyer Gopal Subramanian said that the "whirlpool" of litigation was being dragged for too long. "We cannot let the spinners' wheel continue. At least have a conversation," he told the apex court.

Agreeing to this, senior advocate Harish Salve, appearing for the Future Group, said, "What stops Amazon to call Kishore Biyani and discuss. Let me assure you no one is winning in this battle. Amazon 'God' has to come to the ground and speak to lesser mortals like us," said Salve. "No one is winning. FRL, Reliance, and Amazon all have issues. I don't know why we need a court order



Shopping for a deal

for a dialogue." The court welcomed the decision of both parties to engage in a dialogue. Amazon agreed not to file any new petition. The Supreme Court will hear the matter again on March 15.

## Future had stonewalled

It may be recalled that the Future Group had refused to have a dialogue on multiple occasions in the past. It had even denied financial help from Amazon since the amount offered by the e-commerce giant was nowhere close to the ₹24,713 crore offered by Reliance for Future Group's assets.

However, sources close to the Amazon camp said that the American company is more than willing to sit across the table with Future group. "Over the next 12 days, the discussion will focus on the investment structure, and even more on whether we can work together or not," said a source.

BusinessLine reached out to Future Group's Kishore Biyani and Rakesh Biyani to under-

stand on what conditions would the Future Group have a dialogue with Amazon. However, neither responded.

Ketan Mukhija, Partner, Link Legal, said the decision to talk will open doors for a more meaningful outcome for all stakeholders.

Sonam Chandwani, Managing Partner, KS Legal & Associates, said there is a possibility of the issue getting resolved amicably, as none of the parties stands to benefit from the ongoing dispute.

Experts said the recent move by Reliance Retail to take over Future Retail's lease agreements for over 400 stores may have tilted the battle in its favour. "It is expected that Amazon will be keen to resolve and conclude this on a positive note," Chandwani said.

## Many facets

However, Mukhija said that there are several facets to the ongoing dispute, all of which may not be resolved by the dialogue within ten days.

Chandwani believes it will be a tough discussion because "Ultimately, it would be Reliance, not Future Group, that would be seated across the table for the negotiation. Given Reliance's acquisition of the Future Group, it's tough to argue that the final outcome of this war will be a win-win for both the parties."