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INDIA-NEW ZEALAND FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

- The India-New Zealand FTA aims to strengthen bilateral economic relations by reducing trade barriers, expanding market access and facilitating investment.
- Key provisions include:
 - **Zero-duty access:** New Zealand has eliminated import duties on all Indian exports across sectors.
 - **Tariff reductions by India:** India has reduced tariffs on 95% of New Zealand's imports, subject to the agreement's provisions and exclusions.
 - **Investment commitment:** New Zealand has committed to invest \$20 billion in India over the next 15 years.
 - **Sensitive-sector protection:** India has excluded selected agricultural and dairy products from tariff concessions to protect domestic producers.
 - **Trade facilitation:** The agreement establishes mechanisms such as Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) for selected products.

Benefits for Indian Exports and Industry

- The removal of import duties is expected to improve the price competitiveness of Indian products in the New Zealand market.
- **Labour-intensive sectors**
 - Industries such as textiles, apparel, leather and footwear are expected to benefit from duty-free access.
 - These sectors have significant employment potential and are important for export diversification.
- **Engineering and pharmaceuticals**
 - The agreement also creates opportunities for engineering goods, pharmaceutical products and other manufactured exports.
 - Better market access may help Indian businesses expand their presence in New Zealand and develop more stable export relationships.

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- **Agricultural exports**

- Selected agricultural products can benefit from improved access, although some products remain subject to tariff rate quotas or other conditions.
- Centres of Excellence are also proposed under the agricultural partnership, particularly for apples, kiwifruit and honey.

Safeguards for Sensitive Domestic Sectors

- India has retained exclusions for several products considered sensitive to domestic agriculture and allied industries.
- These include dairy products such as milk, cream, whey, yoghurt and cheese, along with selected agricultural products such as onions, chickpeas, peas, corn and almonds. Artificial honey and sugar have also been kept outside the trade concessions.
- These exclusions are significant because tariff reductions on imports from a major agricultural producer could affect domestic farmers and food-processing industries.
- At the same time, India has permitted selected New Zealand products, including apples, kiwifruit, albumin and Manuka honey, under **Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs)**.

Challenges and the Way Forward

- The agreement's long-term benefits will depend on whether Indian businesses can effectively use the new market access opportunities.
- **Export readiness:** Businesses must meet New Zealand's product standards, certification requirements and other import regulations.
- **Awareness among enterprises:** Small and medium enterprises need information on tariff concessions, rules of origin and export procedures.
- **Investment implementation:** The proposed investment commitment requires effective project execution and a conducive business environment.
- **Farmer protection:** Domestic producers in sensitive sectors require continued support through productivity improvements, infrastructure and market access.
- **Skills recognition:** Professional mobility will depend on applicable qualifications, licensing and visa requirements.

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FRANCE IN CRISIS: POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION, FISCAL STRAIN, AND NATIONWIDE UNREST

France is experiencing its worst unrest in years, as a month-long student protest movement has widened into nationwide demonstrations against the rising cost of living and deteriorating public services.

Over half a million people have joined marches nationwide, with violent clashes, looting, and arson leading to around 1,800 arrests. The crisis has placed President Emmanuel Macron's government under severe pressure ahead of the 2027 presidential election, rooted in two interlinked problems: **political fragmentation and economic strain**.

The Political Problem

- France is sharply divided between:
 - The far right — emphasising immigration clampdowns, national identity, and welfare restrictions.
 - The left — advocating stronger public services, redistribution, and workers' rights.
- Issues of immigration, secularism, and minority rights have deepened these divides.
- Macron's centrist camp has lost its parliamentary majority, leaving governments unable to pass budgets or reforms smoothly.
- The result: a political stalemate over who pays for France's problems and what gets cut.

The Economic Problem: Spending More Than It Earns

- France runs an extensive welfare state — pensions, healthcare, education — funded through taxes and social contributions.
- The core issue isn't high spending alone, but that expenditure persistently exceeds revenue, even without an extraordinary crisis like war to justify it.
- Key OECD figures (2025):
 - Budget deficit: 5.1% of GDP.
 - Public debt: 115.5% of GDP.

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- **Average Growth Since 2023:** just ~1.4% — too slow to ease the debt burden through rising tax revenues.
- **The Vicious Cycle:** Weak growth, high debt, and squeezed living standards fuel political polarisation and unrest — and in turn, political instability deepens economic uncertainty, discouraging business investment and complicating fiscal fixes.

Why Pensions Are at the Heart of the Crisis?

- France has an **ageing population** with longer life expectancy, meaning the state must fund retirement for longer while the working-age tax base doesn't keep pace.
- Macron's government tried raising the retirement age from 62 to 64, but opposition from both far right and far left stalled the reform.
- Generous pension spending has forced cutbacks elsewhere, notably education — effectively subsidising older citizens at the expense of the young.
- This directly connects to the protests: students are protesting overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, and dilapidated schools — the visible fallout of this broader budget squeeze.
- Reforming pensions is politically explosive because it directly affects people's livelihoods.

The Core Dilemma: Economic Fixes, Political Costs

- France's economy still has genuine strengths — the crisis is that every fix carries political cost:
 - Raising taxes → public backlash.
 - Cutting expenditure → protests (as seen now).
 - Reforming pensions → fierce opposition.
 - Stimulating growth → requires investment confidence undermined by instability.
- Citizens demand better services and protection from rising costs, while investors demand credible debt control — a near-impossible balancing act with a fragmented Parliament and elections approaching.

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SUPREME COURT DECLARES INTERNET ACCESS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT FOR CHILDREN

The Supreme Court, in a recent ruling, held that “the right to access and use the internet is a fundamental right of every individual” — explicitly extending it to children, irrespective of age.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and K V Chandran emphasised: “the safety of our children and their freedom are not at odds with each other. Our children are entitled to both.”

The ruling comes amid states like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh planning screen-time curbs for minors, and global trends toward restricting minors’ social media use.

The Court’s Core Reasoning

- The ruling drew on established jurisprudence:
 - **Anuradha Bhasin v Union of India (2020):** Freedom of speech (Article 19(1)(a)) and trade (Article 19(1)(g)) through the internet are constitutionally protected.
 - **Pragya Prasun v Union of India (2025):** Excluding persons with disabilities from digital KYC violated Article 21; “right to digital access is an intrinsic component of the right to life.”
 - **Cricket Association of Bengal (1995):** Article 19(1)(a) includes the “right to know and to receive and impart information.”
- The Court noted that for many children, especially in remote areas, the internet is often the only source of learning and information.

What Safeguards Were Allowed?

- Greater emphasis on parental consent, guidance, and oversight.
- A “child mode” with: private-by-default accounts, restricted contact from unknown adults, and moderated advertising/content.
- The Union government retains power to restrict inherently harmful content categories (e.g., adult content websites).

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The Larger Debate: Rights vs. Implementation

- Expanding fundamental rights (like with the right to privacy earlier) carries symbolic and legal value — but raises questions about the gap between doctrine and delivery.
- The Anuradha Bhasin guidelines on internet shutdowns are routinely invoked in breach, with little state accountability — raising concerns that similarly, this ruling's protections could remain largely unenforced without robust follow-through.

Conclusion

This ruling marks a significant doctrinal shift — reframing children's internet access not as a privilege subject to paternalistic restriction, but as a fundamental right requiring targeted, proportionate safeguards.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF LEGAL METROLOGY



- It is an **intergovernmental organisation established in 1955** to promote the global harmonisation of legal metrology procedures.
- It is an **international standard-setting body**.
- **Meeting:** A meeting of the **OIML Conference is held every four years** to establish general policy, vote on the budget and confirm the decisions of the CIML.
- **Headquarter:** Paris
- **Functions:**
 - It develops international recommendations, **standards and related documents** for **measuring instruments** used in trade, industry, healthcare, safety and environmental protection.
 - It plays a **crucial role in harmonising national laws** and regulations on performance of measuring instruments like clinical thermometers, alcohol breath analysers, radar speed measuring instruments, ship tanks found at ports, and petrol dispensing units.
 - It develops model regulations, standards and related documents for use by legal metrology authorities and industry.

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- **Members:** There are **63 Member States** (voting) and 66 Corresponding Members (nonvoting).
 - **India became a member of the OIML in 1956.** In the same year, India signed the metric convention.
 - **India can issue Internationally Accepted OIML (International Organization of Legal Metrology) Certificates** for selling weights & measures anywhere in the world. (There are **13 countries** who can issues these certificates).
 - To sell a weight or measure in the International market an OIML Pattern Approval certificate is mandatory.

EXERCISE AUSTRALIND 2026



- It is an **annual joint military exercise** conducted between **India and Australia**.
 - It is aimed at enhancing **interoperability, jointmanship and operational coordination** between the two armies while developing a common understanding of tactics, techniques and procedures for operations in island and coastal terrain.
- **Theme:** “Joint Sub-Conventional Operations in Island and Coastal Environment under Chapter VII of the UN Mandate”.
- **Participation:** The Indian Army contingent comprises **troops from the Garhwal Rifles**, along with personnel from other arms and services,
- **Focus:** The training will focus on coordinated operations in **coastal and island environments, surveillance** and reconnaissance, protection of vital installations and response to **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief contingencies**.
 - **Significance:** It will further strengthen **military-to-military cooperation**, interoperability and mutual trust between India and Australia.
 - It will reinforce their shared commitment towards peace, stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

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WHAT IS OSTEOPOROSIS?



- It is a disease in which the **bones become weak** and are **likely to fracture (break)**.
- **Osteoporosis** means “porous bone.” Viewed under a microscope, a **healthy bone looks like a honeycomb**. When **osteoporosis occurs**, the **holes and spaces** in the honeycomb are much **larger than in healthy bone**.
- Osteoporotic **bones have lost density or mass** and contain **abnormal tissue structure**. As **bones become less dense**, they **weaken** and are more **likely to break (bone fractures)**.
- Fractures can occur in any bone but happen most **often in bones of the hip, vertebrae in the spine, and wrist**.

What Causes Osteoporosis?

- Bones are made of living tissue. To keep them strong, the body breaks down old bone and replaces it with new bone.
- Osteoporosis develops when **more bone is broken down than replaced**.
- You **lose bone mass**, and changes happen in the structure of the bone tissue. This can **happen as you get older**.
- Some of the **common risk factors** for developing osteoporosis include:
 - Are **female**
 - **Over the age of 50**
 - Are of **white or Asian descent**
 - Have a **family history** of osteoporosis
 - Have **low body weight**
 - Have **low levels of sex hormones** (low estrogen in women, low testosterone in men)

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- Have **too much thyroid hormone** (hyperthyroidism)
- Are **chronically on certain medications** such as steroids

Symptoms:

- It is called a “**silent**” disease because it doesn’t usually cause symptoms.
- Although most people are **not aware** that they may have osteoporosis **until they experience a fracture**, there are some **signs and symptoms** that you may experience in **later stages of the condition**. They include:
 - **Back pain** (in the presence of vertebral compression fracture)
 - **Loss of height over time** (this will be gradual)
 - **A stooped posture**
 - **Low-impact bone fracture**

Treatment: Treatment for osteoporosis may involve:

- Making **lifestyle changes**, such as changing the diet and exercise routine
 - Taking **calcium and vitamin D supplements**
 - Using medicines to strengthen bones.
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