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1. India–New Zealand set target to double bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore in the next five years

India and New Zealand have set a target to increase the value of bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore (NZ\$7 billion) over the next five years.

I. In addition, 10 agreements were signed to strengthen cooperation in areas such as:

- Maritime security
- Naval logistics cooperation
- Counter-terrorism
- Sports

Besides these, eight major decisions, including measures to expand trade, were also announced.

II. These agreements and decisions were finalized following bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in Auckland.

III. Against the backdrop of China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region, Prime Minister Modi began a three-nation official visit to Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand last Monday to strengthen India's cooperation with regional countries.

IV. As the final leg of his tour, he arrived in Auckland, where he received a grand welcome.

V. With this visit, Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit New Zealand in the past 40 years.

VI. Bilateral talks

Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Christopher Luxon held high-level bilateral discussions in Auckland. They held detailed discussions on strengthening cooperation in:

- Trade
- Defence
- Sports
- Culture
- Education

- People-to-people ties

They also discussed:

- Indo-Pacific regional developments
- International issues of mutual interest

Particular attention was given to:

- Expanding trade under the bilateral Free Trade Agreement signed in April.
- New Zealand's commitment to invest US\$20 billion (₹1.91 lakh crore) in India over the next 15 years.

VII. Ten agreements and eight major decisions

Following the talks, the two countries signed 10 agreements, covering:

- Maritime security
- Disaster management cooperation
- Logistics support between the two navies
- Sharing of maritime domain data
- Veterinary and dairy technology cooperation
- Tourism and cultural promotion

They also announced eight major initiatives, including:

- Upgrading bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership.
- A four-year action plan to implement the partnership.
- Doubling bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore over the next five years. Current trade stands at approximately ₹18,000 crore.
- New Zealand joining the Global Biofuels Alliance, an initiative launched by India.

VIII. Progress in every sector

Addressing the media, Prime Minister Modi said:

"We have decided to elevate our bilateral relationship to the level of a Strategic Partnership. With clear goals and concrete solutions, progress will be achieved across every sector. As maritime nations, our close cooperation gives new strength to the Indo-Pacific region. Our partnership provides renewed momentum towards achieving the goals of peace."

IX. Commitment to free navigation

In the joint statement issued after the talks, both Prime Ministers reaffirmed their

commitment to a:

- Free
- Open
- Prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

They emphasized the importance of:

- Respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- Preserving a rules-based international order.

They stressed that:

- Freedom of navigation and lawful uses of the seas must be ensured in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- Free navigation and commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz should be fully restored.
- Conflicts should be resolved peacefully through diplomacy and adherence to international law.

The leaders also expressed concern over:

- Disruptions to global supply chains affecting the Indo-Pacific region.
- Humanitarian suffering caused by the Russia-Ukraine war.

X. Early implementation of Free Trade Agreement

Both countries agreed to work together for the early implementation of the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement.

The joint statement also announced the establishment of a Maritime Security Dialogue to enhance:

- Cooperation
- Coordination
- Information sharing

in the Indo-Pacific region.

The FTA signed in April provides:

- 100% duty-free access for Indian exports.
- Duty exemption or reduction on 95% of New Zealand's imports.

XI. Cooperation in sports

Prime Minister Modi, along with Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, visited a Sports Innovation Exhibition in Auckland.

Leading New Zealand athletes demonstrated advanced sports equipment and technologies showcased at the exhibition.

Following the signing of a joint action plan to enhance sports cooperation beyond cricket, Modi stated:

“Sports have always served as a strong bridge between India and New Zealand. This year marks the 100th anniversary of sporting relations between our two countries.”

The agreement assumes significance as India is preparing its bid to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games.

2. Tamil Nadu Government empowers Director of Geology and Mining to temporarily ban transport of minerals to other States

The Tamil Nadu Government has issued a Government Order empowering the Director of Geology and Mining to temporarily prohibit the transportation of minerals to other States whenever shortages arise within Tamil Nadu.

- I. Construction materials such as M-Sand and other minerals are transported from Tamil Nadu to neighbouring States. The newly elected State Government has introduced several measures to regulate such transportation.
- II. Accordingly, the Government has amended the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transportation, Storage and Mineral Dealers Rules, 2011, and published the amendment in the Government Gazette. Under the amended rules, the Director of Geology and Mining has been authorised to temporarily prohibit the movement of:
 - Manufactured Sand (M-Sand)
 - Black granite
 - Large stone blocks
 - Boulders
 - Jelly stones
 - Crushed stones
 - Hand-crushed stones
 - All categories of construction stones to other States whenever necessary to ensure

adequate availability within Tamil Nadu.

3. Renowned playback singer S. Janaki (88) passed away on Saturday (July 11).

Known as the “Nightingale of South India,” Janaki sang more than 48,000 songs in several languages, including Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and others.

4. Tamil Nadu Day is celebrated annually on July 18

5. Typhoon ‘Bavi’ strikes eastern China after battering Japan and Taiwan

The Typhoon Bavi, which brought heavy rain and strong winds to Japan and Taiwan, made landfall in eastern China, prompting the evacuation of more than 1.7 million people to safer locations as a precaution.

- I. The typhoon began crossing the coast of Zhejiang Province, located along China’s eastern seaboard.
- II. Authorities warned that, besides Zhejiang, Fujian Province would also experience severe impacts from the storm.
- III. China issued:
 - An Orange Typhoon Warning, and
 - The first Red Rainstorm Warning of the year.

In addition:

- 40 million yuan was allocated from Government disaster relief funds.
- Thousands of rescue personnel were kept on standby for emergency operations.

IV. Impact of Typhoon Bavi so far

Taiwan

- As the typhoon crossed northern Taiwan, winds reached a maximum speed of 144 km/h.
- 113 people were injured.
- More than 14,200 residents from cities including Hualien and Taichung were evacuated to safer locations.

Japan

- The southern Japanese islands of Okinawa and Ishigaki experienced severe weather

conditions.

- The sea turned extremely rough.
- More than 200 flights were cancelled.

Philippines

Even before Typhoon Bavi intensified, continuous monsoon rains and landslides in the Philippines had:

- Claimed 17 lives.
- Forced over 11,000 people to leave their homes and take shelter in relief camps due to heavy rains and the approaching storm.

6. The FIFA World Cup Final will be played on July 20 at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

7. Well-trained soldiers will remain decisive despite the rise of Artificial Intelligence in warfare: Rajnath Singh

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh stated that although Artificial Intelligence (AI) will have a major impact on future warfare, well-trained soldiers will continue to play the decisive role in determining victory.

- I. At a function held in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, the Defence Minister formally inducted the indigenously built warship INS Mahendragiri into the Eastern Naval Command of the Indian Navy.
- II. Key features of INS Mahendragiri:
 - Displacement: 6,670 tonnes
 - Maximum speed: 28 knots
 - Designed with stealth technology, making it difficult to detect using radar.
 - Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL).
 - Capable of carrying high-speed and high-precision missiles, including the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile.

8. India launches campaign for election as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council

India's External Affairs Minister Dr.S.Jaishankar will officially launch India's campaign in New

York next week to seek support from other countries for its election as a Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

- I. India previously served as a Non-Permanent Member of the UNSC during 2020–2021. The election for the 2028–2029 term is scheduled to be held in June 2027. Under the Asia-Pacific Group, only one seat is available, and India and Tajikistan are contesting for it.
- II. The ongoing Russia–Ukraine war, the Israel–Gaza conflict, and rising tensions between the United States and Iran have significantly altered the global geopolitical landscape.
- III. Against this backdrop, India is making intensive diplomatic efforts to secure election as a Non-Permanent Member of the UNSC.
- IV. As part of this campaign, Jaishankar, after completing his visits to Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait between July 5 and July 10, will travel to the United States. He will officially launch India’s campaign at a special event to be held at the UN Headquarters in New York on Monday (July 13). During the visit, he is also scheduled to meet UN Secretary-General António Guterres.
- V. Following his visit to New York, Jaishankar will participate in the 3rd India–European Union Trade and Technology Council Meeting, to be held in Brussels, Belgium, on July 14 and 15.
- VI. India’s campaign for the UNSC election will be conducted under the theme:
“Peace, Planet, Progress.”
Highlighting this vision, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing the Parliament of Indonesia, said:
“At a time when global geopolitics is undergoing profound changes, developing countries like ours must demand equal opportunities and a greater role in global affairs. Accordingly, reforms in the United Nations Security Council should be undertaken without further delay.”
- VII. At present, the five Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council are:
 - United States
 - China
 - Russia
 - United Kingdom
 - France

In addition, 10 Non-Permanent Members are elected on a rotational basis.

India has consistently demanded reforms in both categories of membership and has long sought permanent membership in the UN Security Council.

9. India has urged the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to reconsider its proposal to impose an additional 12.5% tariff on goods imported from India.

- I. India also emphasized that trade disputes should be resolved through bilateral trade negotiations rather than through unilateral measures such as additional tariffs.
- II. After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the reciprocal tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump on India and several other countries were invalid, the United States ordered a fresh investigation under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974.
- III. The investigation aims to determine whether alleged unfair trade practices by trading partners—including India, China, and Japan—have adversely affected American manufacturing.
- IV. Following an extensive review, USTR Representative Jamieson Greer submitted his recommendations. He proposed imposing an additional 12.5% tariff on imports from 54 countries, including India.
- V. The recommendation was based on U.S. regulations intended to prevent the import of goods allegedly produced through forced labour. Accordingly, the proposal seeks to apply the additional tariff to imports from 54 countries, including India.
- VI. As part of the first phase of the process, the USTR is conducting hearings with all 54 countries regarding the proposed tariff. During the hearing held in Washington on July 8, Brij Mohan Mishra, Joint Secretary in India's Ministry of Commerce, represented India and presented its arguments.
- VII. The USTR has published India's written submission on its official website.
- VIII. India's key arguments are as follows:
 - The USTR's action does not satisfy the legal standards prescribed under Section 301(d) of the U.S. Trade Act.
 - Merely because a country has not adopted a particular import restriction related to forced labour cannot automatically be treated as an unfair trade practice under Section 301.

- The USTR has not produced any evidence showing that India has violated any applicable legal provisions.
- The recommendation appears to be based largely on studies conducted in a few countries and on broad trade trends rather than country-specific evidence.
- The USTR has failed to provide any concrete evidence that products linked to forced labour are being exported from India to the United States.
- India regards the elimination of forced labour as a constitutional obligation as well as a commitment under international law and global principles.
- Without sufficient evidence, the USTR has improperly grouped India and 53 other countries under the same category.
- Trade-related disagreements should be addressed through constructive bilateral dialogue rather than unilateral trade actions.
- India remains willing to engage in meaningful negotiations to resolve any specific concerns through consultation.

Therefore, India has requested the USTR to reconsider its proposal to impose an additional 12.5% tariff on imports from India.