

Key India-US trade talks next week to finalise BTA contours

Trump sticks to his decision to impose reciprocal tariffs

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To finalise the shape of the proposed bilateral-trade agreement (BTA), a team of United States (US) officials, headed by Assistant Trade Representative Brendan Lynch, will come to New Delhi next week to hold discussions with their counterparts here.

Both sides are aiming to finalise the first tranche of a “mutually beneficial” deal by the fall of 2025.

The discussions are set to take place a week ahead of reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US becoming effective on April 2.

India has shared a “non-paper” or a non-binding informal discussion paper with the US to convey New Delhi’s point of view and proposals regarding the talks.

The US is expected to respond to the non-paper this week. The idea behind submitting a non-paper is to “test the



IN FULL SWING

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- Idea is to convey New Delhi’s point of view and informal proposals regarding the BTA
- Once the contours of the deal is decided, BTA negotiations will be officially launched
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waters”, two people aware of the matter told *Business Standard*. “India shared a non-paper

(with the US) and the US side is expected to do the same. The idea is to see if it can be a starting point for discussions,” one of the persons cited above said.

Once the contours of the deal are decided, negotiations will be officially launched.

While the details of India’s pitch in the non-paper remains confidential, it is learnt that New Delhi is ready to reduce tariffs across several product categories, including the labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and leather.

India has been under pressure to reduce tariffs on cars and alcohol. For alcohol, import tariffs are over 100 per cent.

Agriculture is another sector where Washington has been bargaining for lower tariffs.

The team’s visit is expected weeks after Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal’s meeting with top officials in the US, including US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, during March 4-6.

Earlier this week, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said there had been progress in trade talks. Turn to Page 6 ▶

Commerce dept assessing impact of Trump tariffs

“India is expecting to see a positive outcome from the trade talks,” Barthwal had told reporters on Monday. The Department of Commerce has been doing stakeholder consultations and assessing challenges, opportunities, and the larger impact of the additional tariffs on Indian exports.

In an interview with Breitbart News on Wednesday, President Donald Trump said he believed India would lower tariffs on American goods, even as he reiterated his threat to impose reciprocal US tariffs on the country, starting April 2.

According to Trump, he has “very good relations” with India. “But the only problem I have with India is they’re one of the highest tariffing nations in the world...”