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STARLINK READY TO CONNECT INDIA WITH HIGH-SPEED INTERNET, MUSK REPLIES

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6 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

WORLD ▶P8



166 ARRESTED AS POLICE CLASH WITH DEMONSTRATORS NATIONWIDE

Second supertanker explodes in Hormuz



TEHRAN, OCT 17

The navy of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) announced Saturday that a second "violating" supertanker had exploded in the Strait of Hormuz after hitting a naval mine, hours after a similar incident involving another tanker.

In a statement published on the IRGC's official news outlet Sepah News, the navy said the blast occurred on Saturday morning, causing a "huge" fire on the vessel, which was carrying over 2 million barrels of crude oil. It said the oil tanker had turned off its GPS and radar systems and was seeking to cross the waterway through an "illegal" route, adding that the explosion occurred in the vessel's engine room and brought it to a halt, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Earlier in the day, the IRGC Navy said another "violating" supertanker seeking to transit the strait through an "unauthorised" route. (IANS)

Protest, counter-protest over anti-CEC held in London

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
LONDON, OCT. 17

Hundreds of people gathered at Mahatma Gandhi's statue in Parliament Square, London, on Saturday to protest against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in India.



The protest, held under the banner "Stop Vote Chori", featured activist Dhruv Rathee as the keynote speaker. Meanwhile, a smaller group staged a counter-protest, raising slogans of "Modi, Modi" in support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the union government.

Metropolitan Police officers kept the two groups apart as their chants grew louder, with each side attempting to drown out the other. The confrontation became heated, although the groups remained separated by police personnel.

Addressing the gathering in Hindi, Rathee said, "We don't want any foreign interference. I am here at Parliament Square to address Indians and NRIs."

He said it was important to spread awareness against alleged "vote chori" in India. Rathee added that the protests would stop once the Chief Election Commissioner was replaced by a candidate selected through an agreement between the government and the Leader of the Opposition.

The protest began with slogans of "Inquilab Zindabad" and "Vande Mataram", followed by the reading of the Preamble to the Constitution of India.

The demonstration was organised by the Indian Overseas Congress Youth wing and supported by several diaspora organisations, including Save Democracy, the Students' Federation of India (SFI) UK and the South Asia Solidarity Group.

Meanwhile, India Diaspora (ID) UK had issued an appeal urging supporters of the Indian government to assemble in London for a counter-protest. Its founder, Hirdesh Gupta, said the Indian diaspora in the UK stood firmly with PM Modi and his government in their vision of a strong, united and developed India.

Saturday's gathering followed a smaller protest and counter-protest outside the High Commission of India in London on Friday, October 16.

The demonstration was part of a series of protests that began with an "Emergency Protest" on Tuesday. The organisers said the campaign aimed to amplify the demands of the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP), including the removal of Gyanesh Kumar as Chief Election Commissioner and the scrapping of the SIR exercise.

The protesters have questioned the electoral revision exercise and raised concerns over the alleged deletion of eligible voters from electoral rolls. Their demands include changes to the process for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner.

US waives Russia energy sanctions

Suspends threat of 100% Tariffs on India, China

WASHINGTON, OCT 17

US President Donald Trump has waived key sanctions, restrictions and tariff provisions targeting buyers of Russian energy, suspending the threat of additional duties of up to 100 per cent on major importers, including India and China, under a new executive order.



The order, issued on October 16 under the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026, allows the US President to suspend specified sanctions and duties on grounds of national interest. Trump said he had submitted a certification to Congress stating that the waivers were in the national interest of the United States, along with a report explaining the basis for the decision.

Under the order, the US administration had outlined additional duties of 100 per cent on goods from the five largest importers of Russian crude oil and natural gas if they knowingly made new purchases of Russian-origin supplies on or after October 18, 2026. It also provided for additional duties of 100 per cent on goods from the five countries identified as major facilitators of Russian oil sanctions evasion.

The order further stipulated a 500 per cent increase in duties on goods from Russia, subject to specified exceptions and waivers. However, Trump waived the application of duties under Sections 112 and 113 of the Act, along with several sanctions and restrictions provided for under the legislation. The waivers will remain in effect until the President or the Secretary of State, in consultation with the relevant officials, determines that further action is appropriate.

The executive order directs the US Trade Representative, in consultation with the Secretaries of State, Treasury and Energy, to monitor countries' purchases of Russian crude oil and natural gas and their role in facilitating sanctions evasion. The Trade Representative has also been tasked with regularly reporting to the President and recommending further action where necessary. The order does not affect sanctions and other measures imposed under earlier executive orders addressing specified harmful foreign activities by the Russian government.

The move comes amid continuing US efforts to pressure Moscow over its actions while retaining the flexibility to adjust economic measures in line with Washington's national interests.



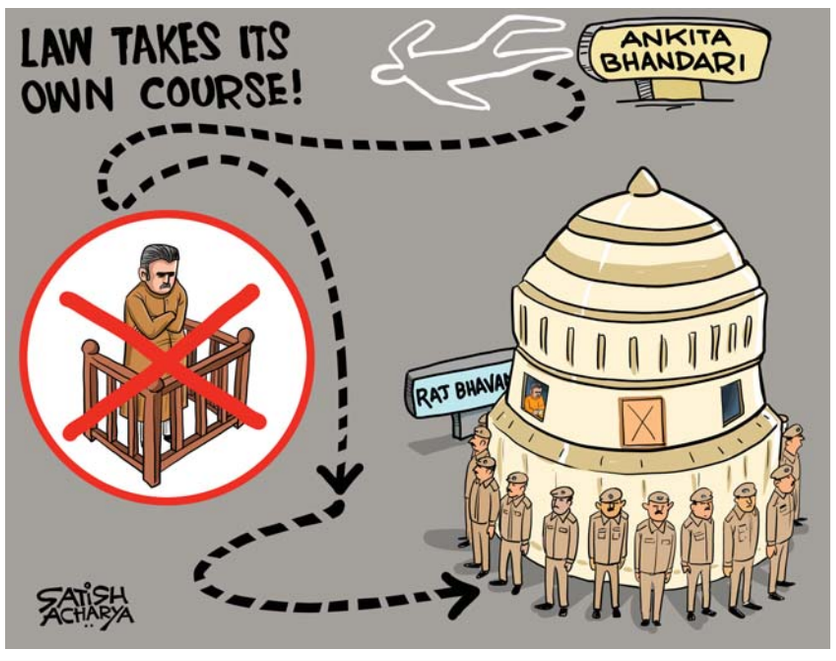
Neha Bora, Abhijeet Dipke released

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

All India Students' Association (AISA) president Neha Bora was released early Saturday after spending the night in police custody, while Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke was also freed after being granted conditional bail in a fresh preventive proceeding linked to the proposed 'Lehra Do Tiranga' protest in Connaught Place. Both were detained on Friday as they headed towards the national capital's central business district for the planned march, held amid protests against the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and demands for Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's resignation.

Following her release, Bora demanded that Delhi Police free all those detained during the demonstrations, asserting that peaceful dissent could not be treated as a criminal act. "I have been released! Delhi Police, release all detained protestors! Fighting for Democracy and the Constitution cannot be criminalised!" she wrote on X. In another post, she thanked lawyers who had worked through the night to secure the release of detainees.

CARTOON CAROUSEL



Stampede-like situation at Puja pandal in Kolkata

KOLKATA, OCT 17

Several persons were injured following a stampede-like situation at a community Durga Puja pandal in Kolkata on Saturday, as an excessive crowd flocked into the pandal arena to catch a glimpse of the idols.

However, at the time this report was filed, no casualties had been reported from the incident at the Chorbagan Sarbojonin Durga Puja pandal, located on Muktarambabu Street in North Kolkata. According to the latest available information, at least 15 injured individuals have been admitted to the nearby Calcutta Medical College Hospital, with the condition of a few reported to be critical.

Tension broke out among visitors at the Puja pandal after a portion of the exit gate structure collapsed. However, fears remain that the number of injured people following the mishap may rise. (IANS/UNI)

Two killed as Army foils infiltration bid

SRINAGAR, OCT 17

Two infiltrators were killed on Saturday when the alert troops of the Indian Army foiled an infiltration bid on the Line of Control (LoC) in Keran sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district.



"An encounter broke out in the early hours around 3.30 a.m. today after troops noticed suspicious movement in the Jumagund area of the Keran sector, prompting a challenge and a subsequent exchange of fire.

"Two terrorists have been killed in this operation and their bodies are lying on the other side of the LoC after they were shot and they tried to rush back into the Pakistani side.

"A search operation is now underway in the area to see if any more infiltrators are hiding", Army sources said.

The Indian Army guards the LoC maintaining a multi-tiered anti-infiltration obstacle system.

Vigilance raids on rice mills in Gadwal over CMR irregularities

TFP I SANAULLAH
J. GADWAL, OCT 17



Rice prices across India have surged in recent weeks, with ordinary and fine varieties reportedly rising by 600 to 1,000 per quintal, increasing the burden on consumers by nearly 20–25%. Despite adequate national stocks, allegations of hoarding and artificial scarcity have raised concerns about the role of millers and traders in driving up market prices.

The availability of substantial rice stocks in central government warehouses has raised questions over whether the price surge is linked to supply-chain manipulation rather than an actual shortage. Delays in releasing stocks into the open market and inadequate checks on illegal hoarding have also come under scrutiny.

Meanwhile, vigilance officials have launched surprise raids on several rice mills in Jogulamba Gadwal district following serious concerns over alleged irregularities in Custom Milled Rice (CMR) stocks.

Officials are investigating the reported disappearance of paddy worth crores of rupees, while some mill owners are reportedly evading inspections.

The raids aim to uncover stock discrepancies and identify those responsible for the alleged irregularities.

Young filmmakers should create short films on climate change, water scarcity: Dy CM

TFP I SAUD SIDDIQUI
HYDERABAD, OCT 17



Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on Saturday called upon young filmmakers to use cinema as a medium to create public awareness about climate change, rising temperatures, water scarcity and energy conservation.

Addressing the Bathukamma Young Filmmaker Challenge Awards-2026 at Shilpakala Vedika here, he said short films could effectively communicate socially relevant messages and inspire people to adopt responsible practices.

The Deputy Chief Minister, who attended the event as the chief guest, said changing rainfall patterns, rising temperatures and the possible impact of a Super El Niño could pose challenges in the coming years.

He urged young filmmakers to focus on environmental protection, rainwater harvesting, preventing water wastage and maintaining ecological balance.

Emphasising the importance of water conservation, he said adequate water resources must be ensured for people, livestock and birds.

He also called for greater public awareness about electricity consumption and energy conservation.

Bhatti said the State Government was committed to developing Hyderabad into a major hub for Indian cinema, beyond its established position as a centre for the Telugu film industry.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and the State Cabinet were giving serious consideration to strengthening Hyderabad's position in the national film industry, he said.

Efforts were being made to attract leading personalities from across the country and provide the necessary infrastructure and conducive environment for the industry's growth.

Stating that Telangana had abundant creative talent, he said the government was committed to identifying and encouraging young directors, actors, producers and other artists.

The Telangana Film Development Corporation's initiative to organise the Young Filmmaker Challenge was aimed at providing emerging talent with a platform to showcase their abilities, he added.

39 Guntas of land allotted for Shaadi Khana in Mahabubnagar



TFP I AHAD SIDDIQUI
MAHABUBNAGAR, OCT 17

Mahabubnagar District Collector Khushboo Gupta, IAS has issued orders allotting 39 guntas of government land in Survey No. 946 on Koilkonda Road for the construction of a Shaadi Khana to serve minority communities in the city.

The proposed facility is expected to provide accessible space for weddings and other social functions. Revenue Inspector Sudarshan Reddy of the Mahabubnagar Urban Tahsildar's Office and District Minority Welfare Officer Vishnuvardhan met Government Whip and Mahabubnagar MLA Yennam Srinivas Reddy at his camp office and handed over a copy of the land allotment proceedings.

TG-PackCON 2026 calls for sustainable, globally competitive packaging industry

TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 16

CII Telangana organised TG-PackCON 2026 in Hyderabad on Thursday, bringing together industry representatives, government officials and regulators to discuss sustainable packaging, pharmaceutical and food safety, automation and export competitiveness.

Speaking at the conference, R.P. Naidu, Regional Head of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), highlighted the importance of quality packaging for Telangana's exports, including basmati rice, millets, fruits, vegetables, seeds, mangoes, pomegranates, egg powder, meat and confectionery. He said trade agreements and APEDA's support for infrastructure, marketing and organic certification could help exporters expand into global markets.

Dr. Narendran, Deputy Drugs Controller (India) at the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), stressed that packaging and labelling were essential to maintaining the identity, strength, purity and safety of medicines.

M. Goutham Reddy, Chairman of CII Telangana, said sustainable packaging was essential to reducing environmental impact while meeting consumer and business needs. A.V.P.S. Chakravarthy, Chairman of TG-PackCON 2026 and CMD of Ecobliss India Pvt. Ltd., described packaging as a strategic driver of economic growth, manufacturing excellence and global trade. Gaurav Maheshwari, Vice-Chairman of CII Telangana, called for solutions that use less material and energy while improving recyclability.

Bhupalpally MLA directs officials to speed up development works

TFP I MLN MURTHY
J. BHUPALPALLY, OCT 17



MLA Gandra Satyanarayana Rao has directed officials to expedite road widening and infrastructure development works in Bhupalpally town to address increasing traffic and improve public safety.

On Saturday, the MLA, along with Collector Rahul Sharma, inspected the proposed development plan for Ambedkar Junction and reviewed road widening works from Ambedkar Junction to the bus stand, through Singareni Ground to Krishna Colony, and along the OC-2 route. Rao said 70 crore had been sanctioned for road widening and 23 crore under the AMRUT scheme for infrastructure development. He directed officials to complete the works on time without compromising quality and resolve land acquisition issues promptly.

The plans include a fountain and modern architectural features at Ambedkar Junction, besides a proposal to install a statue of Gaddar near the RTC complex and name the junction after the revolutionary singer. Alternative business spaces would be provided to small traders affected by road widening.

Collector Rahul Sharma directed the departments concerned to coordinate the relocation of electricity lines and drinking water pipelines and prepare estimates for central lighting, road dividers and side drains.

Municipal chairman Burra Komuraiah, vice-chairman Ambala Srinivas, Commissioner Uday Kumar and officials from various departments participated in the inspection.

Super El Niño Threat: Karimnagar region plans for water and power conservation

TFP I PRAMOD KUMAR
KARIMNAGAR, OCT 17



Special Officer for the erstwhile Karimnagar district, Special Chief Secretary Benhur Mahesh Dutt Ekk, has directed officials to prioritise drinking water supplies and discourage paddy cultivation during the 2026–27 Yasangi season amid concerns over the potential impact of Super El Niño and declining water reserves. He called for an eight-month action plan to manage drinking water, irrigation and electricity requirements.

At a review meeting held at the Karimnagar Collectorate on Saturday, Ekk met the district collectors of Karimnagar, Chitra Mishra; Jagtial, B. Satya Prasad; Peddapalli, Koya Sri Harsha; and Rajanna Sircilla, Garima Agarwal. He stressed the need for coordinated planning, careful use of available water and measures to ensure irrigation supplies reach the tail-end areas.

The Special Officer urged agricultural officials to encourage farmers to cultivate alternative crops such as maize, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables and oil palm in areas with limited water availability. He also directed the departments concerned to ensure the availability of seeds and provide market access and minimum support price assurances to farmers shifting away from paddy.

Officials were instructed to strengthen groundwater recharge through farm ponds, soak pits, borewell recharge structures and rooftop rainwater harvesting under rural employment programmes. They were also asked to expedite AMRUT projects, repair electricity infrastructure and prepare for rising power demand during the coming months.

Ekk said water available in the reservoirs should primarily be conserved for drinking purposes and warned that there might be no irrigation releases from the Sri Ram Sagar Project for Yasangi cultivation. He directed officials to take advance measures to prevent drinking water shortages during the next summer.

Karimnagar Collector Chitra Mishra, Jagtial Collector B. Satya Prasad, Peddapalli Collector Koya Sri Harsha and Rajanna Sircilla Collector Garima Agarwal presented district-level reports on rainfall, water reserves, crop planning, power consumption and conservation measures.

Karimnagar Municipal Corporation Commissioner Prapul Desai and Additional Collector Ashwini Tanaji, along with officials from agriculture, irrigation, electricity, Mission Bhagiratha, groundwater, marketing, animal husbandry and municipal departments, attended the meeting.

Free police job coaching for tribal youth in Kothagudem

TFP I RAMARAJU
B. KOTHAGUDEM, OCT 17

Bhadrachalam Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) Project Officer B. Rahul announced free semi-residential coaching for tribal unemployed youth aspiring to join the Telangana Police Department. The initiative aims to help candidates from poor, rural and remote tribal communities prepare for police recruitment.

Of the 324 applicants who appeared for the screening test for Police Constable and Sub-Inspector (SI) coaching, 100 candidates were selected, including 67 men and 33 women. The selected candidates will receive 60 days of training, along with free food, accommodation and study materials. Experienced faculty and physical education instructors will provide classroom coaching and morning and evening physical training.

Rahul urged the selected candidates to make the most of the opportunity, maintain discipline and work diligently to secure police jobs. DD Tribal Welfare Officer Chandana, PATTC Principal Dr. Veera Naik, ACMO Ramesh, Sports Officer Gopala Rao, Sarveswara Rao Dora, Mohan, Vasanth and Parvathi, among others, attended the programme.

Nizamabad Collector inaugurates new Aadhaar Service Centre

TFP I ATEEQ KHAN
NIZAMABAD, OCT 17



Nizamabad District Collector Ila Tripathi inaugurated a new Aadhaar Seva Kendra on Saturday at the Munnur Kapu Sangham building, beside Sri Abhayanjaneya Swamy Temple in Kotagalli on Varni Road, Nizamabad.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said Aadhaar was essential for accessing government welfare schemes, banking and other services. She instructed the staff to provide quality, transparent and responsible services, particularly to senior citizens, women, students and people from rural areas. She also warned that attempts to obtain fake Aadhaar registrations using forged documents would invite strict legal action.

The centre will function daily from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., including Sundays, the second Saturday and festival holidays, enabling working professionals and other residents to access services conveniently.

The programme was attended by UIDAI Assistant Manager Shravan Kumar, District e-Governance Manager Karthik Kumar, Protean Technologies' Nizamabad Aadhaar Seva Kendra Manager Suresh Kumar, ASK Kamareddy District Manager Anil Kumar, and Aadhaar centre staff.

Balanagar Police conduct cybercrime awareness programme

TFP I RAVI KUMAR
MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI, OCT 17



Balanagar Police Sub-Inspector Swetha has urged security personnel to remain vigilant against physical security threats and cybercrime while discharging their duties.

Speaking as the chief guest at an awareness programme on "Strong Surveillance and Security Personnel Duties" organised at the Action Group Securities office in Balanagar on Saturday, she stressed the importance of strict surveillance at apartments, gated communities, industrial units and corporate offices.

Swetha cautioned security guards against suspicious calls and messages that could lead to financial fraud and advised them to remain alert both at their workplaces and residences. She also encouraged personnel from states such as Odisha, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to look out for the safety of their colleagues.

Action Group Securities Chairman Subhani Abdul, Director Mohammed Yusuf, Balanagar Police Station women constables Swetha and N. Jyothi, and others attended the programme.

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Fight against drugs must be strengthened: DGP C.V. Anand



DGP C.V. Anand addresses at Drug-Free India rally meeting in Hyderabad.

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 17

Telangana Director General of Police C.V. Anand, IPS on Saturday flagged off a national motorcycle rally from Hyderabad to Kevadia in Gujarat to raise awareness about drug abuse, strengthen the fight against narcotics and promote the goal of a drug-free India.

The rally, flagged off at the Integrated Command and Control Centre in Banjara Hills, is part of a nationwide campaign organised in connection with Rashtriya Ekta Diwas.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is coordinating the campaign as the nodal agency.

Motorcycle riders from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are participating in the rally, which aims to promote national unity, social responsibility and public awareness of the harmful effects of drug abuse.

Addressing the participants, Anand called for stringent action against the supply and consumption of narcotic substances.

Expressing concern over the impact of drug abuse on young people, he said the Central and State governments were working towards achieving a drug-free India.

In Telangana, the police department, in coordination with the Telangana Anti-Narcotics Bureau's EAGLE Force, was taking measures to curb drug trafficking and consumption, he said.

The State government had established the EAGLE Force to strengthen anti-narcotics operations, and strict action was being taken against those involved in drug supply, he said.

Highlighting the importance of national unity, Anand said India's diverse languages, cultures and traditions were bound by a common national identity. The rally seeks to reinforce this spirit of unity while encouraging citizens to join the campaign against drug abuse.

He also urged the participants to follow traffic regulations and ensure road safety throughout their journey.

The riders are scheduled to travel through various regions and reach Kevadia by October 30.

They will participate in the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas celebrations on October 31, marking the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. EAGLE Force Director Sandeep Shandilya, Hyderabad Police Commissioner V.C. Sajjanar, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence officer Vikram, Narcotics Control Bureau Assistant Director Vishal, police personnel, NCC students and media representatives attended the flag-off event.

Governor calls for comprehensive modernisation of Salar Jung Museum

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 17



Telangana Governor and Salar Jung Museum Board Chairman Shiv Pratap Shukla on Saturday called for comprehensive modernisation of the museum, with emphasis on upgrading galleries, improving visitor amenities and expanding educational programmes to attract students and young people.

Chairing a meeting of the Salar Jung Museum Board at Lok Bhavan here, the Governor reviewed 13 agenda items concerning the museum's development, infrastructure, visitor facilities and educational initiatives.

During the meeting, Curator (Display) Ritesh Sharma made a presentation on proposed upgrades to the Carpet Gallery, Modern Art Gallery, Indian Miniature Gallery, Toy and Taxidermy Gallery, Furniture Gallery, Musical Clock Area, Textile Gallery and Children's Gallery.

The proposals also included a temporary exhibition gallery, a stepwell development project and an interactive orientation space to help visitors understand the museum and its collections.

The Board also discussed measures to improve visitor navigation through external and internal signage, safety signs, amenity banners and a main directory board.

Proposed infrastructure upgrades included centralised air-conditioning, improved public amenities and washrooms, roof waterproofing, dedicated carpet storage, renovation of existing elevators and installation of an additional elevator.

Renovation of the guest house, preparation of a museum master plan, project management and coordination of curatorial activities were also discussed.

GHMC steps up demolition drive against unauthorised constructions

TFP I FAROOQ KHAN
HYDERABAD, OCT 17

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has intensified its demolition drive against unauthorised constructions and buildings deviating from sanctioned plans, carrying out enforcement operations at three locations across the city on Friday.

In Golconda Zone, officials took action against an unauthorised cellar, ground floor and six upper floors in Feelkhana, Begum Bazar, on a plot measuring 70 square yards, the Corporation said in a release on Saturday.

In Khairatabad Zone, demolition action targeted unauthorised third, fourth and fifth floors at Red Hills, on a 90-square-yard plot.

In Secunderabad Zone, officials acted against an unauthorised fourth floor in Chikkadpally, located on a plot measuring 357 square yards.

According to a preliminary assessment, 473 ongoing constructions across GHMC limits have been identified as unauthorised or as deviating from sanctioned building plans.

The process of issuing notices and passing speaking orders is underway in accordance with the provisions of the CURE Act. The corporation is preparing a comprehensive action plan for the demolition or sealing of the identified structures.

GHMC reiterated that enforcement operations would continue across all zones to ensure compliance with building regulations and curb unauthorised constructions.

Online Betting: ED conducts searches in Hyderabad



TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 17

In fresh action against an online betting/gaming and cyber fraud syndicate, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted search operations at 20 premises located in Mumbai, Pune, Mehsana, Surat and Hyderabad, ED officials said on Saturday.

During the search operations on October 13, the ED's Mumbai Zone-2 seized various incriminating documents, digital devices and other material evidence relating to the layering and diversion of proceeds of crime, the official said in a statement.

In addition, multiple bank accounts of the concerned entities and persons have been ordered frozen under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, the statement said.

In the case, the ED had earlier conducted searches at multiple places in Pune, Mumbai and Bengaluru and also arrested Ram U. Ramdhani, founder of Edsom Fintech Private Limited, who remains in judicial custody, it added.

The investigation stems from two predicate offences pertaining to the online gaming and betting platform "All Panel Exchange" (allpanelexch.com) and MGM91 wherein the complainants were induced to deposit funds and were subsequently cheated, the ED said.

The central agency's investigation under PMLA established that funds collected from victims of both betting platforms were routed and ultimately received in the bank accounts of a Pune-based entity established by Ram U. Ramdhani. "Edsom had developed and operated an in-house payment intermediary platform called "iPaisa", through which it onboarded more than 200 shell/front entities -- referred to internally as "merchants" -- on behalf of online gaming, betting, and cyber fraud operators and their agents, referred to as "Channel Partners/Carry and Forward Agents"," the ED said.

"Investigation revealed that funds collected from victims of online gaming/betting/cyber fraud platforms were routed through a vast network of mule bank accounts and the controllers of these betting platforms, along with the shell entities used for routing the proceeds of crime, have been identified," the ED added.

It also emerged that a significant number of persons involved in operating these online betting/gaming platforms were being directed from Dubai based persons, the probe agency said.

Alai Balai cultural event on Oct 22

RATNA CHOTRANI
HYDERABAD, OCT 17



Bandaru Vijayalakshmi

The annual Alai Balai cultural event, aimed at promoting Telangana's cultural heritage and social harmony, will be held at the Nampally Exhibition Grounds here on October 22, Alai Balai Foundation Chairperson Bandaru Vijayalakshmi announced on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference along with former Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya, she said the annual Dasara get-together would bring together political leaders cutting across party lines, public representatives and citizens.

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and other political leaders are expected to attend the event, she said.

Initiated by Dattatreya in 2005, Alai Balai celebrates Telangana's cultural traditions through folk performances such as Bathukamma, Bonalu, Dappu, Gussadi and Kolatam. Traditional Telangana cuisine will also be showcased, while achievers will be felicitated on the occasion, Vijayalakshmi added.

Dattatreya said Alai Balai was a non-political social and cultural initiative that brought together leaders from different political parties and people from various walks of life.

CS reviews preparations for Global Summit, stresses stakeholder participation



FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 17

Telangana Chief Secretary Sanjay Jaju, IAS on Saturday reviewed preparations for the upcoming Invest Telangana Global Summit and directed officials to ensure the participation of key industry representatives, foreign ambassadors and other prominent stakeholders in the summit-related events scheduled in Hyderabad and New Delhi.

At a meeting held at the Secretariat, the Chief Secretary reviewed the status of invitations for the summit and its curtain-raiser events scheduled in Hyderabad on October 24 and New Delhi on October 29. Jaju directed officials to ensure that stakeholders from the aerospace, space and defence sectors were invited to participate in both events.

He stressed the need to reach out to leading industry representatives, sectoral experts and other prominent personalities whose participation could contribute to the objectives of the summit.

He also instructed officials to invite ambassadors of various countries and representatives of leading industry bodies, including the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Emphasising the need for a focused and comprehensive invitation process, the Chief Secretary called on officials to take ownership of the arrangements, coordinate with relevant stakeholders and make concerted efforts to secure the participation of the targeted invitees.

He underscored the importance of meticulous planning and effective coordination to ensure that the Hyderabad and New Delhi events achieve their intended objectives and encourage engagement among industry leaders, international representatives and other stakeholders.

Senior officials attended the meeting.

ACB registers DA case against police inspector; assets estimated at Rs 2.28 Cr

TFP I RAOOF KHAN
MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI, OCT 17



Arkappally Anjaneyulu

The Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has registered a disproportionate assets (DA) case against Arkappally Anjaneyulu, Inspector of Police at Keesara Police Station under the Medchal-Malkajgiri Police Commissionerate, after searches allegedly revealed assets worth Rs 2.28 crore, the Agency said on Saturday.

The case was registered by City Range-I on allegations that the inspector had acquired assets disproportionate to his known sources of income through corrupt practices and dubious means during his service, the ACB said in a release.

Preliminary searches were conducted on Saturday at his residence, office and four other locations linked to his relatives, associates and alleged benamidars.

During the searches, officials reportedly found property documents relating to two plots of 150 square yards each with an old house at Lingojiguda in Saroornagar, valued at Rs 30 lakh; an old house measuring 240 square yards at CR Enclave, Mansoorabad, LB Nagar, valued at Rs 40 lakh; an under-construction house measuring 180 square yards at Perur village, valued at Rs 50 lakh; and two acres of agricultural land at Haliya in Miryalaguda, valued at Rs 80 lakh.



Opposition spreading lies after electoral defeats: BJP



BHOPAL, OCT 17

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday targeted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, alleging that the Opposition was spreading lies and rumours to incite people after repeated electoral defeats.

Speaking at an event organised by Mera Yuva Bharat in Madhya Pradesh to mark 150 years of the national song 'Vande Mataram', Chouhan said Prime Minister Narendra Modi enjoyed public support, while the Opposition had failed to win people's confidence.

"Rahul Gandhi is not able to win elections. Prime Minister Modi resides in the hearts of the people. The public has rejected the Opposition many times before. They were losing even before the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and are still losing after it," he added.

He alleged that the Opposition, believing it could not win elections, was now attempting to create unrest by spreading misinformation.

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Chouhan said that such efforts would not succeed and that people would reject those pursuing what he described as 'negative politics'.

The Union Minister's remarks come amid the Opposition's criticism of the Election Commission's voter-list revision exercise and allegations concerning the process.

The Opposition has raised concerns over voter deletions and electoral transparency, while the SIR has remained a point of political contention.

He said the country's recorded history extended back more than 5,000 years and highlighted the significance of the Vedas in India's ancient civilisation.

"India's recorded history dates back more than 5,000 years. When the dawn of civilisation had not yet emerged in developed countries around the world, the hymns of the Vedas were being composed in India," he added. (IANS)

Congress accuses Centre of using Census 2027 to further RSS-BJP interests

TFP I PRASHANT SHARMA
NEW DELHI, OCT 17

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh has accused the Narendra Modi government of expanding the eligibility criteria for enumerators for Census 2027 with an alleged political motive, warning that the move, viewed alongside an RSS training camp and a government committee's invitation for public inputs on demographic changes, could compromise the impartiality and credibility of the nationwide exercise.



In a strongly worded post on social media platform X, Ramesh alleged that the government's decision to widen the pool of eligible enumerators was part of a broader design to involve cadres associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the census process.

He questioned the timing of the October 16 notification, linking it to an RSS training camp held in Belgaum, Karnataka, from July 10 to 12, and a subsequent call for public inputs by a committee constituted by the union Home Ministry to examine demographic changes in the country. "The Modi govt has now expanded the list of eligible enumerators for Census 2027. There is much mischief behind it," Ramesh said, alleging that the RSS had organised a major training camp for its cadres in Belgaum with the "single-point agenda of Census 2027". The Congress leader also questioned the composition and independence of the High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes, which he said was constituted by the union Home Ministry on May 26.

According to Ramesh, the committee invited members of the public as well as Indian and foreign organisations to submit inputs on demographic changes in India, raising questions, in his view, about the purpose of the exercise and the affiliations of those overseeing it. "The only thing high level of this committee is the affiliation of its members to the RSS ecosystem. So we know where these inputs will come from," he alleged. Ramesh argued that the sequence of events - the RSS training camp in July, the committee's invitation for inputs on October 14 and the census notification issued on October 16 - warranted scrutiny.

He claimed that the expanded eligibility criteria could open the door to the recruitment of thousands of RSS and BJP workers for census-related duties, potentially turning a national statistical exercise into an opportunity for partisan mobilisation. "It is clear this is a Rozgar Guarantee Yojana for thousands of RSS/BJP workers," Ramesh alleged, warning that the move could further erode public confidence in the census. "This will most certainly further contaminate an already subverted Census. Another institution is being destroyed," he added.

Union Minister Manjhi demands probe into Anant Singh's '9 murders' remark

PATNA, OCTOBER 17

Union MSME Minister and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) patron Jitan Ram Manjhi on Saturday criticised Mokama MLA Anant Singh over his controversial "nine murders" remark and demanded an inquiry into the statement, followed by appropriate action.



"If Anant Singh claims that he committed murders to help Nitish Kumar, then he has acted wrongly. If he truly wanted to help, he should have done so through positive actions. I demand an inquiry into his statement, followed by appropriate action against him," Manjhi said.

Meanwhile, Janata Dal-United (JD-U) National working President Sanjay Jha said the party had taken note of both Singh's original statement and his subsequent clarification.

He added that the party's Bihar unit was closely monitoring the developments.

The JD-U has not announced any disciplinary action against Singh so far.

The controversy erupted after Singh, speaking to a leading media agency on Friday, made remarks about the sacrifices he claimed to have made while supporting Nitish Kumar.

His comments were widely reported as a claim that he had orchestrated nine murders to benefit the JD-U leader.

After the political backlash, Singh held a press conference in Patna, saying his remarks had been misinterpreted.

He clarified that he was referring to the killing of nine of his aides after he aligned himself with Nitish Kumar, rather than claiming that he had arranged their murders. (IANS)

Ladakh CS terms rejection of MHA draft 'unfortunate'

SRINAGAR, OCT 17



A day after the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) rejected the Centre's draft proposal on Ladakh's demands, Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra on Saturday termed the response "very unfortunate", saying the document was dismissed within two hours of its receipt without its clauses being examined in depth.

Addressing a press conference in Leh, Kundra said the draft had been prepared after considerable effort and was open to suggestions, stressing that the Centre was willing to consider changes to reach a consensus on constitutional safeguards and the proposed democratic structure for Ladakh.

"I can only say that it is very unfortunate that the draft was rejected within two hours of being received, without perhaps going into the various clauses in depth. The document was prepared with considerable effort," he said.

"I want to make one thing very clear: this is a draft, and we are open to suggestions. Nothing is off the table," Kundra added.

He said the draft contained provisions for constitutional safeguards and referred to Article 371-K, urging Ladakh's leadership to submit specific suggestions and outline its expectations.

"If the leaders have any ideas or suggestions, they should provide them. As I said, negotiations require patience and you need to have a spirit of accommodation," he said. Kundra said the Centre had offered multiple options on issues concerning the establishment of a democratic body in Ladakh and could not proceed unilaterally without responses from the other side.

"We have given multiple options on several issues relevant to establishing a democratic body in Ladakh. We need answers to those questions. We cannot take any action unilaterally," he said.

On the proposed body's name, he said the government had sought suggestions rather than imposed a final decision.

New Delhi has meted out step-motherly treatment to J&K: Farooq Abdullah

SRINAGAR, OCT 17

National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Saturday accused the BJP-led government at the Centre of meting out "step-motherly treatment" to Jammu and Kashmir, citing the revocation of its special status, bifurcation into two union Territories and continued delay in restoring statehood.



NC President Farooq Abdullah

Abdullah said intimidation, coercion, harassment and suppression of people's voices had no place in a democracy, asserting that the Constitution of India does not permit such actions either.

In a statement he said that respecting the human rights is a fundamental responsibility of a democratic society and no region or citizen should be subjected to discrimination on the basis of religion or faith.

"Jammu and Kashmir has been subjected to step-motherly treatment by the BJP government," he said.

"First our special status was revoked without seeking the people's consent and the historic state was demoted into two union Territories, while J&K's statehood continues to remain in suspended animation. The people of J&K were assured in Parliament and before the Supreme Court that statehood would be restored soon after the elections. However, even two years after the elections, no progress has been made in this direction," he added.

"The Lieutenant Governor's administration leaves no opportunity to interfere in the functioning of the democratically elected government and create obstacles in its work," he said. (IANS/UNI)

Assam ranks 1st in BNS implementation: Himanta

GUWAHATI, OCT 17

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday that the state ranked first in the implementation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), according to the National Crime and Law Enforcement Integrated Network (NCLI) dashboard of the Union Home Ministry, highlighting the state government's focus on strengthening law enforcement and ensuring public safety.

In a post on social media platform X, CM Sarma said the state's policing approach was centred on stronger enforcement, swift action and protecting every citizen. "When it comes to fighting crime, Assam means business. Our policing is focused on stronger enforcement, swift action and protecting every citizen," the Chief Minister said.

He added that Assam had secured the top position in BNS implementation, citing the dashboard maintained by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. The BNS, which replaced the I IPC, is one of three new criminal laws that came into force across the country on July 1, 2024. (IANS)

Kerala awaits probe into KIIFB land acquisitions

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT 17



All eyes are now on Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan to announce the nature of the probe into the controversial KIIFB land acquisitions in Kannur, where thousands of acres were allegedly bought at exorbitant prices, raising serious questions about financial irregularities, procedural violations and the burden on the public exchequer.

One of the first decisions of Satheesan after he took over in May this year was to appoint a panel of experts to conduct a comprehensive study on KIIFB, and it was early this week they submitted its findings.

It was first placed in the state assembly, following which Satheesan made a presentation on the rip-off conducted by the Vijayan government, especially during his second term 2021-26.

Satheesan has said there will definitely be a probe, and the only question remains: which agency will be given the task of it.

The issue has assumed political significance following Satheesan's Friday response to former Finance Minister Thomas Isaac's claim, made a day earlier, that KIIFB had Rs 30,000 crore in cash and investments.

Citing KIIFB's official website and audit records, Satheesan said its total reserves as of March 31, 2026, stood at Rs 10,633 crore.

Of this, Rs 4,128 crore was the government's Treasury corpus fund, leaving actual investments at Rs 6,521 crore.

He also pointed to KIIFB's liabilities of around Rs 32,000 crore.

Isaac is yet to provide a detailed response to the figures cited by the Chief Minister.

The exchange has brought renewed attention to KIIFB's financial position and the decisions taken during the previous CPI(M)-led government. The more serious questions concern the acquisition of land in Kannur through KINFRA.

KIIFB funds were used to acquire 1,044 acres at Kolari in Iritty and 1,030 acres at Koodali.

The reported expenditure of Rs 12,727 crore was financed through loans from HUDCO.

The acquisitions have come under scrutiny over the reported price of Rs 2.49 crore per acre and allegations that proper approvals were lacking.

Large stretches of the acquired land reportedly remain unused, raising questions about their industrial potential and the wisdom of incurring substantial borrowing costs.

The State Budget had envisaged acquiring 1,000 acres at Pattannur. However, the acquisition plan reportedly expanded considerably, with Rs 2,489 crore transferred to KINFRA and a tripartite agreement signed among KINFRA, the government and KIIFB. (IANS/UNI)

SC-tasked panel invites complaints linked to Jantar Mantar clashes in July

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

The Supreme Court-constituted High Powered Enquiry Committee (HPEC) has started inviting complaints and representations from people affected by incidents relating to violence at Jantar Mantar in Delhi and other cities in July, an official said on Saturday.



For the convenience of the affected people, including the affected police personnel, the HPEC, headed by former Justice R. Subhash Reddy, has launched a portal, http://hpec.nic.in, the Union Home Ministry official said in a statement.

The five-member HPEC has been tasked to look into all aspects of the incidents relating to violence at Jantar Mantar, Delhi, and at places outside the Capital, in July during protests over alleged exam irregularities, the official said.

The HPEC shall examine all issues enumerated in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the Supreme Court's order dated August 18 and paragraph 5(i) of the order dated September 10, 2026, said the official in a statement.

Priority will be given to matters about the use of pellet guns, targeted violence and harassment of female protestors, and excessive violence and destruction of property occasioned on either side, said the statement.

The Portal is designed in such a manner as to enable due protection to vulnerable witnesses and also to keep the identities confidential and undisclosed, if so wished by the affected persons, said the statement.

The affected persons and other stakeholders are encouraged to access the portal and upload their complaints/representations, making use of the formats as applicable, it said.

from the above, any person wishing to provide information/suggestion relating to the issues referred to the HPEC under the Supreme Court orders dated August 18, 2026 and September 10, 2026 may also do so through the portal, the statement said.

Those who wish to submit the complaints, representations and other relevant material physically can do so at the Office of the HPEC at Shiksha Sadan, 17, Rouse Avenue Institutional Area, New Delhi 110002 between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. on all working days.

Five suspected UNLF (G-5) members apprehended in Manipur

KOLKATA, OCT 17

In an intelligence-based operation, troops of the Assam Rifles, in coordination with the state police, apprehended five suspected members of the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) from the Ukhrul district in Manipur, officials said.

The five are suspected to be members of the G-5 conglomerate.

This is an underground alliance comprising five insurgent groups: UNLF, KCP, KYKL, PREPAK, and PREPAK (Pro).

The UNLF is the oldest valley-based insurgent group in Manipur that was founded in 1964. In 2023, the outfit signed a peace agreement with the Centre and the Government of Manipur, agreeing to renounce violence and join the mainstream.

"Despite the peace agreement, some factions of the UNLF, with other members of the G-5 conglomerate, have been involved in issuing threats and making extortion demands. Some members continue to operate along the India-Myanmar border," an official said. (IANS)

HC directs Assam VC to vacate post

GUWAHATI, OCT 17

The Gauhati High Court has directed the Vice-Chancellor of Assam University, Silchar, Rajive Mohan Pant, to vacate his post over alleged violations of University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations in his appointment.

The court's intervention has raised questions over the appointment process for the top administrative position at the central university, with the reported violations relating to the eligibility criteria and prescribed procedures under the UGC regulations.

According to an official, the High Court issued the direction on October 14, asking Pant to step down from the Vice-Chancellor's position.

The appointment has reportedly been challenged on the ground that the prescribed UGC norms were not followed.

The controversy has also brought the role of the Union Education Ministry under scrutiny, as the appointment of the head of a central university falls within the broader framework of regulations governing higher education institutions.

The University Registrar Pradosh Kiran Nath said that the matter had been communicated to the authorities in New Delhi. The university is awaiting a response from the Centre before deciding on the subsequent course of action.

The High Court also indicated that the question of recovering the salary already paid to the Vice-Chancellor had been raised in connection with the controversy. (IANS)

9 Indian seafarers on board chemical tanker YARA J safe

BUCHAREST, OCT 17

All nine Indian seafarers on board chemical tanker YARA J are safe and the vessel has arrived at the Port of Constanta in Romania, the Embassy of India in Bucharest said on Saturday.



The confirmation came after India's Ambassador to Romania, Manoj Mohapatra, spoke with Romanian authorities and the Company Security Officer (CSO) of the tanker.

Last week, three Indian nationals rescued from the commercial vessel MV Royad Mammadov, which came under attack in the Black Sea, departed from Romania for India, the Embassy had said.

"We express our sincere gratitude to the Romanian authorities, Constanta County Hospital, and the Romanian rescue teams for their invaluable assistance, cooperation and support," it added.

The three Indians were rescued from the vessel on October 6.

On October 7, India condemned attacks targeting commercial vessels in the Black Sea region and reiterated its call for dialogue and diplomacy to de-escalate tensions and enable an early return of peace in the region. (IANS/UNI)

Army's Central Command chief calls for sharpening operational capabilities

DEHRADUN, OCT 17

Lieutenant General Sanjay Mitra, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Army's Central Command, interacted with troops deployed on the frontier in the Garhwal sector and asked them to sharpening operational capabilities, an official said on Saturday.



"Lieutenant General Sanjay Mitra, GOC-in-C #CentralCommand, visited forward areas in the #GarhwalSector to review operational preparedness and combat readiness in the high-altitude Himalayan terrain," the Central Command said in a social media post.

"During his interaction with troops deployed at the frontiers, the #ArmyCommander commended their steadfast commitment and exhorted them to maintain relentless vigilance, sharpen operational capabilities and remain mission-ready for every contingency," the Central Command added.

Lieutenant General Sanjay Mitra assumed the charge of General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Central Command on October 1, reaffirming focus on operational readiness, strategic responsiveness and multi-domain capabilities. (IANS/UNI)

FSSAI issues notices to Nestle India, Hindustan Unilever over misleading claims

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Saturday said it has issued notices to leading FMCG firms, including Nestle India and Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) over alleged misleading claims and regulatory non-compliances concerning certain nutrition products.



Taking to the social media platform X, the food regulator said Nestle India has been served a notice regarding its "Nestle Resource Renal Vanilla Flavour Powder", a product intended for the dietary management of individuals with conservatively treated chronic kidney disease.

According to FSSAI, an examination of a complaint, product label, advertisements and e-commerce listings revealed multiple non-compliances.

The regulator said such products require prior approval under the Food Safety and Standards (Health Supplements, Nutraceuticals, Food for Special Dietary Use, Food for Special Medical Purpose, and Prebiotic and Probiotic Food) Regulations, 2022.

However, the company had not obtained the requisite approval, rendering the product non-compliant with applicable regulations, FSSAI said. It also noted that the mandatory vegetarian or non-vegetarian symbol was missing from the product label in violation of labelling rules.

The regulator directed the company to show cause and submit its response within the stipulated period, warning that failure to provide a satisfactory explanation could invite further action under food safety laws. (IANS)

Imran Khan files a petition seeking stay on 'Leave India' notice

MUMBAI, OCT 17

Bollywood actor Imran Khan has filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court seeking a stay on the order issued by the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) directing him to leave India before October 28.



Imran Khan

In the petition, it was pointed out that FRRO failed to specify the alleged immigration violation by Imran Khan. It further urged the court to direct FRRO to show the record on the basis of which they took the decision.

It was also shared that FRRO has not taken into account Imran Khan's lifelong residency rights as an OCI cardholder.

The petition stated that he was given only 14 days to leave the country, that too without a prior inquiry, show-cause notice or even an opportunity to present his side.

It was further argued in the petition that the protest site was not a restricted area and the actor did not breach any barricades. It was also mentioned that Imran Khan was leaving when he was suddenly surrounded by the media, followed by his detention.

For the unaware, Imran Khan was directed by the FRRO to leave India by October 28 after he allegedly unlawfully participated in the recent August Kranti Maidan protests, held to demand the resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. (IANS)

Centre eases SEZ norms for IFSC funds, aircraft and ship leasing firms

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

The Centre has amended the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Rules, 2006, simplifying space and lease documentation for funds operating in International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs), allowing eligible aircraft and ship leasing entities to share office infrastructure and manpower, and prescribing specific criteria for renewal of approvals.

The amendments also establish the date of the first final regulatory authorisation granted by the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) as the commencement date of service activities for IFSC units, even if that authorisation subsequently ceases to be valid.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Department of Commerce notified the Special Economic Zones (Fourth Amendment) Rules, 2026, through G.S.R. 895(E), dated October 15, exercising powers under Section 55 of the Special Economic Zones Act, 2005.

The amended rules came into force on publication in the Official Gazette.

Under the revised Rule 18(2), a provisional offer of space confirmed in writing by an SEZ developer for a fund management entity (FME) will be accepted as the provisional offer of space for the fund established in an IFSC.



Similarly, a lease deed executed by the fund management entity will be recognised as the lease deed of the fund concerned.

The provision eliminates the need for separate space-related documentation in these specified circumstances, easing procedural requirements for funds operating through FMEs.

In another significant amendment, the government has clarified the commencement of service activities under Rule 19(4).

For an IFSC unit, the first recognition, registration, licence or authorisation granted in final form by the IFSCA will be treated as commencement of service activity, with the date of grant serving as the commencement date.

The notification further provides that the commencement date will remain unchanged even if the regulatory recognition, registration, licence or authorisation on which it was determined subsequently ceases to be valid.

The government has also amended Rule 19(6B), specifying that renewal of the Letter of Approval for an IFSC unit will be decided on the basis of IFSCA recommendations.

Three criteria will govern the decision: employment generated by the unit, instances of violations of applicable laws relating to its operations, and defaults, if any, in statutory payments.

The amendment consequently brings employment generation and regulatory compliance into the specified considerations for renewal of approvals.

The revised Rule 21B provides greater flexibility for aircraft and ship leasing operations in IFSCs.

An existing unit authorised to undertake aircraft or ship leasing, or a person intending to establish such a unit, may be permitted by the IFSCA to operate without maintaining a separate office.

Subject to the authority's approval, such an entity may use office space, manpower or both belonging to another unit authorised to undertake aircraft or ship leasing activities or Trust and Company Service Provider activities.

The amended rule specifies that sharing arrangements involving a Trust and Company Service Provider are permitted only where the provider is supplying, or intends to supply, services to the entity receiving permission.

Entities permitted to share office space under Rule 21B will not be required to furnish a separate provisional offer of space or lease deed. (IANS/UNI)

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Turning AI capabilities into measurable business value

Every major enterprise today has access to increasingly powerful artificial intelligence (AI) tools, yet many continue to struggle with revenue leakage, fragmented decision-making and slow execution. The challenge is no longer simply acquiring advanced technology but using it effectively to achieve measurable business outcomes. As AI adoption expands, the real competitive advantage will depend on how organisations integrate intelligence into decisions, operations and accountability.

Much of the current debate centres on agentic AI systems that can independently perform tasks, write code and automate workflows. While these capabilities represent significant technological progress, enterprises are primarily concerned with revenue growth, improved margins, operational efficiency and faster decision-making. This distinction highlights the importance of enterprise agency, which refers to an organisation's ability to apply AI within established decision-making structures and translate recommendations into accountable action.

AI systems can generate insights, analyse information and suggest solutions, but enterprises operate within complex environments shaped by institutional knowledge, previous decisions, regulatory requirements and competing business priorities. Without this context, even sophisticated AI recommendations may fail to deliver meaningful results. Businesses must therefore treat organisational knowledge and decision-making processes as strategic assets that can be systematically integrated into their AI systems.

Consider a company reviewing its pricing strategy. A pricing model may recommend a rate adjustment, while a risk management system identifies potential financial exposure and a compliance platform highlights regulatory restrictions. If these systems operate independently, executives must still reconcile conflicting recommendations before taking action. Enterprise agency seeks to connect these functions through a coordinated framework that incorporates business priorities, approval processes and operational constraints, enabling decisions to move from analysis to implementation.

The transition from insight to execution does not necessarily require organisations to replace their existing technology infrastructure. Businesses can build on current systems and data while gradually improving integration and automation. However, they need clear processes to record how decisions are made, who authorises them and what outcomes follow. Such traceability becomes particularly important when AI influences pricing, supply chains, customer services, financial risk or regulatory compliance. Transparent decision records can strengthen accountability, support audits and help organisations improve future performance.

The evolving AI ecosystem also demonstrates that powerful models alone are not complete enterprise solutions. Technology companies increasingly work with consulting firms and technology service providers to integrate AI into complex business environments. This reflects the continuing importance of implementation, domain expertise, governance and organisational transformation. Rather than eliminating the need for human expertise, advances in AI are changing where that expertise creates value: from routine technology delivery towards applying intelligence to specific business challenges.

These developments are also reshaping the technology and services industry. Traditionally, the value of technology projects was measured largely through software delivery, implementation costs and operational performance. As AI reduces the cost and time required to develop software, businesses are likely to place greater emphasis on tangible results. Technology providers will increasingly be assessed on their contribution to revenue growth, profitability, working capital management and organisational resilience rather than simply the systems they deliver.

Biosecurity framework in India

The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and biological research is creating new opportunities in healthcare, agriculture, vaccine development and drug discovery, while raising concerns about potential misuse. In August 2026, scientists at Stanford University used AI in biological research to identify an E. coli-killing bacteriophage and 16 new potential viruses, renewing the debate over AI-enabled biological risks. The findings do not demonstrate the creation of a virus harmful to humans, but they highlight the growing ability of AI to support experiments beyond computer simulations.

For years, concerns about AI-assisted biological weapons remained largely hypothetical. Biosecurity experts warned that advanced AI systems could lower the barriers to designing biological agents, prompting researchers to introduce red-teaming exercises and safeguards against misuse. The distinction between generating a DNA sequence and producing a viable organism remains important. However, recent experiments indicate that the gap between computational design and laboratory testing is narrowing, making the need for evidence-based regulation more pressing.

Earlier exercises, including biosecurity research conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2024, highlighted vulnerabilities in DNA synthesis screening and the potential misuse of AI-generated biological designs. These warnings have gained relevance as AI capabilities advance. Governments must avoid both excessive restrictions based on worst-case assumptions and complacency until a serious incident occurs. A balanced approach should assess demonstrated capabilities, potential risks and legitimate scientific benefits while preserving responsible research.

Effective oversight must extend beyond AI models to the entire biological research process. An AI system may generate a design, scientists may assess it, laboratories may conduct experiments, and DNA synthesis companies may manufacture the required material. Each stage presents different risks and may fall under separate regulatory arrangements. Coordination among AI developers, researchers, laboratories, synthesis firms and government agencies is therefore essential to establish accountability and prevent gaps in oversight.

The growing involvement of private AI companies in physical biological research adds another dimension to the debate. Anthropic announced in September 2026 that it had opened a wet laboratory in San Francisco to support fundamental biological research, drug discovery and experiments integrating AI with laboratory work. Its proposed approach involves using its Claude model to analyse biological data, develop hypotheses and test them experimentally. Such developments blur the traditional boundary between AI developers and biological research institutions, making transparency and effective public oversight increasingly important.

At the same time, AI-assisted biology could help address major public health challenges, including antibiotic resistance, infectious diseases and the need for improved diagnostics and treatments. Research involving bacteriophages, for instance, offers potential avenues for combating bacteria that no longer respond to conventional antibiotics. Regulation should therefore focus on managing risks rather than obstructing scientific progress. Advanced AI systems should be evaluated not only for their ability to reject harmful requests but also for how safely they function when integrated into real laboratory environments.

For India, the convergence of AI and biotechnology presents both a strategic opportunity and a governance responsibility. The country has established pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, a growing AI ecosystem and expanding capabilities in genomics. These strengths could support indigenous innovation in medicines, vaccines, agriculture and diagnostics. However, AI-generated biological designs may create risks before they reach a laboratory, while their wider socioeconomic consequences could extend beyond security concerns. Lessons from the Bt cotton experience underline the importance of assessing the broader implications of biotechnology, including its effects on farmers, markets and public welfare.

India is a rising big power, not a 'Middle Power' - As some want to label it

NARENDRA TANEJA



There appears to be an orchestrated attempt to drag and push India into the vague category of 'Middle Powers' in the global power pecking order, unsurprisingly, much to the surprise and shock of the country's 1.4 billion women, men, and children. Because this goes diametrically against the hard-earned image of India as a growing big power.

Middle powers, theoretically speaking, are countries that enjoy significant influence in their region or part of the world over smaller nations but are constrained by their limited size and power as far as influencing international policies and affairs are concerned, unlike big powers. India crossed that 'middle power' stage many years ago and is now considered, including by the countries calling New Delhi a 'middle power', the most eligible country to be a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the ultimate club of the superpowers. Needless to say, India must thwart all such moves as forcefully as possible before it is too late. In this age of AI and hypercommunication, it may take no time for such a label to get stuck, but years and years to get rid of it. It has never been more important than now to position the correct image of the country in the mind of the world.

A section of deliberations at the two major international conferences, including the Bloomberg New Economy Forum, in the heart of New Delhi this month, may have left many a bit convinced that India was just a 'Middle Power' like Germany, or Australia, or Canada, and not a superpower in the making, thanks to some of the high-profile foreign speakers present there. However, addressing the Forum, India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, in his own inimitable style, tried to nullify all such efforts by insisting: 'India is a power in the middle' and not a 'middle power'. But we need to be more categorical, more forceful, and, if required, louder in stating that India is a big power in the making and nothing less. Sometimes, the world listens only when you speak a bit bluntly.

Countries like China and Pakistan have never been comfortable with the rise and growing recognition of India as a big global power in the making. Some countries in the West, too, appear to be keen to label India just as a 'Middle Power' rather than acknowledging the country's rise as a big power on all key parameters, including economic and defence. But there is no point blaming anybody - that is how the world is! There is no point being sentimental about such issues in internal affairs. The world - eventually, if not immediately - will think of us what we think of us. Hence, it is important that we are clear and consistent in positioning India as a rising big power everywhere, both as a people and as a government.

China is nowhere equal to the United States in most parameters. Yet, President Donald Trump has granted Beijing the status of an equal, or G2, in his desperate efforts to rebuild bilateral relations, lower the temperature on the issues of the South China Sea and Taiwan, and wean China away from Russia. China is, predictably, also happily playing along, talking more like a global superpower than what it is - a regional Asian power.

Until yesterday, the United States used to look upon itself as the guardian of the rules-based international order. It is, however, now China, a one-party dictatorship, which is trying to position itself as the most prominent voice on the rules-based world. Hard power is important. Soft power is important. But how you position and play your cards, image, and power has become central in this modern world.

A 7,000-year-old civilisation, the land known universally for peaceful coexistence, India is today the third-largest economy in the world at USD 18 trillion GDP (on a purchasing power parity basis). By most credible international projections, India will be the second-largest economy in the world, together with the United States, by 2060, if not sooner. Undoubtedly, there is a lot that we need to fix internally, especially in areas like the rural economy, economic reforms, and education, to realise our full potential, but there is no doubt that the country is steadily on the rise.

The unipolar world we have known since the end of the Cold War in 1991, with the United States as its de facto leader, is rapidly collapsing, and the multipolar world has begun to rise for everybody to see. The United States and many others in the West are, however, still refusing to acknowledge this historic shift. Because they want the status quo - the West-dominated world order - to continue. The attempt, therefore, to bundle India into this vague group of 'Middle Powers', which includes Mexico, Turkey, and Indonesia, and may include - who knows - even Pakistan tomorrow, is easy to decode.

It is evident that the multipolar world is fast taking shape, with China already having risen and India fast on the rise. The European Union is also going through a massive churn and may well be a key economic, political, and military global pole in its own right within the next two decades. Russia will continue to be an important global pole.

The multipolar world, when it fully emerges in about twenty years, will be a world of five global super poles, or G5, namely, the United States, the European Union, Russia, China, and India. There will be many smaller poles, or 'Middle Powers', too. This transition, however, will not be without resistance, challenges, and hindrances. India will have to be vigilant, keeping in mind that there are no friends when it comes to battles for securing a top place in the global power pecking order.

(Narendra Taneja is a reputed global expert on energy security and geopolitics)

India's 'Swacch' drive has a mountain-sized blindspot

SUJAY N JHA



Every morning in east Delhi, trucks climb a hill that was never meant to exist. Ghazipur began taking the city's waste in 1984 and was supposed to stop at about 40 metres. A court-appointed commissioner who visited in March 2025 found it at roughly 60 metres, cracked on top, and venting methane. Fires break out regularly. Three decades of cleanliness drives have produced a clean pavement and a burning mountain a few kilometres away.

The Swachh Bharat Mission, launched in 2014, is rightly celebrated for its toilets and door-to-door collection. Its record on what happens after the dustbin is lifted is far weaker. Calling this a "complete collapse" in every city goes beyond the evidence. Calling the official numbers reassuring does too. The honest description is a mission that measured what was easy, declared success early, and left the hard, expensive downstream work half done.

Official dashboards say India's cities generate about 161,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste a day and that roughly 80-82% is processed. Yet the capital, with the best-resourced municipality in the country, told the National Green Tribunal through the pollution regulator that it processes 64.2% of its 11,852 daily tonnes. Some 4,241 tonnes a day go to the Bhalswa and Ghazipur dumps. Processing capacity (8,173 tonnes) is itself below generation, and actual use falls short of capacity.

Ghazipur is the symbol, not the exception. Delhi's three big dumps - Ghazipur, Bhalswa, and Okhla - were assessed by a CPCB, NEERI, and IIT Delhi committee as having caused environmental damage valued at about Rs 1.4-1.6 billion rupees. A 2022 report to the tribunal found only 7% of Ghazipur's legacy waste had been biomined. Delhi's municipal corporation told the tribunal in 2026 that the site still receives around 2,400-2,600 tonnes of fresh waste a day. Delhi's landfills are reported to be 55-60% organic material, the fraction that rots into methane and feeds fires.

Nationally, officials put legacy waste at 270.2 million tonnes, of which 65.8% had been remediated by May 2026. The target, "Zero Dumpsites", falls due this month. A few sites hold most of what is left: 214 high-impact dumps contain about 80% of the remaining legacy waste. Remediation is also a flow problem. Clearing an old mound while fresh, unsorted waste keeps arriving simply refills it.

It measured the wrong thing. Toilets built and wards declared open-defecation-free are countable and photogenic. A functioning organic plant is not. Cities competed in the annual cleanliness survey, in which tidy streets scored well even when the waste was trucked to a dump on the edge of town.

Waste arrives mixed. Processing plants, composters, and waste-to-energy units need segregated feedstock. Wet waste dominates Indian bins, but segregation at source is patchy outside a few cities. Indore, the survey's perennial winner, shows it can be done; it is the exception that proves how rare the discipline is.

Municipalities are poor and fragmented. Waste is a local-body job, yet most urban local bodies lack the revenue, staff, and land to run plants. Central funds helped build capacity; the recurring cost of operating it is another matter. Self-reported dashboards let a city count capacity as processing.

Health costs are real but poorly measured. Landfill fires and methane are linked to bad air near dumps, and doctors report rising respiratory complaints. But data tying specific illnesses to specific dumps has barely been collected. A health crisis is plausible; proving its scale needs research India has not funded.

The comparison cuts both ways. Rich-world landfilling is not a model for India to copy, and America's 50% landfill rate would be a catastrophe without liners. China's incinerator boom shows state capacity but also how targets set from above can be met by building rather than by solving the underlying system. Europe's slower, rules-driven route is closest to what India's cities need: taxes on dumping, mandatory segregation, and enforcement.

Start by auditing the dashboard: independent verification of processing claims, city by city. Tie central money to tonnes actually processed rather than plants commissioned. Ban the dumping of unsegregated wet waste and charge a landfill levy that makes recycling cheaper than disposal. Fund health surveillance around the big dumps so the costs become visible. Without such changes, every remediated mound will be rebuilt by tomorrow's trucks.

India has shown it can change behaviour at scale when it measures honestly and spends on operations. The first Swachh Bharat cleaned up what could be seen. The second must deal with what is merely out of sight.

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

Arbitrary, unverified reports make UN lose credibility: India



UNITED NATIONS, OCT 17
Arbitrary reports based on unverifiable hearsay have led to the UN losing its credibility, India has warned while rejecting "outright" a report by the monitor for freedom of peaceful assembly.

"A sweeping charge against the world's largest youth population, resting on anonymous and unverified claims is not evidence", Indian diplomat Anuj Swarup said on Friday, taking exception to the Special Rapporteur's report on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association.

"This level of arbitrary report writing is precisely the reason that the United Nations and its institutions have lost credibility", he said at a meeting in New York of the General Assembly's Third Committee that deals with social and humanitarian issues.

"It is hearsay dressed up as a UN report, and my delegation rejects it outright", he said.

The report by Special Rapporteur Gina Romero said, "Young people from India reported retaliation or stigmatisation for discussing mental health or gender justice".

The footnote to the claim in the report attributed it to a "submission" without further identifying the source.

"A mandate holder who relies on anonymous inputs to generalise for 1.4 billion people does a disservice to the very mandate she holds", said Swarup, a first secretary in India's UN mission in Geneva.

This was the second time this week that India issued a warning about the UN human rights mechanism losing its credibility through arbitrary reports.

Swarup on Wednesday said Human Rights Commissioner Volker Turk was following double standards in how he reports on violent responses to protests.

"Violent responses to protests in our neighbourhood, as well as in the West, have gone uncommented" in the reports Turk, he said.

"Such double standards contribute to loss of trust" in the high commissioner, he said.

While criticising the special rapporteur's submission on Friday, Swarup said, "Ironically, the same report notes that young Indians created a satirical political movement". He said Romero probably missed Turk's statement "in the Human Rights Council last month that dialogue with young leaders is far more effective in the context of youth-led movement in India". (IANS/UNI)

FSSAI moves to ban sucrose and fructose in foods for infants up to six months

NEW DELHI, OCT 17
The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has published a draft amendment that would prohibit the addition of sucrose and fructose in food products intended for infants up to six months of age, an official statement said on Saturday.



The statement from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said the draft Food Safety and Standards (Foods for Infant Nutrition) Amendment Regulations, 2026, aims to strengthen nutritional safeguards for infants.

The amendment published in the Gazette of India on October 16, 2026, would strengthen the existing regulatory framework by ensuring infant nutrition products are formulated to meet age-appropriate requirements and minimise early exposure to added sugars. The draft notification has been published for public consultation, inviting objections and suggestions from stakeholders within 60 days.

The representations received within the prescribed period will be considered by FSSAI before finalisation of the amendment. The existing regulations prescribe comprehensive nutritional composition, quality and safety standards for various categories of infant nutrition products intended for children from birth up to 24 months of age.

Under the current provisions, lactose and glucose polymers are the preferred sources of carbohydrates, while sucrose or fructose may be added only when required as a carbohydrate source, subject to prescribed limits. The first six months of life represent a critical period for healthy growth and development, making appropriate nutrition particularly important. (IANS/UNI)

NH projects taken up in April-Sep clock 63% jump

NEW DELHI, OCT 16
India's infrastructure sectors, spanning highways, aviation, telecom, ports, and power, recorded robust growth during the first half (April-September) of the current financial year, according to the quarterly update of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's (MoSPI) PAIMANA Performance Monitoring Dashboard.



National Highways awarded for construction rose 62.9 per cent year-on-year to 2,236.3 km during April-September of FY27. This significant increase strengthens the pipeline of highway infrastructure development, paving the way for enhanced connectivity, improved logistics efficiency, and sustained economic growth, the official statement said.

The telecommunications sector recorded a continued expansion of digital infrastructure, with the cumulative Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) laid reaching 7,52,113 km by August 2026. This represents an addition of 29,256 km during FY 2026–27 (April–August), strengthening the country's high-speed digital connectivity infrastructure.

The Ports, Shipping, and Waterways sector recorded continued growth in cargo traffic, with cargo handled at major ports increasing by 7.2 per cent year-on-year to 390.4 million tonnes during FY 2026-27 (April-August). Cargo traffic at non-major ports increased by 1.8 per cent year-on-year to 313.4 million tonnes during the same period. Overall, this growth reflects sustained cargo movement and continued utilisation of port infrastructure supporting domestic and international trade. (IANS)

Ayush patent filings in India surge eightfold over decade

NEW DELHI, OCT 16
Ayush-related innovation and intellectual property activity in India has surged over eightfold over the past decade with 4,077 patent applications filed and 711 patents granted between FY15 and FY26, an official statement said on Friday.



Annual filings rose from 63 applications in FY15 to 590 in FY26, marking a growth of about 836.5 per cent, according to data from the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trademarks, DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Filings peaked at 606 in FY 2022–23 before dipping to 299 in FY 2023–24 before recovering to 590 by FY26, the statement from the Ministry of Ayush said. Annual patent grants also increased substantially, from three in FY16 to 204 in FY24.

Natural persons accounted for 2,113 applications, or 51.9 per cent of total filings, and 398 grants, while educational institutions contributed 995 applications and 88 grants. Together, natural persons and educational institutions accounted for 76.3% of total filings.

"The substantial growth in Ayush-related patent filings and grants reflects the increasing focus on research, innovation and intellectual property in the Ayush sector," said Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State for Ayush and Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare.

"The government is committed to creating an enabling ecosystem where traditional knowledge, scientific research and contemporary innovation can contribute to new products, technologies and solutions while ensuring that India's rich knowledge systems are appropriately protected," Jadhav said.

"The steady expansion of patent activity demonstrates the growing research and innovation base of the Ayush sector. The increasing participation of individuals, universities, research institutions, startups and industry is encouraging and will help strengthen the translation of research into innovative solutions," said Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of Ayush. The ministry will continue to support evidence generation, research collaboration and innovation across the Ayush ecosystem, Kotecha added. (IANS)

Govt pushes FTA utilisation with outreach programme in Rajasthan

NEW DELHI, OCT 17
The government has organised an outreach programme, 'Leveraging FTAs ', to create awareness about benefits under India's Free Trade Agreements and facilitate utilisation by exporters in Jaipur, an official statement said on Saturday. According to the Commerce Ministry, the programme was addressed by Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce, Mohit Yadav and saw participation from exporters, representatives of the state government, DGFT, Jaipur Special Economic Zone and Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC).

The initiative aims to help enterprises translate preferential market access under FTAs into export opportunities through information, capacity building and coordination among Commerce Department, states and industry. It assumes significance amid India's expanding global engagement. The ministry cited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at the Bloomberg New Economy Forum and Independence Day address on opportunities created by FTAs for producers, farmers and MSMEs, with emphasis on international quality standards.

In addition, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has also highlighted that FTAs offer opportunities for farmers, women entrepreneurs, youth, MSMEs and artisans through reduced or zero-duty access. India's cumulative merchandise and services exports during April-September 2026-27 are estimated at $476.20 billion against $418.31 billion in the corresponding period last year, up 13.84 per cent, the ministry said.

The state aims to become a $350 billion economy by 2029 and achieve exports of Rs 1.5 lakh crore by 2029 under REPP 2024, aligning with Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, it added. (IANS)

Consensus earnings growth for AI stocks to plunge sharply: Report

NEW DELHI, OCT 17
Consensus earnings growth for AI-related stocks in the MSCI AC World Index is expected to plummet from nearly 100 per cent in 2026 to 30 per cent in 2027 and about 22 per cent in 2028, a new report has said, as chipmakers suffered sharp losses this week.



"It has become time to diversify beyond AI," the report from investment bank Jefferies said as global equity markets saw a sharp selloff this week as investors grew increasingly sceptical about the sustainability of the AI trade and mounting debt concerns.

However, the investment bank continues to hold companies that supply the infrastructure behind AI, but avoids companies directly spending money in the ongoing AI capital expenditure race. The report mentioned valuation as a key concern because on an equal-weighted basis, global AI stocks trade at about 23 times forward price-to-earnings, nearly double the 13 times multiple for non-AI stocks.

Higher PE ratio means investors pay a significantly higher premium for AI-linked companies, even as their earnings growth is expected to dip over the next two years.

The shift away from AI is already visible in emerging markets, where AI-linked stocks have dipped after an exceptional rally. The report noted the group gained 81 per cent in one year through June but has seen returns slow in the second half of 2026 as investors rotated into other sectors. (IANS/UNI)

Apple opens pre-orders for iPhone Duo in India

NEW DELHI, OCT 16
Apple on Friday opened pre-orders for its first foldable smartphone, the iPhone Duo, in India from 5:30 PM IST, with official sales scheduled to begin on October 23. The device marks Apple's entry into the foldable smartphone segment and features the largest display ever offered on an iPhone, while also being touted by the company as its thinnest iPhone to date.



The iPhone Duo grabbed significant attention after Apple announced its pricing, making it one of the most expensive smartphones ever launched by the company. The foldable starts at Rs 2,99,900 for the 256GB variant, while the 512GB, 1TB and 2TB models are priced at Rs 3,24,900, Rs 3,74,900 and Rs 4,49,900, respectively. Despite the premium pricing, industry reports suggest strong consumer interest, with shipments expected to approach six million units globally in 2026.

Customers can pre-order the device through Apple's online store, authorised retail partners and leading offline retail outlets. The iPhone Duo adopts a book-style folding design. It features a 7.6-inch Super Retina XDR inner display and a 5.4-inch Super Retina XDR outer display.

Apple claims the inner screen delivers 50 per cent more viewing area than the iPhone 18 Pro Max.

Both displays support ProMotion technology, Always-On functionality and peak outdoor brightness of up to 3,000 nits. A nano-texture finish on the inner panel is designed to minimise glare. (IANS/UNI)

Nepal seeks major Indian aid package during PM Balen Shah's planned visit

KATHMANDU, OCT 17

Nepal is seeking a large-scale assistance package from India during the planned visit of Prime Minister Balendra Shah to New Delhi, likely in late November, a senior official at Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.



Nepal PM Balendra Shah

Nepal and India have yet to officially announce the date of the visit, but officials at the Prime Minister's Office and the Foreign Ministry said Shah is likely to travel to New Delhi on November 22 or 23.

"The Prime Minister is likely to visit India in the final days of November," Dipa Dahal, the Prime Minister's press advisor, told IANS. "How many days he will spend in India is yet to be confirmed."

The Foreign Ministry has yet to propose a specific date to the Indian side for the visit.

After Shah was sworn in as Nepal's Prime Minister on March 27, following the March 5 parliamentary elections, India invited him to visit New Delhi. Shah's only trip abroad so far was to New York in September to attend the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

His proposed visit to New Delhi comes at a time when Nepal is grappling with the crisis triggered by the devastating floods of August 26, which killed nearly 1,500 people, while more than 5,000 remain unaccounted for, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority.

The floods in the Bhote Koshi and Trishuli rivers swept away communities, hydropower plants, roads and bridges, causing billions of dollars in physical damage and creating a massive need for reconstruction funding.

"Although the resources needed for reconstruction are enormous, we had been seeking a large-scale assistance package from India even before the floods struck the country," the Foreign Ministry official said, without specifying the amount Nepal was seeking.

The official said the Nepali government wanted assistance with fewer conditions attached to ensure smooth implementation and visible results within a short period.

Besides the regular grants India provides to Nepal through its budgetary allocations, Nepal has been using substantial resources from India's lines of credit, including for post-earthquake reconstruction following the 2015 earthquake, when India pledged US $1 billion.

Four lines of credit (LOCs), amounting to US$100 million, US$250 million, US$550 million and US$750 million, total US$1.65 billion, are currently being utilised in Nepal, according to the Indian Embassy's website.

These LOCs are dedicated to infrastructure development projects prioritised by the Government of Nepal, it said.

Credit provided through the Export-Import Bank of India requires a certain percentage of the components to originate in India.

The Foreign Ministry official said Nepal would seek not only a substantial financial package but also progress on long-standing border disputes and tangible outcomes in energy, trade and transit, and air services. (IANS)

FRANCE PROTESTS

166 arrested as police clash with demonstrators nationwide

PARIS, OCT 17

French police have arrested 166 people nationwide during protests over the cost of living, rising fuel prices and public services, as officers deployed tear gas to disperse crowds in Paris and other cities, authorities said on Saturday.



Tear gas was fired on demonstrators in Paris.

The French Interior Ministry said 140 separate protest actions involving nearly 33,000 people had been recorded across the country. More than 100 people had earlier been detained in the Paris region, according to local media reports.

Police fired tear gas at Place de la République in Paris ahead of a planned march, with officers charging into crowds as some protesters directed fireworks towards police lines. Clashes were also reported in Lyon, Marseille and Rennes.

In Marseille, France's second-largest city, masked protesters broke into the town hall after using security barriers to force open a door, according to media reports. One demonstrator spray-painted an anarchist symbol on a wall before police intervened, Euro news reported.

The protests brought together students, trade unions, farmers and supporters of the Yellow Vest movement, which emerged in 2018 over fuel taxes and economic inequality. (IANS/UNI)

UAE launches village development project in Philippines

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
MANILA, OCT 17

The UAE has started construction work on the development of a 60-home village in southern Philippines, following a launching ceremony led by Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Ahmed Al-Qasimi, the deputy ruler of Sharjah.

Sheikh Dr. Sultan visited the province of Zamboanga del Sur on the island of Mindanao earlier this week for the stone-laying ceremony of the project, which is a humanitarian initiative of the Al-Reeh Al-Mursala program of the Sharjah Broadcasting Authority.

Japan hosting record number of foreigners

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
TOKYO, OCT 17

Japan has registered a record number of foreigners living in the country this year despite growing anti-immigration sentiment, as the country grapples with problems caused by an aging and shrinking population.

Data showed 4.28 million foreigners staying in Japan as of the end of June, excluding short-term visitors, the Immigration Services Agency said on Friday.

That marks an increase of 156,000 people from the end of last year, and accounts for roughly 3.5 percent of Japan's total population, according to calculations based on government estimates.

Immigration expert Toshihiro Menju told AFP that Japan is facing a labor shortage on all levels, from highly skilled professionals to service workers.

"With Japan's population shrinking by more than 900,000 a year... we have no choice but to rely on foreign workers," said Menju, a visiting professor at the Kansai University of International Studies.

Government measures such as "the use of AI and robotics, and greater (workforce) participation by women and older people cannot fully make up for the shortfall," he added.

UNSC deadlocked over election of next Secretary-General



ARUL LOUIS
UNITED NATIONS, OCT 17

The election for the next secretary-general is deadlocked, with the top three candidates getting two negative votes each from permanent members and only 76 days left for a new leader to succeed Antonio Guterres.

In the straw poll held on Friday (local time), UNCTAD head Rebecca Grynspan, with nine overall positive votes, was slightly ahead of former Guyana Foreign Minister Carolyn Rodrigues-Birket and International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi, all of whom got two negative votes from permanent members.

This was the sixth round of anonymous, informal voting in the Council to assess the sentiments towards the seven candidates, and the first to use colour-coded votes to tell permanent members apart.

The results are supposed to be secret, but they were leaked to PassBlue and 1for8Billion, which cover the UN in-depth.

With the top three candidates now known to be opposed by two permanent members each, serious negotiations could start among the veto-wielders, and between the candidates and permanent members.

Yet another possibility is for new candidates to spring up.

The candidate who wins ten votes without a veto from a permanent member will be recommended to the General Assembly, which routinely rubber stamps the Council recommendation, usually made unanimously in the final stage.

In the straw polls, members vote "encourage", interpreted as positive, "discourage", a negative, and "no opinion" or neutral and in the previous five there were no distinctions between the votes of the permanent members and elected members without veto powers.

Grynspan, who is from Costa Rica, received a total of five negatives and one neutral.

She led in five of the six polls, except the second one in August, when Rodrigues-Birket led the field. This time Rodrigues-Birket received eight positives, six negatives and one neutral, the same as Grossi.

But he got only two positives from permanent members, while she got three.

Olara Otunnu, a former UN under-secretary-general and Uganda's foreign minister, former Senegal President Macky Sall, and Maria Fernanda Espinosa, a former president of the General Assembly and Ecuador's foreign minister, got three negatives each from permanent members, and Ivonne A-Baki, a former Ecuadorian ambassador to the US, got five negatives.

The international sentiment is strong for electing a woman to head the 80-year-old UN that has had nine men as secretaries-general.

Latin America and the Caribbean have staked a claim because it has been 35 years since anyone from the continent has held the office after Javier Perez de Cuellar ended his term in 1991.

Two who have been rumoured as last-minute entrants to the race if the deadlock continues are Lana Nusseibeh, the United Arab Emirates minister of state for foreign affairs, and Feridun Hadi Sinirlioglu, the secretary-general of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, who is from Turkey. (IANS/UNI)

US Army accelerates counter-drone technology

WASHINGTON, OCT 17

The US Army has announced a new initiative to accelerate the testing and deployment of counter-drone technology in Africa, seeking to deliver operational capabilities to soldiers within 180 days of identifying urgent requirements.



The US Army Southern European Task Force, Africa, is partnering with the Army's Global Tactical Edge Acquisition Directorate to test emerging unmanned aircraft and counter-drone systems under a faster procurement process.

The Pentagon announced Friday that the first accelerated capability event was scheduled for spring 2027 in Tan-Tan, Morocco.

The event will focus on protecting military command posts and operating locations against threats posed by small unmanned aircraft.

According to the Army, the initiative is designed to address capability gaps identified by commanders operating in the field.

The programme seeks to reduce the time between identifying a requirement, testing potential solutions and providing equipment to military personnel.

The Army said Africa offered conditions particularly suitable for testing emerging drone technologies.

These include relatively uncongested airspace, varied terrain and electromagnetic environments that differ from conventional training ranges in the United States and Europe.

The initiative will allow soldiers to evaluate systems under operationally relevant conditions before the Army considers broader deployment.

The Global Tactical Edge Acquisition Directorate operates under the Army Pathway for Innovation and Technology Office.

Its personnel work alongside Army commands to convert operational requirements into acquisition programmes.

The directorate already has teams supporting American military commands responsible for Europe and Africa, the Pacific and Central Asia.

Army Colonel Christopher Hill, director of the acquisition organisation, said commanders had traditionally faced difficulties obtaining the resources and authorities necessary to address urgent technological requirements.

The new structure is intended to provide access to acquisition expertise and research, development, testing and evaluation resources closer to operational units.

The Army said the partnership would use a three-phase model involving initial submissions and preparation, soldier-led demonstrations and subsequent operational evaluation.

The process is intended to identify promising technologies, assess their performance and accelerate their delivery. (IANS)

Ghana eyes partner status as BRICS expands global influence

SOFIA, OCT 17

Ghana's proposed entry into BRICS-plus is expected to expand its economic prospects and deepen cooperation with countries across the Global South as the grouping seeks to expand its global influence under India's chairmanship. Indonesia was the last country to join the bloc as a full member in January 2025, a report has highlighted.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Ghanaian counterpart, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, announced plans to formally seek partner status after their traditional diplomatic consultations this month.

"Seeking deeper engagement with other emerging powers, the Foreign Ministers acknowledged that joining BRICS+ would complement, rather than replace, its existing relationships with the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and other traditional partners. Formally established in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China, BRICS was founded on the premise that international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF were overly dominated by Western powers and had ceased to serve developing countries," a report in Bulgaria-based 'Modern Diplomacy' detailed.

"South Africa joined in 2010 by invitation of China. The bloc has since expanded to include six new members: Ethiopia, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates," it noted.

Ten countries, including Nigeria, currently hold partner status, enabling them to attend summits without enjoying full voting rights. Ghana's inclusion would make it the second West African nation after Nigeria to join the partner category, underscoring the economic opportunities and political credentials associated with the two countries, Modern Diplomacy mentioned. (IANS)

China's 'waiting game' on Dalai Lama succession could intensify resistance

BEIJING, OCT 17

Beijing's refusal to negotiate with the Dalai Lama reflects a calculated waiting game, with Chinese leadership anticipating that his passing will allow it to control succession and neutralise the Tibetan issue, a report has stated.



However, it argued that the belief that succession can be dictated by decree overlooks the spiritual authority underpinning Tibetan Buddhism, while warning that the Dalai Lama's passing could instead intensify resistance and galvanise international support for the Tibetan cause.

"Beijing has consistently refused to negotiate with the Dalai Lama. This stance is not tactical indecision but a deliberate strategy: the Chinese leadership is playing a waiting game, anticipating that His Holiness's passing will allow them to control succession and neutralise the Tibetan issue. While this approach may consolidate short-term authority, it carries significant risks for legitimacy, stability, and international relations," Khedroob Thondup, nephew of the 14th Dalai Lama, wrote in 'The Tibet Express'.

According to Thondup, Beijing's reluctance to engage in dialogue stems from concerns that doing so would confer political legitimacy on the Dalai Lama, contradicting its narrative that he is a separatist figure.

He noted the Chinese authorities also fear that concessions to Tibet could embolden other minority regions to demand greater autonomy, posing a challenge to China's centralised system of governance.

At the same time, he said, Beijing intends to appoint the next Dalai Lama through state-controlled mechanisms, reinforcing its claim to authority over religious affairs.

Emphasising the challenge to religious legitimacy, he stated that Tibetan Buddhists across the world might refuse to recognise a state-appointed Dalai Lama, weakening Beijing's authority. (IANS)

Syria's Quneitra governor urges UN to document Israeli violations

DAMASCUS, OCT 17

The governor of Syria's southern Quneitra province on Saturday called on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) to monitor and document Israeli violations in the area.



Ghassan al-Sayyed Ahmad made the appeal during a meeting with UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, according to the Quneitra Governorate.

Moreover, Damascus has called on Israel to withdraw from Syrian territory, comply with the 1974 agreement and respect Syria's sovereignty.

The two discussed the security situation in the province, UNDOF's mandate and the impact of Israeli actions on local residents, the governorate said.

Ahmad said documenting violations in accordance with UNDOF's mandate could help protect residents and reduce the impact on the local population.

The meeting comes amid continued Israeli military incursions into Quneitra, including raids, searches, detentions and the establishment of temporary checkpoints.

A UN report issued on September 23 documented continued violations of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement, including Israeli military presence and activities in the area of separation.

Israeli forces remained at 11 positions on the Syrian side of the area of separation as of August 12, according to the report.

Established in 1974, UNDOF monitors the ceasefire and disengagement between Syrian and Israeli forces. Its mandate was extended in June through December 31, 2026. (IANS)

Egypt: Sisi seeks parliament nod on Saudi support

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
CAIRO, OCT 17

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said on Saturday that he requested Egypt's parliament to hold an emergency session to authorize him to take any acts of defense if requested by Saudi Arabia.

Speaking at a military academy graduation ceremony, Sisi said Egypt would take any measures necessary to protect and defend Saudi Arabia if the kingdom requested it in line with the directives of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Sisi said attacks targeting Saudi Arabia undermine Arab and Egyptian national security, stressing Egypt's rejection of any threat to the kingdom's security and stability.

He also warned against threats to the security of the Red Sea and international shipping lanes, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding Saudi Arabia and de-escalating regional tensions.

Al-Sisi also expressed gratitude for what he described as the historic support provided to Egypt by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

Israeli settlers attack US photographer

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
RAMALLAH, OCT 17

Israeli settlers on Friday attacked an American photojournalist working for The Washington Post while she was covering violence against Palestinian olive farmers in the occupied West Bank.

Heidi Levine, a veteran photographer, was taken to hospital in Ramallah following the attack, with AFP photos showing her lying on a gurney with injuries to her leg and hand.

The office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, days ahead of elections in which he is seeking settlers' support, insisted the circumstances behind the incident were unclear, in contrast with the full-throated condemnation offered by his chief rival.

The attack comes 10 days after settlers beat an AFP photographer covering the West Bank olive harvest, Jaafar Ashtiyeh, leaving him also requiring hospital treatment.

Speaking to journalists from her hospital bed, Levine said that "more than 50" masked settlers holding sticks suddenly attacked her while she was working near the Palestinian villages of Abu Falah and Turmus Ayya in the central West Bank.

Oman's FDI rises 6.4% to OMR32.2bn by end-Q2 2026

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
MUSCAT, OCT 17

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Oman rose by 6.4 percent to OMR32.211 billion by the end of the second quarter of 2026, compared with the same period in 2025, according to preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).



Investment flows during the second quarter of 2026 amounted to approximately OMR1.932 billion.

The oil and gas extraction sector continued to attract the largest share of foreign investment, reaching OMR25.824 billion, an increase of 5.7 percent year-on-year. Investment flows into the sector totalled OMR1.397 billion during the quarter.

The manufacturing sector ranked second, with FDI reaching OMR2.830 billion, up 4.7 percent. Investment flows in the sector amounted to OMR128.3 million.

The financial intermediation sector ranked third, recording FDI of OMR1.601 billion, an increase of 18.4 percent. Investment flows in the sector reached OMR248.4 million.

IRGC says supertanker exploded after hitting mine in Hormuz Strait

TEHRAN, OCT 17

The navy of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said on Saturday that a "violating" supertanker that sought to cross the Strait of Hormuz through an "unauthorised" route within the preceding hours suffered a "huge" explosion after hitting a naval mine.



The explosion resulted in a "massive" fire on the oil tanker, which had turned off its GPS and radar systems, the navy said in a statement published by the IRGC's official news outlet, Sepah News.

Carrying more than two million barrels of crude oil, the vessel sought "unauthorised" passage through the strait with the US. military's support, Sepah News reported, adding that the waterway has been closed, Xinhua News Agency reported.

On Wednesday, the IRGC Navy said a "violating" container ship attempting to pass through the Strait of Hormuz via an "unauthorised and high-risk" route sank earlier in the day after hitting a naval mine south of the waterway.

Speaking to state-run IRIB TV on Tuesday, IRGC Navy Commander Ali Azmaei said his troops are controlling the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz "round the clock," while the Gulf of Oman is under the control and supervision of Iran's navy.

He warned that those violating shipping rules under US "deception or provocation" would face a decisive response from Iran. Meanwhile, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian on Friday reiterated that his country does not seek to develop nuclear weapons, dismissing anti-Tehran propaganda claiming otherwise as a "lie." (IANS)

Electronic penal orders rises in Kuwait

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
KUWAIT, OCT 17

Kuwait's Ministry of Justice issued 132,842 electronic penal orders between July 12, when the electronic system went live, and Oct 11, more than seven times the number in the same period last year, Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait said on Saturday.

In a press statement, Al-Sumait said 17,903 penal orders were issued over the same period in 2025. The daily average rose from about 195 orders in 2025 to about 1,444 after the electronic system was introduced, which he said directly reflects faster rulings on cases and a shorter criminal process.

Türkiye deploys Osman Gazi to Black Sea, targets doubling gas output

ANKARA, OCT 17

Opening a new chapter in Türkiye's energy history, President Recep Tayyip Erdo an said on Saturday that the Osman Gazi floating natural gas production platform has been deployed to the Black Sea, with the aim of doubling domestic gas output to 20 million cubic metres per day by 2027.



"Today, we are opening a brand-new page in our energy history. We are sending Osman Gazi, essentially a floating industrial facility, off to its duty station in the Black Sea," Erdogan said in a video message to a ceremony marking the platform's departure from Filyos Port in the northern province of Zonguldak.

The platform departed from Filyos Port in the northern province of Zonguldak for the Sakarya Gas Field, where it will process offshore gas and transport it to shore through subsea pipelines, Erdo an said in a video message marking the departure.

"Natural gas production in the Black Sea will double to 20 million cubic metres per day, and starting in 2027, one in every three households will use our domestic natural gas," Erdo an said.

The deployment is part of Türkiye's efforts to expand domestic energy production and reduce reliance on imported gas. The country has been developing the Sakarya field as a key source of offshore supplies.

The 298.5-metre-long platform has 21 processing units and can accommodate up to 140 personnel. It is designed to operate continuously at sea for 20 years, according to information released by Türkiye's Communications Directorate.

Once operational, the facility is expected to help raise production from the Sakarya field to 20 million cubic metres per day, enough to meet the gas needs of about 8 million households, the directorate said. It projected the platform would contribute $3.5 billion annually to the Turkish economy.

Energy and Natural Resources Minister Alparslan Bayraktar attended the departure ceremony and described Osman Gazi as Türkiye's first floating natural gas processing facility.

Erdo an said the platform represented a milestone in the country's maritime and energy strategy, describing it as the first production facility under its "Blue Homeland" vision, which forms part of the broader "Century of Türkiye" initiative. (IANS)

Jordan Ministry launches cleanup campaigns nationwide

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
AMMAN, OCT 17

The Ministry of Environment, through its environmental protection directorates and offices across the governorates, has carried out cleanup campaigns in several areas, along with the "Keep Your Bag in Your Car" initiative.

The activities were organized in cooperation with municipalities, the Royal Department for Environment Protection, educational institutions, government agencies and civil society organizations as part of the executive program for the National Cleanliness Strategy and efforts to curb littering, as well as to mark Arab Environment Day.

The cleanup campaigns covered Jerusalem Street in Balqa Governorate; the area around the Royal Pavilion in Umm Qais and the area opposite the entrance to the Faculty of Archaeology at Yarmouk University in Irbid Governorate; Dibeen forests, Al-Manshiyya and Al-Jazaza School in Jerash Governorate; and Abeen-Abaleen Health Center and Ain Janna School in Ajloun Governorate.

Additional campaigns were carried out in Al-Qasr District and the western ring road in Karak Governorate; Al-Masfa Street in Zarqa Governorate; the areas of Al-Faisaliah, Al-Lab and Al-Malih in Madaba Governorate; Hasban Municipality Park in Amman Governorate; Abu Huwaidi School and the White Cement Factories Triangle in Al-Dhulayl District.

The campaigns also included the cemetery at the shrine of Abu Ubaidah Amer ibn Al-Jarrah in Deir Alla District, Al-Qadisiyah Secondary School for Girls in Qadisiyah District in Tafileh Governorate, and Rashid Secondary Mixed School in Ma'an Governorate. As part of the initiative, participants were encouraged to keep waste in designated bags inside their vehicles and dispose of it at designated locations. The initiative aims to reduce littering and help maintain the cleanliness of roads and public spaces.

Producer prices jump 5.1% led by manufacturing prices in Saudi

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
RIYADH, OCT 17

The Producer Price Index (PPI) in Saudi Arabia recorded an increase of 5.1 percent in August 2026 compared with the same month in 2025, according to data released by the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT).



The authority attributed the increase to a 5.3 percent rise in manufacturing prices, a 4.2 percent rise in prices for water supply, sewerage, and waste management activities, and a 2.2 percent increase in prices for electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply.

At the industrial level, prices of refined petroleum products rose by 4.8 percent year-on-year, while those of chemicals and chemical products increased by 10.5 percent. Prices of food products also climbed by 5.4 percent, while basic metal prices rose by 8.6 percent and apparel prices surged by 13.4 percent.

Conversely, prices of fabricated metal products, excluding machinery and equipment, declined by 3.1 percent, while prices in other economic activities fell by 3.5 percent.

On a monthly basis, the Producer Price Index remained relatively stable in August 2026 compared with the previous month, as manufacturing prices edged down by 0.1 percent. The decline was driven by a 1.5 percent drop in prices of chemicals and chemical products, a 0.8 percent decrease in rubber and plastic product prices, and a 0.5 percent decline in prices across other economic activities.

Prices in beverage production also fell by 0.7 percent. In contrast, prices of refined petroleum products increased by 0.6 percent, while basic metal prices rose by 0.2 percent.

In other sectors, prices for electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply increased by one percent month-on-month, while prices for water supply, sewerage, and waste management activities rose by 0.3 percent.

The PPI measures relative changes in the prices of domestically produced goods. It is calculated using data collected through the Producer Price Survey, which covers a sample of industrial establishments engaged in activities included in the index.

Qatar: MoPH intensifies initiatives to promote mental health

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
DOHA, OCT 17

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) is intensifying its programs and initiatives aimed at promoting mental health and wellbeing across different segments of society through a series of awareness and specialist activities taking place throughout October, marking World Mental Health Day.

Director of the Non-Communicable Disease Prevention Programs Department at the Ministry of Public Health Sheikh Dr Mohamed bin Hamad Al-Thani affirmed that the State of Qatar attaches growing importance to mental health as a key healthcare priority, recognizing its impact on individuals, families and society. He stressed the importance of continuing to develop programs and initiatives in line with the current and future needs of the population.

He noted that the past six months have witnessed the development and unification of standard operating procedures, templates and key processes related to mental health services, alongside updates to patients' rights and responsibilities.

Starlink ready to connect India with high-speed internet, Musk replies

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

Elon Musk-owned Starlink said it has worked closely with regulators, industry and operators in India for more than 5 years, in a reply to Reliance Industries Ltd (REL) which said that India's rules apply equally to domestic and foreign companies in the field of satellite communications.



Starlink said it has built a network of dedicated systems, gateways, and other infrastructure all in-country to exclusively serve Indian traffic safely and securely - and all with the requisite government approvals.

"Starlink is ready to connect India with high-speed internet," said the space internet company.

Musk replied to Reliance on X, saying "Much appreciated".

In a statement on Friday, Reliance Industries said, "we welcome competition in satellite communications, including Starlink."

"Every player, Jio included, must serve the people of India and abide by the laws and policies of the land," said REL in its statement.

"In light of recent remarks about Reliance and the Indian market, we wish to place the facts on record. Like every Indian enterprise, Reliance has grown in an India that welcomes investment and innovation, homegrown or international, that improve the lives of the people," the company added.

It further stated "that openness rests on the rule of law. As the Government of India has stated, it applies the same process to every applicant, Indian or foreign. Jio's own satellite services await clearances".

At Reliance, "we have never feared competition. We see it as the truest test of who serves the customer best. Jio itself entered India's crowded telecom market in 2016 as the newest player, with not a single customer", the company noted.

In just 10 years, Jio has earned the trust of over 530 million customers and given Indians some of the best digital infrastructure and most affordable data in the world. (IANS/UNI)

Govt halts sugar-based ethanol procurement

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

The Centre has directed state-owned fuel retailers to stop procuring ethanol made from sugar and key sugarcane-based feedstocks in a move aimed at keeping a lid on sugar prices.



The direction will take effect from the new supply year starting November 1 after dry weather hits sugarcane production, according to the tender document.

PSU refiners -- Indian Oil Corp Ltd (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL), Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL), Numaligarh Refinery Ltd and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd -- have issued a joint tender seeking nearly 11 billion litres of ethanol for the new supply year, citing the new government directions.

"No offers have been sought for ethanol produced from sugarcane juice, sugar, sugar syrup and B-Heavy molasses in this quantity bid tender," according to the document.

India -- the world's second-biggest sugar producer -- faces a smaller crop than a year earlier after El Nino contributed to the weakest monsoon in more than a decade.

The nation has increasingly used sugarcane and grains to produce ethanol as part of efforts to curb dependence on imported oil.

Moreover, the government had brought forward its target of blending 20 per cent ethanol into gasoline by five years and achieved the goal in 2025. (IANS)

Govt issues clarification on legislative developments concerning its shareholding in IDBI Bank

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

The government on Saturday issued a clarification on the legislative developments in 2003 concerning the government's shareholding in IDBI Bank, saying the legislative history of the IDBI (Repeal) Act, 2003, the judicial pronouncement of the Delhi High Court and successive Union Budget speeches "collectively demonstrate the evolution of the Government's policy towards the strategic disinvestment of IDBI Bank".



The Finance Ministry said that certain sections of press and media have brought out reports, "which inter alia have comments/ views regarding the legislative developments in 2003 concerning the Government's shareholding in IDBI".

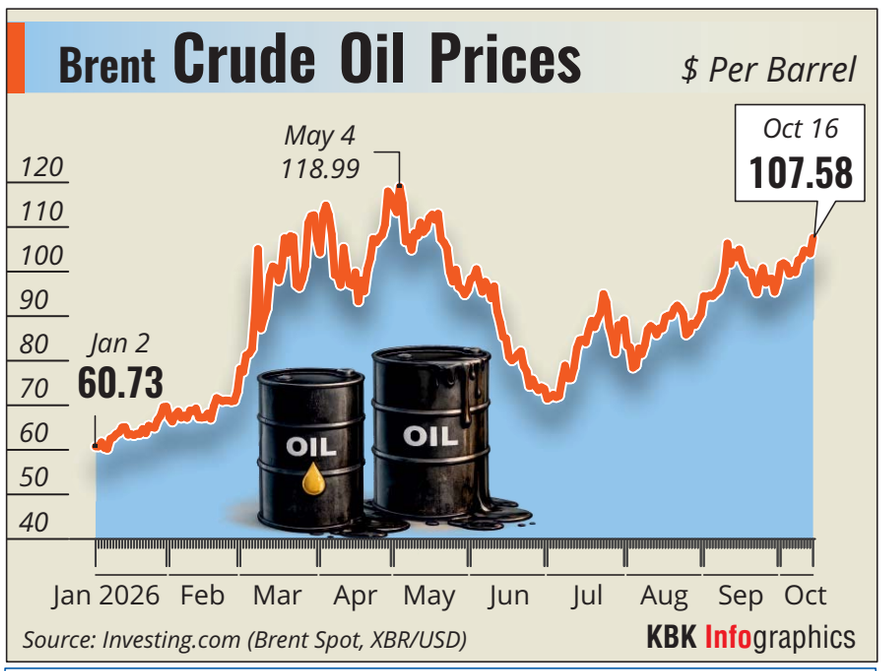
"It is reiterated that during the discussions of Union Budget, 2003 and the parliamentary debate on the IDBI (Repeal) Act, 2003, an amendment seeking to restrict the dilution of the Government's stake was moved but was ultimately rejected and did not form part of the enacted legislation," the ministry clarified.

The matter was subsequently examined by the Delhi High Court in All India IDBI Officers' Association vs. Union of India and Others, decided on December 17, 2018.

The judgment dated December 17, 2018 clarifies beyond doubt that the doctrine of promissory estoppel cannot be invoked on the basis of statements made during parliamentary debates to restrict the Government's power to dilute its shareholding in the IDBI Bank Ltd.

The Court further held that the enacted legislation contained no prohibition against reducing the Government's stake in the IDBI Bank Ltd. The court, while dismissing the writ petition, adjudicated in paragraphs 41 and 42.

Paragraph 41 said that "This Court is of the view that the statements made before the House almost 15 years earlier, in a debate relating to a legislative activity, would not preclude the Central Government from diluting its stake in IDBI Ltd. (IANS)



ICICI Bank Q2 profit surges to Rs 14,843 cr



NEW DELHI, OCT 17

India's second-largest private lender -- ICICI Bank -- on Saturday reported a 20.1 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit for the second quarter of FY27.

The lender posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 14,843 crore for the quarter ended September 30 compared with Rs 12,359 crore a year earlier.

Meanwhile, the bank's net interest income rose 18 per cent year-on-year to Rs 25,339 crore from Rs 21,529 crore in the corresponding quarter last year. Meanwhile, operating profit increased 18.9 per cent to Rs 20,575 crore from Rs 17,298 crore a year ago.

Asset quality improved sequentially during the quarter.

The gross non-performing asset ratio declined to 1.2 per cent from 1.38 per cent in the June quarter and was better than the estimated 1.4 per cent.

Net NPA ratio improved to 0.30 per cent from 0.35 per cent in the previous quarter.

Provisions fell to Rs 851 crore, compared with Rs 914 crore in the year-ago quarter and Rs 1,260 crore in the preceding quarter. (IANS)

FSSAI proposes science-based pesticide residue limits for tea

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has notified draft amendments proposing maximum residue limits (MRLs) for two pesticides in tea -- 20 mg/kg for Acetamiprid and 50 mg/kg for Imidacloprid -- an official statement said on Saturday.



The statement from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said the proposal reflects FSSAI's approach towards reviewing pesticide residue standards in light of scientific assessments, relevant international practices and the requirements of Indian agriculture.

The draft Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Amendment Regulations, 2026, published in the Gazette of India on October 16, 2026, set out the proposed limits to provide clear regulatory benchmarks for pesticide residues, facilitating compliance, monitoring and enforcement of food safety requirements.

The proposed MRL of 20 ppm for Acetamiprid in tea is lower than the corresponding limits of 30 ppm in Japan and 50 ppm in the United States of America. The proposed limit for Imidacloprid has also been formulated with reference to international Codex standards, the statement noted.

Maximum Residue Limits specify the maximum legally permitted concentration of pesticide residues in food commodities and are established on the basis of scientific assessments, taking into account pesticide residue data, dietary exposure and relevant safety considerations.

Earlier regulatory measures also included the delisting of 13 pesticides identified as having higher toxicity, reflecting the continuing emphasis on appropriate regulatory safeguards and consumer protection, the ministry said.

These standards provide a measurable regulatory basis for monitoring pesticide residues and ensuring compliance with prescribed food safety requirements. (IANS/UNI)

Space industry to cross $40 billion by 2030 on rapid commercialisation

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

India's space sector is undergoing a rapid commercial transformation after policy reforms that have opened the industry to private firms and created a new framework that would allow commercial enterprises to participate across the full spectrum of space activities, a new report has said.



The report from Tanzania-based The Guardian said India's space economy, currently valued at nearly $8.4 billion, representing a modest share of the global market, could grow to $40-$45 billion by 2030.

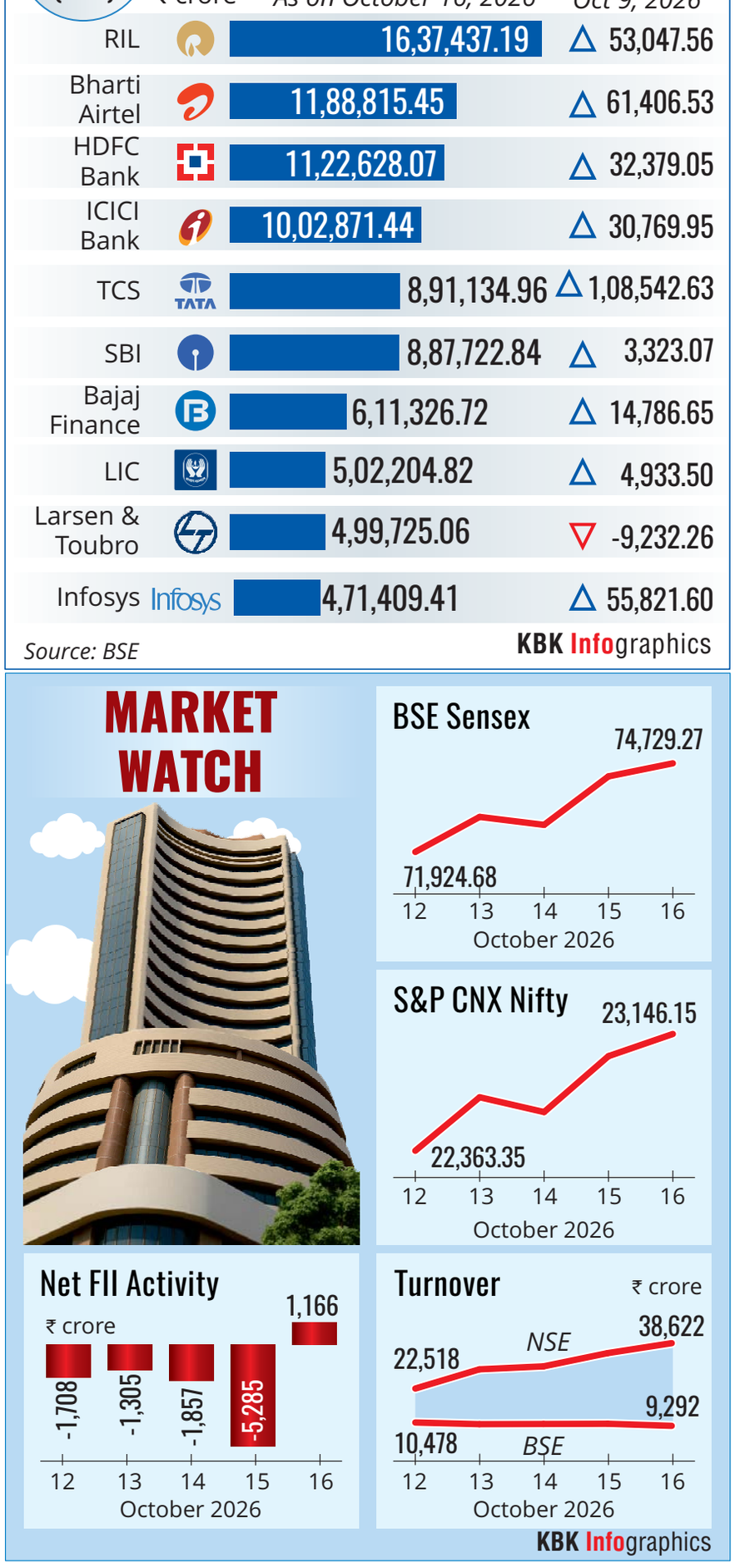
However, it said that the ambition can only be realised through continued investment, regulatory certainty, infrastructure development and sustained technological innovation, even though foundations for sustained growth are becoming increasingly visible.

The report lauded the unprecedented degree of freedom the reforms provide to private participants.

The shift, driven by reforms in 2020 and institutionalised through the Indian Space Policy 2023, loosened long-standing state control over the space value chain and allowed private companies to undertake end-to-end activities from satellite manufacturing and launch services to remote sensing and space-based communications.

A historically government-centric ecosystem transformed into a collaborative network involving public institutions, private industry, academia, research centres and start-ups, the publication said.

The government has redistributed roles among the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO. (IANS)



Mumbai Indians part ways with Jayawardene

MUMBAI, OCT 17



Mumbai Indians and Mahela Jayawardene have mutually agreed to end their association as head coach, with the five-time Indian Premier League champions preparing for a change in leadership ahead of the next season.

The decision follows a disappointing 2026 campaign in which the franchise managed just four victories, with injuries, player availability issues and reported dressing-room unrest contributing to a difficult season. According to reports, the franchise has already shortlisted multiple candidates for the position, with interviews expected to take place in the coming week. Jayawardene is unlikely to continue with the Mumbai Indians in another capacity.

The departure brings the curtain down on a coaching tenure that delivered three IPL titles and established Jayawardene as one of the most successful figures in the franchise's history. He first took charge in 2017, guiding Mumbai to championships in 2017, 2019 and 2020, including consecutive titles in the latter two seasons.

After stepping away from the head coach's role, the former Sri Lanka captain served as Mumbai Indians' global head of performance from 2022 to 2024, overseeing coaching, scouting and strategic planning across the franchise's international teams. He returned as head coach in 2024 under a two-plus-one-year arrangement. Mumbai reached the playoffs in 2025 before slipping to ninth place in 2026.

Reflecting on his association with the franchise, Jayawardene highlighted the relationships and achievements that defined his time with the organisation. Mumbai Indians owner Nita M. Ambani also acknowledged Jayawardene's contribution, expressing gratitude for his leadership and long-standing association with the franchise. (IANS)

BWF WORLD JUNIORS

agsher Singh Khangurra bags a bronze in boys' singles



NEW DELHI, OCT 16

Jagsher Singh Khangurra bagged the bronze medal in the ongoing BWF World Junior Badminton Championships 2026 in Cairo, Egypt, after he went down in the boys' singles semifinal to Radithya Bayu Wardhana of Indonesia on Friday. Khangurra fought back after losing the opening game to force a decider, but Wardhana's attacking prowess proved too good for the Indian as he went down 6-15, 15-13, 3-15 in 49 minutes.

This will be India's seventh bronze in the individual championships, taking the overall tally to 13 medals, including one gold and five silver. Punjab youngster Jagsher Singh Khangurra is a former under-17 national champion and Asian medallist in his age-group. He came into prominence with a medal in the under-15 nationals two years back and has since gone from strength to strength, turning his casual interest in the game into a passion and a possible career option.

After getting initial training at an academy in Bahadurgarh and then at the Uday Pawar Academy in Mumbai, Jagsher Singh has been associated with the Centre of Excellence in Bangalore under former national coach Vimal Kumar for the last two years. Ranked 8th in the Under-19 boys' singles section as of September 22, 2026, Jagsher Singh achieved his best-ever ranking of No.1 in the under-17 boys' singles section at the national level in the week starting January 11, 2026.

Jagsher, who took to badminton at the age of seven and left his home at 11 to join the academy in Bahadurgarh, has so far won six medals in international tournaments and has established himself as one of the best young shuttlers in the country. Jagsher, whose parents are both government school teachers, is the first person from his family to take up badminton. The 17-year-old Jagsher Singh, who hails from Nabha town in Punjab, defeated Jhuang 6-15, 17-15, 15-12 in 48 minutes to become the ninth boys' singles player from India to finish on the podium. (IANS/UNI)

Shanghai Masters: Davidovich Fokina stuns top seed Alexander Zverev

SHANGHAI, OCT 17



Alejandro Davidovich Fokina stunned World No. 2 Alexander Zverev in the semifinals of the Shanghai Masters in what will be one of the biggest wins for the Spaniard in his career.

Davidovich Fokina got the better of the German for the second time in his career as he defeated Zverev in a tight semifinal, 5-7, 6-4, 6-3 in two hours and six minutes at the Stadium Court.

The World No. 26 lost a closely fought opening set before he upped his ante and starred on the baseline exchanges and broke the top seed in the 10th game of the second set to win it in 46 minutes.

He got the shot in the arm when Zverev double-faulted his serve at the start of the third set as the Spaniard pounced on the momentum and did not look back. He held his nerve to close out the third set on serve and make his way into his second ATP Masters 1000 final.

"It doesn't matter the result; I am just thinking about every ball," Davidovich Fokina said in his on-court interview, as quoted by ATP. "I knew that if I stayed there all match, I could get at least one chance, and I took it there in the second set. (IANS/UNI)

Chaminda Vaas joins DC as fast bowling coach

NEW DELHI, OCT 17

Former Sri Lanka fast bowler Chaminda Vaas is set to take over as Delhi Capitals' fast bowling coach as the franchise reshapes its coaching staff ahead of the next IPL season. Earlier this month, the franchise officially parted ways with their existing coaching group ahead of the 2027 Indian Premier League (IPL) season by making an announcement through their social media accounts.

Vaas, the Sri Lankan fast bowling legend, has worked in a coaching capacity with the Sri Lanka men's team many times and with the SLC academy. He also worked with New Zealand and Ireland teams in a consulting capacity, as well as held coaching roles in various franchise leagues. Moreover, it is also expected that former India leg-spinner Amit Mishra, who was a prolific wicket-taker in the IPL, is set to join the franchise as their spin-bowling coach. For Mishra, it will be his first coaching stint after announcing his retirement from all forms of cricket last year. (IANS)

ENTERTAINMENT

Neha Sharma warns legal action against AI content



Actr ess Neha Sharma is the latest celebrity to raise her voice against the misuse of AI to created fake photos and videos. She shared a post on her official handle on Saturday and warned those creating AI-generated content using her face. Neha took to her official X (Formerly known as Twitter) timeline, and wrote, "Anyone using my face or likeness to create AI-generated videos or images without my consent is hereby warned to STOP IMMEDIATELY (sic)." The 'Crook' actress made it clear that she has not permitted anyone to use her face or likeness to generate AI content. She further asked all to take down any such content and refrain from doing anything like that in the future.

"Take down all such content already posted and refrain from creating, editing, or circulating any further AI-generated videos or images using my identity. Using my face in this manner to misrepresent me or malign my reputation is completely unacceptable. I DO NOT CONSENT TO THE UNAUTHORIZED USE OF MY FACE OR LIKENESS", she further penned.

Neha also warned of legal action against anyone creating, posting, or circulating such content. "Consider this a formal warning: I WILL TAKE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST EVERY INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING, POSTING, OR CIRCULATING SUCH CONTENT. No one should assume that hiding behind a fake account or the use of AI will protect them from accountability. TAKE IT DOWN NOW. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED," concluded the post.

In the recent past, many members of the film fraternity have expressed their concern about how AI can be used to manipulate content. As a protective measure, many of them, including Akshay Kumar, Varun Dhawan,



Anil Kapoor, Shilpa Shetty, Preity Zinta, Kartik Aaryan, Mrunal Thakur, and Suniel Shetty, have even approached the court to protect their identity, image, and personality rights from AI-generated misuse.

Ajay Devgn's Property Hit Over Illegal Construction



Parts of Bollywood star Ajay Devgn's bungalow in Mumbai's Juhu area have been demolished by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) days after a stop-work notice was issued over 'unauthorised' construction to the actor. Ajay's bungalow is spread across 7,802 square feet in Mumbai's Juhu area, located in Kapol Cooperative Housing Society (JVPD Scheme, N.S. Road No. 11, Plot S-10). Reportedly, interior alterations, partition walls, windows, and other construction work were being carried out at the bungalow without the necessary permissions.

According to reports, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) issued a notice on September 10, 2026, under Section 354A of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act. The notice directed that the construction work be stopped immediately and that the necessary permissions be submitted along with the relevant documents. Action taken after work continued despite notice

The film stars an ensemble cast including Ajay Devgn, Arshad Warsi, Riteish Deshmukh, Jaaved Jaaferi, Ravi Kishan, Sanjay Mishra, Upendra Limaye, Anjali Anand, Sanjeeda Sheikh and Esha Gupta.

Saif Tries to Understand Window Glass

Actor Saif Ali Khan has been staying on top of his social media game ever since joining Instagram recently. Keeping netizens hooked with another stylish post, the 'Hum Tum' actor uploaded an image looking all dapper while enjoying some downtime in what he refers to as the 'Pataudi Library'.



In the pic shared on Saturday, Saif can be seen posing in a white kurta pajama. Sitting on a chair, with a book in his hand, the 'Omkara' actor is looking outside the window with a sharp gaze. For the caption, he wrote, "Just trying to read between the lines to understand the window's pane (sic)", followed by Grimacing Face, See-No-Evil Monkey and High Voltage emoticons.

After keeping his distance from social media for a long time, Saif finally joined Instagram with his verified account, @saifalikhanpataudi, on October 11 this year. Saif's first post on the platform also featured him in the Pataudi Library. Uploading the photographs, the 'Love Aaj Kal' actor wrote, "Pataudi Library.. Judging books by their cover."

Meanwhile, Saif celebrated 14 years of marital bliss with Kareena Kapoor on Friday. Commemorating the special occasion, Saif dropped a string of pictures on his handle.

Farah Khan faces flakcoming thriller

Filmmaker-choreographer and Youtuber Farah Khan has faced flak on social media after she reportedly refused to apply a 'tika' at an event, with her reaction sparking severe criticism online.

A video of Farah is doing the rounds on X, formerly known as Twitter. In the clip, the choreographer is seen being greeted by hotel staff in the lobby with an aarti thali. However, when a staff member offers to apply a tika on her forehead, Farah declines and instead has it applied to her wrist.

After the video created a tizzy on social media, netizens went on to criticise the filmmaker.

A social media user wrote: "Farah Khan gets offended when a woman offers her a tika as a welcoming gesture. Imagine wearing nail polish, which is haram in Islam, but getting offended by a tika because nail polish is a style statement while tika is a Hindu tradition. Classic Bollywood so called celeb for you."



Another wrote that "Farah first denied the flower shower, then clearly refused to apply kumkum on her forehead! When they know that such procedures will happen there, why do they go to such places at all? Some people just have an itch to stir up controversy! Does it befit Farah Khan to disrespect in this manner? Those who invited her are just as foolish!"

"Why dis SECULAR Farah Khan refused to apply Tikka on forehead ??" another asked.

A user questioned: "She shows in Public as Secular, if so Why SECULAR Farah Khan refused to apply Tikka on forehead ??"

TG to complete Land Resurvey in 3 phases

Land resurvey completed in 285 villages; 400 more rovers to be procured

TFP I ABDUL RAHMAN KHAN
HYDERABAD, OCT 17

Telangana Revenue, Housing and Information and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy has directed officials to accelerate the comprehensive land resurvey, which will be carried out in three phases to establish accurate land boundaries and resolve ownership disputes.



Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy reviewing Comprehensive Land Resurvey progress with revenue officials at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Secretariat.

Reviewing the progress with revenue officials at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Secretariat on Saturday, the minister said that 285 villages had completed the survey, and notices had been issued to landowners to submit objections. The first phase covers 2,720 villages across 32 districts, excluding Hyderabad, out of the state's total of 10,954 revenue villages. The government aims to complete the first phase by the end of November.

The government has already purchased 411 rovers and finalised tenders for another 400, taking the planned fleet to 811. The survey uses modern technologies, including DGPS, GIS and QGIS, to improve measurement accuracy and digitise land records.

Ponguleti said Telangana had approximately 40 lakh survey numbers in 1948, compared with 2.29 crore at present. The government plans to assign a unique Bhu Dhar number to every survey number and issue Bhu Dhar cards to landowners.

In the minister's Palair constituency, the resurvey has been completed across 665 acres in Kongara village of Nelakondapalli mandal. Bhu Dhar pattas will be distributed there soon.

The minister directed officials to issue advance notices to landowners, announce survey schedules in villages, clearly mark government land and village boundaries, and resolve objections transparently. He stressed that the first-phase target must be achieved on time without causing inconvenience to the public, in line with Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's vision of a Telangana free from land disputes.

Singareni expansion, workers' welfare top govt priorities: Dy CM

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 17

Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on Saturday said the State government was prioritising the expansion of Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL), securing new mines and improving workers' welfare to strengthen the 137-year-old organisation and ensure its long-term sustainability.



Bhatti Vikramarka

In a festive greetings message to Singareni workers, employees, officers, trade union representatives and their families on the occasions of Bathukamma, Dasara and Diwali, he called for collective efforts to improve productivity, ensure workplace safety and help the company meet the challenges of the changing coal market.

Bhatti said the government was taking steps to expand Singareni's operations in coal mining, thermal power, solar energy and other sectors, including the exploration of gold, copper and critical minerals. He said coal produced by workers in underground and opencast mines was vital to meeting Telangana's power requirements and supporting the State's development.

Employees should ensure uninterrupted coal supplies to power plants, particularly in view of climate-related challenges such as El Niño, he added.

Stressing the need to strengthen the company's competitiveness, the Deputy Chief Minister called for supplying quality coal at competitive prices, improving productivity, curbing unnecessary expenditure and making efficient use of machinery. He emphasised that worker safety should never be compromised in pursuit of production targets.

Referring to the expansion of mining operations, Bhatti said the necessary approvals for the Naini coal mine in Odisha had been obtained and production had commenced. The mining lease for the Tadicherla-2 block had also been secured, while the Manuguru Prakasham Khani Open Cast-2 Dip Side block had been acquired through auction.

Efforts were under way to regain the Sathupalli-3 and Koyagudem-3 blocks, he said, adding that the government was also exploring opportunities to expand Singareni into power generation, renewable energy and the mining of other minerals.

On workers welfare, he said directions had been issued to expedite the resolution of long-pending employee issues, including around 250 to 300 dependent-employment cases. Officials had also been asked to consider discrepancies in names with a humanitarian approach and accelerate housing benefits for eligible employees on Singareni land.

An action plan was being prepared to establish Nehru Housing Colonies, while the government was focusing on replacing dilapidated quarters and improving workers' residential colonies, he said. Cath Lab facilities had been established to improve access to advanced medical care, and the management had been asked to distribute safety kits every six months and address concerns over income tax on perks and allowances.

315 Mandals face drought-like conditions; TG seeks Central aid

'Khet Bachao Abhiyan' from Oct 22 to Nov 30



Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao participated in a video conference on the 'Khet Bachao Abhiyan.'

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 17

Telangana Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao has urged the Centre to provide immediate financial assistance to the state, citing drought-like conditions in 315 mandals due to deficient rainfall and the El Niño effect.

Participating in a video conference on the 'Khet Bachao Abhiyan', chaired by the Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister on Saturday, Tummala said Telangana would conduct the campaign from October 22 to November 30 in villages with the support of agricultural institutions and university staff.

He called for additional funds for micro-irrigation and seeds for short-duration crops to help farmers cope with changing weather conditions. He also urged the Centre to ensure 100 per cent procurement at the minimum support price (MSP) for major crops, including maize, jowar, pulses and oilseeds, and remove the existing 25 per cent procurement limit under the Price Support Scheme (PSS).

Raising concerns over excessive urea consumption and its impact on soil health, Tummala sought rationalisation of fertiliser prices and subsidies to encourage balanced nutrient use without imposing an additional burden on farmers.

He also called for increased funding under the VB–G RAM G scheme, with priority for agricultural labour employment, farm ponds, water conservation and land development works. The minister stressed that awareness campaigns alone would not suffice and sought financial assistance for farmers and assured procurement of their produce.

HC declares Oct 21 holiday

HYDERABAD, OCT 17

The Telangana High Court has declared Wednesday, October 21, 2026, a holiday in view of the day following the Dussehra festival.



The holiday will apply to the Telangana High Court, Telangana State Judicial Academy in Secunderabad, Telangana State Legal Services Authority, High Court Legal Services Committee, and High Court Arbitration and Mediation Centre in Hyderabad.

The notification was issued in partial modification of earlier notifications and covers institutions functioning under the administrative control of the High Court.

Meanwhile, junior colleges will also begin their Dasara vacation on October 10.

Narcotics, cybercrime, terrorism among major internal security challenges: Union Home Secretary

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 17

Narcotics, cybercrime, terrorism, illegal immigration and the use of technology to conceal criminal activities have emerged as five major internal security challenges facing India, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan said on Saturday.



Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan inspected the Dikshant Parade at SVPNPA in Hyderabad.

Addressing the passing-out parade of the 78th batch of IPS probationers at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA) here, Mohan said the country's internal security landscape had undergone a significant transformation, with violent Left-Wing Extremism having ended, insurgency in the Northeast declining considerably and homegrown terrorism reduced to minimal levels.

However, he cautioned that these threats had not disappeared entirely, pointing to recent incidents, including the Red Fort blast in Delhi, as indications that homegrown and foreign-inspired terrorism continued to pose security concerns.

Identifying narcotics as a major challenge, Mohan cited a 2019 survey that estimated around seven per cent of India's population consumed narcotics in some form.

He said cybercrime was another serious concern, facilitated by the easy availability of fake SIM cards, multiple bank accounts and the limited technical expertise required to commit such offences. Although the Centre had established institutions to tackle cybercrime, the primary responsibility for combating it rested with State and union Territory police forces, he said.

Mohan also emphasised the need to identify illegal foreign nationals and take action against them in accordance with the law, citing concerns over criminal activities, radicalisation and their impact on markets.

The growing anonymity of crime constituted the fifth challenge, with criminals increasingly using virtual private networks (VPNs), cryptocurrency exchanges and the dark web to conceal their identities, transfer money and organise offences.

Urging the probationers to equip themselves to deal with emerging threats, Mohan stressed the importance of mastering new technologies, including artificial intelligence.

He also called for measures to counter the misuse of social media through fake messages and deepfake videos that could trigger law-and-order problems.

A total of 151 officer trainees, comprising 135 IPS probationers and 16 foreign officer trainees from Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives, completed the first phase of their training at the academy. The batch includes 37 women officers.

Agriculture Secretary inspects crops in Suryapet, Nalgonda, Yadadri

TFP I VENKAT REDDY
SURYAPET, OCT 17

Agriculture Production Commissioner and Agriculture Secretary K. Surendramohan, IAS, on Saturday inspected cauliflower fields, a shade-net house and cotton crops during field visits to Suryapet, Nalgonda and Yadadri Bhuvanagiri districts, urging farmers to take precautions in view of the prevailing El Niño conditions.



At Gudibanda village in Kodad mandal of Suryapet district, he inspected six acres of cauliflower cultivated by farmer Khajamiya. He directed officials to provide drip irrigation equipment and subsidised seeds through the Horticulture Department and advised farmers to replace paddy with less water-intensive crops during the Rabi season, using sprinkler irrigation. He also called for regular awareness programmes on El Niño through Rythu Vedikas.

At Korlapahad village in Kethepally mandal of Nalgonda district, Surendramohan inspected a shade-net house established under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH). Farmers Alam Mounika and Harika are cultivating leafy vegetables, onions, ginger and turmeric. The ginger and turmeric are grown in grow bags, with 13,500 plants of each crop, using the Rio de Janeiro ginger variety and Meghalaya turmeric variety. Nutrients are supplied through fertigation using an RO plant. He asked officials to expand the area under vegetable cultivation.

At Aregudem village in Choutuppal mandal of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, he inspected cotton fields and discussed crop conditions and cultivation-related challenges with farmers.

District agriculture and horticulture officials accompanied him during the visits. Dr. B. Gopi, IAS, Director of Agriculture.



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