

India, US making progress toward deal, officials say

Seek to reach trade agreement by fall

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REUTERS

NEW DELHI – Indian and U.S. officials discussed trade issues including the reduction of tariffs and easing of non-tariff barriers, making progress toward a bilateral trade agreement during several days of talks in New Delhi, they said on Saturday.

The negotiations, led by officials from India's commerce ministry and a U.S. trade delegation headed by Brendan Lynch, assistant U.S. trade representative for South and Central Asia,

were held from Wednesday through Saturday. Separately, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau spoke with Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri about efforts to reduce trade barriers and achieve a "fair and balanced bilateral trade relationship," while also strengthening defense and technology cooperation to bolster regional security.

Landau thanked India for its efforts in addressing illegal immigration to the United States and urged continued cooperation, the U.S. Department of State said in a statement.

The talks come as U.S. President Donald Trump prepares to impose reciprocal tariffs on multiple trading partners from April 2, with India hoping for

an exemption amid the bilateral talks. Both countries aim to sign the first tranche of a bilateral trade deal by fall.

"The successful conclusion of the discussions reflects progress in efforts to expand India-U.S. bilateral trade and investment relations to promote prosperity, security and innovation in both countries," a statement by India's commerce ministry said.

Last month, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington, India pledged to boost purchases of U.S. energy products and defense equipment, and the two sides agreed to aim for a deal targeting bilateral trade of \$500 billion by 2030.

Trump has called India a "tariff king," with the U.S. wanting India to reduce

levies on products and seeking greater market access for U.S. companies.

Piyush Goyal, India's trade minister, visited Washington earlier this month for talks with U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. Sector-specific expert engagements for the bilateral trade agreement will begin virtually in the coming weeks, followed by an in-person negotiating round, the joint statement said.

The U.S. currently has a \$45.6 billion trade deficit with India. While the U.S. trade-weighted average tariff rate stands at about 2.2%, India's average tariff is significantly higher at 12%, according to World Trade Organization data.