

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

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India-New Zealand FTA takes effect on Oct. 20

The agreement aims at doubling bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore over the 'next four to five years'

India's dairy, and other sensitive agriculture sectors will remain protected, says Minister

FTA to erase import levies on Indian goods; 95% exports to India to be tariff-free or at low levies

Santaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and New Zealand that was ratified on Monday and comes into effect on October 20 aims at doubling bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore in the "next four to five years", according to Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal.

"The entry into force of the India-New Zealand FTA will translate this goal into concrete economic outcomes," he told journalists.

According to New Zealand's foreign trade office, the FTA is set to erase import levies on all Indian goods, while 95% of ex-

ports to India will either be allowed tariff-free or at "sharply" reduced levies.

Mr. Goyal insisted that India has safeguarded its sensitive sectors, such as dairy and agricultural produce, including onions, almonds, chickpeas, peas, artificial honey, and sugar, not granting Wellington any relaxation or concessions on these products in the agreement. The deal will benefit India's micro, medium, and small enterprises, farmers, handloom artisans, and weavers, the Minister added.

New Zealand also has technological expertise in manufacturing of engineering and other goods, Mr. Goyal said. "They could look to support our



They [New Zealand] could look to support our companies or invest and set up manufacturing in India to capture global markets

PIYUSH GOYAL
Union Commerce Minister



It [the FTA] gives confidence to our business communities to grow, form relationships, and trade

TODD MCCLAY
Minister of Trade and Investment,
New Zealand

companies or invest and set up manufacturing in India to capture global markets," he added.

New Zealand's Minister of Trade and Investment, Todd McClay, emphasised

the significance of the two countries getting the deal done at a time of global "uncertainty", with escalating tariffs and trade barriers. "It gives confidence to our business communi-

ties to grow, form relationships, and trade," he said.

India is New Zealand's ninth largest export market, and the value of bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$1.3 billion in the fiscal year 2024-25.

Elaborating on the potential avenues for investment, Mr. Goyal said: "There are many areas where they have cutting-edge technology and innovation. Agriculture is one of their strengths in certain products." He pointed to kiwi farming and apiculture as prime examples.

Wellington has committed \$20 billion worth of foreign direct investment in India as part of the deal.

The Commerce Minister

said that global investors are interested in setting up manufacturing in India not only for access to the large Indian market but also to help "seamlessly export" to about two-thirds of the global economy where India has preferential market access.

Mr. Goyal observed that in several countries, including New Zealand, labour is scarce and expensive. Manufacturing in India instead would be more economical.

U.S. sanctions law

"They are on the lookout for countries where they can export their technology to a trusted partner, where intellectual property is respected and would

not be stolen," he added.

Asked about India's response to recent United States legislation imposing sanctions on countries buying Russian oil, Mr. Goyal said that the fine print of the law was being studied.

Responding to a query from *The Hindu* about progress on India's trade deal with Chile, Mr. Goyal said, following productive talks, "in the coming months, we will hear some good news."

About the trade deal with Canada, the Union Minister noted that both sides have resolved to fast-track discussions. Indian negotiators are slated to visit the North American country for the fifth round of talks on October 5, he said.

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India to attend session on UN-based multilateralism

EU, Brazil, Kenya, Canada launch grouping beyond 'superpower politics'; the P4M initiative seeks a more representative UN that is prepared for global challenges, including AI and climate change

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India will join a number of countries committed to supporting United Nations (UN)-based multilateralism, away from "Superpower" politics, as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was set to attend the "Partners for Multilateralism" (P4M) meeting at the United Nations.

Mr. Jaishankar landed in New York on Monday at the start of the UN General Assembly's "High-Level debate" session. He is due to hold a number of bilateral meetings and multilateral meetings there, and will address the UNGA on September 26.

The P4M initiative, founded by leaders of the European Union, Brazil, Kenya and Canada is expected to make a pitch for the grouping this week.

In a joint editorial, leaders of the four founders said the grouping will support the UN but push for it to be more representative and prepared for global challenges, including AI (artificial intelligence), climate change, health security and digital transformation.

"P4M will support the reform of the UN and other multilateral institutions, to make them more representative, legitimate, effective and trusted," the leaders, including European Council President Antonio Costa, Brazil President Lula da



Gearing up: Security guards checking IDs of people ahead of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. REUTERS

Silva, Kenyan President William Ruto and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney wrote in an editorial published in the U.K.-based *Financial Times*.

Mr. Carney had delivered a speech on "Middle powers" coming together at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, which signalled growing dissatisfaction not just with Russia and China for unilateral moves and conflicts, but with the United States over trade and tariffs, expansionist moves, and the conflict in Iran that have been undertaken during U.S. President Donald Trump's second term.

It is unclear whether India was asked to join the joint message.

India is already part of a number of groups like the Non-Aligned Movement,

the Gulf region and India.

"We have superpowers that have not yet recognised that their power has limits and they get into adventures that produce terrible results," Mr. Guterres had said, specifically pointing to Russia, which was still embroiled in the war in Ukraine four years later, while the U.S. is facing "difficulties" with its war in Iran.

'Limits to powers'

"I think it's time for superpowers to understand the limits of their power, and that will help the world become more peaceful," Mr. Guterres said, speaking to *The Hindu* in New Delhi, where he attended the 18th BRICS Summit.

The editorial also said that the 'Partners for Multilateralism', would not create another exclusive bloc or international bureaucracy.

"Its purpose is the opposite: to create a flexible, open framework for countries from different regions and political traditions that are willing to work across divides, to build coalitions for reform and to translate shared principles into practical action," the co-authors wrote, pointing out that 2025 saw the highest recorded number of state-based armed conflicts since 1946, in 35 countries, and highest recorded military spending of nearly \$3 trillion.

India is already part of a number of groups like BRICS and G20 that have similar objectives

BRICS, G20, and G-4 that have similar objectives.

The editorial on Monday pointed to comments by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in which he had said that "superpowers are discovering their limits", adding that the P4M grouping believes that the "international community must rediscover the extraordinary potential of collective action".

Mr. Guterres, who demits office later this year, spoke to *The Hindu* amongst five global outlets in U.S., U.K., South Africa,

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Accused entitled to release if grounds of arrest not given: SC

Right to know grounds of arrest, availability of counsel of choice are fundamental rights under Article 22(1) of Constitution, and 'cannot be breached under any situation,' says Supreme Court

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in a judgment on Monday held that an arrested person kept in the dark about the grounds of arrest and without access to a lawyer was entitled to immediate release.

The right to know the grounds of arrest in writing in a familiar language, and the availability of a counsel of choice, was a sacrosanct fundamental right under Article 22(1) of the Constitution, and "cannot be breached under any situation", a Bench headed by Justice Ujjal Bhuyan said. It has to be followed without exception and at the earliest.

"Any breach or non-compliance would entail immediate release of the arrested person because such arrest is unconstitutional. We cannot tinker with the most important safeguards provided under Article 22... Any attempt to encroach upon the fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 22(1) of the Constitution has to be

Any attempt to encroach upon the fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 22(1) of the Constitution has to be frowned upon by the courts and dealt with strictly. It would vitiate the process of arrest and remand

JUSTICE UJJAL BHUYAN
Supreme Court Judge



frowned upon by the courts and dealt with strictly. It would vitiate the process of arrest and remand," Justice Bhuyan observed.

The Bench, also comprising Justice Atul S. Chandurkar, said the right under Article 22(1) was a "mandatory constitutional safeguard". It applied across the spectrum, including offences under the Indian Penal Code and under special enactments, which include the laws on terrorism and money laundering.

Probe agencies cannot shrug off a breach of Article 22(1) as a "mere procedural lapse", Justice Bhuyan observed. Agencies cannot

contend that a violation of the Article would not render custody illegal or entitle an accused to bail. The agencies had it completely wrong, the Bench said.

"When an accused is released for violation of his fundamental rights under Article 22(1), he is not enlarged on bail. He is released from illegal and unconstitutional detention," Justice Bhuyan emphasised.

Even subsequent filing of chargesheet and order of cognisance would not validate such an arrest, Justice Bhuyan underscored.

No blanket immunity

The court was answering a question as to whether an

accused who had suffered breach of Clauses (1) and (2) of Article 22 could be re-arrested for the same offence, and if so, under what circumstances. Clause (2) of the Article mandates the production of an accused person before the Magistrate within 24 hours of arrest.

There cannot be a blanket immunity against future arrest, Justice Bhuyan said, as some cases relate to grave offences. However, any such move by the probe agencies must be based on stringent judicial oversight in order to protect citizens from police arbitrariness.

The apex court directed that a specific sanction from the Magistrate concerned must precede any attempt by the police to arrest for the second time a person whose earlier arrest was declared illegal for violating rights under Article 22(1) of the Constitution.

The police must apply before the Magistrate, providing recorded reasons for seeking arrest, the judgment said.

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A Malacca-Singapore model for resolving Hormuz

As the siege warfare continues in the Strait of Hormuz and the world suffers, it may be instructive to revisit the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

The Strait of Malacca runs for some 800 kilometres between the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian island of Sumatra, connecting the Andaman Sea to the Strait of Singapore, while the Strait of Singapore, some 105 km long, forms its eastern continuation and connects the Malacca Strait to the South China Sea.

A territorial turning point

The Straits were once considered "international" in the sense that they were like the high seas, over which no country had any claim. In 1971, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore jointly challenged this notion.

Indonesia, a newly decolonised nation, feared for the security of its individual islands if the waters between them were not considered its territory, and in 1957 declared that all waters "surrounding, between and connecting the islands" were Indonesian waters. Then Indonesian President Sukarno had an adversarial relationship with the colonial powers, and the nation was wary of big-power interference.

As the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was being formulated, Indonesia insisted that its territorial waters should extend 12 nautical miles from the outermost islands. Malaysia, despite its 1963 armed conflict with Indonesia over Borneo, revised the stance it had taken at the 1958 UNCLOS conference and also announced a 12-nautical-mile territorial sea, choosing to work with Jakarta on the Straits through bilateral treaties and joint naval patrols. The two nations continue to cooperate actively to this day.

At their narrowest points, the Straits are well under 24 nautical miles wide. Once both states claimed 12-nautical-mile territorial seas, the zones met in the middle, leaving no strip of high seas or exclusive economic zone (EEZ) between them. Under the customary law of the time, this meant that the Straits were simply territorial seas, where foreign vessels enjoyed only the right of "innocent passage" – a right that Indonesia or Malaysia could suspend for security reasons and



M. Kalyanaraman

that excluded submerged submarines.

The three nations issued a joint statement in 1971 proposing a coordinating body comprising representatives of the three states to administer the Straits. Singapore, an island nation dependent on trade and shipping, did not quite agree to declaring the Straits "not international", but did make common cause with Malaysia over the safety of navigation.

The Straits and the great powers

Japan, a major player through the Japan-funded Malacca Strait Council, offered cooperation with the three states rather than seeking an internationalised regime. The United States and the Soviet Union, otherwise rivals, were allies on this one issue – keeping the Straits under territorial waters "international" so that ships retained the right of "continued, politically uncluttered transit".

As UNCLOS entered its final phase of formulation in the 1970s, the United Kingdom introduced the concept of "transit passage" for straits connecting the high seas or EEZs – a right of transit only in a "continuous and expeditious" manner, with no stopping or loitering, but one that applied to warships as well, going beyond mere innocent passage. Indonesia agreed to this formulation with reservations, trading its acceptance for greater security for its archipelago, which UNCLOS eventually addressed separately. Malaysia's concerns centred on environmental safety, insurance requirements and permissible vessel draught.

In 2007, the three states working with the international community arrived at a Cooperative Mechanism building on a traffic separation scheme similar to what Iran and Oman had agreed for the Strait of Hormuz in the 1960s. A core aspect of the 2007 mechanism was for user states and industry to contribute to a fund for aids to navigation, hydrographic surveys and safety projects, administered jointly with the littoral states.

The Aids to Navigation Fund is supported through voluntary financial contributions from non-profit organisations such as The Nippon Foundation and the International Foundation for Aids to Navigation, as well as industry

stakeholders and states with an interest in the safe and efficient use of the Straits. These contributions do not amount to tolls. The fund is administered on a rotation basis by a committee comprising representatives of the three littoral States – Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore – do not impose fees, tolls or any other form of payment on ships exercising their right of transit passage.

The geographic parallel

The Strait of Hormuz is similar to the Malacca-Singapore Straits, in that the territorial waters of Iran and Oman intersect, making sections of the Strait part of their territorial waters.

In 1993, Iran, which has not ratified UNCLOS, passed a law requiring foreign warships to seek its authorisation to pass through the Strait. This continues to be a sore point today.

Persian Gulf nations have a history of both conflict and cooperation. The United Arab Emirates, for instance, was among Iran's leading trading partners. Qatar is among the Persian Gulf nations that have supported the Iran-Oman talks. It had also mooted the Malacca-Singapore straits as a model.

Yet, even if the Gulf nations arrive at a framework they all agree on, the U.S. has shown that it may not accept it. The Malacca-Singapore issue was resolved as UNCLOS itself was being put into effect, when trade-offs were part of negotiating a convention intended to govern the world's oceans.

A key concern in the Malacca-Singapore Straits was the safety of navigation and the environment, whereas in the Strait of Hormuz, the key issue is Iran's security.

Iran is demanding that all nations revisit the Strait of Hormuz, and some are willing to do so. Though Iran and Oman have apparently agreed on a framework for reopening the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait has not been reopened, and the U.S. has not accepted the arrangement. The context has changed, even though there are clear parallels in the technical details.

The Malacca-Singapore experience has lessons for navigating the Hormuz impasse

GS 3: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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How will Gaganyaan's crew module deploy its parachutes?

Why does Gaganyaan need multiple parachutes? How are they tested?

Unnikrishnan Nair S.

The story so far:

Any spacecraft entering the earth's atmosphere will rely primarily on atmospheric drag to lose a significant fraction of its velocity. To gently touch down on land or in the sea, additional decelerating systems like parachutes have to be activated.

The parachute used for crewed space vehicles demands extraordinary engineering with multi-staging, redundancy, high-performance materials and high-pressure packing to reduce storage space.

How are parachutes deployed?

The parachute system contains three types of chutes: pilot, drogue, and main. The pilot chute is a mini-parachute

deployed to pull out wider drogue or main chutes. The drogue chute is deployed early in the descent to stabilise the module and first reduce the velocity. The main chute has a wider canopy and is used in the final phase to reduce the velocity enough to achieve gentle soft-landing conditions.

The crew module's blunt shape creates a turbulent wake in its rear side and the parachute has to be ejected through this wake. The ejection mechanism should ensure the energy imparted to the parachute suffices to cross the wake in the shortest time and deploy the parachute in the far-wake region.

Generally, the parachutes are deployed when the module has reduced its speed to below the speed of sound.

Why deploy parachutes in stages?

As it descends, the Gaganyaan crew

module will be moving at around 170 m/s in the lower atmosphere. If the full-sized main parachute is deployed straightaway, it will experience a high opening shock, shredding the fabric or subjecting the crew to dangerously high deceleration.

Multi-staging, on the other hand, increases the chutes' diameter in successive stages, keeping the dynamic pressure to acceptable levels.

Also, to keep a chute from opening really quickly, a cord wound around the canopy restricts how far it can spread. After a preset delay, when the vehicle has slowed enough, a timed cutter severs the cord, which goes loose and allows the parachute to bloom fully.

How are parachutes tested?

There are different platforms to test parachutes. The 'rail track rocket sled' is a ground facility where a sled is accelerated

along rails by firing small solid motors, and the parachutes are deployed from the sled at an appropriate velocity. The Terminal Ballistic Research Lab, Chandigarh, has a state-of-the-art RTRS facility.

Other modes of testing include dropping the test article from a helicopter or an aircraft or using small rocket-powered test vehicles, which launch the crew module to some appropriate altitude and release it from there.

After splashdown in the sea or upon soft-landing on land, if the parachute is not detached immediately, the wind acting on the canopy could drag the module on land or capsize it in sea and this might cause injuries to the astronauts. Hence, the parachute is released by activating pyro cutters or mechanical quick-release devices.

What materials are used in aerospace parachutes?

A parachute's material is controlled by conditions like tensile strength, thermal resistance, and mass. Modern aerospace parachutes use advanced synthetic polymers engineered to meet specific design conditions.

Kevlar is used in high-load suspension lines, risers, and structural reinforcement tapes due to its exceptional tensile

strength and heat resistance. Nomex finds application in heat-exposed areas to withstand hot mortar gas discharge and aerothermal heating.

Nylon is widely used for canopy broadcloths because of its elasticity, which helps absorb initial dynamic shock loads during inflation. It is highly compressible, so it can be packed into a relatively small volume.

What parachutes are in the Gaganyaan crew module?

In crewed missions, recovery systems use redundant clusters of pilot, drogue, and main parachutes. The Gaganyaan crew module has two drogue chutes deployed by mortars and three main chutes deployed by mortar-ejected pilot chutes.

If one main parachute suffers an anomaly, the remaining two independent chains are fully capable of ensuring a safe touchdown.

ADRDE in Agra, which is a laboratory under the Defence Research & Development Organisation, is the developing agency.

(Unnikrishnan Nair S. is former director, VSSC and IIST; Founding Director, HSFC; and an expert in launch vehicle systems, orbital re-entry and human spaceflight technologies. Currently Dr Sarabhai Professor at VSSC)

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Conservation, compensation: Tackling Himachal monkey menace

Saurabh Parashar
Shimla, September 21

THE RECENT death of a 63-year-old woman in Shimla has again brought forth the issue of human-wildlife conflict. The woman suffered grievous injuries, including spinal damage, after being attacked by a pack of rhesus macaques on the roof of her house on August 30. She succumbed to her injuries on September 5.

The incident highlights the legal and administrative position of rhesus macaques, or rhesus monkeys. The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, listed the rhesus macaque as a protected species under Part I of Schedule II, but the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022, removed it.

What changed after 2022

Chief Wildlife Warden of Himachal Pradesh, Alok Prem Nagar, told *The Indian Express*: "State forest departments are now no more responsible for looking after the monkey menace. A monkey is now like a stray animal, which falls under the purview of civic bodies."



Shimla records 50-55 cases of monkey attack every month. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A senior Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer said there were many reasons why urban local bodies (ULBs) like Shimla Municipal Corporation (SMC) were "not fully competent" to tackle the monkey menace independently. "First, the lack of funds. Second, absence of expertise and trained manpower to capture monkeys, and sterilising the captured monkeys," the officer told *The Indian Express*.

Sustained sterilisation

- Official numbers show that Himachal Pradesh's estimated rhesus macaque population fell from 3,17,512 in 2004 to 2,26,086 in 2013, and then to 1,36,443 in 2019-20.

- The state forest department attributes much of this decline to sustained sterilisation. Starting 2006, the state had sterilised 1,86,448 monkeys by March 2024.

According to the officer, state forest departments earlier used to receive funds from the Centre to control the monkey menace. Now, with the rhesus monkey no longer a protected animal, the officer added, this is no longer the case.

Shimla Municipal Commissioner, Sachin Kanwal, told *The Indian Express*: "We are in the process of training our manpower on how to capture the monkeys. Whenever a situation arises, we take the assistance of the forest department concerned."

Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) of Himachal Pradesh, Shahnawaz Ahmad Bhat, said that the forest department had not given up its responsibilities. "We do intervene, but largely in and around the forest areas. Whenever Municipal Corporation officials approach us for capturing a monkey and sterilising it, we do provide our assistance. But we charge money from ULBs," he told *The Indian Express*. The cost of sterilisation per monkey is Rs 700.

Conservation dilemma

As per SMC officials, Shimla records 50-55 cases of monkey attack every month.

Wildlife expert Shaminder Boparai said that opinion was divided on whether monkeys "should be treated like vermin or a protected animal", despite the fact that their population increases rapidly.

"The public feeding of wild animals, including monkeys, are forcing animals to come out of the forest in search of easy food," Boparai told *The Indian Express*.

A question of compensation

Last week, a Shimla-based NGO held a protest outside the SMC Commissioner's office demanding a compensation of Rs 5 lakh for the deceased woman. The NGO also demanded stricter action against those found feeding monkeys in Shimla.

The change in legal status, however, has also affected compensation. Under Himachal Pradesh's wildlife compensation policy cited by officials, severe monkey-attack injuries attract a compensation of Rs 75,000, permanent disability Rs 1 lakh, and death Rs 4 lakh. Since rhesus macaque is no longer covered by the Act, officials indicated that the woman's family is unlikely to qualify under this framework.