

Committed to 'productive, balanced' trade ties with India: US before BTA talks

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New Delhi, 24 March

The US is committed to advancing a "productive and balanced" trade relationship with India, a spokesperson for its embassy in New Delhi said Monday, ahead of trade talks and the April 2 rollout of reciprocal tariffs, which American President Donald Trump suggested could have "flexibility" in implementation.

Brendan Lynch, assistant US trade representative (USTR) for South and Central Asia, will lead a team of US officials on a five-day visit to India starting March 25 for bilateral trade discussions, the spokesperson said.

The talks are expected to hammer out the details of the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA), with Lynch serving as the chief negotiator.



"I DON'T CHANGE. BUT THE WORD FLEXIBILITY IS AN IMPORTANT WORD. SOMETIMES IT'S FLEXIBILITY. SO THERE'LL BE FLEXIBILITY, BUT BASICALLY IT'S RECIPROCAL"

DONALD TRUMP
US President

The aim is to finalise the first phase of the deal by "the fall" of 2025. During the visit, meetings with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and External Affairs Secretary Vikram Misri are expected.

"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 embassy spokesperson said.

India's commerce department said in a statement that it looks forward to productive and constructive discussions with the incoming US delegation to expand bilateral trade and economic ties in a mutually beneficial manner.

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India committed to working with US in trade, economic domains: Govt

“As directed by the leaders of the two countries, India remains committed to working with the US side in the trade and economic domains to enhance prosperity and innovation in both India and the US, and deepen supply chain integration between the two countries,” it added.

The visit follows Goyal’s meetings with senior US officials,

including USTR Jamieson Greer and Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, in Washington on March 4-6.

India has shared a “non-paper” with the US, outlining New Delhi’s perspectives and informal proposals ahead of the negotiations — with the larger idea to “test the waters” before negotiations commence officially.

In line with Trump’s “America First” policy, Washington plans to implement reciprocal tariffs from April 2 on its trade partners and other nations to match the tariff and non-tariff barriers on imports from the US. The finer details of the policy are still being finalised by the USTR.

India remains concerned about the potential impact of these tariffs

but has not yet devised a specific counter-strategy, largely due to uncertainty over how they will be applied. “We don’t know whether they will be imposed on a country-specific or product-specific basis. That’s why we are prioritising BTA negotiations, as the trade deal will address tariff and market access concerns,” a senior Indian government official said.

Trump, late on Friday, said that there would be “flexibility” on the reciprocal tariff plan, without explaining what it would mean. “People are coming to me and talking about tariffs, and a lot of people are asking me if they could have exceptions. And once you do that for one, you have to do that for all... I don’t change. But the word flexibility is an important word,” he said.