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Honest Journalism...



COUNTRIES SHIFT FROM DOLLAR TO LOCAL CURRENCIES

PAGE 8



CABINET OKAYS PM VGSY WITH RS 7,395 CRORE OUTLAY

PAGE 5

UAE HONOURS FLYDUBAI CAPTAIN SMIT MACHCHHAR FOR COURAGE

PAGE 9



17 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

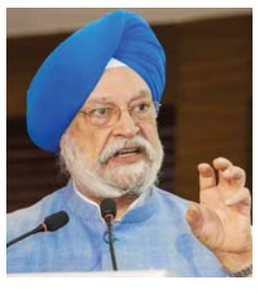
SUNRISE/SUNSET

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

POLITICS ▶ P4



BJP PICKS HARDEEP PURI AS RS CANDIDATE FROM MP

SC seeks centre's reply on DPDP act plea

Union Minister Vaishnaw says press freedom safeguarded

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought the Centre's response to a petition filed by the DNPA, which represents 21 leading news organisations. The association has argued that the law's failure to provide a specific exemption for journalistic activities could adversely affect investigative reporting and public-interest journalism.

The DPDP Act, passed by Parliament in August 2023, is India's first comprehensive law governing the protection of digital personal data. It permits processing of personal data with the consent of individuals or under certain "legitimate uses" outlined in Section 7 of the Act.

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Wednesday said the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, fully safeguards journalistic freedom and does not contain any provision that could undermine the media's ability to report freely.

His remarks came after the Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA) challenged the law in the Supreme Court, arguing that the absence of a journalism exemption could hamper news gathering and weaken citizens' right to information.

The Minister said the legislation was framed on the basis of the Supreme Court's privacy ruling and underwent extensive public consultation. (IANS/UNI)

Security forces recover arms across Manipur

IMPHAL, OCT 28

Security forces recovered large caches of arms, ammunition and explosives from Imphal East, Thoubal and the Bongbal Khullen foothills, while arrests were made in Churachandpur, Senapati, Bishnupur and Imphal East in connection with drug and arms cases, according to Manipur Police today.

A team from the Special Commando Unit of Manipur Police and 33 Assam Rifles today recovered a cache of weapons at Pukhao Terapur in Imphal East.

The haul included four sophisticated pistols with magazines, one Lathode launcher, four single-barrel guns and six hand grenades.

FULL REPORT ON PAGE 5

Cyclone Arnab leaves trail of destruction in coastal Andhra

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
AMARAVATI, OCT 28



Very severe cyclone Arnab, which crossed Andhra Pradesh coast on Wednesday, claimed four lives, leaving a trail of destruction in coastal districts, uprooting thousands of trees, electricity poles and causing extensive damage to crops.

Heavy rains accompanied by gusty winds lashed the region, causing widespread destruction of property. Dr B. R. Ambedkar Konaseema and Kakinada districts bore the brunt. According to preliminary reports, agricultural and horticultural crops over 2.24 lakh hectares, belonging to 3.45 lakh farmers across 14 districts, have been inundated or damaged. State Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu wrote to Union Minister for Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chouhan that paddy accounted for 2.09 lakh hectares of the reported affected area. The impact in the Godavari delta was especially severe, with approximately 82% of the paddy area in West Godavari, 75% in Dr B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema and 48% in Kakinada district reported as inundated.

A total of 15,000 electricity poles collapsed due to gusty winds, disrupting power supply. Thousands of trees were also uprooted.

Though the cyclone has crossed the coast, the State Disaster Management Authority has appealed to people to remain alert in view of the forecast of more heavy rains.

BJP preparing for Mission 2027

LUCKNOW, OCT 28

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has intensified organisational activities in preparation for the 2027 assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh. In this regard, a meeting of the party's state executive committee is scheduled in Lucknow on October 30 and 31.

The two-day visit of union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah is considered significant for this meeting. Senior party leaders, including Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, BJP National President Nitin Nabin, State President Pankaj Chaudhary, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, will attend the meeting. (IANS)

Telangana CM directs mandatory use of treated water from Nov 1



Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy at a review meeting on STPs and treated water utilisation at the MCRHRD in Hyderabad.

TFP I ABDUL RAHMAN KHAN
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has directed officials to ensure the effective utilisation of treated wastewater from Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) for non-potable purposes across Hyderabad and other areas, with the measures to come into effect from November 1.

During a review meeting on STPs and treated water utilisation at the MCRHRD, the Chief Minister stressed that there should be no compromise on water quality and called for the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology to improve plant operations. He directed officials to appoint a special officer for each plant, integrate all STPs with a Command and Control Centre and ensure monitoring by HYDRAA.

The Chief Minister instructed officials to use treated water for landscaping and road cleaning along the Outer Ring Road (ORR), in public parks, and at the Secretariat and Chief Minister's Office. He also called for extending the initiative to the Railway Department, Metro Rail, government offices and data centres, making treated water mandatory for all non-drinking purposes in government establishments.

He directed officials to track treated-water tankers, launch public awareness campaigns and establish a toll-free number for enquiries and supply requests. He also called for incorporating mandatory treated-water usage requirements into the building permission approval process, encouraging private STPs and exploring solar power options for treatment plants.

India reaffirms to strengthen ties with Israel

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

As Israelis voted to elect members of the 26th Knesset, the country's Parliament, India on Wednesday reaffirmed its commitment to further strengthen bilateral ties with Israel.

Tuesday's elections marked the first electoral contest in Israel since the 2023 October 7 Hamas attack, amid significant shifts in the political landscape and the issues shaping voter priorities since the 2022 elections.

Addressing a biweekly media briefing in New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "Yes election is being conducted in Israel. I have seen many of your colleagues reporting from there. We have a good relationship with Israel. We will strengthen this relationship in the coming days..."

Meanwhile, partial election results on Wednesday afternoon showed incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud-led bloc leading as vote counting continued, with 84.5 per cent of ballot boxes counted by Wednesday afternoon, local media reported.

The Central Elections Committee's partial results gave Netanyahu's bloc 54 seats, while the opposition bloc led by Gadi Eisenkot's Yashar party was projected to secure 49 seats.

The predominantly Arab Joint List and Ra'am factions saw their combined tally drop to 17 seats, the 'Times of Israel' reported. (IANS)

22 Indian nationals killed in West Asia conflict



NEW DELHI, OCT 28

Expressing its concern over the situation in the region, India on Wednesday said that 22 Indian nationals, including 14 seafarers, have lost their lives in the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

Addressing a biweekly media briefing in New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that three Indians had so far lost their lives in Saudi Arabia and that the government remained in close touch with the Indian community to ensure their safety and well-being.

"On the question of the total number of people who we have unfortunately lost in the war in West Asia, as I have told you before, we are deeply concerned with the ongoing conflict in West Asia. So far we have lost 22 Indian nationals in the conflict, which includes 14 seafarers, and on our part we remain in close touch with the community there so that we can do our best for their safety and well-being..." said Jaiswal. (IANS)

CARTOON CAROUSEL



Spain: At least 46 killed after two trains collide

MADRID, OCT 28

At least 46 people were reportedly killed after two high-speed trains collided in Spain's Toledo province on Wednesday. The accident involved a Renfe AVE service and a private Iryo train, local media reported fearing that the number of casualties might rise further.

Emergency services were called to the spot at 8:54 am (local time) after the violent impact near the train station in Urda.

The Castilla-La Mancha 112 emergency service said that fire crews from Alcazar de San Juan and Orgaz, Civil Protection units from surrounding municipalities, and three medical helicopters have been deployed at the site of the incident to find survivors and provide assistance to victims. According to the local authorities, there have been at least 39 fatalities, Spain-based 'Sur in English' reported. (IANS/UNI)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

PMLA CASE

ED attaches Jauhar University assets worth Rs 426.46 cr

LUCKNOW, OCT 28



Mohammad Azam Khan

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached land and buildings belonging to Mohammad Ali Jauhar University in Uttar Pradesh's Rampur district, valued at Rs 426.46 crore in connection with a money laundering probe involving the Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar Trust, Samajwadi Party leader and former minister Mohammad Azam Khan, and others, an official statement said on Wednesday.

According to the ED, the attached assets have a current estimated market value of around Rs 1,170 crore. The university campus, located at Jauhar Nagar in Rampur's Singhankhera village, is owned by the Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar Trust, which was founded and is controlled by Azam Khan, who also serves as the institution's honorary Chancellor. (IANS/UNI)

Seethakka directs officials to prepare for cyclone, water scarcity

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 28



Minister for Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, Rural Water Supply, and Women and Child Welfare Dhanasari Anasuya (Seethakka) on Wednesday directed officials to remain vigilant against the threat of strong winds due to Cyclone Arnab and take precautionary measures to prevent untoward incidents. She advised the public to avoid taking shelter near trees, electricity poles and dilapidated structures during strong winds, and instructed emergency teams to respond promptly to incidents.

Seethakka also chaired a video conference from the SERP office at BRK Bhavan with senior officials to review advance preparations for water scarcity and drought conditions expected due to the impact of El Niño. She interacted with around 12,000 sarpanches, panchayat secretaries and officials across Telangana, reviewing village development and NREGA works.

The Minister directed officials to prioritise farm ponds, soak pits, borewell recharge, check dams, tank restoration and rainwater harvesting. She also stressed the need for advance arrangements to ensure adequate drinking water and fodder for cattle and called for coordinated efforts to address emergencies and protect rural communities.

Bandi Sanjay alleges injustice in TG's drought-affected mandal list

TFP I PRAMOD KUMAR
KARIMNAGAR, OCT 28



Bandi Sanjay

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Wednesday criticised the Telangana government over the declaration of drought-affected mandals, alleging that several areas with significant rainfall deficits, particularly in the Karimnagar parliamentary constituency, had been excluded from the list.

In a statement, he questioned the criteria used to identify drought-affected mandals and alleged that the selection process was unscientific. He pointed out that even mandals with a 35 per cent rainfall deficit had been left out, despite reports of barren fields and drinking water shortages.

Referring to the Husnabad, Vemulawada, Sircilla, Manakondur, Choppadandi and Huzurabad constituencies, Bandi Sanjay asked whether rainfall levels, crop losses, cultivated areas, soil moisture and groundwater conditions had been assessed uniformly across the state.

He demanded that the government make public the data and scientific criteria used to identify drought-affected mandals. He also called for complaints from farmers in excluded areas to be examined and eligible mandals to be included in the list in accordance with established guidelines.

Stressing that drought declarations should be based on ground realities rather than political considerations, he urged the government to provide appropriate relief to drought-hit farmers and ensure employment opportunities for the poor. He warned that any injustice to farmers and economically weaker sections would have serious consequences.

Justice Shamim Akhtar reviews Human Rights cases in Nalgonda

TFP I ANIL YADAV
NALGONDA, OCT 28



State Human Rights Commission Chairperson Dr. Justice Shamim Akhtar on Wednesday urged government officials to prioritise public service and make every effort to protect citizens' rights.

At a review meeting held at the Roads and Buildings Guest House in Nalgonda, he met District Collector B. Chandrashekhar, IAS, District SP Sharath Chandra Pawar, IPS and other officials to discuss human rights cases relating to education, healthcare, land, senior citizens, police and revenue matters. He appreciated the district administration for responding promptly to complaints and said cases involving students' certificates, scholarships and fee reimbursement required timely resolution.

Collector B. Chandrashekhar said 45 cases from Nalgonda district were received by the Commission last year and all were addressed as directed. Of the five cases registered this year, four had been resolved. He also outlined measures to monitor food quality in hostels and educational institutions and review senior citizen complaints. SP Sharath Chandra Pawar said the police department was committed to providing timely services in accordance with the law and safeguarding human rights.

Officials from various departments briefed the chairperson on welfare measures and facilities provided in hostels and educational institutions.

Judge Ajay Kumar calls for collective efforts to prevent child sexual abuse

TFP I G. RAMESH
RAJANNA SIRCILLA, OCT 28



Senior Civil Judge Ajay Kumar Jadhav stressed the need for collective efforts to prevent sexual offences against children at an awareness programme organised at the Government Girls' High School in Vemulawada under the Central government's Surakshit Bachpan Abhiyan.

He urged students, particularly those below 18 years, to understand good touch and bad touch and become aware of the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. DSP Srinivasulu warned that those committing offences against children would face strict legal action.

Vemulawada Bar Association president Pittala Manohar emphasised the importance of legal awareness from an early age. App Avadhuta Rajinikanth spoke about children's role in the country's future, while woman advocate Tamiri Annapurna urged people to report suspected offences against children to the police, highlighting the legal consequences of failing to report such cases under Section 21 of the POCSO Act.

AGP Boddu Prashanth Kumar, Bar Association vice-president Gonti Shankar, joint secretary Kanik apu Srinivas, senior advocate Kunta Srinivas, Bar executive committee member Vadlakonda Srikanth, Naim Nasari, Regula Rajakumar, Bhima Mahesh Babu and Gampa Mahesh attended the programme along with school teachers and students.

Palakurthi MLA distributes sewing machines to minority women



TFP I MD BASHEER
MAHABUBABAD, OCT 28

Palakurthi MLA Yashaswini Reddy distributed sewing machines to minority women beneficiaries at her camp office on Wednesday to promote self-employment and financial independence among women.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that women should become financially self-reliant and contribute to their families' economic development. She noted that sewing machines would help beneficiaries earn an income from home while managing their family responsibilities. She urged women to make effective use of the opportunity to improve their livelihoods and develop their skills.

The beneficiaries thanked the MLA, expressing hope that the machines would help them earn an income and support their families. Congress party leaders, representatives and beneficiaries attended the programme.

Warangal Collector calls on youth to stay away from drugs

TFP I BASHEERUDDIN
WARANGAL, OCT 28



Warangal District Collector and Indian Red Cross Society district president Dr. Satya Sharada called on students to stay away from drugs, adopt a healthy lifestyle and focus on education to contribute to the nation's development and achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

She inaugurated an anti-drug awareness rally at Vaagdevi Engineering College in Bollikunta, organised by the Indian Red Cross Society, Warangal district, under the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan. Telangana Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla addressed the youth through a video conference on the harmful effects of drug abuse. Dr. Satya Sharada and Red Cross district chairman Bethi Ashok Babu presented prizes to winners of essay-writing and elocution competitions.

Red Cross vice-chairman Shanaboyina Rajkumar, advisers E.V. Srinivasa Rao, treasurer Bollam Shiva, state management committee member Nadem Shanthikumar, managing committee members Mandala Parashuramulu, Thota Sampath Kumar, Mamidala Ramesh Babu, Dr. Rajkumar, Tirupathi Reddy and Mulka Prasad attended the programme. College directors C.H. Vani and Vishwambhar Reddy, faculty members, M.D. Azam, Riyaz and a large number of students also participated.

Students pledged to stay away from drugs, spread awareness about their harmful effects and work towards building a drug-free society.

TGOs Rangareddy announces new Executive Committee members

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
RANGAREDDY, OCT 28



Smt. Revathi Deepya has been unanimously elected treasurer of the Telangana Gazetted Officers' Association (TGOs), Rangareddy district.

The decision was taken at an executive committee meeting held at the Integrated District Offices Complex (IDOC) in Kongara Kalan on Wednesday, under the leadership of district president Dr K. Rama Rao and secretary Srinesh Kumar Nori.

The meeting resolved to expedite association membership registration, enrol district officers in the Rangareddy District Gazetted Officers' Housing Society, collect advertisements for the 2027 diary and calendar, and organise the district general body meeting next month.

The committee also elected Rakesh, M. Srinivas and N. Sury as vice-presidents and joint secretaries, respectively; Saidamma as women's vice-president; Maheswar as joint secretary; V. Jyotsna as cultural secretary; Victoria Rani as office secretary; and Dr Deepti as an executive committee member.

The appointments were made to fill vacancies arising from retirements and transfers.

Man sentenced to 20 years in POCSO case

HYDERABAD, OCT 28

The Special Fast Track Court for Rape and POCSO cases at L.B. Nagar has sentenced Jarpula Ganesh, 25, to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for sexually abusing a minor girl. The court also imposed a fine of Rs. 32,000 and ordered compensation of Rs. 1.5 lakh to be paid to the victim.

According to police, the accused was living with the complainant and her minor daughter. During this period, he repeatedly sexually harassed the girl and threatened her with serious consequences if she disclosed the abuse. He also allegedly threatened to circulate explicit photographs and videos of the complainant and her daughter on social media.

On October 29, 2024, the accused allegedly took the complainant and her daughter to an isolated location in Mamidipally village and attempted to sexually assault the girl again.

MALKAJGIRI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION :: L.B.NAGAR ZONE

Date: 28-10-2026.

NIT No.	Scope of Work	Estimate Amount	Last Date & Time for Receipts of Bids	Name & Address Officer Cell No.
E/5826/18/2026-27/79, Dt : 28-10-2026.	(5 Works) "Undertaking repairs of Power Borewells. Attending Water leakages, Restoration of defunct Valves. Drilling of Bore Wells at Aspirational Toilets & Fixing of Information Boards at Garbage Vulnerable points at various locations of Hayathnagar Circle-14 & Nagole Circle-11 of L.B.Nagar Zone, MMC."	Rs. 46.60 Lakhs	02-11-2026 @ 3:00 PM	Sri L. Nagender Executive Engineer-I, LB Nagar Zone, MMC (M): 9989930401.
	(7Works) "Laying of CC Roads, Repair works at DOG ponds Animal Care Center Fathullaguda & Balance work to Community Hall at various locations of Hayathnagar Circle-14 & Nagole Circle-11 of L.B.Nagar Zone, MMC."	Rs. 185.16 Lakhs	06-11-2026 3:00 PM	

For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ http://www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in/

Sd/- Executive Engineer-I LB Nagar Zone, MMC.

DIPR - R.O. No. : 12665-PP/CL/ADVT/2026-27

MALKAJGIRI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

NIT No & Date	Name of the Work	Estimate Amount Rs.in Lakhs	Start Date & Time	Last Date & Time for receipts of Bid	Name & Address of EE
32/DB/EE-II/Bowenpally Circle/MMC/2026-27, Dt: 27.10.2026	1. Providing various arrangements to perform Chhat Pooja and cleaning before & after Chhath Puja – 2 Works. 2. Arrangements for Jungle Clearing and Removal of Debris in Marredpally Graveyard in connection with Diwali 2026– 1 Work	6.65	28.10.2026 04.00 P.M	02.11.2026 04.00 P.M	Executive Engineer-II, Bowenpally Circle -3, MMC

Further details can be seen at e-procurement @ https://tender.telangana.gov.in/

Sd/- Executive Engineer-II Bowenpally Circle-3, MMC.

DIPR - R.O. No. : 12642-PP/CL/ADVT/2026-27

Disabled association demands pension hike, 5% reservation

TFP I AHAD SIDDIQUI
MAHBUBNAGAR, OCT 28



The Disabled Association staged a dharna at the Mahbubnagar Collectorate on Tuesday, demanding an increase in pensions for persons with disabilities and fulfilment of promises made by the Congress before the elections.

Addressing the protest, association district president Kodiganti Jayapal urged Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy to honour the electoral assurances given to persons with disabilities. He also demanded 5 per cent reservation for persons with disabilities in Legislative Assemblies to ensure their political representation.

Alleging that the government had failed to fulfil its promises to the disabled community, Jayapal demanded the Chief Minister's unconditional resignation. The protesters appealed to the state government to address their demands and take immediate steps to improve the welfare of persons with disabilities.

ACB catches Mirchowk inspector, home guard accepting Rs 3 lakh bribe

TFP I TAHER ALI
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), City Range-I unit, on Tuesday caught a police inspector and a home guard attached to Mirchowk Police Station in Hyderabad for allegedly demanding a Rs 6 lakh bribe and accepting an initial payment of Rs 3 lakh.

According to the ACB statement released late Tuesday night, Inspector M Kondal Rao allegedly demanded the bribe from a complainant in return for closing a case registered against the complainant's father, avoiding coercive action, and providing future support. The inspector allegedly received the bribe through Home Guard Abid Ali.

The ACB recovered the tainted amount of Rs 3 lakh from the possession of the home guard. Both officials were arrested and are being produced before the Principal Special Judge.

CHANGE OF NAME

I SHAIK SADIQ, S/o Ali Akbar, H.No. 8-2-403/31, Road No. 3, Sanjay Nagar, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, Telangana State - 500034.Intend to change my name in my Passport from Shaik Sadak Hussain (Incorrect Name) to SHAIK SADIQ (Correct Name) for all future purposes Vide Affidavit Date: - 28/10/26

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Governor calls for drug-free TG

Announces 60-day awareness campaign



Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla administered an anti-drug pledge to students at Tagore Auditorium on Osmania University campus.

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

Telangana Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla on Wednesday called upon youth to stay away from drugs and urged society to work collectively towards building a healthy, drug-free Telangana.

He said the success of a developed India and Telangana depended on the health, discipline and responsible participation of young people. Addressing a 'Nasha Mukt Bharat' and 'Nasha Mukt Yuva for Viksit Bharat-2047' awareness programme organised jointly by the Telangana State Branch of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) and the NSS Cell of Osmania University at Tagore Auditorium on the university campus, the Governor said drug abuse not only destroys individuals but also affects families and jeopardises the future of the youth.

He revealed that he had suggested to the state government making an anti-drug pledge mandatory for students at the time of admission to schools and colleges. The Governor announced a 60-day special awareness campaign from Children's Day on November 14 to National Youth Day on January 12, urging educational institutions to organise seminars, rallies, exhibitions and counselling sessions.

He called for extending anti-drug awareness activities across all 33 districts and encouraged students to become ambassadors of the campaign.

Stressing a compassionate approach towards addiction, he said those struggling with drug abuse should receive medical treatment, counselling and family support rather than face humiliation or social exclusion.

He also highlighted the activities of the Indian Red Cross Society in Telangana, noting that its membership had crossed 1.28 lakh, while more than 16 lakh registrations had been recorded under the Junior Red Cross and Youth Red Cross wings.

Special Chief Secretary to the Governor M Dana Kishore said youth must play a pivotal role in the movement to make India drug-free.

During the programme, the Governor unveiled awareness posters and stickers, administered an anti-drug pledge to students, inaugurated a blood donation camp and flagged off an awareness rally from Tagore Auditorium to the Arts College.

AI must improve public services & reduce citizen's visits to offices: Dy CM Bhatti

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on Wednesday said that Artificial Intelligence (AI) must accelerate government work, ensure timely resolution of public grievances and bring tangible improvements to the lives of ordinary citizens.

Speaking at the inauguration of the 'AI Saksham' programme, organised by TG Math with the support of the Planning Department at MCR HRD, he said farmers, pensioners and other citizens should not have to visit government offices repeatedly to get their work done.



Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka inaugurated 'AI Saksham' programme, at MCR HRD in Hyderabad.

Time saved through AI must translate into faster and better public services, he stressed.

Bhatti said AI could help the Finance Department analyse public expenditure, identify delays in project implementation and assess whether welfare benefits were reaching eligible beneficiaries.

He also highlighted its potential to forecast electricity demand, detect equipment faults and improve power supply.

Emphasising data security and accountability, he cautioned officials against entering confidential information into unauthorised AI tools.

He said AI-generated information must be verified, human oversight maintained in official decisions and citizens given access to accountable officials for grievance redressal. The Deputy Chief Minister called for pilot projects in every department, with wider implementation based on accuracy, cost-effectiveness and measurable public benefits.

He said the success of AI Saksham should be judged by improved service delivery, greater transparency and fewer unnecessary visits by citizens to government offices.

Congress protests outside SCR GM's office over denial of special trains to Delhi

TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

The Congress party staged a protest outside the South Central Railway (SCR) General Manager's office at Secunderabad Railway Nilayam on Wednesday, opposing the railway authorities' refusal to arrange special trains to Delhi for party leaders and workers for attending a protest scheduled for November 1.



The Congress leadership had requested special trains from Hyderabad to Delhi to facilitate the travel of a large number of party workers. Following the Railway department's refusal, Congress leaders and workers staged a sit-in and raised slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The protest was led by Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president Mahesh Kumar Goud and attended by Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, Rajya Sabha MP Vem Narender Reddy, Khammam MP Raghuram Reddy, Anil Kumar Yadav, MLAs Naveen Yadav and Sri Ganesh, DCC presidents Mota Rohit and Deepak John, Dr. Kota Neelima and other party leaders.

A large number of Congress workers from across Hyderabad participated in the agitation, demanding that the railway authorities reconsider their decision and facilitate the party's travel arrangements for the Delhi protest.

Kukatpally MLA seeks transparent selection of 2BHK beneficiaries

TFP I RAVI KUMAR
MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI, OCT 28

Kukatpally MLA Madhavaram Krishna Rao met District Collector Manu Chaudhary, IAS on Wednesday and submitted a petition seeking the speedy allotment of double-bedroom houses to eligible poor families in his constituency.



The MLA said nearly 25,000 families in Kukatpally had been waiting for housing for several years. He urged the authorities to conduct a transparent beneficiary selection process and prioritise eligible applicants in the allotment of the 39,000 double-bedroom houses reportedly available across Telangana.

Kukatpally has emerged as one of the areas with the highest demand for affordable urban housing in the city. This follows Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's broader declaration to construct and allocate 1 lakh free units for low-income families across 19 urban Assembly constituencies in Hyderabad under the Indiramma Housing Scheme.

BRS leaders detained ahead of Musi project public consultation

TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

Senior Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader and former minister Sabitha Indra Reddy and her son Karthik Reddy, the party's Rajendranagar in-charge, were placed under house arrest by Mathura Nagar police at their residence in Srinagar Colony, Hyderabad, on Wednesday.



Sabitha Indra Reddy expressed anger over the police action, alleging that a large number of police personnel had been deployed at her residence from 4 am without prior notice, despite no protest call being given. She alleged that the government was imposing an emergency-like situation in the state.

Reacting to the arrests, BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao criticised the police action in a post on social media platform X, alleging that the leaders were detained to prevent them from participating in a public consultation on the Musi River project.

KTR accused Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy of suppressing the opposition and alleged that the proposed Rs 1.5 lakh crore Musi project was being pursued at the expense of farmers and families living along the river.

He also criticised the government for failing to provide adequate compensation to farmers whose crops had withered due to drought.

He said the party would continue its agitation against the Musi project and demanded relief for drought-affected farming families.

Court restrains Balmoor Venkat, Addanki Dayakar from making allegations against KTR

TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

The Hyderabad City Civil Court has issued interim orders restraining MLCs Balmoor Venkat and Addanki Dayakar from making further allegations against BRS Working President K T Rama Rao (KTR) concerning issues raised in his Rs 10 crore defamation suit.



KTR filed the suit challenging allegations linking him to drug consumption and drug culture, as well as claims concerning his personal relationships with women, film personalities and other prominent individuals.

He contended that the circulation of such allegations through videos, interviews and news reports without proper verification had damaged his reputation.

Senior Advocate P Vishwajanani, appearing for KTR, presented arguments before the court on Wednesday. After hearing the arguments, the court issued interim orders in the matter.

The court also directed media organisations, including Mana Tholi Velugu TV, ABN Telugu and Vahini TV, among others, to remove previously published videos and news reports containing the disputed allegations.

It further directed that such content relating to the issues raised in the suit should not be published in the future.

Rice Millers given one week to clear pending CMR dues



TFP I FAROOQ KHAN
RANGAREDDY, OCT 28

Rangareddy Additional Collector (Revenue) K. Chandra Reddy, IAS directed rice millers in Rangareddy district to clear all pending Custom Milling Rice (CMR) dues within one week, warning that failure to meet the deadline would invite action under government rules. At a review meeting with defaulting rice millers at the district Collectorate on Tuesday, Chandra Reddy examined outstanding dues relating to paddy procurement from the Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2014–15 to 2024–25. He instructed officials to expedite recovery in accordance with Government Order G.O.Ms. No. 17.

The Additional Collector said the millers were being given a final opportunity to settle their outstanding amounts and urged them to make payments without delay. He warned that further action would be initiated against those who failed to clear their dues within the stipulated period.

ACB catches Banjara Hills SI, Legal Metrology Inspector in accepting bribe

TFP I SAUD SIDDIQUI
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday reported two separate bribery cases involving a Sub-Inspector of Police at Banjara Hills Police Station and a Legal Metrology Inspector from Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, along with a private person.

In the first case, ACB registered a criminal misconduct case against Kottoor Vijay, Sub-Inspector of Police at Banjara Hills Police Station, for allegedly demanding a bribe from a complainant in exchange for official favours in connection with court-referred Crime Nos. 524/2024 and 525/2024.

According to the ACB statement, the officer initially demanded Rs 10 lakh, which was subsequently reduced and settled at Rs 1 lakh. The alleged favours included not arresting the complainant, issuing notices under Section 41-A Cr.P.C., accepting replies to the notices and ensuring that no fresh cases were registered against him in connection with the matter.

In the second case, ACB officials from the Nalgonda Range caught K Venkateswarlu, Inspector of Legal Metrology, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, and a private person, Kasaram Ravinder, a petrol pump technician, on October 28.

Ravinder accepted a bribe of Rs 20,000 from the complainant at L B Nagar in Hyderabad on the inspector's instructions. The amount was allegedly sought as a reward for issuing a verification certificate and handing over the daily sales register of the complainant's petrol bunk.



BJP picks Hardeep Puri as RS candidate from MP

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday announced Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, as its candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh, after the latter was dropped from the party's list of candidates from Uttar Pradesh.

In a statement, the BJP said that the party's central election committee has approved Puri's name for the bypoll.



Hardeep Puri

This comes after the Election Commission of India announced a by-election to fill a vacancy in the Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh. The vacancy arose due to the resignation of L. Murugan, whose term was originally scheduled to continue until April 2, 2030.

Hardeep Singh Puri, the only Sikh minister in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Cabinet, was earlier elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Uttar Pradesh. His current Rajya Sabha term ends in November.

The party has sent Puri, 74, to the Rajya Sabha twice. He had also unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha elections. (IANS)

PM Modi's takes swipe at Congress party's performance in MLC polls

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday took a swipe at the Congress over its dismal performance in the recently held Legislative Council polls across four states, despite the use of ballot papers in the polling process.

The Congress has drawn a blank in three states and also remains out of the reckoning in Maharashtra, where the counting is reportedly underway for five seats.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

In a post on social media platform 'X', Prime Minister Modi said, "MLC elections in 28 seats across 4 big states - Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and Karnataka."

"Elections held using ballot papers. Guess how many seats Congress won?" PM Modi remarked.

This comes amid the Opposition's demand for Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's resignation amid allegations of irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The MLC polls results assumes significance as the INDIA Bloc prepares to hold a mega rally against the vote theft allegations at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan on November 1, despite strong protests from the ruling NDA, traders and the Sikh community as the date is linked to the 1984 riots.

Earlier in the day, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also remarked that the Congress "failed to make an impact" in the Legislative Council elections across four states despite ballot papers being used to conduct the polling, while accusing Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, of making "false allegations" against the country's electoral process.

Echoing similar view, Union Education Minister Pralhad Joshi also took a jibe at the Congress party on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the Samajwadi Party (SP) emerged victorious in the Agra. (IANS)

Oppn slams 'Save Democracy, Remove Anarchy' march

Questions difference in granting rally permissions

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

Opposition leaders on Wednesday criticised the BJP's 'Save Democracy, Remove Anarchy' march ahead of the Congress' mega rally in Delhi, accusing the ruling party of undermining democratic institutions and misusing government machinery to target opposing parties.



Speaking to IANS, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader, Priyanka Chaturvedi, said democracy needed to be protected from the BJP, alleging that the party had weakened several institutions, including the Election Commission, financial institutions and investigative agencies.

"I am laughing just hearing this. Democracy needs to be saved from the Bharatiya Janata Party, given the way it is undermining every institution, whether it is the Election Commission, our financial institutions or our investigative agencies. The way the BJP has misused these institutions to form, weaken and break parties is why we are protesting to save democracy. This has become a case of the pot calling the kettle black," she said.

CPI(M) leader Hannan Mollah said every political party had the right to organise marches, rallies and protests, but questioned the alleged differences in the way the government and administration treated programmes organised by the ruling BJP and the Opposition.

"Any political party has the right to organise its programmes, marches, rallies and protests. However, how the government and administration treat these events is important. If it is a ruling party's programme, all arrangements are made, and government resources are used. But when it is an Opposition party's programme, numerous restrictions are imposed. The conditions imposed for Ramlila Maidan are the height of brutality," he said.

Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit also took a swipe at the BJP's proposed march, saying the party risked inviting public ridicule by organising a programme to "save democracy".

"Absolutely, you want to undertake a march to save democracy. Go ahead. That is a different matter that people on the streets will laugh at you. Anyway, if they want to make themselves a laughing stock, they can go ahead," he said.

Dikshit also questioned the BJP's choice of the Red Fort as the starting point for the march, referring to the historical significance of the monument and the party's approach to Mughal history.

"I want to ask one thing: The Red Fort is a symbol of Mughal power. Why do they keep coming back to this place? According to me, the Red Fort does not even exist in the history they have presented, because they have not included the Mughals in history. So, how will they start a foot march from a monument that does not even exist? You should ask them this question as well," he added.

NCP(SP) spokesperson Anish Gawande questioned the alleged disparity in granting permission for political rallies, asking why the BJP was allowed to organise its programmes while other groups faced restrictions. (IANS)

Assam Rifles DG reviews security

IMPHAL, OCT 28

Assam Rifles Director General Lieutenant General Vikas Lakhera, who is on a two-day visit to Manipur, on Wednesday reviewed border security arrangements and the progress of fencing work along the India-Myanmar border in the state, officials said.

Assam Rifles sources said that continuing operational review in Manipur, the Assam Rifles Director General visited Moreh and Chongjang in Tengnoupal District, which shares border with Myanmar, to assess the prevailing security situation and review the progress of border fencing work.

During the visit, Lt General Lakhera inspected key border crossing points and interacted with local residents. He emphasised the importance of effective surveillance, heightened operational preparedness and robust border management to ensure sustained vigilance and security in the region. Five Manipur districts – Churachandpur, Tengnoupal, Chandel, Kamjong and Ukhrul -- share a 398 km unfenced international border with Myanmar. (IANS)

CJP backs INDIA bloc's November 1 rally against SIR

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Wednesday announced its support for the INDIA bloc's November 1 rally against alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, while renewing its demand for the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

In a statement issued on social media, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke criticised the electoral roll revision exercise, alleging that it had raised concerns over the possible deletion of eligible voters' names and the protection of their constitutional voting rights.

The party argued that the Election Commission of India (ECI) must ensure that every eligible citizen retains the opportunity to exercise their franchise, maintaining that the integrity of electoral rolls was fundamental to a functioning democracy.

"The fundamental principle of democracy is that people get to choose their government, not that the government gets to choose its voters," the CJP said, reiterating its opposition to the manner in which the SIR exercise was being conducted.

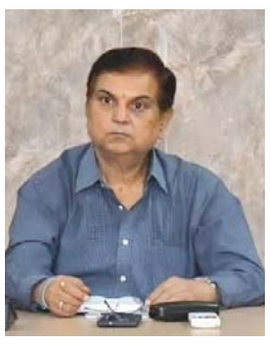
Announcing its backing for the opposition bloc's proposed demonstration, Dipke posted a strongly worded message on social media, declaring, "GYANU MUST GO! The Cockroach Janta Party extends its support to the INDIA Bloc's November 1 rally. Nation above all!" (IANS/UNI)

AP State Election Commission postpones MPTC, ZPTC polling

AMARAVATI, OCT 28

Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission has rescheduled the date of polling for MPTC and ZPTC elections from November 3 to November 5.

The State Election Commission on Wednesday issued a notification rescheduling the polling in view of the change in the schedule for urban local body elections following the Supreme Court order.



As per the revised schedule, polling for Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTCs) and Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies (ZPTCs) will be held on November 5. Repoll, if any, will be conducted on November 6, while counting of votes will be taken up on November 7.

State Election Commissioner Anil Chandra Punetha on Wednesday spoke to the Collectors & District Election Authorities of a few cyclone-affected districts. After the assessment of the situation and based on the assurances given by them, the State Election Commission decided that there is no need to reschedule the polling for urban local bodies.

Accordingly, polling in urban local bodies will be held as scheduled on November 1.

The State Election Commission on October 22 had revised the schedule for urban local bodies. The date of polling was rescheduled from October 28 to November 1 as the publication of the lists of contesting candidates was postponed to October 25, in compliance with the orders of the Supreme Court. (IANS)

Jan Suraaj makes inroads into Bihar MLC

PATNA, OCT 28

Following Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor's triumph in the Bankipur Assembly bypoll, the party has expanded its footprint in state politics by securing its first seat in the Bihar Legislative Council.

In a significant political breakthrough, Jan Suraaj party candidate Suresh Prasad Rai won the Darbhanga Teachers' MLC seat, defeating sitting Congress MLC Madan Mohan Jha by a margin of 324 votes.

According to official election data, Suresh Prasad Rai polled 2,574 votes against Madan Mohan Jha's 2,187.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) candidate Ramdev Rai received 1,498 votes, while Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) nominee Kumar Raut managed 126 votes.

The multi-cornered contest among the Congress, RJD, and CPI(M) fragmented the traditional opposition vote share, creating a clear opening for the newly formed Jan Suraaj party.

The outcome dealt a major blow to Congress. Madan Mohan Jha, a former Bihar Congress president and former cabinet minister in the Grand Alliance government, had represented the constituency for the previous two terms. (IANS)

Bengal soil theft case

KOLKATA, OCT 28

Sumit Roy, the executive assistant of Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha member Abhishek Banerjee, on Wednesday, was shown as arrested by the Diamond District Police in soil theft case. Roy is already serving judicial custody after he was arrested on September 10 this year by the sleuths of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the West Bengal Police, in connection with a multi-crore illegal land-grabbing case at Salboni in West Midnapore district of West Bengal. With the Diamond Harbour Police showing him as arrested in a new case, political observers feel that additional pressure has started mounting . (IANS)

Zeeshan Siddique named NCP Mumbai Chief

MUMBAI, OCT 28

In a major organisational reshuffle within the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), party legislator Zeeshan Siddique was appointed as the Mumbai Regional President. The formal appointment letter was handed over to Siddique on Tuesday by NCP National President and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar.



The appointment letter emphasises continuing the progressive legacy of late leader Ajit Dada Pawar, upholding the tradition of public service, and strengthening the party's grassroots commitment to the common citizens. Zeeshan Siddique, who lost the 2024 Assembly elections from Bandra East constituency, is the son of the late veteran politician Baba Siddique. The NCP leadership expressed firm confidence that under Siddique's stewardship, energy, and dedication, the party organisation in Mumbai will become significantly stronger, more effective, and deeply people-centric.

The appointment marks a crucial step for the NCP as it reorganises its leadership framework in India's financial capital to bolster its urban outreach and grassroots influence. Zeeshan's appointment comes when NCP had failed to increase its tally in the recently held BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation elections. (IANS)

TVK eyes 85% local body seats to strengthen grassroots link; allies seek greater share

CHENNAI, OCT 28

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) is preparing to contest the local body elections, with its leadership seeking around 85 per cent of seats and proposing to leave the remaining 15 per cent to its allies, according to party functionaries.



The elections, likely to be in January 2027, are being viewed within the party as a test of its grassroots strength, particularly in rural areas, and its ability to draw support from women, workers, young people and other sections of the electorate.

However, the proposed allocation could pose a challenge during seat-sharing negotiations. Allies, including Congress and the Muslim League, are expecting a larger share of seats and opportunities to secure mayoral positions, the functionaries said.

Some alliance partners are also considering demands for control of certain municipal corporations and municipalities.

TVK, meanwhile, wants to retain control of all municipal corporations, making the distribution of leadership positions another potentially contentious issue. Senior party leaders and ministers are expected to hold discussions with the allies to persuade them to accept the proposed 15 per cent allocation.

The partners, citing their support for TVK's rise to power, are determined to press for greater representation.

Alongside the alliance negotiations, TVK has begun identifying candidates capable of taking on the networks of the DMK and AIADMK. Party functionaries said ministers, legislators and district secretaries would lead election preparations. Information is being gathered on constituencies where TVK has strong prospects, with local influence and sustained public engagement expected to guide candidate selection. (IANS/UNI)

India to sharpen offensive against Pak at FATF

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



As the plenary meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) gets underway on Wednesday, all eyes will be on India's move to corner Pakistan on terror funding.

Over the last few days, there have been several backchannel talks whereby India has instructed its diplomats from other nations to drum up as much support as possible so that India can make out its case against Pakistan's terror-funding activities.

An official said the main focus would be around Jaish-e-Mohammed and its chief Masood Azhar. At the FATF plenary, Indian officials would build a strong case against Azhar, while accusing Pakistan of doing little or nothing to curb his activities, the official said.

After the push made in 2018, Pakistan was placed in the Grey List. This was thanks to the sustained action by India and the United States and its global allies against Lashkar-e-Taiba. India had also brought up the issue of Jaish-e-Mohammed during the 2018-2019 enforcement period and cited the terror outfit's role in the Pulwama attack.

This time around, New Delhi has sharpened its focus on the Jaish-e-Mohammed and its chief Masood Azhar. All these years, Pakistan got away with it by stating that Azhar is in Afghanistan. At that time, Pakistan and Afghanistan shared good ties, and this helped Pakistan conceal Azhar's whereabouts. (IANS)

Security forces recover arms, explosives and drugs across Manipur

IMPHAL, OCT 28



Security forces recovered large caches of arms, ammunition and explosives from Imphal East, Thoubal and the Bongbal Khullen foothills, while arrests were made in Churachandpur, Senapati, Bishnupur and Imphal East in connection with drug and arms cases, according to Manipur Police today.

A team from the Special Commando Unit of Manipur Police and 33 Assam Rifles today recovered a cache of weapons at Pukhao Terapur in Imphal East.

The haul included four sophisticated pistols with magazines, one Lathode launcher, four single-barrel guns and six hand grenades. Security personnel also seized 69 assorted rounds of ammunition and other items, including 17 iron bullet-proof plates, 22 Kevlar helmets, grenade detonators and arm rings.

In a separate joint operation, Thoubal Police Commandos and 33 Assam Rifles recovered two SMG carbines, four double/single-barrel guns, three pistols, four hand grenades and two detonators from the Ikop Pat area of Thoubal District today.

They also seized 39 rounds of live ammunition and assorted magazines.

Police said on October 26 night, a joint team of Churachandpur District Police, 129 Bn CRPF and 5 Assam Rifles launched an intelligence-based operation at Kingkin village near M. Songgel. (IANS)

Cabinet okays PM VGSY with Rs 7,395 crore outlay



NEW DELHI, OCT 28

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved the Centrally sponsored Pradhan Mantri Viksit Gram Swaraj Yojana (PM VGSY) for implementation from 2026-27 to 2030-31 with an outlay of Rs 7,395.55 crore.

The central share in the scheme is Rs 4,869.48 crore while the state share is Rs 2,526.07 crore. It will be co-terminus with the Sixteenth Finance Commission period, according to an official statement.

Around 32 lakh elected representatives, along with panchayat functionaries and other stakeholders, across over 2.55 lakh panchayats and traditional local bodies will be direct beneficiaries of the scheme. Each awareness-generation episode will reach at least 1 crore citizens.

The scheme aims to support the preparation of 2.55 lakh holistic Gram Panchayat Development Plans annually on the eGramSwaraj Portal, bringing together village priorities, interventions of concerned Central and State departments, and available resources through participatory and evidence-based planning.

Its impact will reach at least 1 crore citizens in each coordinated awareness-generation exercise, using existing digital and outreach platforms, Gram Sabhas and other Panchayat forums to improve understanding of relevant Government schemes and national initiatives and encourage informed discussion of their local implications.

The scheme will strengthen governance capabilities of around 32 lakh elected representatives, along with Panchayat functionaries and other stakeholders, annually, through capacity building and digital handholding to improve holistic planning, communication with citizens, resource management and progress towards locally relevant Sustainable Development Goals. (IANS)

India, US discuss defence partnership

CEBU (PHILIPPINES), OCT 28



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held a meeting with the US Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth, on the sidelines of the 13th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in the Philippines' Cebu on Wednesday, during which both sides took stock of progress on operational coordination, information sharing, and defence industrial cooperation.

Both ministers exchanged views on areas for further collaboration and committed to expanding the major defence partnership between India and the US in support of shared interests across the region.

"The two leaders hailed the one-year anniversary of the Framework for the US-India Major Defence Partnership. They took stock of progress on operational coordination, information sharing, and defense industrial cooperation. They noted the recent bilateral exercise Yudh Abhyas, which highlighted the many areas of progress in the defence relationship," the US Department of War mentioned in a statement.

Singh stated that the robust India-US partnership continues to be a cornerstone for a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific.

"Had an excellent meeting with US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth on the sidelines of the 13th ADMM-Plus. We reviewed the progress of our 10-year India-US Defence Framework, driving strategic convergence across military technology, information sharing, and co-production. Our robust partnership continues to be a cornerstone for a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific," Singh posted on X after the meeting. (IANS)

Villagers demand forest rights in Bengal

SILIGURI, OCT 28

The agitation by people from 18 villages near Buxa Tiger Reserve will continue despite the Alipurduar district administration calling a meeting on November 1 to discuss their demands.

The protesters have been staging a sit-in demonstration for more than three weeks near the main gate of Buxa Tiger Reserve at Rajabhatkhawa. They have made it clear that the agitation will not be withdrawn before the outcome of the meeting is known.

The protesters are demanding forest rights and the abolition of the collection of money from vehicles through a check post set up on a PWD road.

The meeting has been called by the Additional District Magistrate of Alipurduar. The district administration has invited three ministers, an MP and two MLAs to attend the meeting.

The ministers invited are Deepak Kumar Barman, Minister of Education, Manoj Kumar Oraon, Minister of Forests, and Bishal Lama, Minister of State for Home and Hill Affairs. (IANS)

KIIFB row rocks Kerala Assembly

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT 28



Kerala Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan on Wednesday accused the previous government of wrecking the state's finances through the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), triggering a sharp exchange with the Opposition in the Assembly.

Replying to an adjournment motion moved by former Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal over the alleged stalling of KIIFB projects, CM Satheesan said projects worth Rs 70,000 crore remained to be completed, but there was no clear plan to raise the money required.

He said KIIFB projects worth Rs 25,000 crore had been completed, and work worth Rs 31,761 crore was continuing.

The government would complete projects already started, he assured the House.

However, KIIFB had no revenue-generating projects to meet its commitments, the Chief Minister said.

He also claimed that the state had lost Rs 12,000 crore in borrowing capacity after its borrowing limit was reduced.

CM Satheesan alleged that KIIFB had functioned as a separate empire, appointing personnel and borrowing money without adequate control by the Finance Department.

The Board would now function under the department's control, he said.

The Chief Minister turned the Opposition's corporate agenda charge against it, pointing out that Balagopal himself had raised objections to KIIFB borrowing when he was Finance Minister.

"How can an expert committee report be described as a corporate agenda?" CM Satheesan asked, challenging Balagopal to explain his earlier objections.

He also dismissed allegations that the government was sabotaging KIIFB projects and warned that those responsible for looting the state exchequer would not be spared. Balagopal strongly defended KIIFB, crediting it with transforming Kerala's infrastructure over the past decade.

He cited national highway land acquisition, roads in hilly regions and the proposed Wayanad tunnel road as examples of projects supported through the funding mechanism.

The CM said projects had been sanctioned without political discrimination and accused the UDF of opposing KIIFB from the beginning.

Calling the UDF the "Chathiyan Chanthu" that had destroyed KIIFB, Balagopal challenged the government's claims about stalled projects. (IANS/UNI)

India seeks release of national in Ukraine

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

India has been engaged in talks with the Ukrainian government to bring back an Indian national currently held in custody there, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Wednesday.

Addressing a bi-weekly media briefing in New Delhi on Wednesday, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that India has been making efforts to bring back Indian nationals serving in the Russian armed forces.

"Regarding Ukraine, talks are ongoing with the Ukrainian government concerning an Indian national who is in custody there. We are making efforts to bring him back to India. Consular visits have also been conducted to check on his well-being. As for Russia, I have previously shared the figures, based on the information available to us, regarding the number of Indian nationals still serving in the Russian armed forces. We are continuing our efforts to secure their early release," said Jaiswal when asked about the Indian national held in custody in Ukraine and Indians in Russia amid the ongoing conflict.

On the action taken by India in this regard, Jaiswal said, "We have issued several advisories on this in the past two years and action have been taken by law enforcement agencies against travel agents and other individuals, agents involved in the wrongdoing." (IANS)

DIWALI BONANZA

Cabinet hikes Dearness Allowance by 3%

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



In a relief for millions amid the ongoing festive season, the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved to release an additional instalment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to Central Government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners.

The combined impact on the exchequer on account of increase in both Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief would be Rs 10,016.10 crore per annum.

This will benefit about 48.54 lakh Central Government employees and 68.71 lakh pensioners, according to a Cabinet statement.

The decision will come into effect from July 1, 2026, representing an increase of 3 per cent over the existing rates of 60 per cent of the Basic Pay/Pension, to compensate against price rise.

The Cabinet said that the increase is in accordance with the accepted formula, which is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission.

Meanwhile, the eighth Central Pay Commission is holding consultations on pay and pension-related matters. The discussions are expected to focus on pay conditions and submissions from all stakeholders.

The eighth Central Pay Commission is led by former Supreme Court Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai while its members include Pankaj Jain, a former IAS officer serving as Member-Secretary, and Pulak Ghosh, a tenured Professor of Finance and a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. (IANS)

Union Minister Paswan backs livelihood initiative

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
NEW DELHI, OCT. 26



Union Minister for Food Processing Industries Chirag Paswan attended the "Enable to Empower – Carts for a Cause" initiative organised by Rasoi on Wheels Foundation, led by Manika Badhwar, in association with the CII Indian Women Network (IWN), Delhi Chapter.

The initiative aims to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for underprivileged people and persons with disabilities by promoting self-employment, financial independence and dignity. Funds were raised to provide livelihood carts, while Diwali stalls set up by partner NGOs showcased handmade products made by artisans.

Arjun Singh and Lata Bora of Nirvaan MSB Foundation extended support to the initiative. The Social Responsibility Vertical of CII IWN Delhi, led by Minica Garg, Jasleen Shah, Shivani Chandhok and Sunita Agarwal, spearheaded the programme. Those present included Ruchika Jain, Chairperson of CII IWN Delhi; Co-Chair Vani Bajaj; former chair Nandini Chaudhary; executive committee members and other network members.

Rasoi on Wheels Foundation thanked CII IWN Delhi for its association and The Country Club, Sainik Farms, for hosting the event. The initiative highlighted the participating organisations' efforts to promote inclusive growth and community welfare through sustainable livelihood opportunities. Rasoi on Wheels Foundation works in community welfare, inclusion and empowerment, while CII IWN, an initiative of the Confederation of Indian Industry, supports women professionals, entrepreneurs and leaders. Nirvaan MSB Foundation focuses on social welfare and community development.

THE FREEDOM PRESS

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER 2026

India-EU FTA needs framework

The India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) offers an opportunity to strengthen trade and economic cooperation between the two economies by reducing trade barriers and expanding market access. While the agreement awaits the necessary approval process in the EU, India can begin preparing for its effective implementation. Coordinated efforts involving government agencies, industry, academia and technical institutions will be essential to ensure that Indian exporters benefit from the agreement while adapting to evolving international trade standards.

A successful implementation framework requires the identification of nodal agencies, clarity on regulatory procedures and a platform for sharing knowledge and best practices. Industry stakeholders have welcomed the agreement but remain concerned about meeting the EU's changing sustainability and compliance requirements. The EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EUCS3D) places greater emphasis on identifying environmental and labour-related risks across supply chains. Indian exporters will therefore need to strengthen traceability, labour audits, carbon management, data collection, testing and certification, which could increase operational costs, particularly for small businesses and farmers.

The Indian government has already taken steps to strengthen domestic regulatory mechanisms and align trade practices with international standards. Following the implementation of the four Labour Codes, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade amended the Foreign Trade Policy through Notification No. 23/2026-27 to prohibit imports of goods produced using forced labour. Such measures reflect India's efforts to promote responsible business practices while protecting the credibility of its exports. Continued policy coordination will be necessary as EU regulations evolve, ensuring that Indian businesses receive clear guidance and sufficient time to adapt.

The cost of compliance will depend partly on the availability and recognition of testing, certification and audit agencies in both markets. Greater cooperation between Indian and European institutions, including mutual recognition arrangements where feasible, could reduce duplication and make compliance more affordable. Small exporters also face difficulties tracking their products beyond the immediate buyer, limiting their visibility into final markets and downstream supply chains. Although APEDA and commodity boards are developing technology-driven, product-specific traceability systems, India could benefit from a broader national framework, drawing lessons from countries such as the Republic of Korea, which is pursuing nationwide infrastructure for cross-border paperless trade. A coordinated approach to financing and technology is equally important. The government could engage European importers, EU funding institutions and Indian exporters to explore investment in a robust national traceability infrastructure. Such an approach would help avoid duplication among multiple government-led systems and reduce the burden on businesses. Innovative co-financing arrangements and more effective use of existing resources could support testing, certification, digital documentation and compliance-related investments, particularly for small and medium enterprises that have limited financial and technical capacity.

A Government-Industry-Academic Task Force on EUCS3D could provide the institutional framework needed to address these challenges. Representatives from relevant government bodies, including APEDA and export agencies, Indian and European industry associations, certification and testing institutions, and academic and technical experts could jointly identify regulatory gaps and implementation priorities. The task force could map existing traceability systems, examine overlapping audits and documentation requirements, and recommend practical solutions to technology, funding and certification gaps. A common framework would also help exporters access reliable information instead of navigating multiple agencies and procedures independently.

India's bond market is bleeding, and the 'Savers' are losing

DEEPANSHU MOHAN



Oil, war, and a hawkish central bank have made Indian government bonds cheaper than at any point since early 2023. The damage to existing holders is real. So is the opportunity for new ones.

The 10-year yield, which ended 2025 below 6.6%, touched about 7.46% on October 23. The Reserve Bank of India raised the repo rate to 5.50% on October 7, its first increase since February 2023, and moved its stance from neutral to "calibrated tightening". Minutes of that meeting hinted at more to come. Retail inflation reached 5.54% in September, while wholesale inflation hit 11.39%, the highest in the current series. Several gilt funds recorded their worst twelve-month returns since at least 2014 in the year to May.

In the United States, where the 10-year Treasury yield reached 5.3% this month for the first time since 2007, a growing view holds that rising yields lay the groundwork for better returns. The argument applies to India too, though local conditions shape who benefits.

Start with the arithmetic. A bond's yield acts as a buffer against price losses. The benchmark 10-year paper has a modified duration of close to seven years, so a one percentage point rise in yields cuts its price by about 7%. At today's yield, rates would have to rise by about 1.2 percentage points in the next twelve months before a buyer ended the year with a loss. For a five-year government bond yielding above 7%, the buffer is closer to 1.7 points. In 2021, when the 10-year hovered around 6.2%, it was nearer to 0.9 point.

Bank deposits tell a different story. Bond prices adjust within minutes of a policy surprise, while deposit rates lag by months. SBI's highest fixed deposit rate is 6.40%. The five-year government bond yields more than 7%, and 10-year AAA corporate bonds were near 7.8% at the end of September. SBI's chairman said this month that banks may not raise deposit rates for two to three months, citing ample liquidity.

Banks park much of their deposits in government securities that now yield above what they pay savers. Through RBI Retail Direct, gilt funds or target maturity funds, a household can earn that difference for itself. The cost falls hardest on rural India, where September inflation was 6.08% against 4.88% in cities, and households rely on bank deposits.

Gains on debt mutual funds bought since April 2023 are taxed at slab rates without indexation, the same as FD interest. One advantage remains. FD interest is taxed every year as it accrues, while fund gains are taxed only when units are sold. That deferral compounds over time.

The bigger force on Indian bonds this year has been oil. India imports close to 90% of the crude oil it uses. After US and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the Indian crude basket rose from $69 to $117 a barrel within weeks. Brent was above $113 on October 22 after Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia.

Most of this year's rise in yields traces back to crude. Expensive oil lifts inflation and pushes the RBI towards higher rates. It swells the import bill and weakens the rupee, and defending the currency drains cash from the banking system. The RBI has added to the squeeze by selling bonds and raising banks' daily cash reserve maintenance requirement to 99% from 90%.

A lasting settlement that brought oil down would run the chain in reverse. A long-dated gilt fund offers the retail investor one of the simplest ways to position for peace in the Gulf without recourse to derivatives.

The exposure carries a cost. This week, a stock market selloff in America sent investors into Treasuries and pushed the US 10-year back below 5%. Over the same days, Indian yields rose because oil climbed. An oil shock hurts Indian bonds and Indian stocks together. Gilt funds may steady a portfolio through a growth slowdown, but they offer little shelter from a supply shock.

India also feels the Federal Reserve more than it once did. In December 2013, India's 10-year yield was more than six percentage points above the US's 10-year. Today, the gap is about two and a half. JP Morgan began adding Indian government bonds to its emerging market index in June 2024, and tax incentives this year drew record foreign buying, which ties Indian gilts more closely to Washington. A narrow gap also limits how far the RBI can cut once oil eases, so the eventual rally in bond prices may be smaller than in earlier cycles.

Yields may well go higher first. Nomura and SBI Research expect another RBI hike in December, and the October minutes leaned the same way. If Brent stays above $110 and more of it reaches pump prices, the 10-year could climb well past its current level before it turns.

This is where the starting yield matters. With the 10-year near 7.5%, yields can rise by roughly another percentage point over twelve months before a buyer is out of pocket. Timing the peak becomes far less important.

For most savers, the sensible core is three- to five-year government and AAA bonds, where the yield is high, and the buffer is wide. Long duration belongs in a smaller slice of money that will not be needed for at least five years, held as a bet that oil prices normalise. AA bonds deserve caution. They pay about 0.75 percentage point more than AAA paper, and defaults in a high-rate, slowing economy can cost far more than that extra yield.

High yields burden borrowers and reward patience. Indian savers currently enjoy an additional edge, since deposit rates have yet to catch up with the bond market. Such gaps seldom persist beyond a few quarters.

(Deepanshu Mohan is Dean and Professor of Economics, O.P. Jindal Global University)

Indian markets rally on IT strength

Indian equity markets extended their gains for a second consecutive week, recording their strongest weekly performance since April despite elevated crude oil prices, sustained foreign investor selling and weakness in global markets. The Nifty 50 advanced 2.77 per cent, or 625.7 points, to close at 23,146.15, while the BSE Sensex gained 3.11 per cent, or 2,256.94 points, to settle at 74,729.27. Market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies increased by more than Rs.7 lakh crore. Strong buying in information technology stocks, encouraging second-quarter earnings, rupee appreciation and continued domestic institutional investor support contributed to the recovery.

Information technology stocks emerged as the principal drivers, with the Nifty IT index surging 11.7 per cent, its biggest weekly gain in 18 years. Infosys CEO Salil Parekh's statement that artificial intelligence services accounted for more than 8 per cent of the company's second-quarter revenue and were growing at a double-digit sequential rate further strengthened sentiment. The performance of Indian IT companies, despite a sell-off in global technology stocks, has raised expectations about their ability to navigate AI-driven market volatility. The Nifty Media index gained more than 6 per cent, while Auto, Realty and Defence advanced 3 per cent, 2.7 per cent and 2.2 per cent, respectively. Healthcare, Pharma and FMCG declined, reflecting a shift towards growth-oriented and cyclical sectors.

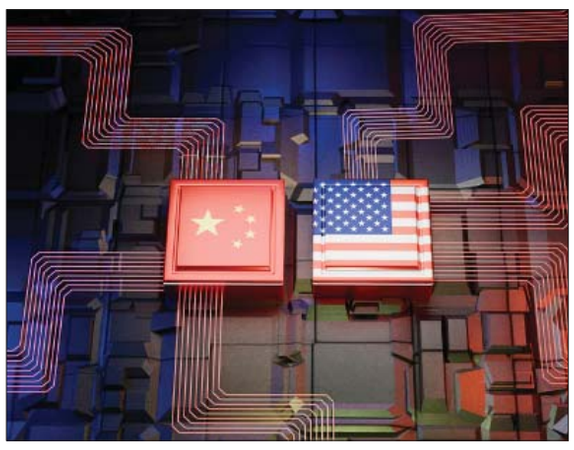
Broader market performance remained uneven, with the Nifty Midcap 100 rising 0.6 per cent and the Nifty Smallcap 100 ending largely unchanged. The rupee recovered 178 paise to close at 94.95 against the US dollar on October 16, compared with 96.73 on October 9, ending its two-week losing streak. Reserve Bank of India measures to support the currency and the postponement of UPI merchant discount rate charges also contributed to the improved domestic sentiment. However, foreign portfolio investors continued selling for an eighth consecutive week, offloading equities worth Rs.8,990.50 crore and taking their total sales for the month to Rs.48,769.01 crore. Brent crude prices remained a concern, rising from $104.95 per barrel at the beginning of the week to a high of $110 amid continuing conflict in the Middle East.

Indian markets outperformed Wall Street, where technology shares faced heavy selling amid higher-than-expected inflation data and the start of the third-quarter earnings season. The Nasdaq Composite fell 4.48 per cent, while the Russell 2000 declined 3.05 per cent; the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.67 per cent. The divergence highlights the importance of domestic earnings, institutional participation and sector-specific opportunities in supporting Indian equities amid international uncertainty. Nevertheless, the sharp rise in IT shares could invite profit-booking, while crude prices and foreign investor flows are likely to influence near-term market direction. Investors will also monitor upcoming corporate earnings for indications of sustained earnings growth.

Technical indicators point to an improving but not yet decisive recovery. The Nifty's weekly close of 23,146.15 followed a strong upward candle that confirmed a potential reversal pattern after a Doji formed near an established support trendline in the previous week. However, the index remains below its 40-week exponential moving average, while the Relative Momentum Index continues to indicate bearish momentum. The Foreign Institutional Investor net index position indicator stands at -1,067,911 but is improving from historically bearish levels, suggesting possible short-covering activity. Meanwhile, the Advanced Diffusion Indicator, which measures the proportion of Nifty 50 stocks with a daily Relative Strength Index of at least 50, has recovered above its trendline. The Net New One-Month Highs Indicator has also risen to 3.11, signalling improving market breadth. Sector rotation remains important in assessing the sustainability of the rally. In the Relative Rotation Graph, Media has moved from the weakening quadrant towards stronger relative performance, while Bank and Private Bank indices continue to show positive momentum. PSU Banks remain in the leading quadrant, although their momentum has eased, and IT continues to show relative strength despite a recent moderation in momentum.

The US-China tech cold war is moving undersea

RUTH POLLARD



When Australia's Defence Minister Richard Marles described the seabed as a battlefield at a regional defense gathering in Singapore earlier this year, he was preaching to the converted. The security of undersea cables - which carry more than 95% of data flows and trillions of dollars of daily financial transactions - was already top of mind for the senior military brass, geopolitical analysts and government ministers in the room.

A new project by Australia, the UK and the US was quickly announced to develop underwater drone technology to protect cables by 2027, while Singapore launched a 17-country framework covering Southeast Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Oceania to explore defense cooperation on critical infrastructure.

But while nations are racing to defend existing networks, the companies building Southeast Asia's digital architecture face a different challenge: avoiding maritime bottlenecks and the risk posed by China's expanding sea presence. The Strait of Malacca, the narrow passage between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, is particularly vulnerable due to the sheer concentration of cables traversing the corridor.

Already considered the Indo-Pacific's most critical chokepoint - it handles about 21% of global maritime trade by value - the Strait is increasingly being bypassed by major private subsea cable projects. Google's TalayLink, for instance, will connect Australia and Thailand via the Indian Ocean following a route west of the Sunda Strait that avoids the congested corridor.

But concentration isn't the only risk. Nowhere is the geopolitical contest over cable routes more evident than in the South China Sea, where China is using regulation and maritime enforcement to control who can build and repair cable infrastructure across the contested waters. Beijing is effectively trying to redraw the undersea cable map, while the US and its partners are finding new ways to push back.

Google and Meta Platforms Inc.'s Echo cable - which links the US to Singapore via Guam and Indonesia - shows how tech companies are redesigning Asia-Pacific networks to reduce their exposure to China. These giants have decided that avoiding Beijing is worth the added costs and the risk of laying cables in less suitable terrain.

Of course, it's tempting to dismiss this as yet more collateral damage from the US-China competition. But it will have long-lasting consequences. The routes chosen for this eye-wateringly expensive critical infrastructure will impact the region for decades to come, cementing ties between nations and increasingly isolating others. Samuel Bashfield, a research fellow at Melbourne-based La Trobe University and the author of two recent books including one on submarine cables, has written that installers are increasingly wary of working in the South China Sea, with many avoiding the area altogether.

Beyond deploying Chinese Coast Guard ships to harass repair crews or prevent them from accessing the cable grounds, Beijing has effectively locked out non-Chinese subsea fiber projects through onerous permitting requirements, he said. These delays have forced some new projects to reroute entirely, hugging coastlines and plowing cables into shallow seabeds, a less-than-ideal solution for network resilience, Bashfield told me.

The $700 million Asia Connect Cable System, led by startup Inligo Networks, for example, will skirt the South China Sea by running through Indonesia and the Philippines. The Pacific Light Cable Network, linking the US to Taiwan and the Philippines, underwent a similar transformation after its planned Hong Kong connection was abandoned following American intervention.

The US has devoted considerable effort to convince Southeast Asian and Pacific nations to shun Chinese vendors in favor of American, Japanese or European alternatives. Both superpowers fear that foreign involvement in cable infrastructure could enable intelligence gathering or sabotage. Washington regards Chinese technology as a security risk, while Beijing has raised similar concerns about American and Japanese equipment.

Amid mounting US scrutiny, Huawei agreed in 2019 to sell its 51% stake in Huawei Marine Networks to China's Hengtong Optic-Electric, which also acquired its British partner's interest. The cable-building business was subsequently renamed HMN Technologies Co. Yet its ownership and technological origins mean the US and allies like Japan and Australia want to reduce its use across Asia.

They have clocked up some recent successes: In August, Australia announced that every Pacific Islands Forum member was connected to the global undersea cable network for the first time. That's a significant achievement, but it doesn't mean that Chinese companies have been excluded from the Pacific altogether. The next battleground is data centers. Countries financing submarine cables will also need to help build the infrastructure needed to store and process data locally, or risk Chinese suppliers filling that gap.

Much of that work will fall to Japan, which plays a critical role both as a manufacturer and as a connectivity hub between North America and Asia. NEC Corp. alone is one of the world's largest subsea cable builders. Tokyo needs to utilize groupings such as the Quad that includes the US, Japan, India, and Australia, as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to strengthen systems in the Indo-Pacific and expand cable-laying capacity to help reduce China's dominance. Asean leaders are due to gather in Manila next month, where a Quad leaders' meeting is also planned. Undersea cable security should be high on their agenda.

There is, however, an irony in efforts to curb Beijing's influence over critical cable routes: Much of that power is instead concentrating in the hands of a small group of American technology giants. What could possibly go wrong?

(Ruth Pollard is a Opinion columnist covering Asia politics and policy)

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

India, Mexico launch preferential trade agreement negotiations

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



The government on Wednesday said India and Mexico have taken a decisive step towards a stronger economic partnership with the signing of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between the two nations.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal and Luis Rosendo Gutierrez Romano, Mexico's Undersecretary of Foreign Trade, formally launched the trade negotiations.

"Our shared ambition: expand trade, unlock investment, strengthen supply chains and create new opportunities for businesses in both countries," the Department of Commerce said in a statement on X.

India and Mexico are ready to turn untapped potential into tangible prosperity through balanced, ambitious and mutually beneficial negotiations, the statement added.

The proposed India-Mexico trade agreement is expected to cover key Indian exports, including automobiles, textiles, footwear, plastics, steel, chemicals and toys, which face tariffs of up to 50 per cent under Mexico's new tariff regime.

According to official trade data, India's merchandise exports to Mexico stood at $5.73 billion in 2025-26, with automobiles accounting for the largest share at $1.92 billion.

The Commerce Secretary arrived in Mexico City for a two-day official visit to advance trade and economic ties. He held a fruitful discussion with Fernando Gonzalez Saiffe, Director General for Asia-Pacific, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE), on India-Mexico relations and opportunities to learn from each other through mutual cooperation, leveraging our respective strengths and advancements.

He appreciated Mexico's keen interest in strengthening political exchanges and reaffirmed India's shared commitment to mutual growth and prosperity. (IANS)

India strengthens financial cybersecurity

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



India is strengthening the security of its financial infrastructure through a combination of physical decentralisation, indigenous cybersecurity capabilities and independent pool of technical defenders, a new report has said.

The report from India Narrative mentioned three recent initiatives as signalling a strategic shift in the protection of the country's digital financial ecosystem.

These include the inauguration of the Reserve Bank of India's new data centre and Cybersecurity Training Institute in Bhubaneswar, an agreement between the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) and Bank of India to develop indigenous quantum-safe banking technologies, and the government's decision to build an independent pool of technical defenders.

New Delhi executed these institutional moves in October 2026 recognising that modern warfare is fought in the "invisible corridors of payment servers, clearing houses, and banking databases."

A prolonged disruption to the central payment grid would cause panic and paralyse national logistics without use of any conventional weapon.

The Financial Stability and Development Council also reviewed the newly formulated Financial Sector Cyber Security Strategy drafted by an inter ministerial group. The council looked beyond big commercial lenders and directed Regional Rural Banks to work towards stronger cyber preparedness.

"In a connected financial system, a poorly defended rural cooperative bank can easily act as a backdoor for hackers to infect the wider national network," the report noted.

The RBI's second major data hub in Odisha is aimed at geographically diversifying critical financial infrastructure away from traditional financial hubs.

The move will achieve "vital geographic dispersal away from high-risk seismic zones and traditional western strike corridors."

Indigenous quantum banking ecosystem seeks to defend against failure of standard encryption methods amid rise of quantum computing.

"By pairing state owned computing researchers with a major public sector bank to test indigenous quantum safe security in sandbox environments, India is refusing to wait for expensive Western software patches," the report said.

The government understood that Unified Payments Interface has formalised the grassroots economy at unprecedented speed, but created a massive surface area for hostile state and non-state actors.

"Intelligence and cybersecurity monitors routinely log millions of automated intrusion attempts targeting Indian banking networks, treasury portals, and stock exchanges every single year," the report noted. (IANS/UNI)

Rural consumers cut spending

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



Rural Indian consumers are becoming more cautious with spending amid pressure on household incomes and rising costs, even as younger shoppers continue to add new product categories to their purchase baskets, a report said on Wednesday.

The report from WPP Media and Kantar said the share of rural adults whose monthly household income rose over the previous six months fell to about 14 per cent in June 2026 from 29 per cent in 2025. Among consumers whose expenditure increased, the proportion reporting higher spending declined to 77 per cent from 91 per cent.

Consumers have started becoming a lot more cautious with the money that they are spending and are making deliberate choices on where to spend, said Puneet Avasthi, Director, Specialist Business, South Asia, Kantar India.

However, rural Gen Z is making room for new categories and expanding their shopping baskets spending on products from packaged snacks and health products to personal grooming.

Brands must understand these trade-offs rather than assuming that all rural consumers behave alike, the report noted.

Rural Gen Z consumers aged 18-29 emerged as a key growth segment, accounting for 33 per cent of rural mobile users and buys across an average of 19.1 product categories a month, up from 17 in February 2025.

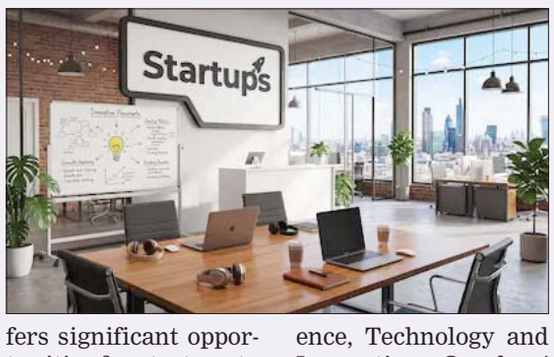
Their convenience-food basket expanded 27 per cent to 5.9 categories, while health and wellness purchases rose 36 per cent. Personal grooming purchases rose 9 per cent even as the category remained flat across rural India.

Products such as ready-to-eat snacks, packaged foods, face wash and hand wash are seeing increased uptake among younger consumers and women, said Abhishek Singh, Senior Vice President and Head of Rural, Social & Health, Media Solutions at WPP Media India.

Nearly 32.3 per cent of rural adults follow online influencers, and the figure rose to 40.9 per cent among Gen Z. Nearly 77.3 per cent said they trust influencer's advice and 55.5 per cent said they decide independently after viewing their content. (IANS)

Govt calls for stronger linkages between startups and industry

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



The government on Wednesday called for stronger linkages between startups and industry, emphasising its role in facilitating partnerships that can help indigenous innovations move from research and development to wider commercial adoption.

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh, said India's expanding innovation ecosystem offers significant opportunities for startups to connect with industry and other potential technology adopters, develop practical applications and scale up their solutions.

At the 'Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave' (ESTIC)-2026, the minister urged stakeholders to come forward and make effective use of these opportunities to strengthen India's innovation-led growth.

He reviewed a range of innovations demonstrating how scientific research is addressing challenges across sectors, from food and nutrition to advanced electronics.

Dr Singh has consistently advocated stronger coordination among research institutions, startups, industry and government to ensure that scientific discoveries translate into tangible economic and societal benefits. (IANS/UNI)

Google Cloud brings production-ready AI

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



Google Cloud on Wednesday showcased how artificial intelligence (AI) is helping India's small and mid-sized businesses improve productivity, streamline operations and accelerate growth, as it hosted Cloud Day India 2026 with participation from more than 600 business and technology leaders across sectors.

The event brought together more than 600 founders, promoters, managing directors and technology leaders from fast-growing SMBs and mid-market enterprises.

The company said AI is emerging as a critical growth enabler for Indian businesses as they seek to scale operations, improve efficiency and remain competitive in an increasingly digital economy.

"India's small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) are central to the country's Viksit Bharat ambitions, with AI emerging as a powerful enabler of their next phase of growth," it stated.

According to Google Cloud, businesses are entering a new era of agentic AI, where intelligent systems can reason across business data, connect workflows and execute tasks with minimal human intervention.

However, many organisations continue to face challenges such as fragmented data, legacy technology systems and uncertainty around return on investment, creating what the company described as an "AI Value Gap." (IANS)

Space economy poised to scale $44 billion by 2033

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



India's space sector is increasingly contributing to economic growth, private investment and industrial capability, alongside its scientific and strategic goals. India's space economy is targeted to reach $44 billion by 2033. Emerging technologies such as reusable launch vehicles, air-breathing propulsion, electric propulsion and in-space docking are supporting this growth, according to a government factsheet released on Wednesday.

This technological momentum is already creating economic opportunity. NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) has signed 118 Technology Transfer Agreements to transfer 83 technologies developed by ISRO to Indian industry. As a result, investor confidence is also growing. Cumulative investment in Indian space start-ups reached approximately $618.5 million as of 31 March 2026, with funding shifting from early-stage seed support to larger, growth-stage rounds, the factsheet states.

Together, these developments show that India's emerging space technologies are not only advancing national capability but also building a strong, enterprise-led space economy for the years ahead.

India's space journey now looks ahead to the planned Bharatiya Antariksh Station. Through SpaDeX, India also became the fourth country to achieve autonomous docking of two spacecraft in orbit. Meanwhile, Gaganyaan is advancing India's human spaceflight goals.

In September 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the development of the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV). The approved outlay of 8,240 crore covers development costs, three developmental flights, essential facilities, programme management and the launch campaign.

Designed for a maximum capacity of 30 tonnes to Low Earth Orbit (LEO), the NGLV triples India's current launch payload capability compared to the 10-tonne LEO limit of the LVM3. In addition, a partially reusable NGLV variant with a 14-tonne LEO payload capability is being developed to support lower-cost access to space.

Its reusability feature will also lower the cost of reaching space.

NGLV will enable both national and commercial missions. These include human spaceflight missions to the Bharatiya Antariksh Station, as well as lunar and interplanetary exploration. It will also launch communication and earth observation satellite constellations to Low Earth Orbit. These missions will benefit the entire space ecosystem and boost the nation's capability and capacity.

India's space mission is aimed to serve the common citizen. That vision now shapes daily life across the country. Communication satellites extend connectivity to remote and underserved areas. Earth observation data support agriculture, disaster assessment, planning, environmental monitoring and other national requirements.

Weather satellites track cyclones and monsoons, enabling early warnings that save lives. Fishermen, farmers and coastal communities rely on these alerts to protect their livelihoods. These systems connect citizens, protect communities, strengthen governance and drive inclusive, sustainable growth. Beyond these services, space also guards India's frontiers and shapes its future. Space-based communication systems support national security and strategic requirements, the factsheet adds. (IANS)

Countries shift from dollar to local currencies

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

Several countries are increasingly going for local currency transactions in cross-border trade instead of using the US dollar as an international currency across all deals. This could, in the long run, reduce the importance that the US dollar currently enjoys in the global financial system, according to a new report.



The use of local currencies in international transactions continues to expand. Asia has become one of the most active regions in developing local currency transaction (LCT) arrangements. Indonesia's LCT partners include Malaysia, Thailand, China, Japan, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates. Cooperation with other countries is also being developed, according to an article in India Narrative.

It highlights that Bank Indonesia reported that the value of transactions under its LCT framework reached the equivalent of $49.4 billion through August 2026. This represented a substantial increase from $25.7 billion for the whole of 2025. In other words, transactions during the first eight months of 2026 had already approached twice the previous year's total.

Beyond Southeast Asia, China is promoting the internationalization of the renminbi through bilateral trade cooperation and cross-border payment systems. BRICS members are also exploring the use of national currencies to facilitate trade among participating countries, the article states.

It also underscores that in Europe, the use of the euro in intra-European trade has become an important feature of economic integration. Latin America has a long history of regional trade and local payment arrangements, including bilateral and regional mechanisms. In Africa, the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) has been developed to facilitate cross-border payments using local currencies. (IANS/UNI)

Türkiye presents Digital Sovereignty Strategy

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
STANBUL, OCT 28

Türkiye's Digital Sovereignty Strategy, aimed at strengthening the country's sovereignty in the digital sphere and reducing dependence on foreign technologies, was presented to the Cybersecurity Board on Tuesday, according to the country's Communications Directorate.

The board met under the chairmanship of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and discussed the implications of global and regional geopolitical developments for the cybersecurity environment, as well as recent cybersecurity incidents worldwide and evolving threat dynamics, the directorate said in a statement.

Heavy clashes reported from Pak-Afghan border



KABUL, OCT 28

Heavy clashes were reported between forces of Pakistan and Afghanistan in the Angoor Ada area of Barmal district in Afghanistan's Paktika province on Tuesday, local media reported on Wednesday.

The clashes erupted after midday near the border and continued intensely. Residents in the area reportedly fled from their homes amid fears over the fighting, Afghanistan's leading Khaama Press news agency reported, citing sources.

Meanwhile, Pakistan media reports have claimed that Afghan security forces opened fire on border posts of the Pakistan army and residential areas in the Angoor Adda border area on Tuesday, claiming the life of one local resident and injuring five members of a family when mortar landed on their home.

According to a report in leading Pakistani daily Dawn, officials alleged that the firing originated from posts in Afghanistan and targeted Pakistan border posts using sniper, small and heavy weapons. Pakistani forces carried out retaliatory action and engaged with several Afghan Taliban border posts, mortar positions and defensive bunkers using small and heavy arms, including artillery.

The latest incident comes after similar clashes had erupted in the same border area. Reports indicated that heavy weapons were used in the fighting that took place in Barmal and Angoor Ada on October 19-20.

Ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan have remained strained, with repeated exchanges of fire and growing concerns over civilian casualties.

On October 12, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid accused Pakistani authorities of trying to sabotage the negotiation process and said that its senior officials are focused on propaganda instead of finding solutions, describing it as Islamabad's "failed policy". (IANS/UNI)

US to grant visas to Flavio Bolsonaro and his family

WASHINGTON, OCT 28

The US State Department will issue visas to defeated Brazilian presidential candidate Flavio Bolsonaro and his family and allow them to enter the United States, US media reported, citing a senior department official.



"The State Department will issue visas to Flavio Bolsonaro and his family and allow them entry into the United States," the official was quoted as saying by US media outlets.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Tuesday criticised Bolsonaro for leaving the country following the election, calling the move "shameful."

"I regret that he left Brazil ... And his decision to leave Brazil is shameful," Lula told supporters who gathered outside the Alvorada Palace, the presidential residence in Brasilia, to celebrate his 81st birthday, reports Xinhua news agency.

Federal lawmaker Mauricio Marcon of the Liberal Party said Tuesday that Flavio Bolsonaro had left Brazil and was heading to the United States.

Brazil's Supreme Federal Court justice orders Flavio Bolsonaro to surrender passports, bars him from leaving country. The confidential ruling is part of an investigation involving Bolsonaro and lawyer Willer Tomaz, according to Brazil's public news agency Agencia Brasil.

Bolsonaro, 45, is the eldest son of former President Jair Bolsonaro and has been serving as a senator since 2019.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva won Sunday's runoff with 51.79 per cent of valid votes, defeating Bolsonaro, who received 48.21 per cent, according to results released by Brazil's Superior Electoral Court.

Brazilian media reported Monday that Brazilian Supreme Federal Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes ordered Bolsonaro to surrender his passports to the Federal Police and barred him from leaving the country.

The confidential ruling is part of an investigation involving Bolsonaro and lawyer Willer Tomaz, according to Brazil's public news agency Agencia Brasil.

UK's Healey says minimum wage to rise by 3.9%

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
LONDON, OCT 28

Britain's Finance Minister John Healey said on Wednesday that the main minimum wage rate would increase by 3.9 percent.



The rate paid to workers aged 21 and over, currently £12.71 an hour, and the rate payable to workers aged 18-20, now £10.85, will both rise by 3.9 percent. Some analysts and employers had blamed larger jumps in the rate for younger workers for increasing youth unemployment.

The increase means the National Living Wage will increase to £13.21 an hour and the 18-20 National Minimum Wage will be £11.27.

"For 2.3 million of our lowest-paid workers, I'm increasing both the national minimum wage and the National Living Wage by 3.9 percent," Healey told lawmakers on Wednesday.

In April, Britain's Low Pay Commission – which advises on minimum wage rates – had said the National Living Wage would probably need to increase by around 3.7 percent in 2027 to £13.18 an hour to keep up with how it expected average pay to rise. (IANS)

Cuba's foreign minister disrupts UNGA meeting in confrontation with US envoy

UNITED NATIONS, OCT 28

In a drama at the General Assembly, Cuba's Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla charged up to the dais yelling to confront US Permanent Representative Mike Waltz, disrupting a meeting on Washington's sanctions against his country.



Assembly President Khalilur Rahman pleaded for calm, asking the Cubans to go back to their seat and let Waltz speak on Tuesday, and briefly suspended the meeting.

As Waltz was criticising the Havana government, the Cuban delegation thumped their desk and yelled.

They left their seats and marched towards the dais, as he accused the Cuban elite of corruption, saying, "Havana would have you believe everything in Cuba has just disappeared. Well, we know, we know where it went".

Rodriguez kept interrupting Waltz, demanding to speak on a point of order.

Both of them got into a staring match, Waltz up from the black marble rostrum, and Rodriguez and his troops down in front of the podium.

Rahman pleaded, "Please help me in conducting the business in a smooth manner, and you will have that right", to a point of order.

Waltz shouted at Rodriguez, "Back away! This isn't Havana".

Meanwhile, Rahman, like a teacher trying to keep order in an unruly classroom, said, "Please sit down. Sit down", before suspending the meeting.

"I'm here to administer the rules of procedure in a fair manner, in an independent manner", he said.

When the meeting resumed within minutes, Rodriguez raised his point of order, which was more of a response, that Waltz was "lying grossly" and "offending the dignity of the people and government of Cuba". (IANS/UNI)

Hong Kong halts poultry, egg imports

HONG KONG, OCT 28

Hong Kong has suspended imports of poultry meat and products from parts of Denmark and the US due to bird flu outbreaks, state media reported on Tuesday Imports have been suspended from the Lolland Municipality in Denmark and Jackson County in the US state of Minnesota due to outbreaks in these areas, Beijing-based Xinhua News reported, citing Hong Kong's Center for Food Safety (CFS). Authorities have instructed importers to suspend imports of poultry meat and products, including eggs, from these areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

Spain: At least 46 killed after two trains collide

FROM PAGE 1

The trains involved in the collision were carrying 544 passengers, according to data provided by the spokesperson for the Government of Castilla-La Mancha, Esther Padilla. The Iryo train was carrying 146 passengers and a baby on board, while the Renfe train was carrying 397 passengers, Spain-based 'El Pais' reported.



Climate change must be declared 'global health emergency': Lancet study

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
PARIS, OCT 28

Climate change must be declared a "global health emergency" to shape governments' policies after heat caused three million deaths between 2016 and 2023, a report in The Lancet said Wednesday.



Published by the British medical journal ahead of the COP 31 climate summit in November, the 10th edition of the report brought together 146 researchers from 30 countries to assess the impact of climate change on the health of the world's population.

It said there were a record 710,000 heat-related deaths in 2023 with more than 70 percent of that toll linked to human-caused climate change.

Marina Romanello, the executive director of the health and climate research project Lancet Countdown, said there were "three million heat-related deaths globally in an eight-year span since the Paris Agreement" of 2015.

"That's roughly equivalent to the entire population of Wales being wiped out in the space of eight years due to heat," she told a news conference.

And "68 percent of those deaths are directly attributable to climate change."

The legally binding international climate treaty adopted in the French capital aimed to limit global warming to well below 2C and pursue efforts to keep it to 1.5C compared to pre-industrial levels.

Romanello said the global health emergency due to climate change should have "an integrated approach so that we're not responding to emergency after emergency."

Instead she called for "a cohesive long-term response that builds resilience, builds capacities, and builds the possibilities of countries to avoid further emergencies moving forward."

To determine the share of deaths attributable to warming caused by human activity, the researchers compiled the number of heat-related deaths recorded by states, then subtracted those that would have occurred in the absence of climate change, said Professor Ollie Jay of the University of Sydney.

Jay said the intensity and frequency of periods of intense heat were amplified by climate change, pointing out that last year an extreme drought affected more than half of the world's land surface for at least one month.

Australia moves to tighten sunscreen rules

CANBERRA, OCT 28

Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is developing reforms to strengthen sunscreen regulation and improve consumer confidence and the reliability of sun protection factor (SPF) claims.

The proposed reforms include strengthening sunscreen testing requirements, setting quality requirements for specific ingredients and limiting the SPF claims that cosmetic sunscreens can make, according to a TGA statement released Tuesday.

The agency said it will also review good manufacturing practice guidance to clarify expectations and responsibilities and support continued confidence in the quality and performance of sunscreen products in Australia, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The reforms follow a public consultation held from March to May that received almost 120 responses from industry, testing laboratories, health professionals, consumer groups, academia and other stakeholders.

Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world, the TGA said, adding that the primary objective of sunscreen regulation was to ensure product quality, safety and efficacy in protecting consumers from harmful ultraviolet radiation, and to reduce the incidence and impact of skin cancer.

"The reforms to sunscreen regulation that are being developed are intended to strengthen consumer confidence in sunscreen performance and ensure that sunscreen sponsors and manufacturers understand their regulatory obligations," the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) mentioned in a statement.

David Whiteman, a distinguished scientist at Australia's QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, backed reforms to improve the rigour and transparency of sunscreen testing and review manufacturing practices, following reports that some sunscreens failed to meet their labelled SPF in independent tests, shaking public confidence. (IANS)

UAE honours flydubai Captain Smit Machchhar for courage during in-flight emergency

DUBAI, OCT 28

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has honoured Indian pilot Captain Smit Machchhar and the flydubai crew for their courage and professionalism during a cockpit incident on September 30, when the seriously injured captain managed to open the cockpit door, enabling crew members and passengers to intervene and help avert a potential tragedy.



UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan conferred the First Class Order of Zayed II on the crew members involved in the incident. The honour recognises their bravery and efforts to protect passengers and ensure the safety of the aircraft during the emergency.

The recognition comes amid widespread international appreciation for Machchhar, whose actions have drawn praise from leaders in India, the UAE, Israel and the United States.

Israel has also announced a civilian bravery award for the Indian captain in recognition of his courage, which will be presented after he recovers from his injuries.

The honours were presented by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Chairman of the Executive Council of Dubai.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, in the presence of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, also received the crew members on Tuesday and recognised their contribution during the emergency.

Israel elections: Likud-led bloc takes lead

Netanyahu calls for 'strong right-wing' govt

TEL AVIV, OCT 28

Israel's election results showed incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud bloc leading by Wednesday morning, with 41.9 per cent of ballot boxes counted, local media reported.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, waves to supporters in Jerusalem.

The partial results released by Central Elections Committee gave Netanyahu's bloc 57 seats to 47 for the anti-Netanyahu camp. The predominantly Arab Joint List and Ra'am factions together held the remaining 16 seats, The Times of Israel reported.

Following exit polls released by Israeli media outlets Channels 11, 12 and 13 on Tuesday night, no clear winner emerged in Israel's election, with neither Netanyahu's bloc nor the opposition seeking to replace him projected to secure the 61 seats required for a majority in the Knesset, the country's parliament

However, by Wednesday morning, some polls indicated Netanyahu's bloc with a clear lead.

An updated exit poll released overnight showed Netanyahu's bloc drawing level with or gaining an edge over the opposition bloc led by Gadi Eisenkot, a former chief of staff of the Israel Defence Forces.

Responding to the projections, Netanyahu asserted that the right wing commanded a "great majority" among Israel's "Zionist public" and called for the formation of a "strong right-wing government".

Addressing supporters at the Likud election headquarters in Jerusalem after the polls, Netanyahu criticised media outlets that had forecast a poor performance by his Likud party in the elections.

"Do you remember how the propaganda channels engineered public consciousness? Likud on 18 seats, 19 seats. They knew the whole time that it was a lie. They were trying to demoralise you from coming to the ballot box. That is what went on here. Well, the first thing that has become clear, unequivocally, is that Likud is the biggest party in Israel. There is no disputing it," Times of Israel quoted Netanyahu as saying.

"And the second thing that has become clear… is that the right-wing bloc has a clear, decisive majority among the Zionist public, among the Jewish public and all those who support the Jewish state. That is what has become clear. A decisive majority. And therefore I said, and I say again, that we must form a strong, national, right-wing government. That is what must be done," he added.

He also criticised parties willing to cooperate with Arab parties, calling such an arrangement a "shame".

Questioning how parties could discuss "the covenant of those who serve" while cooperating with parties that attack Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers, Netanyahu said it was unthinkable "to endanger Israel and set up a government that relies upon anti-Zionist Arab parties".

He further described them as parties that oppose Israel's very existence, that regard "Hamas as a charitable organization", that call Israeli soldiers "war criminals."

Jordan urges undocumented workers to regularize

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
AMMAN, OCT 28

The Director of the Central Inspection Directorate at the Ministry of Labor, Eng. Haitham Al-Najdawi, confirmed that inspection teams are continuing their field visits to identify non-Jordanian workers violating the Labor Law and its related regulations and instructions.

Al-Najdawi noted that approximately one month remains before the deadline for undocumented foreign workers to regularize their legal status.

He urged workers and employers across all sectors and economic activities, as well as homeowners employing domestic workers, to take advantage of the remaining period.

He also explained that the ministry deports any foreign worker who does not hold a valid work permit or who violates the conditions of their permit by changing their profession, employer, or workplace. The Public Security Directorate's media spokesperson said the Cybercrime Unit is monitoring all content posted on social media platforms, including posts and comments that violate the law, offend others inside or outside the Kingdom, or incite hatred.

The spokesperson stressed that the Cybercrime Unit operates around the clock to monitor any legal violations, adding that there will be no leniency in enforcing the law.

Iraqi PM Ali al-Zaidi meets Ahmed al-Sharaa in historic Syria visit

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
DAMASCUS, OCT 28

Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi has arrived in Damascus to meet with Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa on the first visit of an Iraqi prime minister to Syria since the fall of Bashar al-Assad.



The visit comes as the two neighbours seek to strengthen bilateral ties and boost economic and oil cooperation.

According to the official Iraqi News Agency (INA), the two leaders discussed the export of Iraqi oil through the Baniyas line, increasing the volume of trade exchange and joint work to develop the agricultural sector to achieve food and economic integration.

Iraq has recently begun exporting limited quantities of oil through Syria following the outbreak of the US-led war on Iran.

Last July, the two countries signed agreements to revive the Haditha Baniyas pipeline to transport Iraqi oil in addition to signing a memorandum of understanding with a consortium of three companies, most notably the American oil major Chevron to implement the project.

"The Iraqi and Syrian people are one people in two countries," Zaidi said according to INA, noting that "work to develop partnership and joint cooperation in various fields especially economic and social affairs, enhance security co-operation, unify positions on regional and international issues, and work to achieve peace and stability in the region".

Yemen appeals for help for civilians as Houthis tighten the siege of Taiz

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
TAIZ, OCT 28

Yemeni government officials urged the international community to help protect civilians and reopen roads into the city of Taiz as Iran-backed Houthis further tightened their siege of the city.



Taiz province has emerged as a major battlefront in recent weeks, including the city of Taiz — considered a gateway to the country's south. It has taken in around half of Yemen's population displaced by the latest fighting, straining limited resources.

The Taiz governor, Nabil Shamsan, said residents had lost access to about 3 million liters (about 793,000 gallons) of water previously available from wells in Wadi Al-Dhubab, which he said is now under Houthi control.

Eshraq Al-Maqtari, a legal affairs minister in Yemen's internationally recognized government, said more than 2,000 projectiles and explosives fired by the Houthis had struck Taiz city districts in recent days and called for measures to cut off the militia's weapon supplies and funding.

Shamsan said fighting had intensified across the province as the Houthis deployed reinforcements to multiple fronts, with the city encircled on all four sides.

Taiz has witnessed intense fighting between the Yemeni army and the Houthi group for weeks, with hundreds killed and wounded on both sides.

On the Bab al-Mandab, Dhubab and Al-Mudhariba fronts in Taiz, al-Nuzaili said army forces thwarted Houthi infiltration attempts and targeted their reinforcements and military vehicles.

He also said army units continued offensive operations along the northern and northwestern approaches to the capital Sanaa and on the eastern front, supported by armored vehicles, artillery and drones.

According to the statement, the operations targeted Houthi movements, command centers, weapons positions, ammunition depots and fortifications, limiting the group's ability to maneuver and move reinforcements between fronts.

Al-Nuzaili said simultaneous military operations would continue across the front lines to secure further gains, while precautions were being taken to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Bahrain chairs GCC administration meeting

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
MANAMA, OCT. 28

Dr. Shaikha Rana bint Isa bin Duaij Al Khalifa, Director General of the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), chaired remotely the 24th meeting of the Directors General of GCC Institutes of Public Administration, as part of Bahrain's presidency of the 46th session of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Dr. Shaikha Rana bit Isa expressed her appreciation for the participants' efforts to support joint Gulf action.

She affirmed Bahrain's commitment to supporting GCC initiatives aimed at developing leaders and enhancing national capabilities. She also highlighted the importance of exchanging expertise and best practices to sustain administrative development and keep pace with digital transformation and future changes.

The meeting reviewed the latest joint training and research programmes and discussed recommendations to align training visions and policies.

Saudi mining licenses rise to 2,925 as mineral discoveries rise

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
RIYADH, OCT 28

Saudi Arabia's valid mining licenses increased by 524 to reach 2,925 in 2025, while the cumulative number of discovered mineralization sites rose to 5,680, according to the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT).



The authority's Mineral Resources Statistics 2025 report showed that valid mining licenses increased from 2,401 in 2024, recording cumulative growth of 48.70 percent compared with 2021.

Riyadh accounted for the largest share of valid mining licenses at 31.56 percent, followed by the Eastern Province at 15.62 percent and Makkah at 11.73 percent. Together, the three regions accounted for 58.91 percent of all valid mining licenses.

Meanwhile, the cumulative number of discovered mineralization sites increased by 29 from 5,651 in 2024 to 5,680 in 2025.

Non-metallic mineral sites accounted for 53.98 percent of the total, followed by metallic mineral sites at 43.03 percent, while sites containing both metallic and non-metallic minerals represented 2.99 percent.

In terms of mineral reserves, Saudi Arabia recorded approximately 16.68 million ounces of gold, 1.85 million tons of zinc and 0.72 million tons of copper in 2025.

The report also showed that fertilizer exports reached 6.449 million tons, compared with 158,000 tons of imports.

Diammonium phosphate (DAP) accounted for the largest volume of fertilizer exports at 4.663 million tons, while potassium fertilizers led imports at 105,000 tons.

In precious metals, Saudi Arabia imported 348 tons in 2025, compared with 23 tons of exports. Platinum accounted for the largest import volume at 131 tons, followed by silver at 123 tons and gold at 94 tons.

Meanwhile, gold exports totaled 20 tons, while silver exports reached 3 tons.

Kuwait reaffirms support for IAEA's peaceful nuclear energy

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
KUWAIT CITY, OCT 28

Kuwait has reaffirmed its commitment to international cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, with a focus on energy security, water desalination, scientific research and the development of national expertise.



Dr. Faisal Al-Humaidan, Director General of the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), made the remarks during the International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Energy 2026, held in Incheon, South Korea, from October 27 to 29.

Al-Humaidan said Kuwait's participation in the conference coincided with its membership on the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Board of Governors for the 2026–2028 period, reflecting the country's commitment to contributing to the agency's work and strengthening international cooperation in peaceful nuclear applications.

He noted that countries were seeking to strengthen energy security, meet rising demand, reduce emissions and support sustainable development amid rapid changes in the energy sector. However, he stressed that no single energy pathway suited every country, as choices must reflect national needs, available resources and priorities.

Al-Humaidan highlighted the close link between energy and water security in Kuwait. Rising electricity demand and the country's reliance on energy-intensive water desalination make long-term energy planning essential.

Kuwait is closely monitoring advances in nuclear technology, particularly small modular reactors and their potential applications in electricity generation and water desalination, he said. Any future assessment of the technology would consider national needs, safety and security requirements, nuclear safeguards, economic feasibility and sustainability.

India, Singapore agree to strengthen energy ties

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

The Union Minister of State for Power and New & Renewable Energy Shripad Yesso Naik held a discussion with Singapore's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Energy and Trade and Industry Gan Siow Huang on closer energy cooperation under the India-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, including the proposed cross-border electricity interconnection between the two countries, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday.



The discussion took place on the sidelines of the Singapore International Energy Week (SIEW) 2026, from 26th to 28th October, which the Indian minister is attending. Naik invited long-term Singaporean investment in transmission, pumped storage, battery storage and renewable energy in India.

Cooperation in green hydrogen and ammonia, energy efficiency, and partnerships between Indian power equipment manufacturers and Singapore's utilities were also discussed.

He also held bilateral meetings with his counterpart from Bhutan and the IRENA and IEA chiefs.

Naik and Bhutan's Minister for Energy and Natural Resources Lyonpo Sonam Tashi reviewed progress on the 1200 MW Punatsangchhu-I Hydroelectric Project, where dam works have progressed steadily since concreting resumed in April 2026, and noted the satisfactory operations of the 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II project.

They also discussed the other projects that are under discussion in partnership with Indian entities, along with the cross-border transmission planning up to 2040, the statement said. In his meeting with Francesco La Camera, Director-General, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Naik appreciated IRENA's work as a platform for international cooperation on renewable energy and discussed deeper cooperation under the Strategic Partnership Agreement. (IANS/UNI)

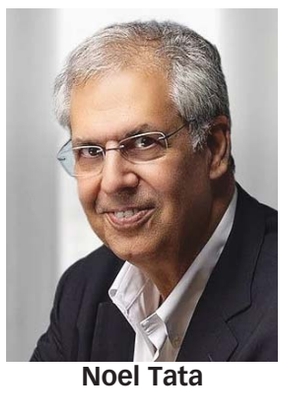
Noel Tata to step down from 6 Tata Group Boards upon turning 70

MUMBAI, OCT 28

Noel Tata, chairman of Tata Trusts, is set to step down from the boards of six major Tata Group companies on November 12 when he turns 70, in line with the conglomerate's retirement policy for non-executive directors.

The move will mark a significant leadership transition within the salt-to-software conglomerate, where Noel Tata currently holds key positions across several listed and unlisted group companies.

He serves as non-executive chairman of Trent, Voltas, Tata Investment Corporation, Tata International, and other group entities, while also holding vice-chairman roles at Tata Steel and Titan Company.


Noel Tata

Despite stepping down from the six operating-company boards, Noel Tata will continue as a nominee director of Tata Trusts on the board of Tata Sons, the group's holding company.

His continued presence on the Tata Sons board will allow him to retain an influential role in the governance of the conglomerate, given that Tata Trusts collectively owns around 66 per cent of Tata Sons.

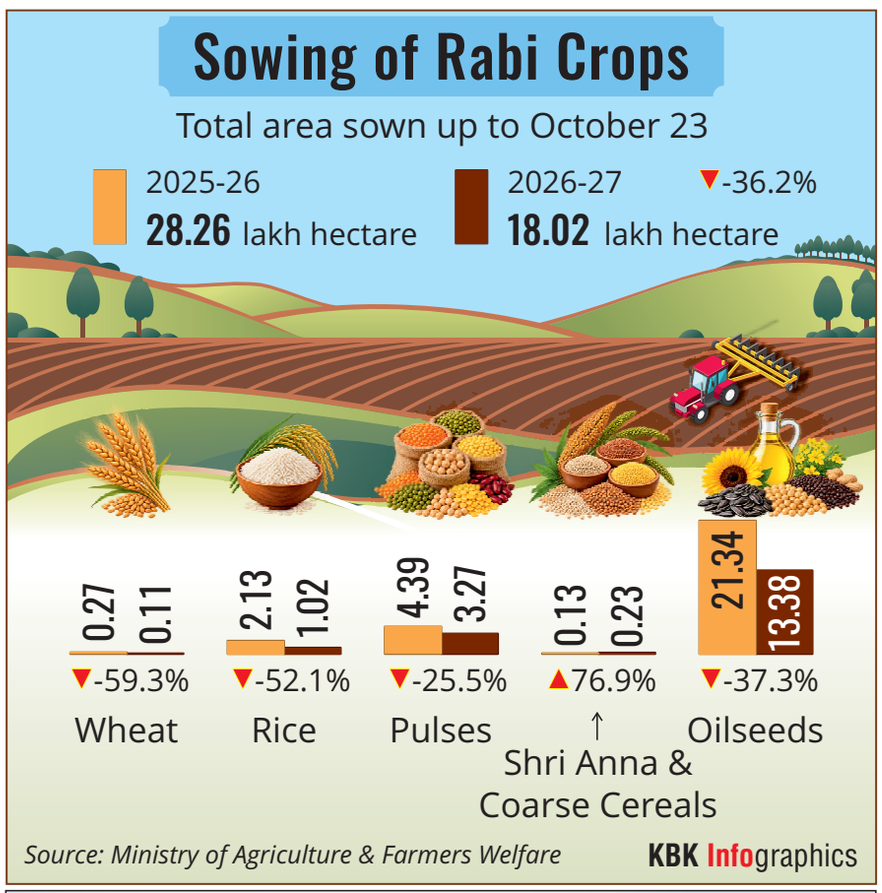
He will also continue in Trent Hypermarket Ltd, the joint venture between Trent and Tesco that operates the Star Bazaar and Star Daily retail chains.

However, succession plans for several of his other directorships and leadership roles are yet to be formally announced.

The transition comes at a crucial time for the group, with discussions around governance, board appointments and the future trajectory of Tata Sons drawing increased attention.

Noel Tata's retirement from operating-company boards highlights the Tata Group's adherence to its internal governance framework, which stipulates a retirement age of 70 for non-executive, non-independent directors and 65 for executive directors.

Corporate governance experts often view compliance with such retirement norms as a sign of institutional discipline, particularly in large business groups where promoter entities exercise substantial influence over board composition and leadership decisions. (IANS)



Anti-cancer medicine brands prices revised

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) on Wednesday released a revised list of maximum retail prices (MRPs) for 543 brands of anti-cancer medicines, following its recent trade margin rationalisation initiative aimed at making cancer treatment more affordable and accessible across the country. According to the authority, the revised MRPs will come into effect from November 9, 2026. The updated price list incorporates information submitted by pharmaceutical companies up to October 27, 2026, and will continue to be revised as manufacturers. (IANS)

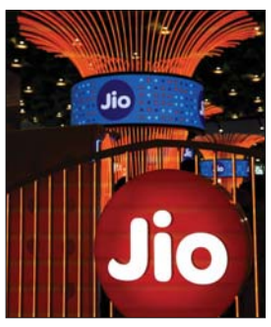
Jio Platforms shares trade nearly flat after strong listing

MUMBAI, OCT 28

Shares of Reliance Industries' digital and telecom subsidiary, Jio Platforms Ltd, made a strong debut on the NSE and the BSE on Wednesday, following its Rs 30,213-crore initial public offering (IPO).

Jio Platforms shares were listed at Rs 1,358 apiece on BSE and NSE, a premium of 21.36 per cent to the issue price of Rs 1,119 per share. The market capitalisation of Jio Platforms crossed Rs 12.5 lakh crore after the listing, making it the second largest listed company in India.

The public issue, which was India's biggest IPO,



attracted strong investor demand, with the issue subscribing 22.19 times overall. Qualified institutional buyers led the bidding, subscribing 70.55 times their allotted portion.

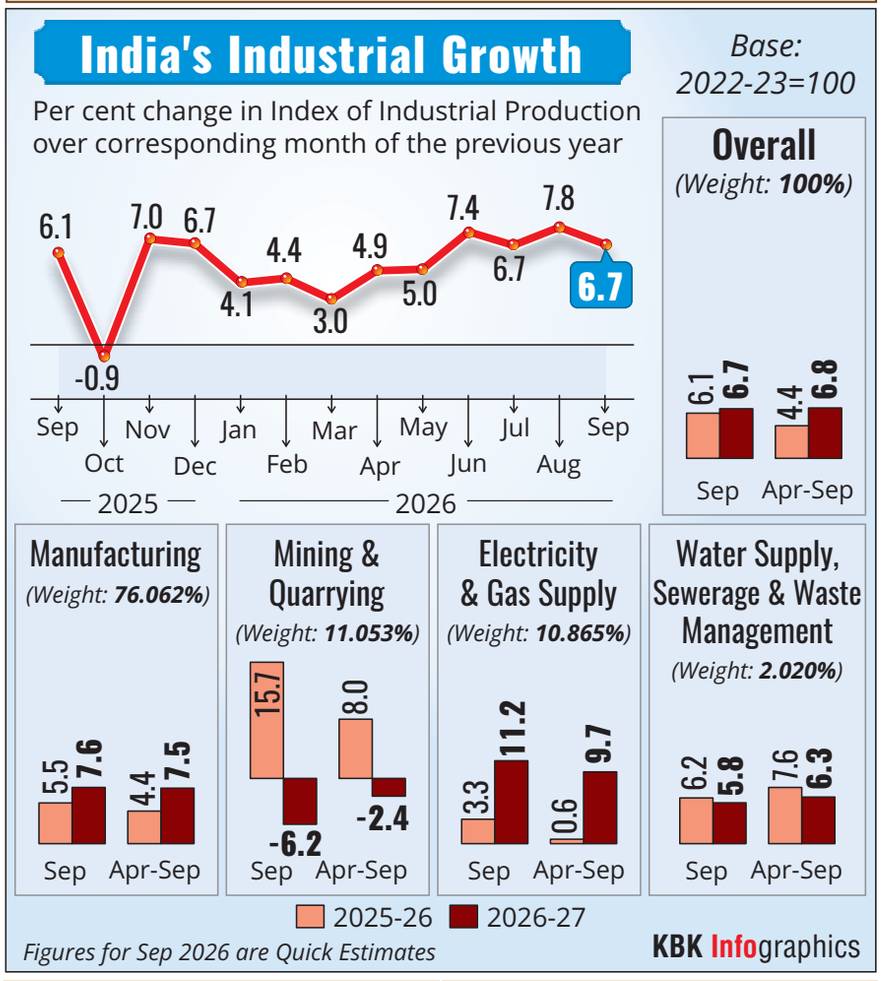
Investors will watch out whether the company can sustain revenue growth, improve profitability and execute its expansion plans while maintaining healthy cash flows. The shares were trading flat after a strong opening.

Brokerage firms Nomura, Motilal Oswal Financial Services and Elara Securities have initiated their coverage on Jio Platforms shares with 'Buy' ratings.

Nomura said that Jio, once the disruptor, is now the leader. It has 42 per cent of the country's wireless subscribers, 60 per cent of data traffic, and 43 per cent of home broadband. "In our view, the listing will likely push Jio Platforms, the price setter, towards steady tariff hikes that peers can follow. We estimate a 13.5 per cent EBITDA CAGR over FY26-29," Nomura said.

It initiated coverage on Jip Platforms shares with a 'Buy' rating and a target price of Rs 1,340.

Motilal Oswal expects rising profitability and range-bound capex should generate a cumulative FCF of Rs 1.46 lakh crore over FY26-29 and enable Jio Platform to achieve a net cash position by FY29. It initiated coverage with a 'Buy' rating and a target price of Rs 1,350. (IANS/UNI)



SpiceJet's domestic market share slips

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

Cash-strapped SpiceJet's share of India's domestic aviation market fell to 0.6 per cent in September, dropping below regional carrier Star Air's 0.7 per cent share for the first time, the data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) showed.

SpiceJet carried 7.3 lakh passengers in September, extending a sharp decline from 59.2 lakh passengers in January as the airline continued to grapple with financial pressures and operational problems that kept part of its fleet grounded.

India's domestic airlines carried an overall 11.823 million passengers in September, down 6.49 per cent on an annual basis, as airfares continued to remain high amid increased fuel costs and rupee depreciation.

Domestic passenger traffic for January-September fell 0.82 per cent year-on-year to 122.35 million passengers, against 123.370 million in the corresponding period last year, the DGCA data showed. SpiceJet's market share has steadily dipped through the year, slipping from 3.9 per cent in January and February to 1.2 per cent in August before reaching 0.6 per cent in September.

Hyundai Motor Q2 profit falls

MUMBAI, OCT 28

Hyundai Motor India Limited on Wednesday reported a 23.9 per cent year-on-year (YoY) decline in net profit for the July-September quarter of the current financial year (Q2 FY27), as margin pressures weighed on earnings despite a strong increase in revenue.



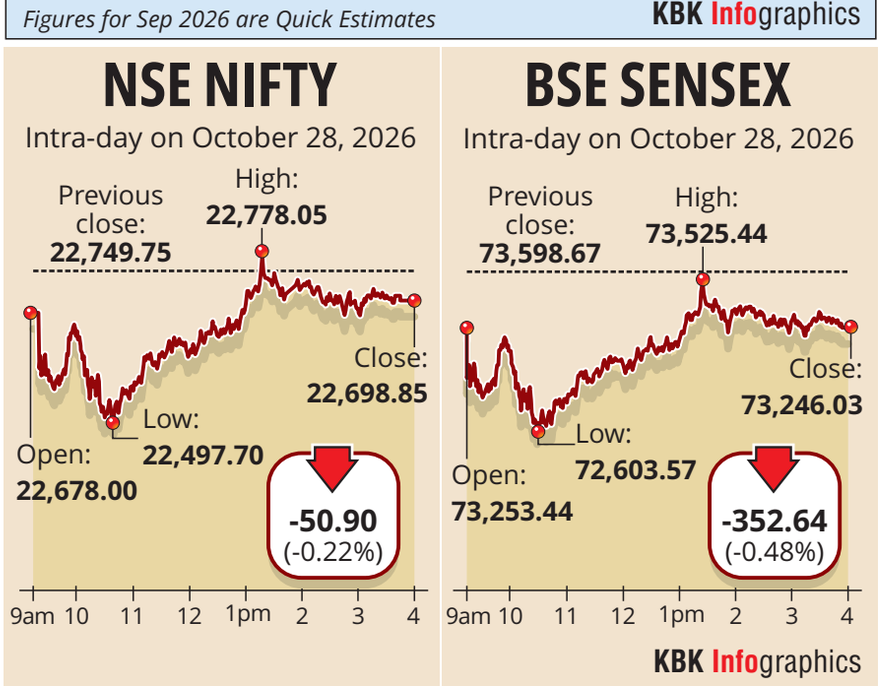
The automaker posted a net profit of Rs 1,196 crore for the second quarter ended September 30, compared with Rs 1,572 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year (Q2 FY26), according to its stock exchange filing.

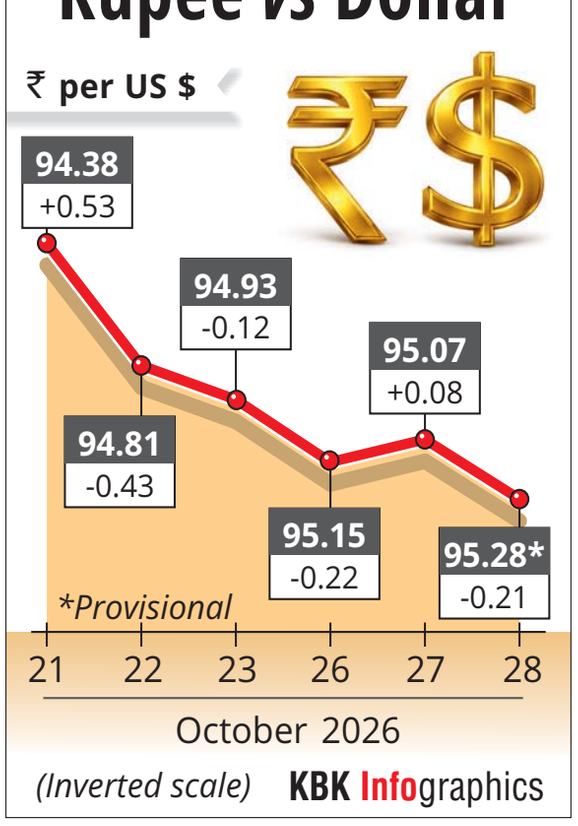
Revenue from operations rose 18.5 per cent year-on-year to Rs 20,696 crore during the quarter, up from Rs 17,460 crore reported a year earlier.

At the operating level, EBITDA declined 18.7 per cent to Rs 1,974 crore from Rs 2,428 crore in the year-ago period.

As a result, EBITDA margin contracted to 9.5 per cent from 13.9 per cent in the corresponding quarter last year.

Following the earnings announcement, shares of Hyundai Motor India gained on investor optimism. The stock was trading at Rs 1,898.20 on the BSE, up Rs 44.20, or 2.38 per cent. (IANS)





Govt to open textiles PLI scheme for new applications

NEW DELHI, OCT 28

Ministry of Textiles is set to reopen the application portal of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Textiles to accept new applications from 1st November to promote the manufacturing of Man-Made Fibre (MMF) Apparel, MMF Fabrics and Technical Textiles, enhance domestic manufacturing capabilities, attract investment, generate employment and strengthen India's position in global textile value chains, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday.

The applications being invited under Round 4 of the PLI Scheme will remain open from 1st November till 31st December 2026.

To facilitate wider participation under the scheme, the minimum turnover requirement for companies has been reduced from Rs 200 crore to Rs 100 crore under the Part 2 category of the scheme. This will make more MSMEs and mid-sized manufacturing units eligible for participating in the scheme, the statement said.

The tenure of the scheme has been extended up to Financial Year 2033–34 exclusively for applicants approved under Round 4. The extended tenure is intended to provide these applicants with a longer investment and operational horizon for establishing and scaling up their manufacturing capacities.

All existing participant companies of Round 1, 2 & 3, in any part of the Scheme, that have not claimed or received any incentive so far, are also eligible to migrate under Round 4, subject to withdrawal of their existing applications under Round 1, 2 and 3, as applicable, the statement said.

The online application portal https://pli.texmin.gov.in will remain open from 1st November 2026 till 31st December 2026.

Buddh Circuit set for Indian Racing Festival Return

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



The Indian Racing Festival (IRF) will bring international-standard circuit racing back to the Buddh International Circuit (BIC) after 13 years, with the F4 Indian Championship and Indian Racing League (IRL) set to compete at the Greater Noida venue on October 31 and November 1.

The two championships will hold Round 4 and Round 2 of their respective 2026 campaigns at the 5.125-km circuit, which previously hosted the Formula 1 Indian Grand Prix and MotoGP Bharat.

The return to Buddh offers motorsport fans in the Delhi-NCR region an opportunity to witness two racing championships at one of India's prominent racing venues, with the F4 title battle gathering momentum and the IRL entering another important phase of its season. (IANS/UNI)

Anahat withdraws from Canadian Open squash QF with injury

TORONTO, OCT 28



Indian squash sensation Anahat Singh withdrew from the Canadian Women's Open due to injury ahead of her quarterfinal match, according to the PSA Tour website.

The world No. 15, who was in her impressive form and defeated England's Saran Nghiem in four games to reach the quarterfinals, was scheduled to play Egyptian world No. 7 and top seed Fayrouz Aboelkheir in the last eight of the PSA Silver-level tournament.

As a result, Aboelkheir has now received a walkover to the semifinals in Toronto. Last week, Anahat stunned Egyptian eight-time world champion Nour ElSherbini in straight games to move into the quarterfinals of the Silicon Valley Open squash in Redwood City (US). It was the biggest win of her career.

Anahat's recent performances have strengthened her position among the emerging players on the women's tour, with consecutive deep runs at tournaments in the United States and Canada offering valuable experience against established international opposition.

Last month at the Asian Games 2026, Anahat scripted another piece of history by becoming the first Indian woman to reach the squash singles final at the continental meet.

She eventually settled for silver after going down 3-0 (11-4, 11-4, 11-7) to Malaysia's Sivasangari Subramaniam - the defending champion - in the women's singles final.

Anahat had won two bronze medals at the Asian Games 2023 - in the women's team and the mixed doubles events - in Hangzhou. She added a women's singles silver to her collection from the Asian Games 2026 in Aichi-Nagoya, becoming the first Indian woman to reach an Asian Games squash singles final. (IANS)

Sports, Education Ministries sign MoU with UNESCO

NEW DELHI, OCT 28



The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Education and UNESCO have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to introduce clean sport values in classrooms across India through the 'Sports Values in Every Classroom Toolkit', in a bid to promote integrity, fairness and respect among school children.

The agreement was exchanged on Wednesday at the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) India's Clean Sport Conclave in New Delhi, in the presence of Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Education Minister Pralhad Joshi and UNESCO's Regional Office for South Asia Director Tim Curtis.

The toolkit will use educational resources and video modules available in 13 Indian languages to reach students nationwide. The initiative aligns with the integration of sports and education emphasised in the Khelo Bharat Niti 2025 and aims to build awareness of clean sport from an early age.

"Sporting excellence and sporting integrity must go hand in hand. Talent, discipline and hard work are essential for sporting success, but integrity, fairness and credibility are equally important," Mandaviya said, highlighting the need to strengthen clean sport awareness alongside India's growing sporting ambitions.

The Sports Minister pointed to India's fourth-place finishes at the Asian Games and Asian Para Games as indicators of the country's growing sporting strength, while cautioning that doping remained a serious concern requiring sustained efforts in education, prevention, testing and enforcement. (IANS/UNI)

Sabitzer sends Dortmund into German Cup last 16

BERLIN, OCT 28



Marcel Sabitzer scored a stoppage-time free kick as Borussia Dortmund edged Werder Bremen 3-2 in the German Cup second round, surviving a second-half comeback inspired by former Dortmund striker Niclas Fullkrug.

Dortmund appeared in control after racing into a two-goal lead inside 17 minutes, but Fullkrug struck twice in four minutes after coming off the bench to bring Bremen level before Sabitzer settled the contest deep into added time, reports Xinhua.

Serhou Guirassy opened the scoring in the sixth minute, finishing from close range after Julian Ryerson redirected Maximilian Beier's delivery into his path.

Carney Chukwuemeka doubled Dortmund's lead in the 17th minute, converting Jobe Bellingham's layoff with a first-time finish following a cross from Joey Veerman.

The hosts dominated the opening half, pressing Bremen high up the pitch and creating several chances to extend their advantage. Guirassy had another effort ruled out for offside, while Felix Nmecha also failed to capitalize on a promising opportunity.

Bremen struggled to create openings before halftime but improved after the break, with coach Daniel Thioune's decision to introduce Fullkrug proving decisive.

The former Dortmund forward pulled a goal back from the penalty spot in the 65th minute after Ryerson fouled Mick Schmetgens inside the area.

Fullkrug struck again four minutes later, dispossessing Waldemar Anton near halfway before beating an opponent and driving home the equalizer. (IANS)

ENTERTAINMENT

Ranbir Kapoor on steady marriage with Alia Bhatt



M.A.SALAM
Film Journalist



Bollywood superstar Ranbir Kapoor opened up about the foundations of a strong relationship, especially of his own marriage with Alia Bhatt during the Diwali special episode of the popular quiz show Kaun Banega Crorepati.

The actor highlighted the importance of love, trust and respect in sustaining meaningful bonds.

Speaking about the values that keep relationships strong, Ranbir said, "Hamaari rishte ki jo neev hai, jo jad hai, woh dosti hai. Main hamesha se yeh manta hoon ki... prem ek rishte ko jodta hai, vishwas ek rishte ko mazboot banata hai, aur samman ek rishte ko kayam rakhta hai, and I think these are the important foundations in a relationship."

(The foundation of our relationship, its roots, is friendship. I have always believed that love brings a relationship together, trust makes it stronger, and respect helps it endure. I think these are the important foundations of a relationship)

Appearing on the quiz reality show, Kaun Banega Crorepati, Ranbir Kapoor also shared how the birth of his daughter Raha brought a daily ritual of faith into his life.

During the interaction with the megastar, Ranbir spoke about beginning his mornings with the veteran actor's rendition of the 'Hanuman Chalisa'

He revealed, "Jabse meri beti Raha paida hui hai, aisa koi din nahi guzra hai jahan hum subah aapke gaaye hue Hanuman Chalisa se shuru.." (Ever since my daughter Raha was born, there hasn't been a single day when we haven't started our morning with the Hanuman Chalisa sung by you)

Acknowledging the connection, Amitabh Bachchan responded warmly, "Wah, kya baat hai.." (Wow, excellent).

Manoj Bajpayee says OTT helps actors sidelined in Bollywood



Actor Manoj Bajpayee believes OTT platforms have created opportunities for actors who struggled to find space in mainstream cinema, allowing them to earn recognition and maintain their livelihoods through substantial roles.

Speaking about the changing landscape of the entertainment industry, Manoj Bajpayee, in an exclusive conversation with IANS, said the impact of streaming platforms got male actors who were previously overlooked by Bollywood also finding opportunities on OTT.

"Look at the actors who could not even get rightly consumed earlier. Male actors could not even get consumed by mainstream cinema. They are getting so much respect on OTT," he said.

"And their lifestyle is maintained. They are finding some kind of comfort in their life because of all those roles that they have been getting," he added.

'As a keen observer of the situation, I would say that with OTT, things have been very, very frequent," he said.

Esha Deol backs South Indian accents amid trolling



Actress Esha Deol has come out in support of South Indian accents amid discussions around actors being trolled for their Hindi diction.

The 'Dhoom girl', in an exclusive conversation with IANS, said that such linguistic nuances add to an artist's individuality rather than take away from their performance.

The actress, who is the daughter of veteran actors Hema Malini and Dharmendra, said she herself sounds like her mother who is a South Indian while delivering dialogues, particularly in Hindi.

She stated that she believes that an actor's distinctive way of speaking is part of their identity.

"I sound a lot like my mother when I am saying my dialogue, especially in Hindi. But that's me, and the person who's taken me on board to play a particular character knows that. So I think it sounds really sweet and cute. I enjoy hearing people with a little accent," Esha said.

Chris Hemsworth wraps up 'Extraction 3' shoot



Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth is wrapping up his time in Thailand after a hectic few weeks of filming 'Extraction 3' and shared glimpses of his time in the country, revealing that he managed to squeeze in some fun adventures.

Hemsworth took to Instagram, where he shared a string of pictures of himself from Thailand, where he's been spending time in the sea, diving, fishing, posing with his sons, boxing, and visiting temples.

He wrote as the caption: "Finishing up my time in Thailand. Crazy few weeks of filming Extraction 3 but managed to fill the weekends with some fun non-work adventures too! @evanpaterakis."

Extraction was first released in 2020. The action thriller film was directed by Sam Hargrave and written by Joe Russo, based on the 2014 graphic novel Ciudad. It is the first installment in the Extraction franchise.

The film stars Chris Hemsworth, Rudhraksh Jaiswal, Randeep Hooda, Golshifteh Farahani, Pankaj Tripathi and David Harbour.

Quentin Tarantino says he is a 'man of letters'

Filmmaker Quentin Tarantino has made his intentions clear about his creative pursuits. The filmmaker has shared that he is exploring writing for mediums other than cinema.

The filmmaker recently attended a special screening of his 2019 film at AFI Fest 2026 in Los Angeles where he spoke about his upcoming debut stage play, 'The Popinjay Cavalier', and opened up about writing for mediums other than film.

He said during the event, "I'm a writer and that's just kind of what I do. I'm always writing something. I'm always writing. I always got some film [or] book in the back of my head. So, there's never, like, 'Oh, I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't have anything to write'.

TG prepares unified action plan to tackle El Niño, drought threat



Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka chairs an all-party meeting at the Secretariat in Hyderabad on Wednesday to discuss Telangana's preparedness to tackle the potential drought threat posed by El Niño. Ministers, senior officials and representatives of various political parties attend the meeting.

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Wednesday said the Telangana government was taking proactive steps to address the possible rainfall deficit and drought conditions arising from the impact of El Niño. He said the government was preparing a comprehensive action plan in consultation with all political parties to safeguard farmers, protect agricultural production and ensure an uninterrupted supply of drinking water and irrigation resources.

Speaking after chairing an all-party meeting at the Secretariat, Bhatti said a preliminary report on the state's drought situation had already been submitted to the Union Government. If necessary, the state would lead an all-party delegation to New Delhi to seek immediate financial and logistical assistance from the Centre.

Emphasising the need for a collective response, the Deputy Chief Minister appealed to political parties to rise above partisan considerations and prioritise public welfare in the face of a potential crisis. He said the meeting had been convened in the spirit of democratic governance and assured participants that feasible suggestions made by party leaders would be considered while finalising the state's action plan.

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The meeting was attended by Cabinet Sub-Committee members and Ministers N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Tummala Nageswara Rao, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Danasari Seethakka and Vakiti Srihari, along with Chief Secretary Sanjay Jaju and Nodal Officer Ramakrishna Rao.

Representatives from various political parties included Anjan Kumar Yadav and Farmers' Commission Chairman Kodanda Reddy from the Congress; Vinod Kumar, L. Ramana and Singireddy Niranjan Reddy from the BRS; BJP Legislature Party Leader Aleti Maheshwar Reddy and MLC Komurayya; AIMIM president and MP Asaduddin Owaisi and Assembly Floor Leader Akbaruddin Owaisi; CPI National Secretary Palla Venkata Reddy and State Secretary Koonamneni Sambasiva Rao; CPM State Secretary John Wesley and former MLA Nandyala Narasimha Reddy; Telangana Jana Samithi president and MLC Professor Kodandaram; Samajwadi Party leaders Professor Simhadri and Venkateswarlu; RJD leader Shobha Yadav; BSP state leader Sriram Krishna; Aam Aadmi Party state president Hema Sudarshan; and TDP representative Katragadda Prasanna Kumar, among others.

TG offers to help Andhra restore power in cyclone-hit areas

AMARAVATI, OCT 28

The Telangana government led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has come forward to help Andhra Pradesh in relief and electricity restoration works in its cyclone-affected areas.

Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, on Wednesday spoke to Andhra Pradesh Energy Minister, Gottipati Ravi Kumar, over the phone and enquired about the impact of Cyclone Arnab and the damage caused by the severe weather conditions in the state.

According to an official release, Gottipati briefed his Telangana counterpart on the damage reported so far, the ongoing relief and restoration operations, and the measures being undertaken under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu to minimise losses and restore normalcy in the affected areas.

Gottipati outlined the steps being taken by the Andhra Pradesh government to address the impact of the cyclone, with particular emphasis on restoring electricity supply and ensuring the safety of people in affected regions.

Bhatti Vikramarka assured Andhra Pradesh of the Telangana government's full support in dealing with the situation. He conveyed the State government's readiness to extend assistance by providing personnel and essential materials required for electricity restoration, should the need arise. The assurance of assistance is expected to strengthen the ongoing efforts to restore power supply and facilitate a quicker response to cyclone-related disruptions.

Gottipati Ravi Kumar expressed his gratitude to the Telangana government and Bhatti Vikramarka for extending support to Andhra Pradesh during this challenging period. He appreciated the gesture of solidarity and the willingness to provide the necessary resources for restoration operations.

Gottipati Ravi Kumar had earlier stated that experienced personnel, including officers and field staff familiar with cyclone-related restoration operations, had been mobilised to support emergency services and expedite the restoration of power supply in affected areas.

Ponguleti launches free online coaching for unemployed youth



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HYDERABAD, OCT 28

Telangana Revenue, Housing and I&PR Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy on Wednesday launched 'PSR Yuva Nestham', an initiative of the PSR Charitable Trust to provide free online coaching for competitive examinations to unemployed youth across Telangana.

Launched in collaboration with RC Exams, the programme will offer free training, books and study materials for one year, with an extension if required.

Ponguleti said there was no limit on the number of candidates, adding that over one lakh aspirants had registered within 10 days of the announcement.

Recalling his earlier initiative in the Khammam region, he said 462 of the approximately 2,300 unemployed youth who received offline coaching in 2016 had secured government jobs. The online programme aims to make quality coaching accessible to candidates across the state, irrespective of their financial circumstances or location.

The Minister also said the Congress government, led by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, had filled 72,000 government posts over the past two years and that around 15,000 more vacancies would be filled soon.

Separately, Ponguleti announced that the Chief Minister had agreed to resolve the long-pending issue of housing plots for journalists before Diwali.

TG transfers 12 IAS officers

HYDERABAD, OCT 28

The government of Telangana on Wednesday transferred 12 senior IAS officers including Special Chief Secretary to Government, Metropolitan Area & Urban Development (HMDA Limits) Jayesh Ranjan, days after he reportedly applied for voluntary retirement.

Jayesh Ranjan, the 1992 batch IAS officer and one of the well-known bureaucrats, has been posted as Special Chief Secretary, EFS & T Department and also placed in Full Additional Charge (FAC) of the post of Director General, EPTRI vice Shailaja Ramaiyer.

Ranjan has also been relieved of FAC of the Special Chief Secretary to Government, Sports and Director, Heritage Telangana and Special Officer for Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, Cyberabad Municipal Corporation and Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation.

The development came a day after Ranjan confirmed that he has initiated the process of seeking voluntary retirement nearly 11 months before his scheduled superannuation.

A Government Order was issued by Chief Secretary Sanjay Jaju on Wednesday, transferring 12 top IAS officers.

Vikas Raj, IAS (1992), Special Chief Secretary to Government, Transport, Roads & Buildings Department, has been transferred and posted as Special Chief Secretary to Government, Energy Department, vice Navin Mittal.



DGP launches 6 digital initiatives to modernise CID policing



FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

Telangana Director General of Police C.V. Anand, IPS on Wednesday inaugurated and launched a series of digital initiatives of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), aimed at improving transparency, accountability, investigative efficiency and citizen-friendly policing.

The initiatives include a Citizen Feedback Centre (CFC) to collect feedback from people who have used police services such as petitions, FIRs, e-Challans and passport verification; Bharosa software for digital case management and survivor support across 35 Bharosa Centres; and the official CID website.

The DGP also launched the Jail Release Surveillance System (JRSS), developed by integrating the NIC's e-Prisons platform with CCTNS to facilitate automated prisoner-release monitoring, SMS alerts and intelligence-led policing. The Mobile Face Search application, backed by a database of more than 9.8 lakh photographs, can deliver facial-matching results in about 15 seconds to help identify suspects, missing persons, deceased persons and unidentified bodies.

Five volumes of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) covering bodily offences, property offences, crimes against women and children, special and local laws, and other offences were also released to standardise investigation procedures and improve the quality of criminal investigations.

Senior police officials, including DG L&O Mahesh Bhagwat, CID DG Charu Sinha, PCS ADGP Akun Sabharwal and other senior officers, attended the launch programme.

Ballot paper victory exposes Rahul Gandhi's false narratives: T-BJP

RATNA CHOTRANI
HYDERABAD, OCT 28

Telangana BJP President N. Ramchander Rao on Wednesday urged Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi to stop spreading what he described as lies and false narratives about electronic voting machines (EVMs) and alleged vote theft, saying the BJP's victory in a ballot paper election had exposed the Opposition's claims.

His remarks came after a setback for the ruling Congress in Karnataka, where the JD(S) on Tuesday wrested the Bengaluru Teachers' Constituency seat in the Legislative Council from the party. National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidate A.P. Ranganath defeated sitting Congress MLC Puttanna in the election, which was conducted through ballot papers.



N. Ramchander Rao

Speaking to media, Rao said, "Mr. Rahul Gandhi should, at least now, stop spreading lies and giving false narratives. The ballot paper elections have again proved that the BJP has won. Now, what does Rahul Gandhi have to say? He used to blame EVMs whenever the BJP won. Now, the BJP has won in a ballot paper election as well."

He alleged that Gandhi was repeatedly making false claims about EVMs and vote theft.

"Again and again, he is spreading falsehoods with regard to EVMs or vote theft. He talks about vote theft, but unfortunately, it is a theft of logic. He has no logic left," the BJP leader said.

Rao also criticised the Congress over its allegations of voter deletions in Delhi, claiming that the party had failed to provide evidence to substantiate its charges.

"Yesterday, in Delhi, they claimed that many votes had been deleted. However, they have not provided proof of which votes were deleted so far," he said.

He added that voter names could be removed from electoral rolls for several reasons, including the death of voters, duplicate entries and changes in residence.

Rao also pointed out that people whose names had been deleted could seek their inclusion in the electoral rolls through the prescribed process.

"Again and again, Rahul Gandhi is repeating the same lies. People have now understood that vote theft and EVMs are merely excuses. The Congress has been out of power for 12 years, and out of frustration, it is trying to create anarchy," Rao alleged.

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Editor: **MOHAMMED ABDULLAH KHAN. Postal Reg. No. D/RNP/HCD-2001/2025-27.** Phone: +91 9440140120. Email:freedompress15@gmail.com