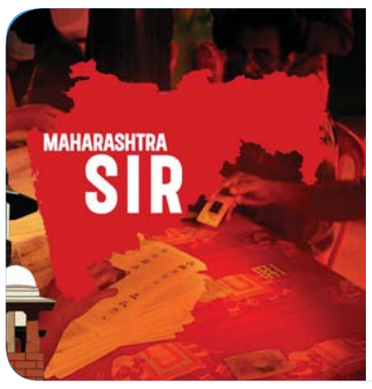
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SC ISSUES NOTICE ON PLEA CHALLENGING MAHARASHTRA SIR

PAGE 5



BJP TO LAUNCH MONTH-LONG PADYATRAS TO COUNTER INDIA BLOC'S NOV 1 RALLY

PAGE 4

LUIZ INACIO LULA DA SILVA WINS BRAZIL PRESIDENTIAL RE-ELECTION

PAGE 8



15 JUMADA AL-AWWAL 1448H

NAMAZ TIME

FAJAR	05:20 AM
ZOHAR	01:30 PM
ASAR	05:00 PM
MAGHRIB	06:15 PM
ISHA	08:15 PM

SUNRISE/SUNSET

13 HRS 10 MINS
RISE 05:42 AM
SET 06:52 PM

MOONRISE/MOONSET

13 HRS 52 MINS
RISE 05:31 AM
SET 07:23 PM

SPORTS ▶P11



ANTONELLI CONFIDENT OF WINNING F1 TITLE 'VERY SOON'

Maharashtra to consider Telangana's Tummidihatti barrage request



Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy met Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in Mumbai.

TFP I ABDUL RAHMAN KHAN
HYDERABAD, OCT 26

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has responded positively to consider a request by Telangana to give the nod for construction of Tummidihatti Barrage with a height of 152 metres, the Telangana CMO said on Monday.

A Telangana delegation led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy met Fadnavis in Mumbai.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

CEC can be removed only like SC judge, orders on SIR unanimous: ECI tells apex court

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has told the Supreme Court that a plea seeking to restrain Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar from functioning is not maintainable, asserting that the CEC can be removed only in the same manner and on the same grounds as a judge of the apex court.

In a counter-affidavit filed before the apex court, the poll body also defended its decision-making procedure and the conduct of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The ECI said the petition, which questions whether CEC Gyanesh Kumar could individually exercise or represent powers vested in the



multi-member poll panel, was based entirely on a single newspaper report and sought extraordinary reliefs without establishing the factual basis for its allegations.

"The averments in the Writ Petition are admittedly based solely on a single newspaper report," the affidavit stated, adding that the petitioner had neither attempted to ascertain the factual position from the poll panel nor made any representation to it.

The ECI said the petitioner had himself described the material relied upon as an "investigative reportage" requiring verification, and argued that a newspaper report could not be treated as evidence of the facts it narrated.

"A public interest petition built on such material calls for its conclusions to be examined with circumspection," the affidavit stated. The ECI further submitted that the petition did not dispute that the constitution of the Commission was in accordance with law and that the petitioner had accepted that the CEC was duly appointed.

It said the prayer seeking a writ of quo warranto was, therefore, misconceived.

On the prayer to restrain the CEC from functioning, the ECI invoked Article 324(5) of the Constitution, which provides that the CEC shall not be removed from office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.

"The prayers in the Writ Petition for passing of an order restraining the CEC would not be maintainable," the affidavit stated. It further argued that any restraint on the CEC would run contrary to Section 18 of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, which governs the transaction of business by the poll body. The provision requires the Commission to endeavour to take decisions unanimously, with matters on which its members differ being decided by majority.

The ECI said that any order restraining the CEC would frustrate the functioning and decision-making of the constitutional body under the statutory framework. (IANS/UNI)

Ex-SC judge alleges attempt to divert PMLA case

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
NEW DELHI, OCT 26

Former Supreme Court judge Sanjay Kishan Kaul has alleged in his memoir Without Fear or Favour that an attempt was made to persuade him to take a "middle path" while hearing petitions challenging provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and seeking reconsideration of the 2022 judgment in the Vijay Madanlal Choudhary case.

Justice Kaul recounts that then Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud called him to his chamber, where Justice Sanjiv Khanna was also present, and the discussion turned to whether he should continue hearing the matter. In an interview with The Wire, Kaul said he could not recall who specifically suggested the "middle path". He said the petitioners had nearly completed their submissions and he expected the hearing to conclude within another day or two.

The dispute arose after Justice Kaul directed that the matter be listed before a three-judge bench, considering that issues concerning a larger bench's jurisdiction required appropriate consideration.

He wrote that the government viewed the listing as an unfavourable development, although a three-judge bench could not overrule a judgment delivered by a bench of equal strength and could, at most, refer questions to a larger bench.

UP Court acquits Rahul in defamation case over Amit Shah remarks

SULTANPUR, OCT 26

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was acquitted by a special MP-MLA court in Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh, on Monday in a defamation case over alleged derogatory remarks against union Home Minister Amit Shah, with the court citing lack of evidence.

The verdict brought relief to the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha in a case stemming from remarks he allegedly made during a rally ahead of the 2018 Karnataka Assembly elections.

BJP leader Vijay Mishra, a resident of Hanumanganj in the Kotwali Dehat police station area in Sultanpur, filed a defamation suit after being angered by Rahul Gandhi's remarks against Amit Shah. The case was subsequently



heard in the MP-MLA Magistrate Court.

The arguments between the two sides in the case concluded after a long delay on October 13. In written arguments, Rahul Gandhi's lawyer acknowledged the controversial statement, but argued that it was made in good faith and was not intended to offend anyone. The defence also raised other arguments, including that the statement had been distorted.

Meanwhile, the plaintiff's lawyer sought to convict Rahul Gandhi on the basis that he admitted making the controversial statement. After hearing arguments from both sides, the court reserved judgment.

It is alleged that Rahul Gandhi said at a press conference in Bengaluru on May 8, 2018, "The president of a party that talks about honesty is accused of murder." After the verdict, Congress workers outside the court danced to the beats of drums, set off fireworks, and chanted slogans in support of Gandhi. (IANS/UNI)

Centre clears Rs.2.12 lakh cr defence deals

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

The government on Monday said it has cleared capital acquisition proposals worth Rs 2.12 lakh crore for defence forces, out of which nearly 82 per cent of the procurements will be made from Indian Industry.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) -- in-principle administrative approval to various capital acquisition proposals of the defence forces -- at an estimated cost of about Rs 2,12,000 crore.

According to an official statement, for the Indian Army, approval was accorded for the procurement of high mobility vehicles (HMV), self-propelled tracked gun systems, gun shot response systems (GSRS), light multi-role helicopters (LMRH), very short-range air defence systems (VSHORADS), platform-based counter unmanned aerial systems (C-UAS), unmanned aerial system brick long range, surveillance UAVs, integrated surveillance and strike system, and long-range kamikaze drone system.

"The HMVs will enhance operational capabilities, logistic support and mobility in challenging terrains. The Self-Propelled Tracked Gun System will provide matching mobility and firepower to mechanised formations. The GSRS will serve as a force multiplier, providing real-time situational awareness of the forces," the statement said. (IANS)

Centre notifies 'E100' fuel norms

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

The government has amended the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, introducing changes to vehicle emission and fuel-related standards, including provisions for vehicles using 100 per cent ethanol (E100) fuel in flex-fuel vehicles, effective from Monday.

The government has expanded references to ethanol fuel by replacing several mentions of E85 fuel with E85 or E100 across emission standards and testing requirements, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

However, the government has also clarified that E85 or E100 fuel should be used only in flex-fuel vehicles designed by original equipment manufacturers. (IANS)

CARTOON CAROUSEL



Income Tax Dept nudges taxpayers owning undeclared properties in UAE

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

The Income Tax Department has recently nudged select taxpayers who have invested in residential and commercial properties in the UAE to avail of the Foreign Assets of Small Taxpayers – Disclosure Scheme, 2026 (FAST-DS), offering a one-time opportunity to declare these overseas assets which have been undisclosed so far, according to Finance Ministry sources.

The scheme provides a time-bound window



to regularise eligible disclosures by paying 30 per cent tax on the fair market value and an equal amount of penalty in addition to tax. A crucial feature of the scheme is that it is fully online, trust-based, and self-declaratory.

A valid declaration brings immunity from further assessment, penalty and prosecution under the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015 (Black Money Act). The scheme further provides an opportunity to taxpayers to report unaccounted assets and income on payment of a Rs 1 lakh fee to avoid a penalty of Rs 10 lakh each year prescribed in the Black Money Act.

Till now, approximately 1,100 taxpayers have filed applications under the scheme, which is open till December 31, 2026, sources said.

To facilitate taxpayers, the Department has created a facility in the e-filing portal where a taxpayer can see information with respect to assets reported on their PANs by the foreign jurisdictions under Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI), popularly known as CRS/FATCA. Taxpayers can log in to the e-filing portal and download this information for the three-year period 2022-2024. (IANS/UNI)

Rs. 70 Crore sanctioned for Godavari Pushkaralu works in Chennur

Minister Vivek directs officials to expedite development works



TFP I ANJANEYULU
MANCHERIAL, OCT 26
State Labour, Employment and Training, Factories, Mines and Geology Minister Gaddam Vivek Venkatswamy said the government was giving special priority to the comprehensive development of Chennur town and its surrounding villages. He directed officials to expedite road works, Godavari Pushkaralu infrastructure, tourism projects and the construction of Indiramma houses.

Accompanied by District Collector Kumar Deepak, IAS, DCP Bhaskar, Chennur Mandal Tahsildar Mallikarjun, Municipal Commissioner Maruthi Prasad, Municipal Chairperson Peddinti Padma and Market Committee Chairman Mahesh Tiwari, the Minister laid foundation stones for several development works in Chennur on Monday. Projects include road widening, drainage systems, central medians and lighting, with a focus on improving access to the Godavari Pushkaralu ghats. Around Rs. 70 crore has been sanctioned for Pushkaralu-related development works in Chennur.

The Minister directed officials to complete pending rural road works within stipulated timelines and resolve beneficiaries' problems related to Indiramma housing, including sand supply issues in Suddala village. He said plans were being prepared to develop the crocodile park in the Jaipur Reserve Forest and connect tourist destinations, including the Gandhari Maisamma temple. He also announced that Rs. 17 crore had been sanctioned for the development of the Shiva temple in Chennur.

District Collector Kumar Deepak said road widening, drainage, drinking water supply and street lighting were being prioritised to meet the town's growing needs. Water tank and pipeline works under the AMRUT 2.0 scheme were also being expedited.

At Velala village in Jaipur mandal, the Minister, along with the Collector, ACP Venkateshwarlu, Tahsildar Vanaja Reddy and Mandal Parishad Development Officer Sripathi Bapu, laid the foundation stone for a Godavari Pushkaralu ghat project estimated at Rs. 4.25 crore after offering prayers to Mallanna Swamy.

Venkatswamy said the government was working to expand employment and healthcare opportunities in the constituency. The Jaipur power plant expansion is expected to create around 5,000 jobs, while German-language training at the Advanced Technology Centre in Mandamarri is preparing youth for overseas employment. Around 70 trainees are currently undergoing training. He also said a 100-bed hospital in Chennur would be opened shortly and proposals had been submitted for a 50-bed hospital in Mandamarri.

The Minister added that efforts were underway to construct 12,000 to 15,000 Indiramma houses in the constituency over the next five years, with around 5,000 houses already taken up. He urged officials to ensure timely execution of development projects and called on people to work collectively to address weather-related challenges associated with El Niño.

Minister Srihari calls for transparent voter revision

TFP I G. RAGHU
NARAYANPET, OCT 26
State Minister Vakiti Srihari said protecting the voting rights of the poor was essential to safeguarding the Constitution and democracy. Addressing the 'Vote Bachao–Desh Bachao' meeting in Narayanpet on Monday, he urged authorities to ensure that no eligible voter was excluded during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.



Srihari said every vote was valuable and stressed that electoral roll revision must be transparent and impartial. He praised Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy for promoting social justice through the caste census and called on Congress leaders and workers to participate in the 'Vote Bachao–Desh Bachao' protest meeting in Delhi on November 1.

He also urged party cadres to work for the victory of Congress candidate Sama Ram Mohan Reddy in the forthcoming Palamuru–Rangareddy–Hyderabad Graduates' MLC elections and ensure that all eligible graduates are registered as voters.

AICC observer Ravindra Das, DCC president Prashant Reddy and other leaders attended the meeting.



MP Mallu Ravi inaugurates Kendriya Vidyalaya in Wanaparthy

TFP I THIRUPATHAIAH
WANAPARTHY, OCT 26
Nagarkurnool MP Mallu Ravi formally inaugurated the Kendriya Vidyalaya at Nagavaram on the outskirts of Wanaparthy on Monday, in the presence of Wanaparthy MLA Thudi Megha Reddy and District Collector Adarsh Surabhi. The school began functioning four months ago.



After the inauguration, the MP, MLA and Collector inspected classrooms and discussed teaching methods, admissions and academic standards with the principal. Mallu Ravi said the establishment of the Kendriya Vidyalaya would provide local students access to quality education in line with national standards and urged them to make the best use of the opportunity.

MLA Thudi Megha Reddy said the efforts of Mallu Ravi at the national level had helped bring the institution to Wanaparthy. He said steps would be taken to provide a permanent building and that efforts were underway to mobilise Rs. 9 crore in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds for development works and facilities in the district. Proposals had also been submitted to establish a Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, and suitable land had been inspected.

District Collector Adarsh Surabhi said admissions were conducted through a lottery system due to the large number of applications. He assured that the district administration would provide necessary support to improve the school's learning environment.

Wanaparthy Municipal Chairperson Madhavi, Vice-Chairman Madhusudhan Goud, former DCCB Chairman Vishnuvardhan Reddy, District Education Officer Yadaiah, the school principal, teachers, public representatives and officials attended the programme.

TGSRTC ED visits injured conductor

TFP I RAOOF KHAN
HYDERABAD, OCT 26
Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) Executive Director Ch Venkanna on Monday visited Pravalika, a woman conductor from the Manuguru depot who is undergoing treatment at Sai Sanjeevani Hospital in Hyderabad after being allegedly attacked by a passenger while on duty.

The ED enquired about her health from the attending doctors and instructed them to ensure the best possible treatment without any lapses. He also spoke to Pravalika and her family members, assuring them of the RTC management's full support.

CYBERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
Office of the Superintending Engineer, HQ, STSQM, CMC.

NIT.No.24/SE(STSQM)/HQ/CMC/2026-27 **Date: 26.10.2026.**

NIT.No.24/SE(STSQM)/HQ/CMC/2026-27, Date: 26.10.2026 published on 'e' procurement platform (EOI for establishing Poultry/Slaughter Recycling Unit under PPP mode). The details can be seen by logging @ https://tender.telangana.gov.in. The date of events is detailed below:

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Estimate amount (Rs in Lakhs.)
1	Expression of Interest for "Design, Finance, Built, Operate and Transfer of Poultry/Slaughter Recycling Unit of 100 TPD Capacity in the jurisdiction limits of Cyberabad Municipal Corporation including O&M for period of 25 years.	–
	Total	–

Events	For works (1)
Bid Download Start Date	27.10.2026 @ 11.00 AM
Bid Download End Date	09.11.2026 @ 03.00 PM
Last Date & Time for uploading of Bids	09.11.2026 @ 03.15 PM
Price Bid Opening Date	09.11.2026 @ 03.30 PM

Address of the office concerned, Superintending Engineer, STSQM, HQ, Cyberabad Municipal Corporation.
Further details can be seen at www.tender.telangana.gov.in
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, STSQM, HQ, CMC.
DIPR - R.O. No. : 12469-PP/CL/ADVT/2026-27

CYBERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
SERILINGAMPALLY CIRCLE-49, SERILINGAMPALLY ZONE

E.O.I. Tender Notice No. Engg - 52/CMC/Cir49/2026-27, Dated: 26.10.2026.

NIT No.	Name of the Work	Download Start Date	Last Date and Time for Receipt of Bids	Name & Address of E.E.
E.O.I. No. Engg - 52/CMC/Cir49 /2026-27, Dated: 26.10.2026	Expression of Interest (EOI) cum bid invitation for Operations and Maintenance of Nallagandla Sports Arena under Nallagandla Flyover at Aparna and Old MIG colony side in Ward No.226-Nallagandla, Serilingampally Circle-49, SLPZ, Cyberabad Municipal Corporation	27.10.2026 3.00 PM	04.11.2026 3.00 pm	Executive Engineer, Serilingampally Circle-49 Phone No. 9000115410

Sd/- Executive Engineer Serilingampally Circle-49, Slp Zone, CMC.
DIPR - R.O. No. : 12474-PP/CL/ADVT/2026-27

Kothagudem Collector stresses improving students' learning

TFP I RAMARAJU
B. KOTHAGUDEM, OCT 26
Bhadradri Kothagudem District Collector Ankit, IAS conducted a surprise inspection of Zilla Parishad High School at Sujatanagar on Monday and directed teachers to focus on improving students' learning abilities, comprehension and academic performance.



The Collector reviewed classroom teaching, attendance, infrastructure and sanitation. During his interaction with Class VIII students from Sections A and B, he asked them to read textbook passages and explain their meaning in Telugu.

Observing that some students struggled to understand and explain English texts, he instructed the English teacher to provide special attention to improving their language skills. He also interacted with students during a physics lesson and appreciated those who answered questions correctly.

Speaking to school principal Rammurthy, Ankit stressed that students should develop the ability to understand lessons and explain concepts in their own words rather than merely memorising texts.

El Niño Alert: Mahabubnagar Collector orders 5-month drinking water contingency plans

TFP I AHAD SIDDIQUI
MAHABUBNAGAR, OCT 26
Mahabubnagar District Collector Khushboo Gupta, IAS has directed Mandal Special Officers to prepare contingency plans to ensure uninterrupted drinking water supply for the next five to six months amid concerns over possible El Niño-related rainfall deficits.



At a review meeting at the Collectorate on Monday, she instructed officials to visit at least two to three Gram Panchayats every week and inspect government schools, Primary Health Centres (PHCs), welfare hostels and other public facilities. She stressed the need to visit remote villages, identify public grievances and ensure the timely delivery of government services, warning that negligence would invite action.

The Collector directed officials to assess borewells, hand pumps, pipelines, overhead tanks and public taps, immediately repair leakages and identify villages requiring water tankers and storage facilities. She also called for monitoring water conservation works, including rainwater harvesting structures, soak pits and farm ponds, and preventing the wastage of water and electricity in government institutions.

Officials were further instructed to verify medical staff availability at health centres, ensure food quality under the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and check nutrition and hygiene at Anganwadi centres.

Nalgonda Collector inspects TGPSC examination centre

TFP I ANIL YADAV
NALGONDA, OCT 26
The Telangana Public Service Commission (TGPSC) computer-based examinations for Assistant Scientist (Analyst Grade-II) and Assistant Environmental Engineer concluded peacefully at the SPR School examination centre in Nalgonda district headquarters on October 24 and 26, respectively.



On Monday, 125 of the 180 candidates allotted to the morning session attended the Assistant Environmental Engineer examination, while 124 appeared in the afternoon session.

District Collector B. Chandrasekhar inspected the examination centre during the morning session and reviewed the arrangements and attendance details with District Officer and District Industries Manager Satish. Officials informed him that the examination was proceeding smoothly without any issues.

With more TGPSC online examinations expected in November, the Collector directed Nalgonda RDO Y. Ashok Reddy to inspect examination centres in advance and ensure proper arrangements.

He also suggested periodically changing invigilators and chief superintendents according to examination requirements. RDO Y. Ashok Reddy, DSP Shiva Ram Reddy and other officials were present.

Shadnagar Police organise blood donation camp

TFP I FAROOQ KHAN
RANGAREDDY, OCT 26
A blood donation camp was organised at Shadnagar Police Station on Monday as part of Police Commemoration Week, following the instructions of Tarun Joshi, IPS, under the supervision of Shadnagar DCP Shirisha Raghavendra and the Shadnagar ACP.



A total of 62 donors voluntarily donated blood at the camp, including four Sub-Inspectors of Shadnagar Police Station. The programme was attended by the Shadnagar ACP and all Station House Officers (SHOs) of the Shadnagar Zone.

Fruits and fruit juices were distributed to the donors as a gesture of appreciation.

The camp highlighted the police department's commitment to public service, compassion and humanitarian values as part of the Police Commemoration Week programmes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MOHD SHAFI UR RAHMAN, R/o Plot No. 103, Sy No. 39, Kings Colony Mailardevpally, Rajendranagar, R.V. Rangareddy, Telangana State - 500052 intend to change my name in my wife Rafath Sultana passport from Syed Shafi Ahmed (Incorrect Name) to MOHD SHAFI UR RAHMAN (Correct name) for for all future purposes. Vide Affidavit Date: 26/10/2026.

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Governor Shukla meets President Murmu and PM Modi





FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 26

Telangana Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, accompanied by his wife, Janaki Shukla, paid a courtesy call on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan and Prime Minister Narender Modi in New Delhi on Monday.

During the meeting, the Governor presented a bouquet to the President and held discussions with her.

The meetings took place as part of the Governor's visit to the national capital, a Lok Bhavan communique said.

Cong MLA threatens hunger strike over funding disparity

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 26

Congress MLA Anirudh Reddy, who represents the Jadcherla Assembly constituency, has threatened to launch an indefinite hunger strike involving 30,000 people to demand adequate funds for the constituency's development, alleging disparities in the allocation of government funds.

Addressing a media conference in Jadcherla on Monday, Anirudh Reddy questioned the release of pending bills in constituencies represented by Ministers while other constituencies were allegedly being neglected. Referring to the release of bills worth 5 crore in Nagarkurnool following the death of a contractor, he asked whether funds would be released for Jadcherla only if he died. He said he was even prepared to sacrifice his life for the development of his constituency.

The MLA maintained that the government could remain strong only by ensuring equitable development across all constituencies.

Nepali gang arrested for murder of retired IPS officer's wife



TFP I MANVEER SINGH
HYDERABAD, OCT 26

More than five months after Tanuja Ranjan, wife of retired Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Ray Vinay Ranjan, was brutally murdered at their residence in Hyderabad, police on Monday arrested four Nepalese.

Those arrested include the domestic worker, Dharma Tiruwa alias Kalpana, who had worked at the victim's residence.

The arrests were made following a five-month-long investigation spanning several states and the India-Nepal border.

Hyderabad Police Commissioner V. C. Sajjanar, IPS announced the arrests at a press conference.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing rising property offences committed by Nepali gangs across the three Police Commissionerates, arrested four accused near Nampally Railway Station on Monday (October 26).

Dharma alias Kalpana, 26, is from Surkhet district in Nepal. Ganesh B.K. alias Ganesh Bishwakarma alias Dinesh Thapa, 31, is a labourer who was residing in Pune; Chandra Bahadur Tamang alias Ranjeet Thapa alias Shanker Chandra Lama alias Kancha, 44, a cook whose listed Indian address is in Gurugram, Haryana; and Ganesh Bahadur Shahi, 37, a watchman who was residing in Pune.

Police said two other accused remained absconding and that teams were continuing efforts to trace them. The police had earlier arrested two other accused in the case.

Police said the accused entered the house in Prashasan Nagar on the night of May 7–8, restrained Tanuja Ranjan and smothered her. They allegedly escaped with 225 grams of gold jewellery and other valuables.

The police investigation revealed that Dharma came to Hyderabad in June 2025 through a relative and began working as a domestic help at the Jubilee Hills residence for a monthly salary of about Rs 20,000. During her employment, she allegedly remained in contact with Bikas, a Nepal national based in Pune, who repeatedly asked about her employer, the household's assets and the valuables inside the house. He eventually proposed a robbery in return for a share of the proceeds. In April 2026, Dharma travelled to Pune to visit her ailing father and came into contact with other members of the alleged gang.

On May 4, when her employer left for Bengaluru, she allegedly alerted the group. The police account says Ganesh Bahadur Shahi, Shanker Chandra Lama and Sunil Pariyar met at Kalamboli in Raigad district, Maharashtra, on May 4 and travelled to Pune in a hired Maruti Ertiga.



TGGENCO gets 6-hour window for coal transportation from Odisha

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 26



Angul District Collector in Odisha has agreed to extend coal transportation hours for the Telangana Power Generation Corporation Limited (TGGENCO), allowing coal movement from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m., against the earlier restriction of midnight to 4 a.m.

The decision followed a meeting on Monday between TGGENCO Chairman and Managing Director Dr. S. Harish, IAS, Director (Coal & Logistics) B. Nagya, IRTS, and the District Collector, Angul. They explained the need to increase coal transportation from Naini Coal Mine in Odisha to meet the fuel requirements of TGGENCO's thermal power stations, including Yadadri Thermal Power Station.

TGGENCO had been transporting coal from Naini Mine since August 2026, but restricted transportation hours had affected the achievement of targeted quantities. The extended six-hour window is expected to improve coal dispatches and help the corporation meet its coal supply targets.

Women Safety Wing launches gender sensitisation programme

HYDERABAD, OCT 26

The Telangana Police Women Safety Wing on Monday launched a two-day Training of Trainers programme at the University of Hyderabad to sensitise students and other participants on gender equality and encourage them to actively challenge harassment, discrimination and gender-based violence.

The programme, organised under the #StandWithHer campaign in collaboration with the Rubaroo team and the university's Centre for Women's Studies, was inaugurated by Charu Sinha, Director General (CID, ACB and WSW), at the School of Social Sciences.

The programme will conclude on October 27.

University of Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor J. Anuradha, Registrar Devesh Nigam, Dean of the School of Social Sciences K. Suneetha Rani, Head of the Centre for Women's Studies Deepa Srinivas and Women Safety Wing's Head of Training and Content Development Asiya Shervani attended the inaugural programme.

Suneetha Rani stressed the need to address gender inequality within homes and promote shared responsibility in everyday relationships. (UNI)

TG Media Academy Chairman honours women journalists at The Freedom Press

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 26



The National Conference of Women Journalists at Tourism Plaza, Begumpet, concluded in Hyderabad on Sunday. Following the conference, women journalists visited The Freedom Press office and toured its editorial section and printing department.

Telangana Media Academy Chairman K. Srinivas Reddy interacted with the women journalists during their visit. The visiting women journalists congratulated The Freedom Press on maintaining high journalistic standards and ensuring high-quality printing of its Delhi and Hyderabad editions.

K. Srinivas Reddy appreciated The Freedom Press Editor Mohammed Abdullah Khan and Mohammed Abdul Rahman Khan for their commitment to quality journalism.

Later, K. Srinivas Reddy, Indian Journalists Union (IJU) President Balwinder Singh Jammu, Telangana Union of Working Journalists (TUWJ) President Viranhat Ali, Telangana Urdu Working Journalists Federation (TUWJF) President M. A. Majid, presented gifts to all the women journalists.

Journalists Shaheen Khan and Nafeesa Khan interacted with Editor Mohammed Abdullah Khan and Mohammed Abdul Rahman Khan.

Senior journalists S. N. Sinha, Y. Narender Reddy, D. Soma Sundar, Ms. Ratna Chotrani, Syed Najeeb Ali, Pedestal Infra Managing Director Shahid Siddiqui, Nayeem Ghouri and Syed Ghouse Mohiuddin, among others, were also present. The visit was followed by a dinner hosted by The Freedom Press English Daily in honour of the women journalists.

DMHO raids unregistered clinics in Medchal-Malkajgiri district

TFP I RAVI KUMAR
MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI, OCT 26



Medchal-Malkajgiri District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) Dr. K. Anand conducted surprise inspections of medical facilities in Uppal, Ramanthapur and Boduppal to check compliance with healthcare regulations.

the inspections, officials directed Sri Gayatri Center in Ramanthapur to comply with the provisions of the PCPNDT Act and maintain proper records. The team also inspected UV Diagnostic Center in Uppal. In Boduppal, officials seized Mamata's Clinic for operating without valid registration and being run by an unqualified practitioner.

Dr. K. Anand warned that strict action would be taken against establishments violating the Clinical Establishment Act and the PCPNDT Act, stressing that surprise inspections and monitoring would continue to ensure safe and quality healthcare.

Keesara Division Deputy DM&CHO Dr. Geetha, District MCH/CIA Program Officer Dr. Geetha, Additional Program Officer Dr. Pawan Reddy and Deputy DEMO Mrs. Vasantha Kumari participated in the inspection drive.

Singareni employees urged to report irregularities, uphold integrity

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 26



Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) Director (Projects and Planning) K. Venkateswarlu on Monday urged employees to report irregularities and work with the Vigilance Department to curb corruption and promote transparency in the organisation.

Inaugurating Vigilance Awareness Week 2026 at Singareni Bhavan here, he said employees should discharge their duties with honesty and integrity and bring any irregularities they noticed in the system to the attention of the authorities.

He said misconceptions about vigilance continued to persist among some people and stressed the need to recognise vigilance activities as an integral part of the governance system.

Honest employees need not fear vigilance, he added.

Commending SCCL employees for their commitment and dedication, Venkateswarlu said their sincere efforts had helped the company overcome financial difficulties.

He described SCCL as one of the country's most transparent public sector organisations and called upon employees to work collectively to protect its reputation.

Director (E&M) M. Tirumala Rao, Executive Director (STPP) Chiranjeevi, General Manager (Personnel and Welfare) Ajay Kumar, General Manager (Power Projects) Guruprasad and employees and officers from various departments attended the programme.

SC extends timeline for pleadings in TMC symbol dispute

NEW DELHI, OCT 26



The Supreme Court on Monday granted 10 days to the faction led by Ritabrata Banerjee to file its response before the Election Commission of India (ECI) in the dispute over the name and election symbol of the Trinamool Congress, while allowing the Mamata Banerjee-led faction a further 10 days to respond to the rival camp's affidavit.

The development comes amid an ongoing dispute over control of the party, with both factions staking a claim to the Trinamool's organisational and legislative structures.

Earlier, in an order passed on September 28, the apex court had directed the parties to complete their pleadings within four weeks, following which the ECI was to take three months to decide the controversy.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana had passed the directions while hearing a plea filed by Mamata Banerjee challenging the poll panel's interim order freezing the party's established name and reserved "Flowers and Grass" election symbol.

The latest directions came after the rival faction sought an extension of two weeks to file its response before the ECI, as the deadline for submitting the reply was due to expire on Monday.

The Mamata Banerjee-led faction opposed the request for additional time.

In its September 28 order, the apex court had noted that the response filed by the Mamata Banerjee-led faction was already on record, while the reply from the rival group was awaited.

"We grant four weeks' time to the contesting respondents as well as the petitioner to place on record their additional documents/affidavits/counter affidavits, etc. In other words, the pleadings shall be completed in all respects within four weeks," the CJI-led Bench had said.

It had further directed the ECI to take three months after completion of the pleadings to decide the dispute, while asking both factions to extend their full cooperation to the poll panel.

The Supreme Court had also clarified that it had not expressed any opinion on the merits of the dispute and that both sides would remain at liberty to raise their respective contentions before the ECI.

Mamata Banerjee had approached the top court seeking the quashing of the ECI's interim order freezing the party's existing name and symbol pending a final determination of the rival claims under Paragraph 15 of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968.

The poll panel had said the interim arrangement was intended to place the rival groups on an equal footing and protect their respective rights and interests until the dispute was finally decided. (IANS)

BJP to launch month-long padyatras to counter INDIA Bloc's Nov 1 rally

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

As the INDIA Bloc plans to organise a mega rally on November 1, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is launching a month-long counter-offensive starting the same day with synchronised 'padyatras (foot marches)' led by top political figures.



This campaign is being organised to counter the INDIA Bloc's scheduled 'Vote Bachao, Desh Bachao' mega rally at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan on November 1.

Top Ministers and Chief Ministers from the BJP-ruled states will be deployed across the country to participate in the 'padyatras'.

BJP National President Nitin Nabin is likely to participate in some of the events.

Additionally, Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to participate in a 'padyatra' in Hyderabad on November 2 and in Haryana on November 5.

The INDIA Bloc has announced the mega gathering to protest against the Election Commission of India (ECI) over the alleged irregularities in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls. The Opposition leaders have also demanded the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar over the allegations of "vote chori".

Earlier, Delhi Police issued a No-Objection Certificate (NOC) clearing the security and traffic coordination for the event from October 25 to November 3.

However, the scheduled event has triggered a massive row. The BJP is heavily targeting the Congress-led Opposition alliance by pointing out that November 1 marks the anniversary of the 1984 anti-Sikh violence in Delhi.

Additionally, the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) has written to Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge and Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi, urging them to postpone the rally until after November 10, given the festive season.

Kharge has acknowledged that some traders had submitted a memorandum regarding the matter. (IANS/UNI)

K'taka sting Op row: All MLAs stand with Siddaramaiah, says Dy CM Parameshwara

BENGALURU, OCT 26



Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister G. Parameshwara on Monday asserted that former CM Siddaramaiah will never be politically isolated, and all Congress MLAs stand with him, along with CM D.K. Shivakumar and the party.

Responding to the media near his residence in Bengaluru, Parameshwara said there was no question of Siddaramaiah being left alone.

"All our MLAs are with Siddaramaiah, D.K. Shivakumar and the Congress party. Nobody is isolated," he said.

On the controversy surrounding the alleged sting operation involving Siddaramaiah, Parameshwara said everyone should condemn incidents that should not occur in public life. He added that the Congress leaders had collectively condemned the incident.

However, he said it would not be appropriate to comment further on a matter that was under investigation. The facts would become clear once the investigation was completed and the report was made public, he added.

On the issue of employment for local people in industries established in Karnataka, Parameshwara said industrialists must provide employment opportunities to eligible local Kannadigas in accordance with their qualifications and skills. It can be noted that a young woman made a video alleging that if the mother tongue is mentioned as Kannada, IT companies are not considering the candidates for jobs in Bengaluru. (IANS)

Ex-DMK minister held in Rs.100 Cr case



Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi

CHENNAI, OCT 26

A couple of hours after the Madras High Court dismissed his anticipatory bail plea, the Chennai Crime Branch (CCB) police on Monday evening arrested senior DMK Leader and former Tamil Nadu School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi in connection with the Rs 100 crore private school fraud case.

A special police team arrested Anbil Mahesh, cited as fifth accused in the case, from his Amjinkarai residence. He was being taken to the office of the Greater Chennai City Police Commissionerate for preliminary questioning. Later he was expected to be subjected to medical tests after which he would be produced before a Court for judicial remand. Earlier in the day, Mr Justice V.Lakshminaryanan, who had reserved his orders on October 16, dismissed his anticipatory bail petition after the prosecution objected to it on the ground that what had happened was large scale corruption. (IANS)

CMRL CASE

Kerala HC stays Vigilance probe against Pinarayi Vijayan and others

KOCHI, OCT 26



In a major relief to former Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the Kerala High Court on Monday stayed its single judge's order directing the registration of a Vigilance FIR against him, his daughter Veena, and son-in-law and CPI-M MLA Mohammed Riyas in the CMRL-Exalogic case.

A Division Bench of Justices K. M. Natarajan and Johnson John admitted the appeals filed by the three and others challenging the October 9 order.

It also stayed the single judge's judgment and ordered that further investigation into the FIR remain in abeyance until further orders.

The court posted the case for final hearing after three weeks.

The development follows the Supreme Court's October 21 intervention, when it held that Vijayan and the others were entitled to challenge the single judge's order before the Division Bench.

It had also granted an interim stay on the investigation to enable the High Court to hear their appeals.

During Monday's hearing, senior advocates appearing for the appellants argued that the single judge had ordered an FIR without hearing those directly affected.

They contended that the petitioner had bypassed the procedure available under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS).

The defence also argued that the single judge had exceeded the court's jurisdiction by directing the registration of an FIR when the decision should ordinarily be taken by the investigating agency. (IANS/UNI)

Congress questions Tata Power project clearance despite objections by villagers

REWA/BHOPAL, OCT 26

The Congress on Monday questioned the clearance granted for preliminary drilling for Tata Power's proposed nuclear power project in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa district, alleging that it was issued despite the village assembly's opposition.

Leader of Opposition, Umang Singhar, raised the issue at a press conference in Bhopal, a day after visiting the proposed project site in the Rojhauhi-Sarai Kala area and meeting tribal residents and other villagers who have been protesting against the proposal.

"When the Gram Sabha had clearly refused to give consent, on what basis was the 'No Objection Certificate' issued? The government must explain the circumstances and make the relevant documents public," Singhar said.

According to Singhar, the Gram Sabha unanimously refused consent for drilling on September 3. He claimed that the Gram Panchayat informed the District Collector of its decision through a letter dated September 5. However, an NOC was issued on September 23, reportedly citing a consent letter dated September 4, he alleged.

Sarpanch Komal Sanjay Singh approached the Divisional Commissioner and the District Collector on October 8, seeking an enquiry into the authenticity of the alleged consent letter and cancellation of the NOC.

The proposed project involves two 220-MW nuclear power units. Local residents, including tribal families, small farmers and agricultural labourers, have been opposing the proposal over concerns about public safety, water availability, agricultural livelihoods and its potential environmental impact. (IANS)

No merger with NCP(SP) ahead: Ruling NCP reaffirms alliance autonomy

SANJAY JOG
MUMBAI, OCT 26



The explicit refusal by the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) to entertain any merger or share organisational control with the NCP (SP) faction, marks a defining juncture in Maharashtra's political trajectory. Beyond a mere denial of reconciliation, this decision codifies the permanent structural rift within the Pawar family and reshapes coalition dynamics across both sides of the state's political divide.

The refusal to share control or merge signals that the era of tactical ambiguity between the two NCP factions is officially over. Both outfits are now set on divergent trajectories, setting up a long-term electoral contest for the legacy of the party's original mandate.

By firmly ruling out a merger or power-sharing agreement, the ruling NCP faction after its core committee meeting held on Sunday, reinforces its commitment to the Mahayuti alliance alongside the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena.

Having secured official recognition and symbol rights from the Election Commission, the ruling NCP seeks to establish itself not as a temporary breakaway group, but as the sole legitimate vehicle of the party's administrative future.

Retaining full structural autonomy allows the party to maintain its bargaining power within Cabinet portfolios and regional seat-sharing negotiations without the threat of internal ideological dilution.

The trigger for Sunday's core committee meeting was NCP(SP) MP, Supriya Sule's reported discussion with late Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's sons Parth and Jay Pawar, advocating for an early decision on reunification or a merger, subject to conditions regarding leadership and Cabinet berths.

The core committee decisively rejected the merger proposal, refusing to cede party control to Sharad Pawar and Supriya Sule while deciding to remain steadfast within the Mahayuti alliance.

The core committee's rejection highlighted a fundamental power struggle. Supriya Sule's proposal — demanding top-level organisational control for Sharad Pawar and herself, alongside three ministerial berths (Jayant Patil, Rohit Pawar, Jitendra Awhad) — offered little clarity, especially on NCP President and Deputy CM Sunetra Pawar's standing and equality of partnership. The core committee, therefore, reiterated there will be no reunification or merger between the two NCP factions and also signaled that it will not capitulate to NCP(SP) on terms that strip away its operational autonomy.

Veteran NCP leader and Minister Chhagan Bhujbal said, "The merger was not on the cards and it won't be in future too."

For Sharad Pawar and the NCP(SP), the definitive rejection of unified control solidifies their position within the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition. Operating as a distinct entity prevents narrative confusion among voters, it can draw a sharp line between those aligned with the ruling government and those offering an alternative ideological platform.

Without the prospect of internal compromises or dual-headed leadership, the NCP(SP) can focus exclusively on grassroots cadre building and regional anti-incumbency campaigns.

Despite taking a firm stance against the merger, the Sunetra Pawar-led NCP however, faces crucial unaddressed internal challenges. The conflict between the youth wing and seasoned veterans remains unmanaged, threatening cohesion.

The lack of alignment between NCP office-bearers and government representatives leaves the cadre without clear direction.

Political observers said that post-Ajit Pawar, leadership structures remain fluid, which could be exploited by rivals if internal restructuring is delayed.

In a nutshell, the current outcome preserves the status quo within the Mahayuti, closing the door on an immediate or unconditional merger. Unless a comprehensive, mutually beneficial formula is presented from the top—resolving both Cabinet quotas and internal hierarchy—the NCP will continue to chart its independent course inside the ruling coalition. (IANS)

EAM meets League of Arab States' diplomats, highlights role of technology in shaping today's world

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
NEW DELHI, OCT 26

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Monday met a group of diplomats from the League of Arab States undergoing training at Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service here and stressed the far-reaching impact of ongoing conflicts and the role of technology in shaping today's world.



During his interaction, EAM Jaishankar encouraged diplomats to use their time in India to deepen their understanding of the country and its people.

"Pleased to meet a group of diplomats from the League of Arab States undergoing training at Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service. Discussed the far reaching impact of ongoing conflicts and the transformative role of technology in shaping today's world", he wrote on X.

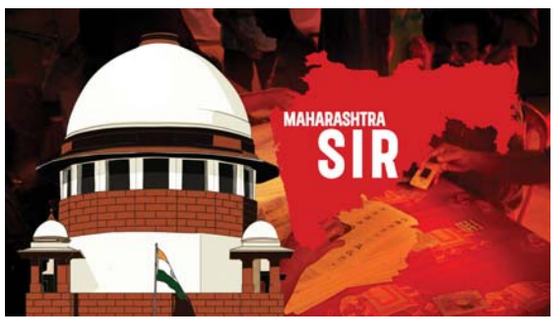
"As neighbours and Global South partners, underlined the need for close economic cooperation to overcome chokepoints and neutralize unfair leverages. Encouraged them to use their time in India to deepen their understanding of the country and its people. Wished them a rewarding and enriching experience," he added.

In August, Secretary (Consular, Passport and Visa and Overseas Indian Affairs) at the Ministry of External Affairs, Sripriya Ranganathan, held a meeting with Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Khalid Manzalawi, with discussions focussed on advancing the Executive Programme 2026-28 adopted at the second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

India has traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations with the countries that form the League of Arab States (LAS), also known asthe Arab League. The Arab League was formed in Cairo in 1945, initially with seven members to promote the various interests of these nations. Currently, the League has 22 member states from the Arab world, including countries from North Africa and West Asia. Today, the nations of the Arab League are part of India's extended neighbourhood, according to an Indian Embassy in Egypt statement. (IANS/UNI)

SC issues notice on plea challenging Maharashtra SIR

Declines to extend deadline without hearing ECI



NEW DELHI, OCT 26

The Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to the Election Commission of India (ECI), the Centre, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Maharashtra government on a plea challenging the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Maharashtra, alleging large-scale deletion of voters, while declining to grant immediate relief on extending the deadline for filing claims and objections or halting publication of the final voters' list.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana posted the matter for further hearing on November 5.

The plea was filed by Arun Anandagiri, who questioned the deletion of names from the draft electoral rolls and the procedure prescribed for voters seeking restoration of their names.

Appearing for the petitioner, senior advocate Arvind P. Datar submitted that nearly 33 per cent of Maharashtra's approximately nine crore voters, amounting to around three crore people, had been struck off following publication of the draft rolls.

He said 1.22 crore voters had been deleted on the ground of "logical discrepancy". Datar argued that voters whose names had been removed were being asked to submit Form 6, which is intended for fresh voter registration, despite having voted in previous elections.

He contended that requiring existing voters to file the form could expose them to allegations of making a false declaration, as applicants are required to state that they have not been registered as voters earlier. Referring to a recent Delhi High Court order, the senior advocate said that an assurance against prosecution did not resolve the underlying problem. (IANS)

Fire breaks out at North Block in Delhi

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

A minor fire broke out at North Block, a historic administrative building on Raisina Hill in the national Capital, resulting in thick black smoke emanating into the sky on Monday morning, triggering a rapid response from the Delhi Fire Services. The blaze was subsequently extinguished, and no casualties were reported, according to official sources.



Thick black smoke was seen billowing into the morning sky from behind the red-sandstone building, prompting concerns about a possible fire inside the premises.

According to sources in the Delhi Police, welding work was underway when sparks from the operation reportedly ignited a nearby tank, triggering the fire. The blaze was brought under control, and no injuries or casualties were reported.

Delhi Fire Services officials said they received a call reporting smoke emanating from an unidentified location inside North Block. Following the alert, six fire engines were dispatched to the spot to assess the situation and tackle the blaze.

The fire was minor, and no casualties were reported. The fire was later extinguished, officials said, adding that some internal dismantling work was underway at the site when the incident occurred. (IANS/UNI)

14 killed in lightning strikes in Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI, OCT 26

Fourteen people have died in lightning strikes across Tamil Nadu since the onset of the Northeast monsoon, Minister Sengottaiyan said after reviewing the heavy rain situation and rescue operations in the Nilgiris and Coimbatore districts with officials in Chennai.



Speaking to reporters following a meeting at the Emergency Operations Centre, the minister said precautionary restrictions had been imposed in the Nilgiris, Kodaikanal and Yercaud. Tourists have been barred from visiting these hill destinations, with access permitted only for essential purposes.

The review focused on the impact of continuing heavy rainfall in the Nilgiris and Coimbatore, along with rescue work and measures taken to restore normal life in affected areas. Officials discussed the situation with the minister at the emergency centre.

Sengottaiyan said water that had accumulated following heavy downpours in Coimbatore. (IANS/UNI)

Veeramani POCSO case: Madras HC posts to Nov 10

CHENNAI, OCT 26

A Division Bench of the Madras High Court on Monday adjourned to November 10, the intra-court appeal filed by TVK Ministers Aadhav Arjuna and CTR. Nirmal Kumar against a Single Judge order granting leave for the main opposition DMK to initiate a Rs 1.01 crore defamatory suit against them and the ruling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) IT Wing, for their remarks linking DMK to POCSO case against granite baron R.Veeramani of Gem Granites.

When their plea came up for hearing, the Bench of Justices N.Satish Kumar and G.K.Muthukumar adjourned it to November 10. Earlier, Ms.Justice Govindarajan Thilakavathy, had on October 5, allowed the plea filed by DMK General Secretary and former Minister Duraimurugan, seeking the court's leave to sue the ministers and the TVK IT wing, overruling the defendants' objections regarding the maintainability of the case.

In the plea, the DMK accused the TVK ministers and their IT wing of orchestrating a false, defamatory campaign on social media. (IANS)

Kerala's monsoon climate zone expands

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT 26

Kerala's climate zone, associated with some of the country's heaviest rainfall, has expanded over the past seven decades, even as the state recorded a severe rainfall deficit during this year's southwest monsoon, according to a study by Indian meteorologists.

The study by scientists from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, analysed temperature and rainfall data from 1951 to 2020.

It found that the tropical monsoon climate zone, which receives the highest rainfall in the country, spread into more areas along the western coast, including Kerala.

The findings highlight the contrast between long-term climate trends and rainfall variations from one season to another.

Although rainfall has generally increased over the long term in southern India, Kerala received 28 per cent less rain than normal during the June-September southwest monsoon this year. (IANS/UNI)

Cyclone Arnab to bring widespread rain

BHUBANESWAR, OCT 26

Odisha government is on its toes as the state braces for heavy rainfall accompanied by strong winds due to the impending cyclonic storm 'Arnab', which is likely to hit the Andhra Pradesh coast on October 28.

Speaking to media persons, Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari said that all 30 districts of Odisha will experience widespread rainfall, with heavy to very heavy rain in some places.

According to the India Meteorological Department, the system, which has been intensified into a cyclone. (IANS)

Assam Minister defends eviction drive at Lutumari Reserve Forest

GUWAHATI, OCT 26



Assam Forest Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah on Monday defended the recent eviction drive at Lutumari Reserve Forest in Nagaon district, rejecting allegations raised by Bangladesh and asserting that the operation was conducted in accordance with the law and Supreme Court directives.

In a detailed post on X, Baruah said the allegations presented a misleading account of the eviction exercise, maintaining that the government's action was aimed at reclaiming notified forest land and protecting the ecological balance rather than targeting any religious or social community.

According to the minister, the eviction proceedings were carried out on October 17 and 18, covering 314 hectares of notified forest land and displacing 563 families.

Citing judicial proceedings, Baruah referred to a Supreme Court order dated February 10, 2026, which, he said, prescribed procedures for eviction from notified forest areas in Assam.

He also stated that the Special Leave Petitions (Civil) filed by the petitioners were disposed of by the apex court on September 2, 2026.

The minister maintained that the administration followed the prescribed legal process and gave the affected families sufficient time to vacate their homes and remove their belongings before the operation began.

He further claimed that the exercise was conducted outside the rainy season and proceeded peacefully, without reported resistance or the use of force.

Emphasising the environmental rationale behind the operation, Baruah said the reclaimed land would be restored through plantations of indigenous tree species to revive wildlife habitats, particularly elephant habitats, and help mitigate human-elephant conflict.

He asserted that protecting reserve forests was both a statutory responsibility and an ecological necessity, adding that humanitarian concerns surrounding evictions could not supersede the rule of law.

The minister also said the government respected all communities and understood the difficulties faced by families during eviction proceedings.

However, he urged that the operation be assessed on the basis of legal records, court proceedings and its stated environmental objectives.

The response followed concerns expressed by Bangladesh over the eviction drive and the alleged demolition of homes in Assam, which he reportedly portrayed as targeting a religious community.

The Assam government has maintained that the operation was undertaken to reclaim notified forest land and was not motivated by religious considerations.

Govt spends Rs 17.73 lakh crore on ongoing infra projects

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

A total of 1,853 infrastructure projects, with a total latest cost of Rs 37.56 lakh crore, are being monitored across 17 Central ministries/ departments (as of September 2026), the government said on Monday.



The cumulative expenditure incurred on these projects stands at Rs 17.73 lakh crore, accounting for approximately 47.21 per cent of the project cost, indicating steady progress in project implementation, according to a statement by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

"A significant proportion of projects are at advanced stages, with 654 projects (35 per cent) achieving over 80 per cent physical progress, while 338 (18 per cent) have crossed 80 per cent financial completion."

Out of 1,853 ongoing infrastructure projects, there are 780 mega projects (project cost of Rs 1,000 crore and above), and 1,073 major projects (below Rs 1,000 crore).

The transport and logistics sector accounts for the highest number of ongoing projects (1,320 projects) with a cost of Rs 20.07 lakh crore, underscoring priority to connectivity-driven infrastructure growth, the statement said.

The statement further stated that the Ministry of Road Transport Highways accounts for the highest number of projects, with 974 projects (53 per cent out of total projects), and a share of total revised project cost of Rs 9.46 lakh crore (25 per cent of total project cost), highlighting its central role in national infrastructure development.

The Ministry of Coal accounts for 121 ongoing projects (6 per cent), with a total revised project cost of Rs 2.22 lakh crore (6 per cent). The Ministry of Petroleum Natural Gas, Ministry of Power, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, and the Department of Water Resources, River Development GR are implementing 115, 106, 49, and 35 projects, with associated project costs of Rs 4.30 lakh crore, Rs 6.40 lakh crore, Rs 3.41 lakh crore, and Rs 1.95 lakh crore, respectively. (IANS/UNI)

THE FREEDOM PRESS

TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2026

India's clean energy push

Japan Credit Rating Agency (JCR) recently upgraded India's sovereign credit rating from BBB+ to A-, marking the first time in more than 35 years that a rating agency has placed the country in the A category. The move comes amid limited changes by the major international agencies. Fitch has retained India's rating at BBB- since 2006, Moody's has maintained Baa3 since 2020, and S&P upgraded India from BBB- to BBB in August 2025. JCR's decision has renewed debate over whether existing rating assessments adequately reflect India's economic resilience, growth prospects and investment potential.

Sovereign credit ratings influence how much governments and businesses pay to borrow money. Lower ratings generally translate into higher risk premiums, increasing financing costs across the economy. This has particular implications for clean energy, where solar and wind projects, electricity transmission networks and energy storage systems require substantial upfront investment and recover costs over several decades. Higher borrowing costs can delay projects or make them dependent on guarantees and concessional finance, even when their long-term economic and environmental benefits are considerable.

The relationship between creditworthiness and climate vulnerability works both ways. Natural disasters and energy shocks can damage infrastructure, disrupt economic activity and increase government expenditure, placing additional pressure on public finances. An International Monetary Fund working paper published in 2026 links disaster-related economic losses to a higher probability of sovereign default, estimating that default odds rise by around two to three per cent for every percentage-point increase in disaster losses as a share of GDP. Other IMF research indicates that climate vulnerability can weaken sovereign ratings and raise borrowing costs, particularly in emerging and developing economies. These findings highlight a self-reinforcing cycle: climate vulnerability raises borrowing costs, expensive finance restricts investment in resilience, and inadequate investment leaves economies more exposed to future shocks. Research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development suggests that clean-energy projects in developing countries, excluding China, face capital costs at least twice those in Europe and the United States. The International Energy Agency has similarly estimated that the cost of capital for a typical solar photovoltaic project in emerging and developing economies, excluding China, was two to three times that in advanced economies in 2021. These disparities underline the need for financing arrangements that recognise differences in actual project risks and national economic conditions.

India's experience demonstrates how domestic financial capacity and sustained policy support can help overcome these constraints. Despite remaining in the lowest investment-grade category with several major rating agencies for years, India has continued expanding its clean-energy sector. Clean energy accounted for 83 per cent of power-sector investment in 2024, while the country ranked third globally in installed renewable-energy capacity. This progress reflects investment opportunities, policy continuity, domestic demand and the growing role of Indian financial institutions in supporting energy infrastructure. It also shows that sovereign ratings, although influential, do not alone determine a country's development trajectory.

India's relatively large domestic capital base provides an important advantage. State-linked institutions such as the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) and the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) help mobilise financing for power and renewable-energy projects, benefiting from their links to the public financial system. Domestic investors also provide a substantial share of the capital supporting India's clean-energy expansion, reducing exclusive dependence on foreign funding. Foreign investment remains important, but the availability of domestic financing channels offers greater flexibility when international markets become expensive or volatile. Continued development of these institutions and domestic capital markets can further strengthen India's energy transition.

India eyes global gold market leadership

For decades, central banks focused primarily on the safety of their gold reserves, but growing geopolitical uncertainty has made liquidity and accessibility equally important. The Netherlands recently transferred approximately 86 tonnes of gold, primarily to London, increasing London's share of its reserves from 18.1 per cent to 32.1 per cent, above the 30.8 per cent held domestically. The Dutch central bank said the move would improve liquidity, facilitate trading and strengthen crisis preparedness. The decision highlights a changing approach to gold management, in which the location of reserves matters as much as their ownership.

India, meanwhile, has pursued a different strategy by bringing a substantial share of its gold reserves back home. By March 2026, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) held 880.52 tonnes of gold, of which 680.05 tonnes, or approximately 77 per cent, was stored domestically. This marks a significant increase from the 301.1 tonnes held in India three years earlier. The contrasting approaches of India and the Netherlands demonstrate that central banks must balance sovereign control with immediate access to international markets. For India, strengthening domestic custody while developing the capacity to trade and mobilise gold could offer a sustainable way forward.

The importance of domestic custody became evident in 2022, when Western governments froze approximately US$300 billion in Russian foreign reserves following the conflict in Ukraine. Gold held abroad can be exposed to geopolitical tensions and the policies of the jurisdictions where it is stored. India's decision to increase domestic custody therefore strengthens its control over a strategic national asset. At the same time, gold stored in major international centres such as London can be sold, lent or pledged quickly. The challenge is to preserve the security of domestic holdings without sacrificing the liquidity required during financial emergencies.

India has experienced the consequences of limited access to international financing. During the 1991 balance-of-payments crisis, when foreign exchange reserves were critically low, the country transported gold to London and pledged it to raise approximately US$405 million. The episode demonstrated that owning gold does not automatically guarantee immediate access to foreign currency; the supporting financial infrastructure and market access are equally important. Today, India's stronger economic position and larger reserves provide a different foundation. The next step is to develop domestic institutions capable of making the country's gold reserves more accessible and economically useful.

International competition in the gold market is creating an opportunity for India. London remains a major centre for central-bank gold transactions, while the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) in Basel facilitates transactions between central banks. China conducts gold purchases through the Shanghai Gold Exchange, and countries such as Ghana and the Philippines also acquire gold directly from miners. Meanwhile, China has continued adding to its gold reserves, Singapore is developing vaulting services for foreign central banks, and Hong Kong is expanding its gold storage, clearing and settlement facilities. These developments reflect a broader effort to strengthen control over the infrastructure supporting the global gold trade.

India, the world's second-largest gold consumer, can build on this trend by developing the India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX) at GIFT City into a regional bullion and settlement hub. Its strategic location between major gold-producing regions in Africa, refining centres in the Gulf and consumer markets in South Asia offers considerable potential. By attracting foreign central banks, bullion traders and financial institutions, India could expand gold storage, trading, clearing and settlement services. A transparent regulatory framework under the International Financial Services Centres system, supported by efficient infrastructure and international participation, would help strengthen GIFT City's competitiveness against established centres.

Brazil Elections: What it means for India?



PROF (DR) D.K. GIRI



In the Brazilian Presidential elections held on 25 October, the doughty left-wing 81-year old Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, popularly known as 'Lula' pulled off a dramatic record-breaking victory. The historic win has several takeaways for Brazil and even international politics. I write this with a great sense of personal satisfaction as I have had the opportunity to meet Lula in Sao Paulo in a conference organised by Progressive Alliance in which his Workers Party is a member and the think tank I am part of, The Association for Democratic Socialism, is also a member. I was touched by Lula's humility and camaraderie as he spoke to the international delegates from each country.

As the biggest trading partner of India in Latin America and a key fellow-founder member of BRICS, Lula's victory is quite significant for India. His rival Flavio Bolsonaro is a Right-wing Senator, 45, and the son of the jailed former President Jair Bolsonaro. He could have been also a powerful ally of New Delhi but for his heavy leaning on Donald Trump, who at best is a capricious world leader, quite controversially leading the most powerful country, the United States of America.

Let it be noted that the election results, at the time of writing, are shrouded in political controversy and potential legal challenges. These arise out of alleged disruption, cutting back of transport services that affected voter turnout and the extension of polling time for two hours from 5 pm, the official deadline, to 7 pm. Flavio Bolsonaro charges Supreme Court Justice Cristiano Zanin with partisanship as he was the lawyer of Lula who named him to the Supreme Court in 2023. Late on 25 Oct, Flavio refused to concede and called for the results to be 'annulled', saying the extension was unprecedented. The Superior Electoral Court (TSE) has, however, confirmed the count — Lula 51.78% (51.8%) against Flavio's 48.22% — a lead of nearly 4.4 million votes. Note both camps had requested extension due to bad weather and transport breakdowns.

In trade terms, India and Brazil had agreed to raise it to USD 20 billion by 2030. In 2025, it was USD 15.21 billion. During PM Modi's July 2025 visit to Brasilia, the two countries set a target of taking bilateral trade to USD 20bn over five years. Key baskets: Brazilian crude, raw sugar, soya oil, gold vs Indian diesel, pharma, engineering goods. Lula's return provides opportunity to sustain momentum. Also, markets will test Lula — Bovespa was up 7% and Real up 5% on expectation of a Bolsonaro win since first round. Investors now want fiscal discipline while protecting Bolsa Familia and social spending.

Lula's re-election also matters in BRICS. Both New Delhi and Brasilia have called for urgent reforms of global institutions including UNSC permanent membership. At a time when BRICS is expanding — with Indonesia, Saudi Arabia — Lula and Modi are seen as moderates balancing China-Russia push for anti-West bloc versus maintaining BRICS as development platform.

Furthermore, Lula is a proponent of using local currencies. In an interview during his February 2026 visit, he said, "It is not necessary that a trade agreement between India and Brazil has to be carried out in US dollars. We can use our own currencies. It is difficult, but we can try". This aligns with India's rupee settlement push, and de-dollarisation debate after US tariff weaponisation.

Finally, Lula is a thinking and pace-setting politician. He has done so in his country during his last three terms — lifting 30 million out of poverty, Amazon protection, and South-South diplomacy. In the fourth term, probably the last because of advancing age, he may seek to leave footprints on international politics — climate (Belem COP30 in 2025 legacy), hunger alliance, and reform of Bretton Woods institutions.

In an unsteady and uncertain world order at present, while New Delhi is attempting new strategies — trade deal with US near closure, yet strategic autonomy — this could be a propitious moment for India as well. As I recall Lula telling us in Sao Paulo, "Democracy is not won once, it has to be defended everyday — on street and online". That line from an 81-year old who just did it again is worth remembering in New Delhi.

(Prof. (Dr) D.K. Giri is a Professor of Practice, at IIM Bhubaneswar)

Why China is producing more, selling cheaper - and still not getting anywhere

ADITYA SINHA



In 1963, anthropologist Clifford Geertz, in his study of Javanese rice farming, gave an old word a second life. The word was 'involution'. Geertz used it for a system that absorbed ever more labour onto the same wet paddies, growing more intricate and more crowded, yet never breaking through to higher productivity. More hands, more elaborate arrangements, the same output per head. A treadmill dressed as progress.

Six decades on, the word has migrated to a country Geertz never wrote about. Young Chinese call it 'neijuan'. Officials in Beijing have adopted involution as a term of policy. This is used for the self-defeating price wars in which makers of electric vehicles, solar panels, and food delivery undercut one another until no one earns a margin. The market that fell into a bear this week is the financial expression of the same treadmill. More capital, more capacity, more elaborate technology, and steadily less profit to show for any of it.

The numbers are these. Chinese equities lost about 2.4 trillion dollars in market value between a peak in May and October 22 this year. The China Securities Index (CSI) 300, the benchmark of the 300 largest mainland firms, closed 1.8% lower on Thursday, taking its fall from a June high to 20%. It has now declined for ten straight weeks. Shanghai's technology board, the STAR 50, is down close to 40% from its late June peak, which erases its entire gain for the year.

Begin with the trigger. The rally that started in late 2024 ran first on stimulus, then on artificial intelligence (AI). Optimism around the startup DeepSeek and heavy state support drove technology valuations to levels that earnings never justified. What has turned is the question of whether the enormous capital spending of the AI hyperscalers will earn a return. The doubt is global. Softbank's shares have halved from a June high. In Hong Kong, the Hang Seng Tech index is down 31% for the year. Alibaba fell 6.1% in one session after regulators summoned e-commerce firms over product quality. Contemporary Amperex Technology Limited (CATL), the battery maker, dropped 12% on a profit miss. Valuations built on a narrative are the first to fall when the narrative is questioned.

Beneath the trigger sits the reason. Home prices have fallen about 30% from their 2021 peak. Property investment contracted 20.6% in the first nine months of 2026, and fixed asset investment fell 7.2%. Retail sales rose 1.1% in September, against 3% a year earlier. Falling house prices erode the one asset in which Chinese households stored their savings, and a household that feels poorer saves rather than spends.

Here, precision matters. On the headline, China left three years of falling prices earlier in 2026, and producer prices rose 5% in September. Shorn of the import effect, the recovery dissolves. That jump came from oil after the war with Iran and from chips amid the AI boom, not from domestic demand. Core consumer inflation was 1%. Underneath this is demography. Births fell to 7.93 million in 2025, the lowest since 1949. The working-age share of the population has slipped to about 61% from more than 70% a decade earlier. The buyer base is shrinking.

Add the flight of capital. Foreign investment inflows fell 4.3% in the first three quarters to 548.8 billion yuan, while Chinese outbound direct investment reached 101 billion dollars. Margin financing has dropped to a level last seen in late 2025. The state can place a floor under the index, as its "national team" did by trading some 52 billion yuan of exchange-traded funds in a session. It cannot manufacture confidence. Beneath the market lies the older problem of local government financing vehicles, whose hidden debt the International Monetary Fund puts at about 60 trillion renminbi, roughly 48% of GDP.

What, then, becomes of the Chinese economy? Officially, it is steadying. The GDP grew 4.5% in the third quarter, within the target band of 4.5 to 5%, itself the least ambitious goal since 1991. Capital Economics estimates true growth nearer 2%. The steadying is entirely external. The monthly trade surplus hit a record 134 billion dollars in September, and the year will pass last year's record of 1.19 trillion dollars. Yet integrated-circuit export volumes rose only about 1% once price gains are removed. This is a K-shaped economy, a thriving export summit, and a sinking base of consumption, with no policy yet bold enough to join them. A genre has appeared on Chinese social media of the "fake commute", the laid-off worker who leaves home each morning to sit in a library so relatives do not learn the truth. Gig employment is expected to reach 320 million people in 2026. The rally never reached them.

Now the global implications. Deflation is an export. A producer with idle capacity and no buyer at home sells abroad below cost. September shipments rose 40% to the United States, 25% to the European Union, and 52% to Southeast Asia. The European Union has negotiated quotas on hybrid cars and is drafting a tool to shut China out if tensions escalate. History counsels caution about the panic that follows. The 2013 paper by David Autor, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson attributed about a quarter of American manufacturing job losses from 1990 to 2007 to Chinese competition. Lorenzo Caliendo and co-authors put the national figure at 16% in 2019, and a 2022 correction for automation halved the effect again.

For India, the account is mixed. Cheaper oil, coal, and iron ore are a terms of trade gain for a net importer. Against that, imports from China reached 79.41 billion dollars in the first half of 2026-27, and the annual deficit is running above last year's 116 billion dollars. India has opened anti-dumping cases on steel and chemicals. A duty is a defensible shield. It is also a tax on the Indian firm that buys the input.

Geertz's farmers never starved. They simply worked harder each year to stand still. China's market has now priced what its shopkeepers, selling sweaters at a loss in a Beijing wholesale market, already knew. Involution is not a crisis. It is the absence of one, indefinitely prolonged.

(Author was with the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister)

Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are there own do not nessarily reflect The Freedom Press' point-of-view.

Jal Sanchay boosts water conservation

NEW DELHI, OCT 26



Over 1.55 crore artificial recharge and storage structures have been constructed under the Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari (JSJB) initiative, with an impact evaluation estimating groundwater recharge of 2.43 billion cubic metres from 23 lakh structures assessed using rainfall data between June and December 2025, an official fact-sheet said on Monday.

"By linking community ownership with convergence, digital oversight, and asset creation, JSJB: Catch the Rain campaign is laying the foundation for a water-secure Bharat," the statement said.

The JSJB has been integrated with the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain campaign. The campaign focused on rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, water conservation, creation of water assets, and community participation.

It promoted locally appropriate, low-cost interventions and strengthened climate resilience through sustainable water management, the statement noted.

The initiative brought together Panchayati Raj Institutions, urban local bodies, women's groups, youth, educational institutions, civil society organisations and local communities.

These stakeholders support planning, implementation and community-led water conservation. JSJB: CTR portal and mobile application have been instrumental in strengthening transparency, monitoring and facilitating public feedback.

JSB: CTR campaign builds on the success of Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2019, which covered 1,592 water-stressed blocks across 256 districts for promoting rainwater harvesting.

It also promoted groundwater recharge, watershed development, rejuvenation of water bodies, afforestation, and community participation through a Jan Andolan approach. (IANS)

UPI handles 80 crore daily transactions



NEW DELHI, OCT 25

India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has become the world's largest real-time payment system, processing more than 2,400 crore transactions a month, or nearly 80 crore transactions every day, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Sunday.

Addressing the inauguration of the Reserve Bank of India's Greenfield Data Centre and Training Institute by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Khordha, Odisha, FM Sitharaman said UPI's annual transaction volume has increased around 13,000 times since 2016-17.

She noted that the platform now processes more than 2,400 crore transactions in a single month, equivalent to nearly 80 crore transactions every day, underscoring the scale and adoption of India's digital payments infrastructure.

"UPI has become the world's largest real-time payment system. Its annual transaction volume has grown around 13,000 times since 2016–17, and it now handles over 2,400 crore transactions in a single month, or nearly 80 crore transactions every day," the finance minister noted.

The finance minister said the rapid growth of UPI has helped foster a vibrant fintech ecosystem that is bringing credit, insurance and investment opportunities to millions of first-time users across the country.

Highlighting the importance of digital infrastructure, FM Sitharaman described data centres as the "vaults of the digital age" and said the government has taken several measures to boost the sector.

"The vibrant fintech ecosystem built on these initiatives is bringing credit, insurance and investment opportunities to first-time users. A data centre is the vault of the digital age," FM Sitharaman noted.

She pointed out that data centres were granted infrastructure status in 2022, while the Union Budget 2026-27 announced a tax holiday for foreign companies providing global cloud services from data centres located in India.

According to FM Sitharaman, the newly inaugurated RBI facility will further strengthen India's domestic digital infrastructure and support systems that form the backbone of the country's payments architecture. (IANS)

Government e-Marketplace boosts local artisans



NEW DELHI, OCT 26

In a bid to support local artisans, the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is promoting 'The AABHAR Collection', a dedicated digital storefront showcasing curated gift items and hampers that reflect India's rich cultural heritage, an official statement said on Monday.

The collection includes handicrafts, handlooms, artisanal foods, pantry products, and personal care items. It offers government buyers gifting options for official ceremonies, conferences, state events, foreign delegations, employee recognition, retirement functions, and festive occasions.

"The 'AABHAR Collection' marks an important milestone in enhancing visibility of indigenous arts and crafts, showcasing the rich tapestry of Indian heritage and culture, and empowering underserved seller groups through the network of Central and State Handicraft and Handloom Emporiums," said Mihir Kumar, Chief Executive Officer, GeM.

According to the statement, the collection features products associated with the One District, One Product (ODOP) initiative and Geographical Indication (GI) tags, providing government buyers with convenient access to distinctive regional products while supporting artisans, weavers, rural entrepreneurs and women-led enterprises.

The collection features 294 product catalogue listings from 10 State and Central Handloom and Handicraft Emporiums.

"These include COTTAGE from Central Cottage Industries Emporium, KHADI INDIA from the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Garvi Gurjari (Gujarat), Himcrafts (Himachal Pradesh), Jharcraft (Jharkhand), Cauvery (Karnataka), Mrignayani (Madhya Pradesh), Marhati (Maharashtra), Purbashree (NorthEast) and Poompuhar (Tamil Nadu)," said the Commerce Ministry.

Seven additional government emporiums and organisations are at an advanced stage of completing the seller's onboarding process, which will enable them to offer their curated products through the AABHAR Collection storefront.

"The idea was to provide an effective market linkage to the country's artisanal ecosystem by integrating them through this #VocalForLocal storefront on GeM with the country's public procurement landscape," said Additional Chief Executive Officer, GeM, Ajit B. Chavan. (IANS)

India to lead multimodal AI use

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

India is poised to lead the surge in multimodal artificial intelligence (AI) adoption with daily use across text, voice, images and video projected to nearly double to 43 per cent by 2030, a report said on Monday.

According to Ericsson ConsumerLab research, AI usage in the country is pegged to surge by 95.45 per cent from 22 per cent at present, outpacing the global average of 30 per cent.

It further points to a shift from occasional AI interactions towards more frequent use across different devices and locations, creating new demands on mobile networks.

"AI is becoming an integral part of how consumers search, create and communicate today. As AI becomes more multimodal and mobile, consumers will expect these experiences to work reliably across devices and wherever they are," said Nitin Bansal, Managing Director, Ericsson India.

"India's strong digital foundation provides an opportunity to support this next phase of AI adoption. High-performing networks will be important to delivering the responsiveness, capacity and reliability that emerging AI experiences will require," he added. (IANS)

Nearly 44% of India's GCCs now own platforms

NEW DELHI, OCT 26



Nearly 44 per cent of India's Global Capability Centres (GCCs) now own platforms, products, artificial intelligence adoption and business-critical outcomes, a report said on Monday.

The report from TeamLease Digital said AI Architect roles command a median fixed pay of up to Rs 108.6 lakh per annum at 15 years and above of experience, while Principal Data Scientists earn up to Rs 92.8 lakh per annum.

The pay premiums are following ownership, with AI-Core roles offering starting salaries 2.5 to 3 times higher than AI-Support positions from the earliest stages of a career.

The report showed that GCCs are steadily moving from delivery centres to AI capability hubs, and the pay for digital talent is moving along with them.

GenAI, ML and data science remain the highest-return skilling pathways for salary acceleration in GCCs.

The country has over 2.5 lakh AI and machine learning professionals and over 1,200 AI-enabled GCCs and is ranked first in global AI hiring. Nearly 83 per cent of GCCs are scaling generative AI initiatives, 70 per cent are adopting hybrid AI models and 58 per cent are investing in agentic AI technologies.

The 2026 salary increment in GCCs stands at 10.4 per cent, ahead of the 9.1 per cent India Inc. average, and AI, ML, cyber and cloud skills carry a 30–40 per cent pay premium because demand outpaces supply.

For early and mid-career roles, at 0–2 years of experience, AI-Core roles earn a median fixed pay of Rs 10.8 LPA for a data scientist to Rs 13.2 LPA for a GenAI engineer.

"As these centres take on the thinking, ownership and accountability behind AI, India is becoming central to how enterprises across the world transform," said Neeti Sharma, CEO, TeamLease Digital. (IANS)

INS Trishul arrives in Italy's Civitavecchia after exercise with Italian Navy

NEW DELHI, OCT 26



Indian Navy's frigate INS Trishul has arrived at Civitavecchia in Italy during its ongoing operational deployment to the Mediterranean Sea. The Indian Naval Ship undertook a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Italian Navy's Carlo Margottini before entering harbour, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said on Monday.

"The exercise featured coordinated manoeuvring drills, communication procedures, replenishment approaches, cross-deck landings, personnel transfers and boarding operations. The PASSEX facilitated the exchange of Best Practices and enhanced operational synergy between the two Navies," the MoD stated.

Professional interactions, cultural visits and exchanges have been scheduled during the port call, and the ship will also be open to visitors, giving them an opportunity to engage with the Indian Navy's maritime traditions and capabilities, it said.

"The port call underscores the enduring maritime partnership between India and Italy and reflects the commitment of both Navies to enhancing professional linkages and operational cooperation," the ministry added.

Earlier, on October 18, Indian Navy's stealth frigate INS Trishul arrived in Lisbon, the Embassy of India in Portugal said.

The ship was received by First Secretary at the Embassy, Ronnie Spurgeon, and Defence Attache Colonel Rohan Falnikar.

"Indian Naval ship INS Trishul arrived in Lisbon. Received by First Secretary Shri Ronnie E. Spurgeon and Defence Attache Col Rohan Falnikar. The officers and staff of the Embassy extend a warm and hearty welcome to the ship and its crew to Portugal," the Embassy posted on X.

The frigate reached Portugal after taking part in the India-UK bilateral maritime exercise Konkan-26, which concluded off Plymouth in the UK, enabling the Indian Navy and the Royal Navy to engage across a wide range of professional and operational domains, the Indian Navy said.

Conducted from October 8 to 15, the exercise saw the Indian Navy represented by INS Trishul, while the Royal Navy deployed HMS Sutherland, a Duke-class anti-submarine warfare frigate. The exercise was conducted by the Royal Navy's Fleet Operational Standards and Training (FOST).

"The intensive four-day Sea Phase, conducted from 12-15 Oct 26, encompassed advanced seamanship manoeuvres, joint tactical exercises, communication procedures, anti-surface asymmetric warfare, anti-submarine warfare and weapon firings in a multi-threat maritime environment. These serials enhanced interoperability between the participating units," the Navy said in a statement. (IANS)

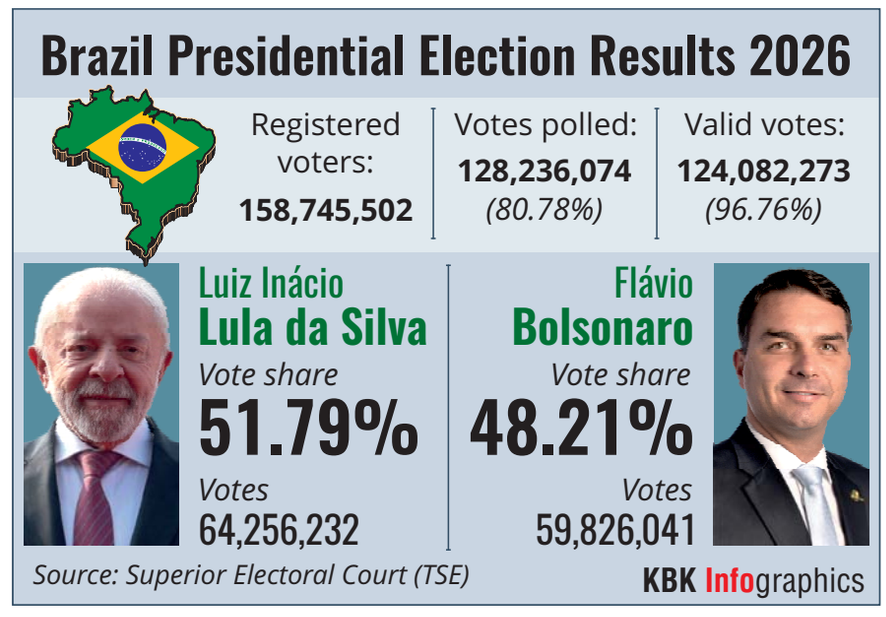
Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva wins Brazil Presidential re-election, secures 4th term

RIO DE JANEIRO, OCT 26

Incumbent Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva staged a comeback victory in Sunday's presidential runoff, defeating Liberal Party candidate Flavio Bolsonaro, who led in the first round, to secure a fourth term in office.

Born in October 1945 in northeastern Brazil, Lula was the seventh child in a poor rural family.

In the early 1970s, Lula gradually emerged as a trade union leader, becoming known as a voice for the poor and a leading figure in the struggle against the military regime. In 1980, he co-founded the Workers' Party (PT).



After winning a landslide victory in the 2002 presidential election, Lula became Brazil's first president from a working-class background.

In 2006, Lula was re-elected. His flagship Bolsa Familia (Family Allowance) cash transfer program helped lift millions of Brazilians out of poverty.

In 2014, Brazilian judicial authorities launched a sweeping anti-corruption investigation known as Operation Car Wash. Lula was subsequently investigated, convicted and imprisoned. In March 2021, Brazil's Supreme Federal Court annulled all the convictions on corruption charges against Lula. (IANS/UNI)

Serbia's Vucic concedes election defeat

BELGRADE, OCT 26

Former Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic conceded defeat in the snap parliamentary election, as independent projections and leaders of a student-backed movement born out of anti-corruption protests confirmed an outright parliamentary majority that ends the Serbian Progressive Party's (SNS) 14-year grip on power.



Serbia's former President Aleksandar Vucic votes during the parliamentary election in Belgrade.

Initial projections released by polling agencies Ipsos and CeSID showed the "Student List -- Students Win" winning 52 per cent of the vote, well ahead of Vucic's SNS-led coalition, "Aleksandar Vucic -- United Serbia," which stood at 39.3 per cent.

Speaking at his campaign headquarters in Belgrade before final official results were available, Vucic said a stratified sample indicated that the student-backed list would win between 135 and 140 of the 250 parliamentary seats, compared with around 105 for his coalition, reports Xinhua news agency.

"I want to inform you that based on the stratified sample, it is clear that we have lost these elections," Vucic said. "The student-backed list has won. They will have between 135 and 140 seats, and we will have around 105."

According to Vucic's projections, the student-backed list received approximately 2.2 million votes, while his coalition secured roughly 1.72 million.

As victory celebrations erupted at the Student List's headquarters, prominent candidate Radomir Saicic, a University of Belgrade professor and member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, declared a historic triumph for Serbian citizens.

"Tonight the voice of the people is heard," Saicic said, noting that preliminary results showed the Student List convincingly leading across polling stations.

"This is a victory of courage over fear, a victory of hope over apathy, a victory of faith that Serbia can and must be different ... This victory is no one's personal trophy. It belongs to all of us," he said.

Stressing that the electoral will of the public "must be respected without exception," Saicic called on supporters to celebrate peacefully and with dignity, urging citizens not to fall for provocations or enter into conflicts. (IANS)

Russia says open to mini Ukraine ceasefires, but no let up in war

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
MOSCOW, OCT 26

Russia said Monday that it would not slow down its offensive on Ukraine despite upcoming US-brokered talks on ending the conflict but that it could agree local "humanitarian" ceasefires.

The Kremlin said that it was open to short-term "humanitarian" ceasefires along the front line, ahead of a truce in the ravaged Russian-occupied city of Oleshky.

A ceasefire is to start in the southern Ukrainian city early Tuesday, brokered by US First Lady Melania Trump after months of reports that residents faced dire food, water and medicine shortages.



Firefighters try to put out a fire at a shopping store following Russia's air attack in Kharkiv.

Asked whether Russia would consider more local truces, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters: "For humanitarian purposes, absolutely."

But Moscow vowed not to let up in the overall pace of the war, even as the sides prepare to restart stalled talks under US mediation next month.

"The decision to resume trilateral talks does not imply any restrictions on combat operations," Peskov said.

"Our armed forces continue to carry out massive strikes on Ukraine's military-industrial complex," he added.

Russia has intensified drone and missile attacks on Ukraine in recent weeks, hitting energy sites around major cities in what Kyiv says is a bid to plunge the country into cold and darkness throughout the winter. Strikes last year left millions without heating or electricity with temperatures as low as -20C. (IANS/UNI)

France bracing for more protest

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
PARIS, OCT 26

France is bracing for more trouble this coming weekend related to student protests and broader anti-government demonstrations, said Interior Minister Laurent Nunez.

Asked if Saturday could be another high-risk day, regarding the likelihood of violent clashes between demonstrators and police, Nunez told BFM TV: "Quite clearly, yes."

Nunez added that curfews that have been set up to try and prevent the looting and vandalism that have broken out on the sidelines of demonstrations were also likely to stay in place.

Bulgaria's incumbent president Iliana leads Presidential election

SOFIA, OCT 26

Bulgaria's incumbent President Iliana Iotova is leading in the country's presidential election on Sunday, but a runoff will be required to determine the winner, according to exit polls.



Presidential candidate and incumbent President Iliana Iotova votes in Sofia.

According to the exit poll by Alpha Research, Iotova is expected to get 35.3 per cent of the valid votes, while the exit poll by Myara Sociology Agency showed that Iotova would get 35.2 per cent.

The voter turnout was 22.3 per cent and 21.2 per cent, according to Alpha Research and Myara, respectively. The two exit polls were announced on Bulgarian National TV.

To be elected, a candidate for president shall require more than half of the valid ballots, provided that more than half of all eligible voters have cast their ballots in the election. If none of the candidates wins an outright majority, a second round vote shall be held within seven days between the two top candidates.

Iotova's opponent in the runoff will be the former Bulgarian caretaker Prime Minister Andrey Gurov, who got 32.4 per cent according to Alpha Research, and 32.2 per cent according to Myara, reports Xinhua news agency.

The official results will be released no later than Tuesday evening, and the runoff between the two top candidates is to be held next Sunday.

"It is an illusion to think that by not voting, we can change anything in the country," Iotova told reporters after the release of the exit polls.

She expressed concern regarding the low voter turnout and emphasised that citizens' participation in the elections is a necessary condition for achieving real change.

"In the coming years, we must change a great deal so as not to take Bulgaria back to the years of stagnation -- a period during which we missed out on so many opportunities due to division and confrontation," she said. (IANS)

Unknown gunmen kill 58 in Taraba

ABUJA, OCT 26

At least 58 bodies have been recovered after unknown gunmen attacked a community in Nigeria's northeastern Taraba State, police have said, as rescue operations continued.

Victor Mshelizah, spokesman for the Taraba State police command, told Xinhua news agency by telephone on Sunday (local time) that the death toll from the attack, which occurred Friday in the Binnari community of Karim-Lamido Local Government Area, rose to 58 after 15 bodies of victims who fled the scene were recovered Sunday.

The police official said bodies were recovered from surrounding bushes and a river following the attack, which occurred on the community's weekly market day.

An overloaded canoe carrying victims to a nearby community capsized midway, he said, adding that more victims were still feared missing.

According to local media reports, more than 40 bodies were initially recovered by security personnel. The gunmen indiscriminately opened fire on people during the four-hour attack, leaving many houses burned and families displaced. (IANS)

CCP elite gather for governance talks

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
BEIJING, OCT 26

China's President Xi Jinping and other top leaders meet in Beijing on Monday at a key gathering watched closely for clues as to the country's direction and future leadership. Roughly 300 members of the ruling Communist Party's Central Committee in attendance at the meeting, called the fifth plenum, will be looking to tighten discipline within their ranks, according to state media. That includes measures to reduce corruption and make cadres more effective and loyal. Little of the closed-door gathering, held under tight security, will be made known until it concludes on Thursday, but the timing of the meeting is crucial.

Storms batter Europe hitting power supplies

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
LONDON, OCT 26

Storms battered northern Europe on Sunday cutting power to more than 150,000 homes, forcing the cancelation of hundreds of flights and silencing phone networks.

Winds of up to 84 miles (135 kilometers) an hour were recorded in Argyll and Bute in western Scotland and fallen trees and power cables blocked roads and rail lines across the country.

More than 82,000 homes in Britain, nearly 60,000 in France and at least 10,000 in Germany had power cuts inflicted by the passage of storms Boelo and Austen within 24 hours of each other,



authorities in the countries said.

Britain's Energy Networks Association indicated that more than 400,000 homes had lost power at some stage during the storms. Part of the pier at Brighton the southern England coast, unused since a fire in 2003, blew away in Storm Austen on Friday.

Advance voting opens in New Zealand

WELLINGTON, OCT 26

Advance voting opened across New Zealand on Monday, allowing voters to cast their ballots nearly two weeks before the November 7 general election, as political parties vie for support in a closely contested race.



A total of 207 voting places opened on the first day of advance voting, with more locations to become available in the days leading up to election day, according to the Electoral Commission. More than 2,300 voting places are expected to operate nationwide on election day.

Voting locations include community halls, shopping centres, schools, tertiary institutions and marae, or Maori meeting grounds. More than 220 dedicated Maori community voting places are also available, including 67 where voters can cast their ballots in either Maori or English, according to the commission.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon's centre-right National Party is seeking a second term after taking office in 2023, while Labor, led by former prime minister Chris Hipkins, is campaigning to return to power amid public concerns over the cost of living, economic growth, jobs and public services.

Poll results suggested that neither major party could secure a parliamentary majority on its own, leaving smaller parties potentially pivotal in forming the next government, reports Xinhua news agency.

New Zealand uses a mixed-member proportional electoral system to elect its parliament. Under this system, the government is usually formed by two or more parliamentary political parties. (IANS/UNI)

Rescue continue after Kenya building collapse

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
NAIROBI, OCT 26

The number of people rescued from a collapsed building in Kenya's capital has risen to four, while several others remain missing and are reported to have communicated with loved ones from beneath the rubble. Rescue operations entered a third night Sunday as relatives said they were losing hope of finding those trapped alive.

The 18-story building collapsed Friday in a busy commercial street of the capital Nairobi, trapping construction workers and people reportedly inside shops on the ground and basement floors that had been illegally occupied.

One-third of Australian households experienced food insecurity in past 12 months: Report

CANBERRA, OCT 26

One-third of Australian households have experienced food insecurity over the past 12 months, with those that have children among the hardest hit, according to a new report.

The report released by NGO Foodbank Australia on Monday revealed that 33 per cent of households experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months, up from 32.8 per cent in 2025 and 32.5 per cent in 2024.

Among households with children, the report said 45 per cent experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months, with 25 per cent classified as being severely food insecure.



It found that 37 per cent of middle-income households and 53 per cent of low-income households experienced food insecurity, reports Xinhua news agency.

"Foodbank research shows that hunger is no longer confined to the margins; it is impacting middle Australia. A wage used to be what kept food on the table, but for a growing number of working Australians their pay packet no longer stretches that far," Foodbank Australia CEO Kylea Tink said.

Of households that reported experiencing food insecurity, 85 per cent said they were unable to afford balanced meals, and 69 per cent said they experienced food insecurity for the first time in the past 12 months.

Over 50 per cent of renting households experienced food insecurity compared to 12 per cent of households that own their home outright.

"People should not have to choose between putting a roof over their head or putting food on the table. We're hearing of parents going without just to make sure their children can eat. This is unacceptable, and we must do something about it," Tink said. (IANS)

Israel heads to polls; Netanyahu to face ex-IDF chief Eisenkot

TEL AVIV, OCT 26

As Israel heads to a crucial parliamentary election on Tuesday, incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces a challenge from key candidates including Gadi Eisenkot, Naftali Bennett, Yair Lapid, Avigdor Lieberman and Yair Golan, local media reported.



People walk past a Likud party campaign billboard in Beni Brak, Israel.

Netanyahu has positioned himself as the strongest candidate to safeguard Israel's security and handle its international ties.

His Likud party is focusing on military successes against Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, while critics argue that the October 7 attack exposed serious security lapses under his leadership, Israeli media outlet i24 News reported.

Former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot has emerged as a prominent challenger to Netanyahu. His newly formed Yashar party combines a security-oriented agenda with pledges to restore public confidence and reinforce democratic institutions.

Furthermore, former prime ministers Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid have united to build an alliance, the Beyachad party, spanning right-wing and centrist voters. Their platform focuses on national security, integrating ultra-Orthodox men into military service and the workforce, supporting reservists and reforming the constitutional framework.

While the party traditionally drew support from immigrants from the former Soviet Union, it is now reaching out to a broader electorate that demands compulsory military service for all and less religious influence over public affairs.

Additionally, Yair Golan's Democratic Party opposes annexation, favours a diplomatic resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and supports cooperation with moderate regional partners, i24 News reported.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu's opponents are exploring possible post-election arrangements as opinion polls point to a closely contested race, according to a report in The Jerusalem Post.

"Israel's anti-Netanyahu bloc is preparing for the possibility of forming a minority government after the upcoming elections, despite opposition from Avigdor Liberman and Naftali Bennett, while a broad agreement is emerging among the parties to replace Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana even before a coalition deal is reached," the report stated.

"In most polls, the anti-Netanyahu camp holds an advantage over the outgoing coalition bloc, but the Zionist parties seeking political change fall short of the majority needed to form a government based on their current agreements," it noted.

Nearly three years after the deadliest attack in Israel's history triggered a devastating war on multiple fronts, Israelis are preparing to cast their votes in an election widely regarded as one of the most consequential in the country's history, with implications extending well beyond the political future of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his opponents, The Times of Israel reported.

Israeli strike in Gaza kills three

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
GAZA CITY, OCT 26

Three Palestinians, including a young girl, were killed Monday in an Israeli airstrike on a camp for displaced people in the southern Gaza Strip, medical sources and first responders said.

Civil defense spokesman Mahmoud Bassal said a total of 11 people had been killed and 50 wounded by Israeli fire and airstrikes in Gaza over the past 24 hours.

"We transported three martyrs, including a child, following an Israeli airstrike targeting a camp for displaced people in the Al-Mawasi area, west of Khan Yunis," Bassal told AFP.

Prince Khalid leads Saudi delegation in Makkah Joint Defense Agreement talks with Iran

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
RIYADH, OCT 26

Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman is leading the Kingdom's delegation to Tehran on Monday for talks between representatives of the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement countries and senior Iranian officials.



Saudi Deputy Minister for Public Diplomacy Ambassador Dr. Rayed Krimly announced the visit in a statement on X, saying the meetings would bring together representatives of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye.

The delegation includes Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir and Turkish National Intelligence Director Ibrahim Kalin.

Representatives of the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement countries are scheduled to meet Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Mohsen Rezaei.

Krimly said the visit forms part of continued efforts by the agreement's member countries to reduce tensions between parties involved in the ongoing regional crisis and promote dialogue and diplomatic solutions.

The talks also aim to support mediation efforts undertaken by Qatar and Pakistan to address the crisis.

Yemeni forces launch strikes against Houthi targets

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
ADEN, OCT 26

Yemeni government forces carried out 753 strikes on Houthi targets within a 24-hour period as part of its Dawn of Yemen campaign against the Iran-backed militia, a military spokesman said late on Sunday.

Col. Majed Al-Nuzaili said that the targets included advanced field command, control and governing centers, fortifications, firing sites, troop concentrations and reinforcements.

The strikes disrupted the militia's movement, supply capabilities and force deployment, while supporting Yemeni forces in raiding, assaulting and maneuvering, he said on X.

At least 218 Houthi members and field commanders were "neutralized."

"Our forces continue to develop the offensive with high combat resolve, striking the militia's ability to mobilize and reorganize, while taking care to limit targeting to legitimate military objectives and adopting the necessary precautions to protect civilians and civilian assets," Al-Nuzaili said.

Saudi Arabia to raise minimum wage threshold

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
RIYADH, OCT 26



Saudi Arabia will raise the minimum monthly wage required for Saudi private-sector employees to be counted as full-time workers under the Nitaqat Saudization program to SR5,000 in April 2027 and SR6,000 in April 2028.

According to details released by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, the decision will be implemented in two phases, beginning six months after its announcement on October 25, 2026.

The first phase will take effect on April 25, 2027, raising the minimum monthly wage threshold for full inclusion in Saudization calculations to SR5,000. The second phase will begin on April 25, 2028, increasing the threshold to SR6,000.

The ministry clarified that the decision does not require private-sector employers to directly increase the salaries of Saudi employees. Instead, it adjusts the minimum wage threshold used to determine whether a Saudi employee is counted in full toward a company's Saudization requirements.

The phased implementation gives private-sector establishments time to adjust to the new requirements.

Kuwait Minister proposes 'Silicon Desert' to transform Gulf into technology and investment hub

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
KUWAIT CITY, OCT 26

Kuwait has called for closer economic integration among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, with Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment and Acting Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdulaziz Al-Marzouq proposing the name "Silicon Desert" for a regional technology and economic zone designed to attract advanced industries and investment.



Speaking at the ninth World Investment Forum in Doha, Al-Marzouq said the Gulf had the resources and capabilities to emerge as a major economic region over the coming decades. He stressed that investment in infrastructure and the localisation of specialised industries, particularly technology-related sectors, would be crucial to achieving that ambition.

"Why not call it 'Silicon Desert'?" he said, referring to the region's ambition to establish modern technology industries close to its primary energy resources.

The remarks came during the ministerial roundtable on "Investment for Development" and the session titled "The Future of Investment in the Gulf", organised by the GCC General Secretariat as part of the forum convened by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Al-Marzouq emphasised that the focus should be on attracting high-quality investment and maximising its economic and developmental benefits, rather than investment volume alone. He said the GCC countries had the potential to attract specialised industries and emerging technologies, creating opportunities for a more diversified and integrated regional economy.

"The time has come to consider the GCC as an integrated economic zone," he said, adding that the region was well placed to become an emerging economic centre in the coming years and decades. His proposal highlighted the opportunity for Gulf countries to combine their resources and capabilities to attract advanced industries, strengthen economic cooperation and establish a stronger position in the global technology and investment landscape.

Syria signs $147 mn road deal to boost trade with Iraq



FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
DAMASCUS, OCT. 26

Syria signed a $147 million contract with a Qatari construction company on Monday to upgrade a key highway linking Damascus to the Iraqi border, as part of efforts to rebuild transport infrastructure and strengthen regional trade links.

The agreement, signed between the General Establishment for Road Transport and Qatar's Almohannadi for Roads, Trading and Contracting (MRTC), covers the rehabilitation and expansion of a 170-kilometer road between the al-Busayri junction and the al-Tanf border crossing.

The project also includes a 45-kilometer section connecting al-Sabaa Biyar to al-Busayri. Construction is expected to take 900 days. The contract was signed at the Cham Hotel in Damascus by Moaz Najjar, director general of the establishment, and Abdullah Adnan al-Zattam, CEO of the Qatari company, in the presence of Transport Minister Yarub Badr and Finance Minister Mohammed Yisr Barnieh.

The highway runs through Syria's eastern desert and forms part of a transport corridor linking Iraq to Syrian ports on the Mediterranean coast.

Badr said the agreement was part of a broader road rehabilitation program launched in the summer of 2026 to restore major routes across the country. He said the government planned to sign six additional road construction contracts and three supervision contracts with international companies.

The minister said the al-Tanf–al-Sabaa Biyar–al-Busayri route would complement the Damascus–Palmyra–Deir Ezzor highway, whose rehabilitation contract is expected to be signed soon. The projects are intended to strengthen Syria's role as a trade and transit hub connecting the Gulf region with Europe, he added.

Najjar said the project would go beyond repairing the existing highway to include the construction of a second carriageway and the installation of road safety features.

Mass outages in Sudan

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
KHARTOUM, OCT 26

Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces launched a coordinated drone attack Monday against five power stations, causing mass power outages across the country's east, a government official told AFP. The drones hit two power stations each in the states of Al-Jazira and Gedaref, and one in White Nile state, "resulting in power outages across large parts of these three states," the official said on condition of anonymity.

All three states are controlled by the Sudanese army, which has since April 2023 been at war with its former ally, the RSF.

Infinity: A 888.88-carat black diamond unveiled in Dubai

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
DUBAI, OCT 26

A rare 888.88-carat fancy black natural diamond, named Infinity, went on show for the first time at the Dubai diamond conference organized by DMCC.



Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman and CEO, DMCC (centre), Daniel De Belder, Owner, Diamond Trading NV (left), H.E. Rik Van Droogenbroeck, Ambassador of Belgium to the UAE.

The company Diamond Trading NV presented the stone and also shared that security and cash management company Brink's handled its secure transport to the event.

The diamond originates from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was cut from a 1,138-carat rough stone that Andrew Coxon acquired in 1975 on behalf of De Beers. Years later the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) examined the rough crystal. In 2013, the institute recorded it as the largest single-crystal natural diamond it had examined and reported on up to that point. Cutting and polishing ran from 2022 to 2024 and produced the finished 888.88-carat Infinity, which is currently owned by Antwerp's Diamond Trading NV.

Describing how Infinity took shape, Daniel de Belder of Diamond Trading NV told the audience what went behind shaping it.

"It is a black diamond. It carries features that are witnesses of the eruptive process, when it came from 150 kilometres deep down to the surface," he said. "We adapted the plan and the manner in which we shape it to what nature is. We did not try to erase the traces of this very dramatic and fast transit from deep in the earth."

The showing at the Dubai diamond conference gave the international industry a rare chance to see the diamond in person. The organizers also spoke of the role that provenance, rarity and craftsmanship play in the value of natural diamonds. however, they did not mention a clear valuation for the piece or if it is on offer to be sold.

India reaffirms stronger trade and investment ties with the Netherlands

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthen economic ties with the Netherlands, exploring new avenues for trade and investment, and deepening engagement with the Indian community.



His visit featured engagements with stakeholders in the maritime and logistics sector in Rotterdam, interaction with the Indian community in Amsterdam, and media engagement, according to an official statement.

Goyal undertook a tour of the Port of Rotterdam, accompanied by its Chief Executive Officer, Boudewijn Siemons.

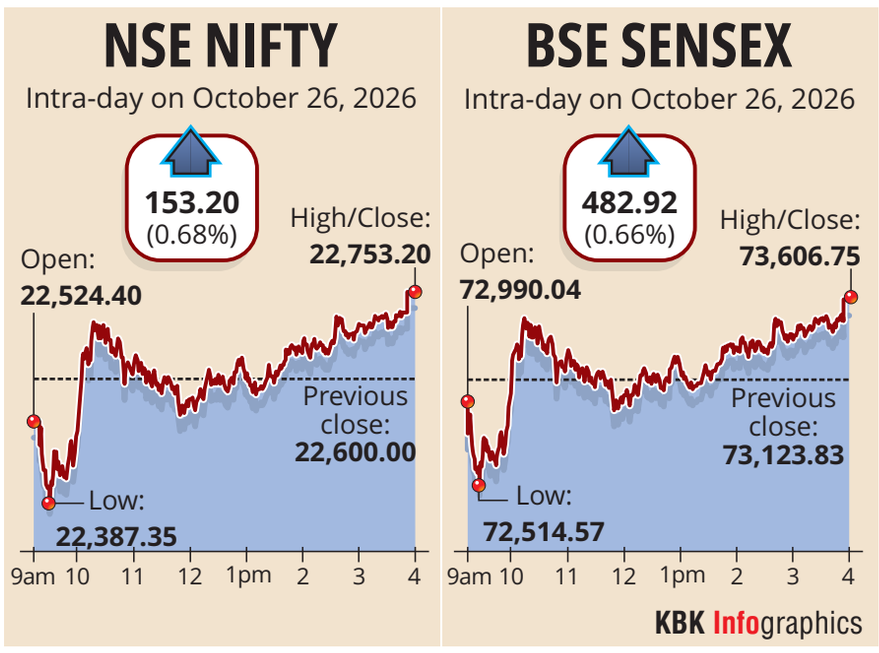
The visit highlighted the strategic importance of Rotterdam, Europe's largest port, as a gateway for Indian goods to the European market and a key hub for international trade and global supply chains.

100

The Minister's visit to the Port of Rotterdam underscored the Netherlands' strategic importance as a gateway to Europe, particularly in the context of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement.

With the Agreement expected to create significant new opportunities for Indian exporters, the Netherlands' world-class ports, logistics infrastructure and connectivity with European markets can play an important role in facilitating increased trade flows and strengthening India-Europe supply chains.

The minister also attended an Indian community interaction hosted by the Embassy of India at the Waldorf Astoria Amsterdam, with approximately 70 participants. (IANS)



Satcom players at same regulatory stage in India

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

The Indian government has said security assessments are underway for all three licensed satellite communication operators, including Starlink, with all at broadly the same regulatory stage, even as a decision on spectrum pricing is close, according to a report.



India's satellite internet debate is increasingly being viewed through the lens of what it delivers to end users -- reliability, affordability and choice – even as attention remains on the regulatory timeline for new entrants, as per analysis of Gulf News.

The discussion has intensified amid delays to Starlink rollout in India with SpaceX CEO Elon Musk alleging that business interests have impeded the company's progress, it added. However, no evidence has been publicly provided to support those claims.

The government has said security assessments are under way for firms, indicating that operators are at a broadly similar stage in the approval process, the report said.

While Starlink has secured a telecommunications licence, commercial operations still require compliance with security conditions and assignment of spectrum needed to provide services.

Meanwhile, Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has also indicated that a decision on satellite spectrum pricing is nearing completion.

The debate has highlighted the need for greater clarity around which approvals remain outstanding and whether progress depends on government decisions or actions required from applicants. (IANS)

Tesla India posts Rs 247 crore revenue



NEW DELHI, OCT 26

The Indian unit of Elon Musk-backed electric vehicle (EV) maker Tesla -- Tesla India Motors and Energy -- has reported revenue of Rs 247.31 crore and a net profit of Rs 5.16 crore for FY26.

According to regulatory filing, revenue from operations surged nearly 12-fold from Rs 20.83 crore in FY25.

The carmaker's net profit increased from Rs 55.49 lakh as the company expanded its presence in the Indian market following the launch of its first showroom in Mumbai in 2025. However, FY26 was the first year in which vehicle sales contributed to Tesla India's reported revenue.

In the previous financial year, the company's turnover had come entirely from services-related operations.

Vehicle sales generated Rs 214.69 crore during FY26, accounting for nearly 87 per cent of total revenue, while services contributed Rs 32.40 crore.

The performance came despite a relatively small sales base as the company recorded 346 vehicle registrations in India between September 2025 and March 2026.

Meanwhile, registrations accelerated to 650 units during April-September FY27, surpassing the entire previous year's tally within the first six months of the fiscal year.

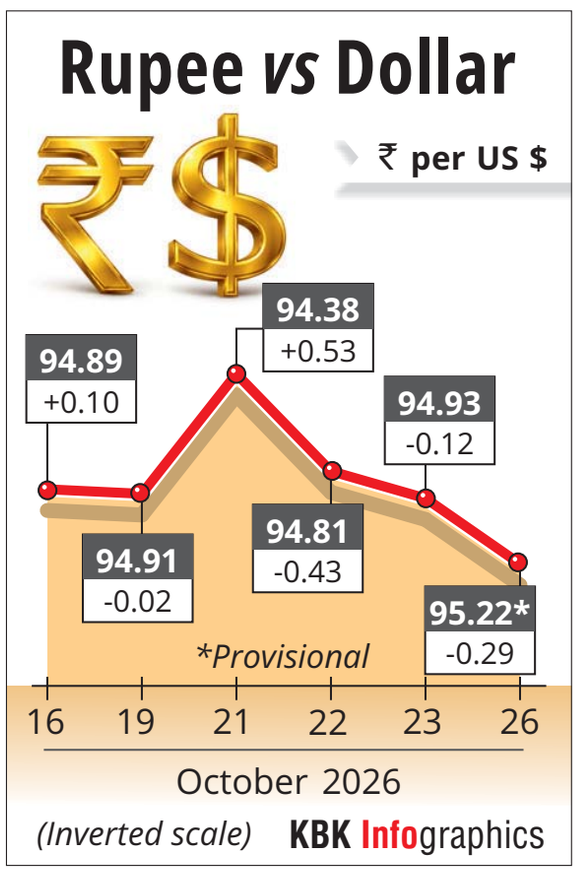
Average monthly registrations rose from around 49 units during the initial launch phase to about 108 units. Apart from that, the company strengthened its balance sheet through fresh capital infusion.

Filings showed Tesla injected about Rs 86 crore into its Indian subsidiary during FY26.

In addition, cash expenditure on property, plant and equipment and capital work-in-progress climbed to Rs 62.54 crore in FY26 which was higher than Rs 1.16 crore in the previous year.

Earlier in October, CEO Musk showcased a new version of its Roadster sports car -- a prototype that briefly lifted off the ground during a demonstration at a SpaceX facility in Texas.

He highlighted that the vehicle navigated an elevated curved track before becoming airborne for a short distance and landing safely, drawing comparisons to the concept of a flying car. (IANS/UNI)



NSO aims to align ASUSE survey

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

The National Statistics Office (NSO) plans to conduct the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) 2027-28 from April 2027 to March 2028, aligning the survey period with the financial year, and will introduce new policy focused questions for better understanding of the unincorporated sector, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Monday.

The NSO will, for the first time, be introducing questions to capture gender-specific constraints faced by female entrepreneurs in operating and managing their establishments.

Govt extends RELIEF scheme for risk coverage of export shipments due to Gulf war

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

The Department of Commerce has extended the timelines under 'Component II of RELIEF (Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation)', a time-bound intervention under the Export Promotion Mission (EPM), until March 31, 2027, to provide risk coverage to export shipments due to the continuing Middle East conflict, according to an official statement issued on Monday.



The extension has been undertaken in view of continued geopolitical disruptions in West Asia and their impact on maritime logistics across the Gulf and adjoining regions.

'Component II' of the initiative aims to encourage exporters to obtain Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) cover for upcoming shipments to specified regions by providing 95 per cent risk coverage.

The benefit is available for standalone policies and whole turnover policies obtained on or after March 16, 2026. Under this component, the premium payable by eligible exporters is protected against increases beyond pre-disruption levels during the eligible period. The covered cargo categories include Full Container Load (FCL), Less than Container Load (LCL), and refrigerated (reefer) containers, excluding energy shipments.

Exporters seeking coverage under the RELIEF initiative are required to submit claims and supporting documents through the ECGC customer portal. Guidance on generating user IDs and passwords, completing exporter registration and submitting claims under the initiative is available through dedicated video tutorials on ECGC's official YouTube channel, said the statement.

Launched on March 19, 2026, RELIEF is a targeted intervention to support Indian exporters facing extraordinary freight cost escalation, higher insurance premium and war-related export risks arising from disruptions in the Gulf and the wider West Asian maritime corridor.

There have been reports of ships being hit in drone and missile attacks around the Strait of Hormuz. The war danger has also spread to the Red Sea area following the Houthi launching attacks in Yemen to take over vast swathes of territory along the coastal region.

The extension of RELIEF underscores the government's commitment to strengthening export resilience, sustaining trade flows and supporting Indian exporters amid continuing geopolitical and maritime logistics uncertainties, the statement added. (IANS/UNI)

Silver likely to see upside from near-equilibrium levels

NEW DELHI, OCT 26

Silver prices are near equilibrium levels and may receive support from recovering investor demand, but rallies are likely to be capped by a firm US dollar and rising supply, a report said on Monday.



The report from HSBC Global Investment Research said the silver market recorded a deficit of 140 million ounces in 2025. It forecasted that the shortfall will narrow sharply to 5 million ounces in 2026 before widening mildly to 12 million ounces in 2027.

"Moderating deficits help explain our view that prices are near equilibrium levels and may be supportive but do not augur for robust rallies," the report said.

Above-ground stocks and recycling may eventually help cap sizable rallies and weigh on prices longer-term.

Silver reached a record high of $121 per ounce on January 29, 2026, driven by record gold prices, supply tightness, and tariff, geopolitical and economic concerns, all of which fostered safe-haven buying.

The Middle East conflict triggered a flood into the USD, and high oil prices sparked concerns over tighter monetary policy as equities slumped.

"Gold prices will likely remain influential, and we are moderately positive on bullion, which should help sustain silver," it said.

The report forecasted that resumption of tariff concerns could trigger further rallies, while industrial and jewellery demand will continue to weaken. Lower ore grades and mine closures this year will be largely offset by new projects and facilities expansion.

Another recent report said Silver ETFs held about Rs 85,000–86,000 crore as of August, while, highlighting growing financialisaton of gold, an expanding commodity derivatives market and rising structural demand for industrial metals such as copper and aluminium. (IANS)

SBI Funds hits record low after Q2 profit miss

MUMBAI, OCT 26

Shares of SBI Funds Management plunged to a record low in Monday's intra-day trade after the asset manager reported weaker-than-expected earnings for the September quarter, prompting investors to dump the stock despite brokerages maintaining a positive long-term outlook.



The stock fell as much as 7 per cent to Rs 433.55 on the BSE, its lowest level since listing on July 21, 2026. It was trading at Rs 445.65, down 4 per cent, during noon trade. The stock is currently trading about 24 per cent below its issue price of Rs 574 per share.

Trading activity remained robust, with nearly 2.52 million shares changing hands across the NSE and BSE, nearly double the average volume.

The sharp decline came after the company reported a weaker-than-anticipated performance for the second quarter of FY27. According to Equirus Securities, SBI Funds Management posted a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 701 crore, down 6 per cent year-on-year.

The earnings shortfall was primarily attributed to operating expenses, which rose 24.3 per cent year-on-year to Rs 301 crore. The brokerage also noted that revenue yield declined by 0.6 basis points quarter-on-quarter to 36.1 basis points, while non-mutual fund yields excluding advisory remained in the 35-40 basis point range.

SBI Funds Management's equity quarterly average assets under management (QAAUM) increased 5.6 per cent sequentially, lagging the industry's 6.6 per cent growth rate. As a result, the company's market share declined by 12 basis points quarter-on-quarter to 12.53 per cent.

The firm's share in monthly systematic investment plan (SIP) inflows also weakened, falling to 12 per cent in September 2026 from 12.65 per cent in June.

SIP assets under management remained largely unchanged at Rs 2.07 trillion, while market share edged lower to 11.59 per cent from 11.64 per cent. (IANS/UNI)

3rd T20I: New Zealand face rampant India in must-win clash

WELLINGTON, OCT 26

New Zealand will be without two of their most potent fast bowlers, Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson, when they take on a rampant India in the third T20I at the Hnry Stadium on Tuesday. It's a match New Zealand, currently trailing 2-0, must win to keep the series alive.



Henry, who bowled only two overs in the second match at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch on Saturday, one of them being a maiden, is unavailable for the rest of the series so that his workload can be managed ahead of the other formats, while Ferguson will sit out of the game in Wellington.

Neither bowler completed his allotted overs in the previous match – Henry had a calf complaint, while Ferguson also went off as a precautionary measure. The duo's absence leaves New Zealand leaning on Adam Milne and Blair Tickner, who are available for the remainder of the series, along with Kyle Jamieson, who will feature in Wellington before turning out in a Ford Trophy match to prepare for the Test series.

India, by contrast, have barely put a foot wrong so far, despite having just one training session before the series opener in Christchurch.

Sharper execution of their batting prowess has helped them chase down a record 226 and a tricky 181.

Squads

India: Shreyas Iyer (captain), Sanju Samson (wk), Ishan Kishan, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Naman Dhir, Prince Yadav, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakaravarthy, Arshdeep Singh, Mayank Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Kumar Kushagra.

Antonelli confident of winning F1 title 'very soon'

Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli has history in his sights, having moved closer to a record-breaking Formula 1 title after winning the United States Grand Prix.



A one-stop pit strategy turned out to be a masterstroke from Mercedes as Antonelli won the race from Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Red Bull's Max Verstappen for his ninth win of the season.

Reflecting on the race, Antonelli stated that this was what he wanted and now he aims to clinch the title very soon. "It was the result we needed. The whole team deserves it so much, and all this time putting in so much work on bringing this new package and finally seeing the result is very pleasant," Antonelli said after the race, as quoted by F1. "It was also perfect execution from strategy to call the one-stop so I'm really happy we made it stick, and it was a great team effort," he added. (IANS)

Real Madrid win Clasico 2-1 with Mbappe's brace

BARCELONA, OCT 26

A brace by Kylian Mbappe, who reached a century of goals as a madridista, handed FC Barcelona their first La Liga defeat 1-2 of the season.



The play began with a brilliant roulette by Bellingham, who passed the ball to Arda Guler, who then set it up for Camavinga. Mbappe made just the right touch to get past Cubarsi and provide an assist to the MVP of the night.

Madrid barely allowed Barcelona any chances in the first half. In contrast, before the 0-1, Arda Güler had two opportunities to score. His first shot, just four minutes in, missed the target by mere centimeters.

The second, 14 minutes later, was saved by Joan García. Mourinho's side broke the deadlock in the 41st minute after an excellent team play that ended with a cross from Yan Diomande. However, Gerard Martin, in an attempt to clear, deflected the ball onto Mbappe, who netted it with his right thigh.

Barca's response came two minutes later, but Lamine Yamal missed the target from close range. Just before halftime, the scoreline could have changed to 0-2 when Diomande went one-on-one with Joan García, but his shot hit the side netting.

The second half began with the same script: spectacular defensive work by Madrid and quick transitions that kept surprising the hosts.

Cancelo's Stomp on Yan Diomande

In the 56th minute, Madrid called for Cancelo's dismissal after a clear stomp on the back of Yan Diomande's thigh, forcing the madridista to leave the pitch for a minute. (IANS)

Medvedev rallies past Basilashvili to retain Almaty Open title

ALMATY (KAZAKHSTAN), OCT 25

Daniil Medvedev successfully defended an ATP Tour title for the first time in his career on Sunday, recovering from a set down to beat Georgian qualifier Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-7 (6), 6-1, 6-3 in the 2026 Almaty Open final.



The top-seeded Russian overcame a strong start from Basilashvili, who matched Medvedev from the baseline in a closely contested opening set before fading as the match wore on.

Medvedev, who remained unbroken throughout the contest, gradually asserted his authority to secure his fourth title of the season and the 25th of his career after one hour and 53 minutes.

Basilashvili began confidently, using his powerful groundstrokes to put Medvedev under pressure and force a first-set tiebreak. The Russian held a set point but was unable to convert as the Georgian edged ahead.

However, Basilashvili struggled to maintain his early intensity, with Medvedev's consistency and defensive skills increasingly frustrating the 34-year-old.

The defending champion dominated the second set 6-1 before carrying that momentum into the decider, where he continued to dictate play and landed 78 pe cent of his first serves to complete (IANS)

ENTERTAINMENT



M.A.SALAM
Film Journalist

Ahaan, Sharvari-starrer romantic action-drama 'Beparwah'

The makers of the romantic action-drama film starring Ahaan Panday and Sharvari have revealed that the upcoming project is christened 'Beparwah'.



Production banner Yash Raj Films (YRF) took to Instagram to share the title and a poster featuring the two actors.

"Fearless in love... #Beparwah in cinemas on 26th March 2027. @ahaanpandayy @sharvari @aliabbaszafar #AdityaChopra #AkshayeWidhani," the caption read.

The poster features Ahaan and Sharvari in a romantic yet intense pose, standing close to each other with their foreheads touching. Ahaan is holding a gun, while a guitar hangs beside Sharvari, hinting at a blend of action, romance and music.

The title is written in bold accompanied by the tagline "Fearless in Love." The romantic action-drama is directed by Ali Abbas Zafar and produced by Aditya Chopra.

The title was unveiled with the film's teaser poster, marking exactly five months to its theatrical release. Beparwah marks Zafar's return to Yash Raj Films, having previously helmed blockbusters such as Sultan and Tiger Zinda Hai among others for the banner.

Produced by Aditya Chopra, Beparwah is set for a worldwide theatrical release on 26 March 2027. The film also stars Aaishvary Thackeray and Bobby Deol. The film has been extensively shot in the UK.

Aaishvary Thackeray has been roped in to play an antagonist in Zafar's film. On November 17 last year, it was reported that Ahaan had to train four to five hours a day for the next film.

A source had then shared: "Ahaan will start his training in boxing first and then move on to mixing martial arts and hardcore strength training to bulk up for the screen. His training will be for about 5 hours every day. It will be intense but necessary as Ali wants to present him as a young boy who can take down people with sheer brute force".

"No one can even imagine Ahaan in this fierce avatar and YRF will keep things completely under wraps for people to feel the awe when they look at him in his new film visuals", the source added.

Parineeti says 'Mom Talks Season 2' brings honest conversations

Actress Parineeti Chopra has opened up about her show 'Mom Talks: Maa Ki Baat Maa Ke Jazbaat', which is returning with its second season.

She said the show aims to bring honest and unfiltered conversations about parenting to the forefront. Speaking about the new show, Parineeti shared, "It's wonderful to see my show Mom Talks: Maa Ki Baat Maa Ke Jazbaat return with Season 2. What makes the show special is the honest, unfiltered conversations around parenting that are deeply relatable and offer meaningful perspectives on motherhood. I'm glad my show brings these real experiences and emotions to the forefront."



Reflecting on the show's first season and its return, Azim Lalani, co-founder and Chief Business Officer, BULLET Microdrama and Trinetra AI, said, "The first season demonstrated the potential of parenting-led content to create value for both audiences and brand partners. Season 2 gives us an opportunity to deepen these partnerships and build on the show's growing momentum." Talking about the approach to Season 2, Munaf Merchant, Head of AVOD & Partnerships, BULLET Microdrama, shared, "With Season 2, we want Mom Talks to make parenting conversations easier to engage with, combining candid, playful chats with practical takeaways for young parents.

Rasha calls mom Raveena her 'actual bestfriend'

Bollywood actress Raveena Tandon received a sweet birthday wish from daughter, actress Rasha Thadani.



Taking to her official Instagram handle on Monday, Rasha uploaded a couple of adorable pictures of the mother and daughter duo. Her post also included glimpses from an advertisement they did together.

"Happy birthday to my actual bestfriend. Love u mamaaaa (Red heart and Princess emoticons) (sic)," Rasha wished her mom.

Apart from Rasha, veteran actress Bhagyashree also used social media to share her birthday wish for Raveena.

She took to the Stories section of her Instagram handle and uploaded a photograph with the 'KGF: Chapter 2' actress where both of them are smiling for the camera.

Expressing her admiration for Raveena, she penned, "Happy birthday Ravs! May you remain as ravishing @officialraveenatandon forever."

From doing ads together to visiting temples, Rasha is believed to share a special bond with mom Raveena.

Amit Sadhh headlines 'Pratap'

The makers of the forthcoming crime drama, 'Pratap', starring Amit Sadh and Esha Deol unveiled the trailer of the movie on Monday.



The project will see actor Amit Sadh in the role of Pratap, a police officer, who after spending a major part of his life putting people behind the bar, suddenly finds himself in the same position. Juggling between his past and present, the preview raises curiosity regarding the circumstances that led to the imprisonment of a police officer.

The ensemble cast of the drama also features Esha Deol, Seema Biswas, Tigmanshu Dhulia and Milind Gunaji in key roles, along with others.

Talking about his next, Amit Sadh shared, "Pratap is not your conventional cop story. What interested me was the journey of a man who has spent his life enforcing the law, only to find himself on the other side of it. There are so many emotions and contradictions within this character, and as an actor, that made him interesting to portray. The trailer gives you a glimpse of his world, but there is a lot more to his story than what meets the eye."

Maharashtra to consider Telangana's Tummidihatti barrage request

FROM PAGE 1



Chief Minister Revanth Reddy met Fadnavis in Mumbai and discussed construction of the Tummidihatti Barrage across the Pranahita River on the Telangana–Maharashtra border, including the proposed enhancement of the barrage height, water availability, submergence implications, and other technical aspects.

According to the Telangana Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Telangana Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, the Chief Secretaries of both states, and senior officials of the Irrigation Departments participated in the meeting.

The Maharashtra Chief Minister expressed his willingness to revisit Telangana's request.

However, he emphasised that several technical, environmental, and administrative steps would have to be completed before reaching a final conclusion.

The Maharashtra Chief Minister stated that if the project did not adversely affect Maharashtra or its people, his government would have no hesitation in supporting Telangana in meeting its water requirements, in the larger spirit of national interest.

Uttam Kumar Reddy made a detailed presentation highlighting the historical significance, cultural heritage, social conditions, and economic backwardness of the erstwhile Adilabad district.

CM Revanth Reddy observed that the proposed barrage could serve as a physical bridge connecting the two states, strengthening connectivity and economic cooperation between communities on both sides of the border.

The Maharashtra Chief Minister proposed the constitution of a joint committee of officials headed by the Principal Secretaries of the Irrigation Departments of both states.

The committee would examine the proposed barrage height, water availability, submergence implications, affected agricultural lands, compensation requirements and other technical matters.

It would also examine the assessments and concerns of both states regarding the extent of submergence and the possible impact on land and local communities, including alternative approaches where necessary.

During the meeting, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy invited his Maharashtra counterpart to participate in the Invest Telangana Global Summit, scheduled to be held on December 7, 8, and 9 at Future City in Hyderabad.

Nelakondapalli Buddhist Stupa to be develop as int'l tourism centre: Minister Ponguleti

Indiramma Housing final bills to be cleared within 10 days

TFP I N.J. CHARY
KHAMMAM, OCT 26



Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy launched development works in Palair constituency.

Telangana Revenue, Housing and Information and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy announced that the historic third-century Buddhist stupa at Nelakondapalli in Khammam district would be developed as an international Buddhist tourism centre. On Monday, he laid the foundation stone for tourism facilities and conservation and restoration works at the site.

The minister said the stupa, identified around 50–55 years ago, was among the largest Buddhist stupas in the country. Archaeological excavations in the surrounding area had yielded several ancient artefacts, which were kept at a Hyderabad museum due to a lack of local facilities. Following Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's directions, the government would consult Buddhist representatives, local residents, experts and officials to prepare a comprehensive development plan.

Ponguleti also announced that pending final bills under the Indiramma housing scheme across Telangana would be credited directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts within 10 days, without any scope for corruption.

At the Nelakondapalli Rythu Vedika, he distributed second-phase Indiramma housing sanction letters to beneficiaries. He said that of the 648 houses sanctioned in the first phase in the mandal, around 620 had been completed and directed officials to expedite the remaining work.

During his visit, Ponguleti laid the foundation stone for a 2.5-km BT road from Anasagaram to Pammi. He also reviewed development works with engineering department officials and inaugurated the newly constructed gram panchayat office at Gorillapadu Thanda in Kusumanchi mandal.

District Collector Divakara T.S., Housing Project Director Bhukya Srinivas, Panchayat Raj Superintending Engineer Venkat Reddy, Khammam RDO N. Srinivas, along with officials, public representatives participated in the programmes.

Kamareddy Stadium to become cricket training hub: Shabbir Ali

HCA plans coaches, 3 practice nets, a quality pitch and Under-19 matches at Indira Gandhi Stadium



FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
KAMAREDDY, OCT 26

Telangana Government Advisor Mohammed Ali Shabbir on Monday said the Indira Gandhi Stadium in Kamareddy would be transformed into a cricket training hub with professional coaching, practice nets, a quality pitch and opportunities for competitive matches.

He said the initiative was aimed at identifying sporting talent among local youth and enabling promising players from the district to progress to State and national-level cricket.

Shabbir Ali, Advisor to the Telangana Government for SC, ST, OBC and Minorities, inspected the stadium along with Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) Secretary Jeevan Reddy and HCA CEO Imtiaz Khan. They reviewed the existing facilities and discussed requirements for cricket practice, pitch construction, practice nets, coaching and equipment.

Shabbir said cricket had a strong following in Kamareddy and several talented youngsters could emerge if they were provided proper coaching and modern facilities locally. He said students with sporting ability should not be deprived of quality cricket training because of financial constraints. The objective, he said, was to ensure that talented youngsters could access better opportunities in Kamareddy itself instead of depending entirely on facilities in larger cities. He said sports helped inculcate discipline, determination, punctuality and teamwork among youth. He said young people should be encouraged to excel not only in academics but also in sports and make use of such opportunities to advance in life.

He pointed out that considerable sporting talent existed in both rural and urban areas, but many youngsters were unable to progress because of the absence of proper training platforms. He said the government would work to address this gap through better sports infrastructure and coordination with the departments and sporting bodies concerned.

BRS fears lakhs of graduates may lose right to vote in MLC constituencies

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 26



Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has expressed grave concern over the sluggish and chaotic pace of voter enrolment for the upcoming biennial elections to the two Graduates' Constituencies of the Telangana Legislative Council scheduled for March 2027.

The party warned that due to the inaction of the Election Commission's field machinery, hurdles created by officials in the name of attestation, technical obstacles, and an unduly compressed timeline, lakhs of eligible graduates are at serious risk of losing their fundamental right to vote. A delegation of senior BRS leaders met C. Sudarshan Reddy, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Telangana, on Monday and submitted a comprehensive representation.

The delegation comprised former Minister and MLA Talasani Srinivas Yadav, MLA Kaleru Venkatesh, MLC Dr Dasoju Sravan Kumar and MLC Surabhi Vani Devi, alongside several other key BRS leaders and representatives.

BRS voiced concern over a severe slump in voter registration in Mahabubnagar–Rangareddy–Hyderabad and Warangal–Khammam–Nalgonda constituencies. While 10.36 lakh electors were registered across these two constituencies in the 2021 elections, only 5,23,758 applications have been received so far (just 50.56% of the earlier electorate).

CEO reviews SIR process

HYDERABAD, OCT 26

Chief Electoral Officer C. Sudharsan Reddy on Monday directed district collectors to expedite the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and dispose of pending applications under Forms 6, 7 and 8 within prescribed deadlines.

During a video conference, he reviewed the progress of SIR, registration of graduates for MLC elections and other election-related matters. He instructed officials to verify incorrectly mapped voters'.

NCST directs officials to resolve Adivasi housing issues

TFP I AMJAD KHAN
ADILABAD, OCT 26



The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has directed officials to take necessary steps to resolve housing-related issues faced by Adivasi families in the Utnoor and Kadam areas of the Khanapur Assembly constituency.

The Commission initiated an inquiry following a representation by Nirmal District BJP President Ritesh Rathod regarding difficulties faced by beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) scheme. Although pucca houses were sanctioned to eligible families, construction has reportedly been obstructed by Forest Department officials citing restrictions in a tiger zone.

NCST Member Jatothu Hussain Naik examined the issue during an inquiry held at Dilkusha Guest House in Hyderabad on October 26, attended by officials from the Tribal Welfare and Forest departments. The Commission directed the officials to take appropriate measures to resolve the matter, and they assured that action would be taken at the earliest.

The intervention has raised hopes among affected Adivasi families awaiting construction of their sanctioned houses. The community expressed gratitude to Jatothu Hussain Naik and Ritesh Rathod for taking up the issue.

Agriculture Director urges farmers to grow pulses, oilseeds and short-duration crops

TFP I SAUD SIDDIQUI
HYDERABAD, OCT 26



Telangana Agriculture Department Director Dr. B. Gopi, IAS, on Monday advised farmers to adopt organic farming and cultivate water-efficient crops instead of paddy during the ongoing Yasangi season, citing declining water levels and the possibility of El Niño-related dry conditions. He made the recommendations during a field visit to Dubbacherla village in Maheshwaram mandal of Rangareddy district as part of the Khet Bachao Abhiyan, a joint Central and State government initiative.

Dr. Gopi urged farmers to cultivate pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, fruit crops and oil palm, focusing on short-duration crops that require less water and offer better market returns. He also stressed the need to grow short-duration fodder crops to prevent shortages and protect livestock.

Emphasising soil conservation, he advised farmers to follow integrated pest and nutrient management practices, use fertilisers and pesticides according to scientific recommendations, and base their application on soil tests. He encouraged every farmer to adopt chemical-free natural farming on at least one acre, noting the growing demand for organically produced vegetables and fruits.



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