

Evening News Script

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THE HEADLINES :-

- India and New Zealand formally sign Free Trade Agreement
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi hails FTA as historic milestone in India's journey towards global engagement
- National Green Tribunal sets up panel to check over-extraction of groundwater across country
- And, India Meteorological Department issues strong winds, heavy rain alert for Nagaland



India and New Zealand signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in New Delhi today. The signing ceremony was presided over by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Investment Todd McClay. Finalised in December last year, the agreement grants 100 percent duty-free access for Indian exports across all tariff lines. The FTA also opens new avenues in services, mobility, education, healthcare, traditional medicine, and investment. Speaking at the event, Mr Goyal said that the FTA reflects the depth of trust and ambition shared between the two nations. He added that the signing of this FTA marks another defining milestone in India's engagement with the developed world, bringing the country closer towards achieving its dream of becoming a developed nation.

Mr McClay said the FTA will enhance established business relationships and accelerate development of new partnerships between New Zealand and India.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said the FTA signing with New Zealand marks a historic milestone in India's journey towards deeper global engagement and shared prosperity. In a message read out by Union Minister Piyush Goyal during the signing ceremony, the Prime Minister said this reflects the strengthening of economic partnership and a convergence of values, trust and shared ambition between two vibrant democracies. Mr Modi noted that the FTA catalyses new opportunities for farmers, artisans, youth, entrepreneurs, and MSMEs, unlocking pathways for global market access and enterprise across sectors. Meanwhile, In a social media post, the Prime Minister hailed the signing of FTA and called it a landmark moment in the partnership between both countries. Mr Modi said that the FTA will add unprecedented momentum to developmental partnership of both nations.

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The National Green Tribunal has formed a panel to remediate the problem of over-extraction of groundwater across the country. The Tribunal was hearing a matter regarding some areas in the Indo-Gangetic basin already crossing the groundwater depletion tipping point. The Tribunal bench referred to a report submitted by the Central Ground Authority of India which disclosed that there is a lapse on the part of states and Union Territories and their authorities in taking adequate steps to prevent the illegal extraction of groundwater and for its recharge. They also failed to effectively implement guidelines of the Jal Shakti Ministry on regulating and controlling groundwater extraction. The new panel will examine the lapses and make general and state-specific recommendations within three months.

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The Longkhum Students' Union has expressed deep concern over the continued closure of Government High School Longkhum under Mokokchung District. The

school has remained shut since February 27 by landowners, following a dispute over the appointment of Multi-Tasking Staff. In a letter to the Principal Director of School Education, the union stated that the closure has severely disrupted the academic progress of students, as they have been deprived of a proper classroom environment. It also highlighted the growing psychological and emotional distress among parents and the community, noting that students' futures are now at risk. The Longkhum Students' Union urged the Department to intervene and ensure reopening of the school at the earliest, stressing its importance for students' education and wellbeing. The union expressed hope for an urgent and amicable resolution to the issue.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi took part in a grand road show in Gangtok this evening. Accompanied by Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang Golay and state BJP President D.R. Thapa, thousands of people gathered to welcome the Prime Minister in his two-day visit to the state. Earlier, Governor Om Prakash Mathur, the Chief Minister, state assembly speaker and senior ministers welcomed Mr Modi upon his arrival at Libing helipad. Mr. Modi will participate in the closing ceremony of Sikkim's 50th Year of Statehood celebrations at Paljor Stadium tomorrow, where he will inaugurate, launch and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth over four thousand crore rupees across the state. The development projects will cover infrastructure, connectivity, healthcare, education, power, urban development, environment, tourism and agriculture sector.

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The government today reaffirmed that fertiliser availability in the country remains robust, with supplies consistently exceeding demand. During an interministerial briefing on updates related to developments in West Asia, Additional Secretary in the Department of Fertilisers Aparna Sharma said that no shortages have been reported so far.

Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Sujata Sharma, said that there is adequate supply of LPG in the country and no distributor is facing any dry-out. Adding that supply of petrol and diesel remains normal, she appealed to people to avoid rumours and panic buying.

Additional Secretary (Gulf) in the Ministry of External Affairs, Assem R. Mahajan, said that the Ministry is closely monitoring developments in the Gulf and West Asia, and government's efforts are focused on ensuring the safety, security and welfare of the Indian community in the region.

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The total number of the Members of Parliament of BJP in Rajya Sabha has increased to 113. In a social media post today, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju informed that Chairman of the Upper House CP Radhakrishnan has approved the merger of seven Aam Aadmi Party turncoat MPs, including, Raghav Chadha, Dr Ashok Kumar Mittal, Sandeep Pathak, Swati Maliwal and Harbhajan Singh. After the merger, the number of Aam Aadmi Party MPs in the Rajya Sabha has reduced to three.

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Nominations for the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2026 are now open for children aged between 5 and 18 years as of 31st July this year. The prestigious national-level award is presented to children who have demonstrated excellence in categories including Bravery, Social Service, Environment, Sports, Art and Culture, and Science and Technology. The last date for submission of nominations is the 31st of July. Nominations can be received only through the National Awards Portal on awards.gov.in.

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And, In weather, the India Meteorological Department has forecast thundersqualls with wind speeds of 50 to 60 kilometres per hour, gusting up to 70 kilometres per hour, over Nagaland tomorrow. The state is also expected to experience heavy rainfall in isolated areas till the first of May. Meanwhile, the

department also forecast fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning gusty winds over the Northeast states during next five days.

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