

# Goyal: India-NZ talks focused on goods mkt access, services

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**Auckland:** The fourth round of the India-New Zealand FTA talks was focused on goods market access, services, economic and technical cooperation, and investment opportunities, and both countries have vowed to wrap up a deal soon.

"We look forward to working towards the early conclusion of a balanced, comprehensive and mutually beneficial agreement, in line with the growing strategic



and economic convergence between India and New Zealand," commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday at the end of his official visit to New Zealand.

While no timeline has been given about the signing of

**FTA PARLEYS**  
the FTA, there are expectations that it may be concluded early next year.

New Zealand's trade minister Todd McClay will visit India next month and is expected to carry forward the negotiations.

Negotiators from both countries have narrowed down the differences but there are some "nuances" which need

to be worked on. The dairy remains a sticking point.

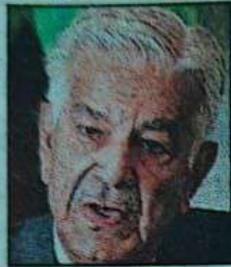
But there is growing interest in New Zealand about expanding cooperation with India across sectors such as agriculture, tourism, technology, education, sports, gaming, and drone technology.

Given India's significant advancements in the space sector, including its recent lunar missions, space collaboration was identified as an area for future engagement.

During the visit, Goyal also held meetings with business leaders from both India and New Zealand and called for deepening the economic ties between the two countries.

# Pak defence min says peace talks with Afghanistan have collapsed

**Karachi:** Pakistan's defence minister **Khawaja Asif** said on Friday that peace talks with Afghanistan in Istanbul aimed at preventing renewed border



clashes have collapsed, adding that the ceasefire will hold as long as there are no attacks from Afg-

han soil, speaking on GEO News. Asif said talks have "entered an indefinite phase" as negotiators failed to bridge deep differences between the two sides. "Right now, as we speak, negotiations are over," he said while speaking on Geo News programme 'Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath'.

Earlier, officials confirmed that talks in Istanbul were at a deadlock. The update on the talks by Pakistan's information minister Attaullah Tarar came after an Afghan official said four Afghan civilians were killed and five others wounded in clashes between Pakistani and Afghan forces along their shared border despite the joint negotiations. In a statement thanking Turkiye and Qatar for mediating the talks, Tarar maintained Afghan Taliban has failed to meet pledges it made with the international community about curbing terrorism under a 2021 Doha peace accord. AGENCIES

## Wildlife panel clears 13 defence, paramilitary projects in Ladakh, Arunachal

NEW DELHI, Nov 7 (PTI)

**THE** Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life (NBWL) has recommended 13 defence and paramilitary projects, most of them in high-altitude protected areas of Ladakh and one in Arunachal Pradesh, according to the minutes of its 86th meeting.

The proposals, submitted by the Ministry of Defence, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), include new border outposts, a brigade headquarters, ammunition storage and training facilities and bridge and culvert works. The committee has approved these projects with strict environmental safeguards to protect fragile Himalayan ecosystems.

According to the minutes, the committee has recommended the use of 0.37 hectare of the Eco-Sensitive Zone of the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh for the construction of a 158-metre-long permanent bridge on the Balipara-Charduar-Tawang road under Project Vartak.

The area lies within a global biodiversity hotspot and an important elephant corridor. The proposal was cleared with a mitigation plan that includes construction only during daylight hours, speed-control measures and waste and noise management.

In Ladakh, several major defence projects were approved inside the Changthang Cold Desert and Karakoram (Nubra-Shayok) wildlife sanctuaries. These include the establishment of a 315 Field Workshop Company at Chushul, spread over 3.7 hectares, to support the 142 Infantry Brigade deployed near LAC.

# Military station 30km from B'desh border to fortify 'Chicken's Neck'

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## Wildlife panel gives nod to 13 def projects

**Guwahati:** A strategic project to build India's closest military station to the Bangladesh border in Assam's Dhubri formally commenced Thursday with a nod to Lachit Borphukan, the 17th-century Ahom general who staved off a Mughal invasion.

Around 30km from the international boundary, it will be in proximity to the "Chicken's Neck" connecting the northeast to the rest of the country. Lachit Borphukan Military Station's

National Board for Wildlife – a panel that takes decisions on projects in areas near wildlife protected zones – has given its approval to 13 defence and paramilitary projects, most in Ladakh and one in Arunachal Pradesh. Clearances have been given on conditions of following environmental safeguards and mitigation plans to protect Himalayan ecosystems. The projects include new border outposts, a brigade headquarters, ammunition storage and training facilities, and bridge work. TNN

launch comes in the wake of threats from Bangladesh, including talk of disrupting access to the corridor.

Lt Gen R C Tiwari, general officer commanding-in-chief of Eastern Command, laid the foundation at an

event described as "a significant step in further strengthening the operational capabilities and infrastructure of the Army in the region".

The station will be under the operational command of Tezpur-based 4 Corps.

# R Naval edge may see a dent as Pak inducts subs from China

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**New Delhi:** India's naval combat edge over Pakistan will be somewhat eroded from next year, when the latter begins inducting eight advanced Hangor-class diesel-electric submarines from China. India's long-pending conventional submarine-building project, in sharp contrast, is yet to kick off.

Pakistan Navy chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf has confirmed in interviews to Chinese state media that the first Hangor-class submarine will enter active service next year. All eight boats, four each being built in China and Pakistan under the estimated \$5 billion deal, will be delivered by 2028. They will boost Pakistan's ability to patrol the north Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, he said.

The Hangor or Type 039A Yuan-class submarines, in addition to having advanced sensors and weapons, are also equipped with Stirling air-independent propulsion (AIP) to boost underwater endurance.

While nuclear-powered submarines can stay underwater for months, diesel-electric boats must surface or snorkel every couple of days to get oxygen to recharge their batteries. Those with AIP, however, can stay submerged for around two-three weeks. India has no conventional submarine with AIP.

"The submarines will undoubtedly boost Pakistan's A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) capabilities in the Arabian Sea. We will have to find a solution for it. China, of course, is always there to help Pakistan, which was very evident during Operation Sindoor," a senior Indian military official told TOI.

"After the overwhelming dominance demonstrated by the Indian Navy in the north Arabian Sea during Operation Sindoor, Pakistan will be better prepared the next time, plugging gaps with help from China and Turkiye," another officer said.

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# India inks \$1bn deal for 113 Tejas engines

Rajat Pandit  
& Chethan Kumar | TNN

Reuters



The delivery of the GE-F404 engines to defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics will take place in the 2027-2032 timeframe

**New Delhi/Bengaluru:** India on Friday inked an over \$1 billion (Rs 8,900 crore) deal with US major General Electric (GE) for another 113 jet engines to power the much-delayed indigenous Tejas Mark-1A fighters. This may to some extent assuage the Donald Trump administration amid tariff tensions.

The delivery of the 113 new GE-F404 engines to defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics will take place in the 2027-2032 timeframe, adding to the delayed supply of 99 engines ordered under a Rs 5,375 crore deal in Aug 2021.

With the deal being inked in Bengaluru, HAL chief DK Sunil told TOI, "We have 11 Tejas aircraft ready, including four fitted with new GE engines. We are moving towards certification, and the aim is to deliver the first 10 jets to IAF by the end of March next year."

Tejas Mark-1A production has also been hobbled by pending trials of Astra beyond visual range air-to-air missiles, the advanced short-

range air-to-air missiles and laser-guided bombs as well as their integration with the Israeli-origin Elta ELM-2052 radar and fire control system.

Down to just 29 fighter squadrons when 42.5 are authorised, IAF is banking upon 180 'improved' fourth-generation Tejas Mark-1A fighters to shore up its depleting numbers. Pakistan has 25 fighter squadrons and is slated to get at least 40 J-35A fifth-generation Chinese stealth jets. China has over four times the number of fighters, bombers and force-multipliers as compared to India.

The first contract for 83 Tejas Mark-1A fighters was in Feb 2021 for Rs 46,898 crore, while another 97 were ordered for Rs 66,500 crore on Sept 25 this year. Deliveries of

the 83 jets are yet to begin.

"Engines have the most lead time. Keeping that in mind, we started negotiations for the 113 new engines with GE even before we inked the 97 Tejas contract with IAF," Sunil said. He added, "Results of the data from trials involving Astra and ASRAAMs are being analysed. In Nov and Dec, we plan to begin bombing trials. If GE delivers 10 engines in time, we don't see any reason for delay in handing over 10 aircraft by the end of this fiscal."

HAL is also negotiating co-production of the more powerful GE-F414 engines in the 98 Kilonewton thrust class in India, with 80% of transfer of technology for around \$1.5 billion, for the Tejas Mark-2 fighter.

# May travel to India next year, 'friend' Modi wants me to visit, says Trump

New York/Washington: US President Donald Trump has said he may travel to India next year, adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi "wants" him to visit.

"He's (PM Modi) a friend of mine, and we speak... He wants me to go there. We will figure that out. I will go. I will have a great trip there with Prime Minister Modi, he's a great man. And I'll be going," Trump said at the Oval Office on Thursday in response to a question.

Asked if the visit could happen next year, Trump said, "It could be, yeah."

India is due to host the next Quad summit with leaders

## TRUMP SPEAK

**ON TRADE:** It's great, going good. He (PM Modi)... largely stopped buying oil from Russia

**ON TARIFFS:** It's a great national defence. If I didn't have tariffs, I wouldn't have been able to settle that (India-Pak) war



from Australia, Japan, and the United States, after the 2024 meeting in Wilmington, Delaware. However, dates are yet to be announced. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal in

## Canada tightens visa, permit norms

Canada's foreign students, workers and visitors face tougher compliance checks under updated guidelines that allow immigration officers to cancel visas and permits already issued. It is intended to curb misuse of temporary immigration programmes. **P 16**

New Delhi declined to comment on the visit. "I will let you know when I have (information)," Jaiswal said. **PTI**

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