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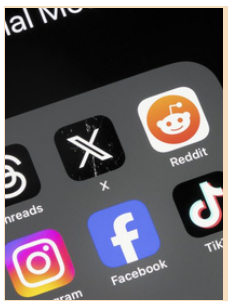

Ministry tells social media platforms to block 'obscene and pornographic' content

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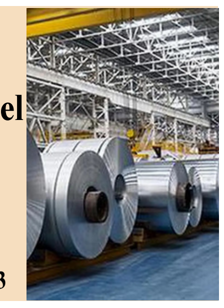

What is the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement?

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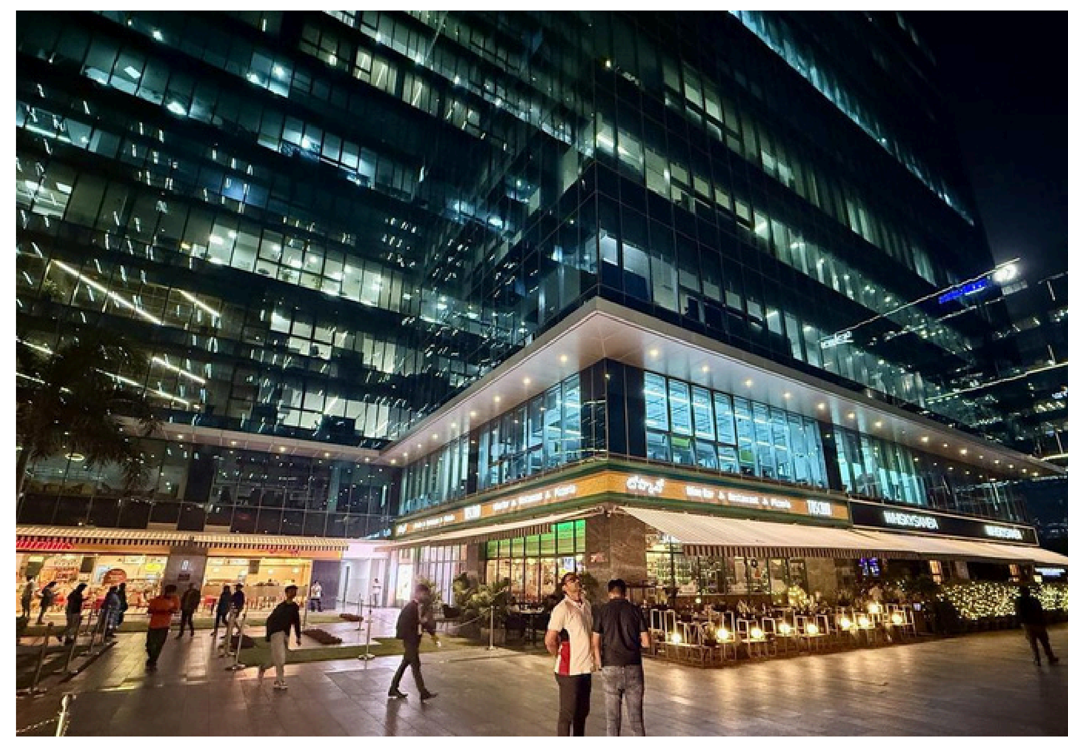
India is now the fourth largest economy: Centre



India's overtaking of Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy reflects strong domestic-demand-led growth, but sustaining this momentum and realising the 2030 projections will depend on continued reforms, macro-stability, and global conditions. India's nominal GDP is stated at about 4.18 trillion dollars, which has pushed it ahead of Japan into fourth place globally, behind the US, China and Germany. The government projects that India can reach a GDP of 7.3 trillion dollars by 2030, which would allow it to overtake Germany and become the third-largest economy within about 2.5–3 years.

India is currently the fastest-growing major economy, with recent real GDP growth of around 8.2% in Q2 of FY 2025-26, accelerating from already high growth in previous quarters. Domestic demand, especially private consumption, is described as the central driver, suggesting that rising incomes and an expanding middle class are fuelling services and retail expansion. The piece attributes resilience to ongoing structural reforms (such as GST rationalisation and improvements in corporate and bank balance sheets) and relatively benign inflation and financial conditions, which together create a "goldilocks" mix of high growth with moderate price pressures. Strong performance of industry and services, supported by robust services exports, is cited as underpinning the high real GDP and GVA growth figures. Multiple international agencies—World Bank, IMF, Moody's, S&P, Fitch, ADB, OECD—are said to have upgraded or maintained optimistic growth forecasts for India, generally in the 6–7% range over the next few years. These projections frame India as a structural growth story, not just a cyclical upswing, reflecting confidence in ongoing reforms and demographic advantages. The government links this milestone to the ambition of achieving high middle-income status by 2047, implying a need to convert aggregate GDP growth into broad-based income gains and employment. Despite the positive narrative, it briefly acknowledges macro-risks: global trade uncertainties, the need to keep inflation within tolerance, and to ensure that employment and export performance continue to improve alongside domestic consumption.

Khaleda Zia, first woman PM of Bangladesh and the main rival of Hasina, is no more

Former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, whose rivalry with the deposed Premier Sheikh Hasina defined the country's politics for a generation, died on Tuesday, her Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) said in a statement. She was 80. Ms. Zia was the first woman elected Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Bangladesh's interim government announced a three-day mourning following her death. Apart from deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Khaleda Zia was the only Prime Minister from Bangladesh whose political and institutional interactions with the Indian leadership stretched back to the 1970s and continued till the 21st century. Her last noted interaction with Indian leadership was in 2015 when she met Modi in Dhaka.

Ministry tells social media platforms to block 'obscene and pornographic' content

- Platforms must prohibit hosting, uploading, or sharing any obscene, pornographic, vulgar, indecent, sexually explicit, paedophilic, or otherwise illegal content, with swift removal upon gaining "actual knowledge" via court orders or government notices.
- Intermediaries face a strict 24-hour timeline to disable access to prima facie sexual content, including nudity or impersonations, upon complaints from affected individuals or representatives.
- Social media firms must review internal compliance frameworks, content moderation practices, and user enforcement mechanisms immediately to ensure "greater consistency and rigour" in due diligence.

Legal and Regulatory Context

- The advisory invokes Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000, warning that safe harbour protection for platforms depends on strict adherence to IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.
- Non-compliance risks prosecution under multiple laws, including IT Act Sections 67/67A, IPC Section 292, Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, and POCSO Act.
- It follows public complaints, parliamentary discussions, court proceedings, and Supreme Court observations on inadequate platform responses to obscene material a month prior.

Background and Triggers

- MeitY noted inconsistent platform actions despite repeated grievances about harmful content proliferation, including child safety risks and societal harm from vulgar material.
- Builds on prior government actions, such as blocking 18 OTT platforms, 19 websites, 10 apps, and 57 social media accounts in 2024 for similar violations under IT Act and IPC.
- Platforms are urged to deploy automated tools for proactive detection, enhance grievance redressal access, and appoint round-the-clock monitoring officers.

Implications for Platforms and Users

- Large intermediaries like Meta, Google, and others must prioritise technology-based prevention to avoid losing intermediary status and facing criminal liability for users or executives.
- Users gain easier reporting mechanisms and faster takedowns, but platforms may ramp up content restrictions, potentially affecting free expression debates.
- Signals intensified government scrutiny on digital accountability, aligning with broader efforts for a "safe, trusted, and accountable" internet ecosystem.

Broader Policy Significance

- Reinforces India's evolving digital governance, balancing innovation with protections against obscenity, especially amid rising internet penetration and child online safety concerns.
- Could prompt platforms to overhaul AI moderation globally for India compliance, while critics may flag overreach risks without clear definitions of "obscene."
- Positions this as part of sustained crackdowns, including SOPs for non-consensual intimate content and appellate committees for user appeals.

Defence Ministry inks contracts for procurements for Army and Navy

- India's Defence Ministry signed contracts worth over ₹425 crore for key procurements benefiting the Army and Navy, emphasizing indigenous production and operational enhancements under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

Strategic Objectives

- These deals replace ageing legacy equipment in frontline units, aiming to modernize infantry close-quarter battle capabilities and submarine warfare by 2028-2030.
- Focus on indigenously designed systems like Akash missiles strengthens domestic manufacturing, creates jobs, and reduces import dependence in critical defence segments.
- Deliveries for torpedoes start in 2028 for Kalvari-class submarines, addressing capability gaps in anti-surface and anti-submarine roles.

Broader Defence Procurement Context

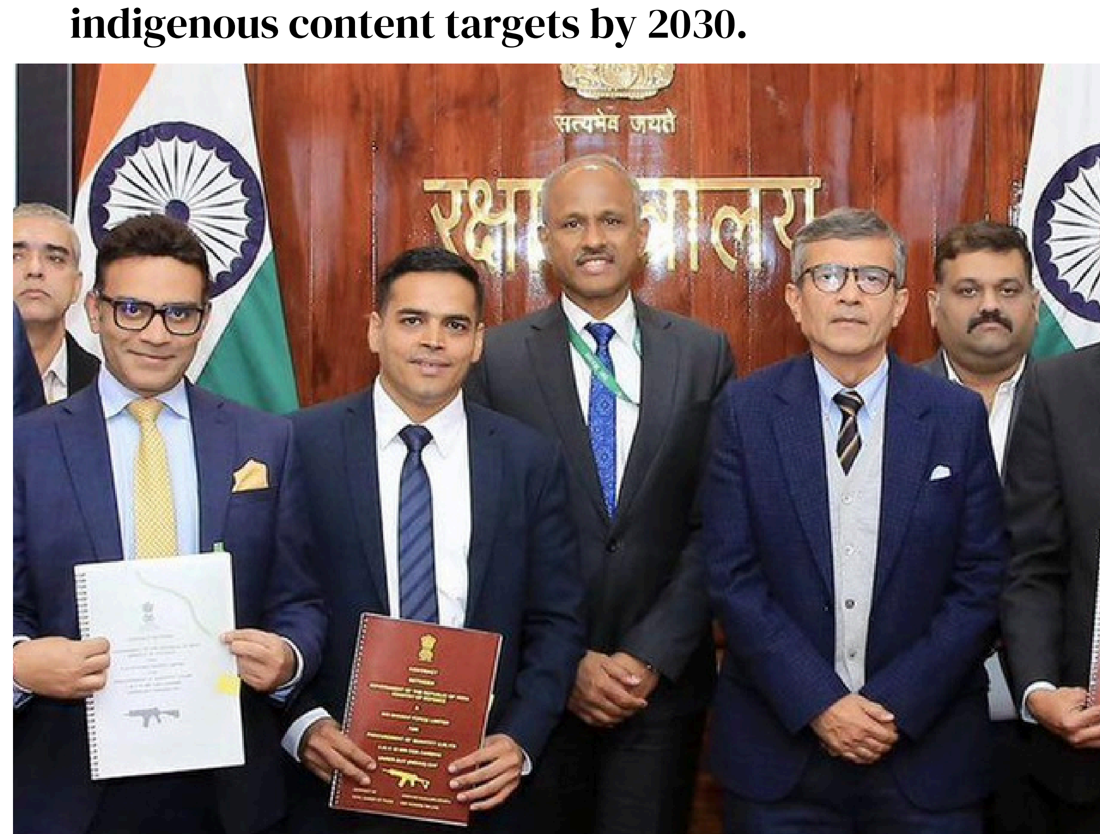
- Part of FY 2025-26's aggressive acquisition drive, with MoD already inking ₹1.82 lakh crore in capital contracts this year, accelerating self-reliance goals.
- Aligns with recent high-value deals like BrahMos missiles (₹4,000+ crore exports and domestic inductions), showing momentum in missile and naval tech integration.
- Defence Secretary Raju Panicker (or Rajesh Kumar Singh per reports) highlighted long-term inventory stability and export potential from these platforms.

Implications for Forces

- Army gains robust surface-to-air missile regiments, improving layered defence against drones, aircraft, and missiles in border theatres.
- Navy's operational capacity surges with advanced torpedoes, vital for Indo-Pacific deterrence amid rising maritime tensions.
- Overall, these procurements signal policy shift towards timely execution, private sector involvement, and tech infusion for tri-service synergy.

Policy and Economic Impact

- Boosts MSME ecosystems through offsets and local content mandates, generating employment in Uttar Pradesh and other defence corridors.
- Reinforces India's global defence stature, with similar deals paving way for exports (e.g., BrahMos to Vietnam/Indonesia), amid 2025's record procurement tempo.
- Risks include delivery timelines and integration challenges, but success could propel India past 75% indigenous content targets by 2030.



PRELIMS CORNER :

1.He was a saint&social reformer of Medieval India who founded Gaudiya Vaishnavism.He popularised 'Sankirtan' or public singing of God's name and opposed the inequalities of the caste system. Which one of the following personalities is described above?

(a) Vallabhacharya
(b) Vidyaranya
(c) Nimbarka
(d) Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

2.The Tehran Convention, 2006 is an overarching legal instrument for the environmental protection of which one of the following water bodies?

(a) Red Sea
(b) South China Sea
(c) Caspian Sea
(d) Arabian Sea

3.Which of the following is Brunei's only land neighbour?

(a) Thailand
(b) Malayasia
(c) Indonesia
(d) Vietnam

4.Optical fibre cables work on the principle of:

(a) Doppler Effect
(b) Photoelectric Effect
(c) Quantum Tunnelling
(d) Total Internal Reflection

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

HAL enters civil market with Dhruv NG helicopter

Milestone Event Details

- The inaugural flight occurred at HAL's Helicopter Division in Bengaluru, flagged off by Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, with HAL CMD DK Sunil, DGCA Joint Director General Maneesh Kumar, and Pawan Hans CMD Sanjeev Razdan present.
- HAL received DGCA certification for indigenous manufacturing of the Shakti 1H1C civil engine during the ceremony, the first such approval for a domestically produced aero engine.
- Approximately 130 test flights are planned over the next months using two prototypes, targeting full civil certification in 3-4 months.

Technical Specifications

- Features a maximum take-off weight of 5,500 kg, top speed of 285 km/h, capacity for up to 14 passengers, and a state-of-the-art glass cockpit meeting AS410 standards with advanced avionics for enhanced situational awareness.
- Equipped with crashworthy seating, self-sealing fuel tanks, twin-engine redundancy, and vibration control systems for superior safety, comfort, and reliability in high-altitude or challenging terrains.
- Builds on the Dhruv Mk-1 civil variant's proven track record of over 24,000 flight hours, upgraded for global civil standards.

Strategic Objectives

- Positions HAL as a "one-stop solution" provider for manufacturing, maintenance, and upgrades via Power-by-the-Hour (PBH) and Performance-Based Logistics (PBL) models, reducing import dependence.
- Targets roles like VIP transport, HEMS, offshore logistics, law enforcement, search-and-rescue, and disaster relief, addressing India's diverse regional connectivity needs.
- Early interest from Pawan Hans Ltd, BSF, and Karnataka state government signals potential initial orders.

Policy and Economic Implications

- Aligns with Aatmanirbhar Bharat by diversifying HAL from defence (e.g., military Dhruv variants) to civil aviation, boosting indigenous tech and exports.
- Enhances regional air connectivity initiatives, with government promoting HAL's role in domestic helicopter production amid rising civil demand.
- Could generate jobs, strengthen aerospace MSMEs, and position India competitively against imported light twins, though certification timelines and market penetration remain key challenges.

Broader Industry Context

- HAL's move counters foreign dominance in India's civil helicopter segment, leveraging Aero India 2025 showcase for global visibility.
- Reinforces momentum in indigenous aviation, following military successes, with potential for variants in paramilitary and state operations.
- Success hinges on sustained performance in trials and competitive pricing, potentially opening doors to international sales.

A multipolar world with bipolar characteristics

The global order in late 2025 exhibits multipolar tendencies alongside dominant US-China bipolar rivalry, where power diffusion coexists with intensifying great-power competition.

Core Thesis

- Describes a "multipolar world with bipolar characteristics," featuring multiple actors (US, China, Russia, Europe) but structured around US-China primacy, echoing Cold War dynamics without ideological blocs.
- US maintains military primacy despite internal divisions and external challenges, while China's economic ascent and Russia's resilience prevent full unipolarity.
- Trump's reelection reinforces US transactionalism, weakening alliances and amplifying bilateral tensions over multilateral cooperation.

US Strategic Position

- US holds unmatched military reach, intervening decisively in external theaters (e.g., largest Caribbean mobilization in decades), but faces alliance fatigue and domestic constraints limiting sustained primacy.
- Policy failures in containing China and Russia highlight overextension, with Europe fragmenting under security pressures and Trump's "America First" pivot reducing transatlantic commitments.
- Bipolar lens positions US as one pole, challenged by China's naval buildup and economic leverage, narrowing the power gap without full parity.

China's Rising Pole

- China emerges as the counterweight, leveraging economic interdependence, technological advances, and military modernization to contest US dominance without direct confrontation.
- Seeks regional hegemony in Asia while projecting global influence through BRICS and infrastructure diplomacy, complicating US containment efforts.
- Bipolar structure benefits Beijing by forcing third powers (e.g., Europe, India) into hedging, amplifying China's bargaining power in trade and security domains.

Russia's Disruptive Role

- Russia defies isolation through hybrid warfare, energy leverage, and deepened Sino-Russian alignment, sustaining influence despite sanctions and Ukraine setbacks.
- Challenges Western order by exploiting NATO divisions and US retrenchment, positioning as a spoiler in multipolar flux rather than a full pole.
- Ties with China create an axis that fragments global institutions, pressuring Europe toward strategic autonomy.

Europe's Marginalization

- EU grapples with internal disarray, energy dependence, and US disengagement (e.g., NSS-2025's Europe-led NATO deadline), eroding its pole status.
- Germany weakened by economic stagnation and policy missteps; seeks autonomy but lacks cohesion against Russian pressures and Chinese economic sway.
- Potential for Europe-China engagement offers stabilization, yet risks subordination in bipolar US-China rivalry.
- Third powers like India face alignment dilemmas, balancing autonomy against bipolar pressures amid BRICS expansion.

Law on 'suspension of sentence'

The Delhi High Court suspended the life sentence of former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case, citing his status as not qualifying as a "public servant" under IPC Section 21 and time served exceeding minimum penalties, sparking massive public protests and legal backlash.

Legal Basis of HC Order

- Trial court convicted Sengar under POCSO Sections 3/4/5/6 and IPC 376(2)(n), imposing life imprisonment, treating him as a public servant (MLA) for aggravated assault, but HC ruled strict IPC definition excludes legislators.
- Bench (Justices Subramonium Prasad, Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar) suspended sentence pending appeal, noting 7+ years served meets non-aggravated minimums, dismissing threat perception to survivor as irrelevant for bail.
- Order emphasizes procedural fairness in appeals under CrPC Section 389, without prima facie overturning conviction, but critics call it hyper-technical ignoring case gravity.

Public and Political Outrage

- Survivor and family protested outside Delhi HC with activists, raising slogans against eroded public faith; survivor called order "death" for her family, citing safety fears and prior intimidation.
- Opposition leaders (Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi) condemned it as justice failure; women's groups, lawyers (e.g., Dushyant Dave) labeled judgment "perverse," shaking faith in judiciary.
- Protests spread to Delhi streets, highlighting systemic bias toward powerful convicts in sexual violence cases.

Supreme Court Intervention

- CBI filed SLP challenging HC order; SC stayed suspension on Dec 28-29, 2025, questioning "public servant" interpretation under POCSO and merits review, keeping Sengar in custody.
- SC flagged substantial legal issues on aggravated assault classification, aligning with victim-centric jurisprudence post-conviction.
- Sengar's appeal hearing reserved; related 10-year sentence for father's custodial death remains under scrutiny.

Broader Legal Principles

- Suspension under CrPC 389 requires high acquittal likelihood or trial flaws; post-life conviction, innocence presumption ends, prioritizing offence gravity and public trust.
- Case history: SC transferred trial to Delhi (2019) due to threats; underscores POCSO's protective intent for minors against power abusers.
- Highlights tensions in balancing appeal rights with victim rights under Article 21 (dignity), especially in high-profile POCSO/IPC cases.

Implications and Critiques

- Erodes deterrence for elite offenders, risks normalizing leniency in rape cases amid #MeToo echoes; demands clearer "public servant" scope for politicians.
- Reinforces need for fast-track appeals, security for survivors; SC stay restores interim faith but exposes appellate delays (6+ years post-conviction).
- Signals judicial pushback on technicalities overriding substantive justice, influencing future bail/suspension precedents in grave crimes.

'Open access to AI infra key in India'

India's government advocates treating AI infrastructure—compute, data, and models—as a public utility to ensure open, affordable access for startups, researchers, and institutions, preventing dominance by large players.

Policy Vision and Rationale

- Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) white paper positions AI infra as shared national resource via Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) model, enabling modular access without physical proximity or high costs.
- Democratization fosters inclusive innovation in local languages, agriculture, healthcare; counters risks like bias from unrepresentative data by expanding access beyond urban hubs.
- Essential for India's AI governance: subsidised resources mitigate barriers, promote accountability, and align with net-zero sustainability amid rising energy demands.

Current Infrastructure Landscape

- IndiaAI Mission delivers 38,000+ GPUs/1,050 TPUs at <₹100/hour (half global rates), via providers like Yotta, Jio, CtrlS; backed by ₹10,300+ crore over 5 years.
- IndiaAIKosh hosts 5,700+ datasets/250 models across 20 sectors; Bhashini aids language representation; National Supercomputing Mission complements.
- Private investments (AdaniConneX, Tata, NTT) build hyperscale centres; state platforms enable federated data sharing preserving sovereignty.

Key Enablers and Challenges

- Compute: Subsidies cover 40% costs; sovereign clusters (3,000 next-gen GPUs) for strategic use; energy/cooling coordination with renewables critical.
- Data: Permissioned access via directories/metadata standards; phased DPI evolution from protocols to federated systems ensures privacy/governance.
- Hurdles include uneven adoption in non-urban sectors, power demands, and integration needs; calls for policy prioritizing public-good status.

Strategic Implications

- Positions India as AI leader by 2035, potentially adding $1.7T to economy via adoption in key sectors; boosts MSMEs/researchers over Big Tech monopoly.
- Global model: DPI-for-AI exports expertise (e.g., to Global South); reduces import reliance via domestic fabs/assembly (NVIDIA, AMD partnerships).
- Risks: Over-centralization avoided via interoperability; success hinges on scaling trials, ethical frameworks, and equitable regional rollout.

EU CBAM to crush aluminium, steel exporters' margin

- The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), effective from January 1, 2026, will impose carbon taxes on high-emission imports like Indian steel and aluminium, severely squeezing exporters' margins amid existing US duties and blast furnace reliance.

CBAM Mechanics and Timeline

- Taxes EU importers based on embedded emissions during production, mirroring EU ETS costs (~€71/tCO_2), transitioning from reporting (since Oct 2023) to payments in 2026 with full expansion by 2028.
- Covers steel, aluminium, cement, fertilizers, electricity, hydrogen initially; Indian exposure limited to metals as other exports minimal.
- India faces ~€173.8/tonne (~₹15,394) on steel, equating to 16-35% of export value, with aluminium less hit due to indirect emissions exclusion (~80% of total).

Impact on Indian Exporters

- Steel/aluminium exports to EU (27% of $8.2B metals total in 2022; 3.71MT steel in 2024) already down 24-35% in FY25 from compliance fears, poised for further 15-22% price cuts to absorb costs.
- Margins crushed as blast furnace steel emits 2-3x EU levels; exporters pivot to Africa/Middle East, risking oversupply and price crashes elsewhere.
- Cumulative hit with US 50% duties; GTRI warns $2B+ annual losses without tech upgrades.

Industry and Government Responses

- Firms urged to adopt green steel (e.g., electric arc furnaces), energy efficiency; govt seeks CBAM exemptions via FTA talks, credits under Indian CCTS (~$10/t$CO_2$).
- Compliance burdens rise: quarterly reporting, verification; non-adherence blocks EU access amid anti-dumping duties (13-35%).
- Experts like Ajay Garg (SMC Global) predict accelerated decarbonization; Naveen Mathur (Motilal Oswal) flags landed cost hikes eroding competitiveness.

Strategic Challenges

- Second-largest exporter to EU after China; high-emission legacy tech disadvantages vs low-carbon EU peers, distorting global trade.
- Risks production shifts to EU or market loss; critics call CBAM protectionist, ignoring developing nations' transition needs.
- Broader scope looms for downstream products, amplifying reporting for MSMEs.

Policy Implications for India

- Hastens green taxonomy, domestic carbon markets; aligns with net-zero goals but demands subsidies/tech transfers for compliance.
- Diversification imperative: ASEAN, USMCA alternatives, though saturated; strengthens WTO challenges on CBAM equity.
- Opportunity for leadership in green metals exports if upgrades scale, but short-term pain tests resilience amid 45% EU steel reliance.

China fires missiles on second day of live-fire military drills around Taiwan

Drill Execution and Scale

- Involved destroyers, frigates, fighters, bombers, and rocket forces targeting mock ports (Keelung, Kaohsiung) with long-range live-fire, sea-air coordination, anti-submarine ops, and blockade enforcement over 10 hours.
- PLA Eastern Theater Command reported "desired effects" from strikes in restricted zones, with debris detected within Taiwan's 24-nautical-mile contiguous zone; 130+ aircraft (90 crossing median line) and 14+ ships deployed.
- Videos showed PCH-191 rocket systems launching volleys; disrupted 150+ flights, international shipping, drawing tourists to observe booms reverberating across the strait.

Strategic Objectives

- Tests integrated blockade/control capabilities to sever Taiwan's external links, deter "separatist forces" and US intervention post-$11.1B arms sale (largest ever).
- Demonstrates precision strikes on energy/maritime targets, normalizing coercive ops amid Lai Ching-te's independence rhetoric and Japan's potential intervention signals.
- Includes Type 075 amphibious ship debut in drills, signaling amphibious assault readiness; Beijing's top diplomat Wang Yi vowed "strong countermeasures."

Taiwan and Allies' Response

- Taipei condemned as "highly provocative/reckless military intimidation," scrambling jets/missiles without escalation; President Lai emphasized non-provocation while monitoring.
- Defense Ministry tracked incursions; no retaliation but heightened alert; US Trump downplayed invasion risk, citing Xi ties.
- Japan/Taiwan aviation disrupted; Beijing sanctioned US firms over arms deal.

Broader Geopolitical Context

- Follows prior "Joint Sword" exercises; escalates post-US arms, Takaichi's Taiwan defense remarks, amid Trump's inauguration shadow.
- PLA aims to erode faith in Taiwan defenses via info war; part of annual pressure amid strait median-line erosion.
- Risks miscalculation in crowded airspace/shipping lanes, testing US deterrence commitments.

Implications for Regional Security

- Signals Beijing's blockade rehearsal feasibility, pressuring Lai pre-inauguration; normalizes high-intensity drills (first live-fire north/south zones).
- Heightens Indo-Pacific tensions; Taiwan bolsters asymmetric defenses, US eyes sustained arms flow despite Trump pivot.
- Long-term: Accelerates arms race, alliance realignments (AUKUS, Quad); success metrics include deterrence without full invasion trigger.

What is the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement?

Core features of the FTA

- India will receive near-total zero-duty access for its exports to New Zealand over a transitional period, while India will gradually cut tariffs on about 55% of imports from New Zealand, with 57% of those becoming duty-free by year 15.
- New Zealand has committed to investing 250 billion NZD into the Indian economy by 2030 and easing work and study opportunities for Indians, including easier visas for students and professionals.

Sectors included and excluded

- The deal opens opportunities for Indian exports in textiles, garments, leather, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, and processed food items, especially for MSMEs that gain better market access.
- Sensitive sectors such as most dairy, fruits, several agricultural products, and labour-intensive sectors like some auto parts and toys have been kept outside, reflecting India's defensive interests in protecting farmers and small manufacturers.

Strategic and economic rationale

- The FTA is presented as part of India's broader strategy to diversify trade ties beyond China and the U.S., deepen engagement with the Pacific and West Asia, and integrate Indian firms into global value chains.
- It builds on India's recent FTAs with countries such as Australia and the U.K., and is seen as a way to attract investment, technology, and high-skill jobs while leveraging India's large market to negotiate favourable concessions.

New Zealand's perspective and domestic criticism

- In New Zealand, the agreement is promoted as providing Indian market access for its high-value goods and services, and for making it a gateway for New Zealand businesses into the wider Indo-Pacific.
- However, some New Zealand sectors—especially parts of agriculture and labour groups—criticise the FTA for insufficient safeguards, potential job displacement, and fears that India may maintain non-tariff barriers that blunt real market opening.

Broader implications and challenges

- For India, implementation will test its ability to improve trade facilitation, upgrade infrastructure, and support domestic industries to withstand greater competition while using rules of origin and safeguards effectively.
- This notes that the FTA must be read in the context of shifting global supply chains, regional trade pacts, and India's attempt to balance protection of vulnerable sectors with ambitions for export-led growth and strategic partnerships.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans d

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was Bengal's most prominent Vaishnava saint. He popularised Krishna-bhakti in many parts of Eastern India. The advent of Chaitanya marks the shifting of the focus of the Bengal Vaishnava bhakti from devotional literary compositions to a full-fledged reform movement with a broad social base. Chaitanya disregarded all distinctions of caste, creed and sex to give a popular base to Krishna-bhakti. His followers belonged to all castes and communities. One of his favourite disciples was Haridas, who was a Muslim. He popularised the sankirtan (group devotional songs accompanied by ecstatic dancing). Chaitanya's exposition of Rasalila is one of his most profound contributions to Indian philosophy.

Q2. Ans c

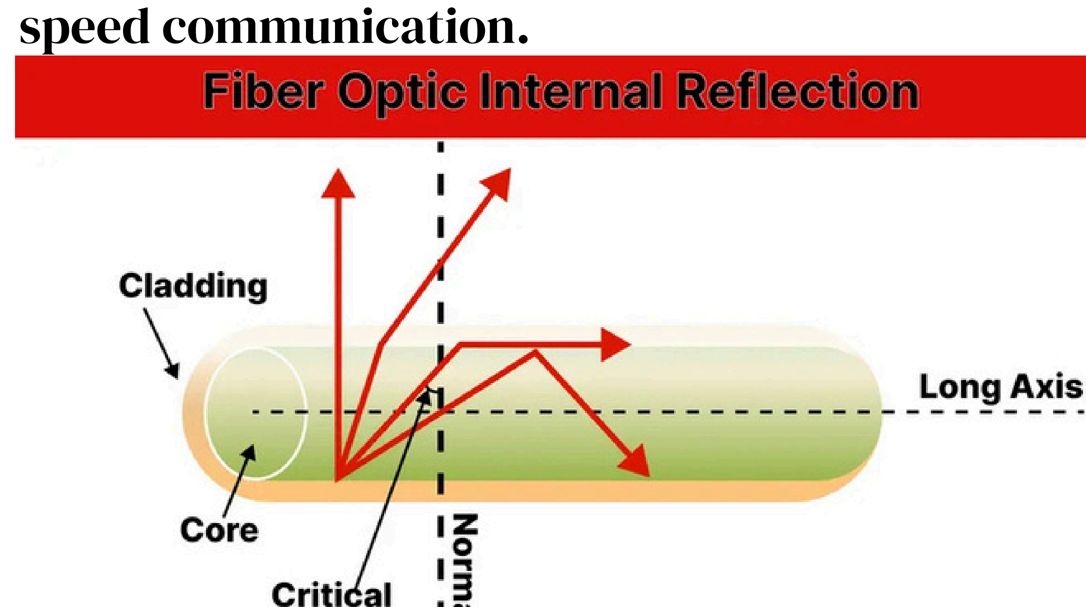
The Tehran Convention (formally the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea), which entered into force in 2006, is the overarching legal instrument for the environmental protection of the Caspian Sea. It is the first legally binding regional agreement signed by all five Caspian littoral states: the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Turkmenistan. The Caspian Sea is a unique natural reservoir on our planet. It is a land locked water body located between two major parts of the Eurasian continent. Economic activities in the Caspian Sea include oil production, fishing, and shipping.

Q3. Ans b

Brunei is a sovereign state located on the northern coast of the island of Borneo in Southeast Asia. It is bordered by the South China Sea to the north and is completely surrounded by the Malaysian state of Sarawak on all other land sides. Brunei consists of two disconnected territories that occupy a total land area of 2,226 square miles and are separated by the state of Sarawak. The segment to the west is significantly larger than the part on to the east and is home to the nation's capital of Bandar Seri Begawan. The nation gained its independence from the British in 1984.

Q4. Ans d

Optical fibre cables work on the principle of Total Internal Reflection (TIR), where light signals, converted from digital data, bounce repeatedly within the fibre's core (a glass/plastic strand) by striking the boundary with the surrounding cladding at angles greater than the critical angle, allowing data transmission over long distances with minimal loss. This principle ensures that light signals, carrying vast amounts of data, stay trapped and travel efficiently from one end to the other, making fibre optics a superior choice for high-speed communication.



Case Study:

Waymo's outage raises doubts over robotaxi

Awidespread power outage in San Francisco that led to Waymo robotaxis stalling and snarling traffic earlier this month has raised concerns about the readiness of autonomous vehicle operators to tackle major emergencies like earthquakes and floods. Driverless taxis from Alphabet unit Waymo, a ubiquitous feature on the city's streets, were stuck at intersections with their hazard lights turned on as traffic lights stopped working following a fire at a PG&E substation that knocked out power to roughly one-third of the city on December 20, videos posted on social media showed. Waymo halted operations, resuming a day later. The incident renewed calls for stricter regulation of the nascent but fast-growing industry as other companies, including Tesla and Amazon's Zoox race to expand robotaxi services in several cities. "If you get a response to a blackout wrong, regulators are derelict if they do not respond to that by requiring some sort of proof that the earthquake scenario will be handled properly," said Philip Koopman, a Carnegie Mellon University computer-engineering professor and autonomous-technology expert.

Amazonian stingless bees have become the first insect in the world to be granted legal rights, after two municipalities — Satipo and Nauta — in Peru passed an ordinance earlier this month. The move is expected to help conserve stingless bees, which are the oldest bee species on the planet. In recent years, the insect has been facing threats from climate change, forest fires, and deforestation. Stingless bees, as their name suggests, are a class of bees which either do not have stingers or have stingers that cannot cause much pain. They are found in tropical regions across the world, and about half of the 500 known species live in the Amazon. In Peru alone, there are more than 170 species. These bees have been sustaining tropical forests around the world for about 80 million years, since the time of the dinosaurs, by being a valuable pollinator.

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"Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard."
Tim Notke