

US officials arrive in India today for talks on trade pact

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WITH RECIPROCAL TARIFFS just days away, a team of US officials will be visiting India from Tuesday to take forward the ongoing trade discussions, including the scope of the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) that both sides aim to finalise in the next few months.

Both sides are expected to finalise the contours of the BTA and the negotiation schedule during the three-day talks. As the agreement will be in tranches and the first tranche is to be signed by the end of this year, both sides will be initially focusing on goods trade.

"Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch, along with a team of US government officials, will be in India on March 25-29 for meetings with Indian interlocutors as part of ongoing bilateral trade discussions," a statement by the US embassy in India said on Monday.

The visit by Lynch will be part of the regular India-US trade-related interactions at the official level, the Indian commerce and industry ministry said. The visit follows commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal's trip to the US earlier this month with a team of officials. During his week-long visit starting March 4, Goyal held talks with US trade representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick.

The US has said it will impose reciprocal tariffs on its trade partners from April 2 and President Donald Trump has ruled out any concessions for India despite New Delhi lowering the tariffs on bourbon whiskey, cars and motorcycles with high capacity engines. "I have a very good relationship with India, but the only problem I have with India is that they are one of the highest tariffing nations in the world. I believe they are probably



Assistant US trade representative Brendan Lynch will lead the US delegation to India

going to be lowering those tariffs substantially, but on April 2, we will be charging them the same tariffs they charge us," Trump said in an interview with US-based *Breitbart News* last week.

"This visit (by assistant US trade representative) reflects the United States' continued commitment to advancing a productive and balanced trade relationship with India. We value our ongoing engagement with the Government of India on trade and investment matters and look forward to continuing these discussions in a constructive, equitable, and forward-looking manner," the US embassy statement said.

The US wants to balance its trade with all major partners and India is one of the priorities. The US goods trade deficit with India was \$45.7 billion in 2024, a 5.4% increase (\$2.4 billion) over 2023, according to the office of the USTR.

The reciprocal tariffs have not been discussed with the US as it is not known whether reciprocal tariffs will be sectoral, product based or on a country. Both sides are currently working to finalise the contours of the BTA.