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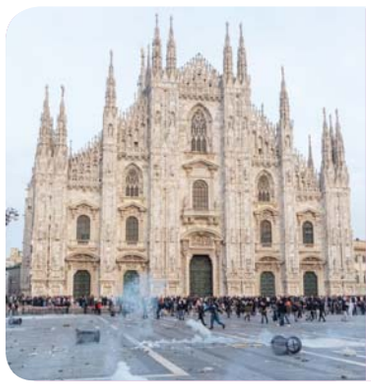
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Honest Journalism...



ITALIAN POLICE CLASH WITH PROTESTERS IN MILAN AND BOLOGNA

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INDIA'S 3-PART TRUCE PLAN SEEN AS 'BROADEST' FOR ENDING RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

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FPIS ARE SELLING BUT INDIAN EQUITIES NOT UNDER FOREIGN-INVESTOR STRESS

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7 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

NATION ▶P5



RAINS BATTER CHENNAI SUBURBS

'Vote Chori' is an attack on constitution: Rahul Gandhi

TFP I PRASHANT SHARMA
MARGAO, OCT 18

Describing the Congress as "guardian of the Constitution", Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday launched a fresh attack on the government and CEC Gyanesh Kumar for what he called "vote chori", promising to bring the culprits to book.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses party rally at Margao in Goa.

Addressing a party rally at Margao in Goa, Gandhi said, "Vote chori is an attack on the Constitution and the Congress party's dharma as the party is the guardian of the statute."

"Gyanesh Kumar and others will face the law and pay a price for what they have done," said Gandhi, challenging the government to file a case against him for his repeated claims about vote theft.

"I already have 45 cases, including defamation, against me, and I challenge them to file a new case for my vote chori claims. I know they will not do this as filing a case against me on this issue will make the matter legal and expose them," he said.

Gandhi said those who have indulged in vote theft are experiencing sleepless nights in Delhi as they know that they will have to face the Congress someday.

"They cannot escape from the Congress," he said, promising that the party will ensure justice is done.

He also repeated the allegation of vote theft during the elections in Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Bengal and Assam.

He said the truth has been brought before all and vote theft is a reality. "We have proved this with evidence. Vote chori has been done," he said.

"They cut Opposition parties' votes, they cut our votes and increase their own votes. They shift voters from one district to another and one state to another. Therefore, Congress workers in Goa have to remain very alert to foil their attempts at vote theft," he said while addressing party workers in Hindi.

15 houses burnt in Manipur's Kamjong, Kuki civilians flee

IMPHAL, OCT 18

At least 15 houses belonging to the Kuki tribal community were reportedly burnt by suspected militants in Chassad village in Manipur's Kamjong district, forcing civilians to flee their homes and take shelter in nearby forest areas and a camp of security forces, officials and local sources said on Sunday.



The incident occurred late on Saturday night, following a gun attack in the village earlier in the day in which a Kuki civilian, identified as Seikhohao Haokip, was killed and four others sustained bullet injuries, according to reports.

Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen condemned the violence, expressing grief over Haokip's death and concern for the injured village leaders and displaced families. Describing the burning of houses as an intolerable crime, Kipgen said she had directed the district administration, state police and security forces to maintain round-the-clock vigilance, protect civilians and their property, and ensure that those responsible for the violence were brought to justice.

A police official said that a joint column of the Assam Rifles, the Border Security Force (BSF) and Kamjong Police had been deployed in the affected area to bring the situation under control.

In a separate incident at Kamjong district headquarters on Saturday night, three Tangkhul Naga civilians sustained bullet injuries in an attack reportedly involving rival armed groups. The injured were identified as T. Chithung, S. Malung and M. Shithung. They were admitted to Kamjong Hospital, where their condition was reported to be stable. (IANS/UNI)

Tiger Shroff escapes assassination attempt

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
MUMBAI, OCT 18

Actor Tiger Shroff escaped unhurt after three motorcycle-borne men allegedly opened fire in the Juhu area of Mumbai on Sunday evening, injuring his car driver in the hand. Shroff was reportedly leaving a football ground when the incident occurred. Police are investigating the shooting and the identity and whereabouts of the attackers.



Tiger Shroff

Following the incident, an audio recording emerged in which a man identifying himself as Anil Pandit and claiming links to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang allegedly took responsibility for the attack. The speaker claimed that Shroff was targeted for ignoring the gang's directions and working with actor Salman Khan. The authenticity of the recording and the claims made in it have not been independently established.

In the audio, the speaker also threatened others in the Mumbai film industry who work with Salman Khan, warning of violence against those who did not follow the group's alleged directions. The recording included derogatory remarks about Salman Khan and references to fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim.

Army officer's wife booked under official secrets act

TFP I CORRESPONDENT
JAMMU, OCT. 18

Jammu and Kashmir Police have registered a case against the wife of a senior Army officer for allegedly sharing sensitive information with individuals suspected of having links to foreign intelligence agencies, including China. The woman, a Telangana resident currently living within the jurisdiction of Gandhi Nagar Police Station in Jammu, is suspected to have been approached by operatives posing as academicians.

An FIR (No. 290/2026) has been registered at Gandhi Nagar Police Station under Sections 3 and 5 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, and Sections 152 and 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The provisions cover offences related to information prejudicial to national security and the unauthorised communication or handling of protected information.

According to preliminary investigations, suspected Chinese operatives allegedly contacted the woman under the guise of academicians and asked her to write articles on subjects of strategic and operational significance. The subjects initially concerned the environment and geopolitics but allegedly shifted gradually towards defence-related issues. Investigators suspect she may have unknowingly fallen into what they described as an "intellectual trap".

Sources said she came under the scanner following intelligence inputs alleging the clandestine collection, possession and transmission of sensitive documents, photographs and electronic data relevant to national security.

CARTOON CAROUSEL



India advises caution amid Saudi situation

RIYADH, OCT 18

India on Sunday advised its nationals in Saudi Arabia to take due precautions under the prevailing situation, visit the nearest safe place in case of an aerial attack, and refrain from filming, publishing or sharing any information, photos and videos regarding the ongoing events.

The Embassy said that its officials continue to visit hospitals where Indian nationals are undergoing treatment.



Minister Vivek urges BLAs to ensure 100% voter registration

TFP I ANJANEYULU
MANCHERIAL, OCT 18



Minister of Labour & Employment, Dr Vivek Venkatswamy, addressing Mandamarri town Congress party Booth Level Agents (BLAs) at his residence in Mancherial district, called for 100 per cent voter registration, greater coordination among party workers and efforts to strengthen the organisation.

He urged BLAs to ensure that every eligible new voter was included in the electoral rolls during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process, noting that a week remained to complete registration. He promised to take BLAs who achieve full registration to Delhi to meet Rahul Gandhi. He also stressed adherence to protocol and called for unity among party workers. The leader said the Congress government was committed to public welfare and state development, and urged people to conserve drinking water, irrigation water and electricity amid concerns over the El Niño effect. He criticised opposition parties for politicising natural challenges.

Targeting the previous BRS government, he alleged that poor construction quality and irregularities had affected the Medigadda project and questioned K. Chandrashekhar Rao over his family's assets and alleged diversion of public funds for water supply to his farmhouse.

He also questioned BRS leader K.T. Rama Rao over demands to operate the Medigadda pumps and sought answers from former MLA Balka Suman regarding allegations about his assets and election expenditure.

Telangana Public School to be set up in Navipet at ₹9.76 Crore

TFP I ATEEQ KHAN
NIZAMABAD, OCT 17



TG Govt Advisor Sudharshan Reddy and District Collector Ila Tripathi inspected Govt Girls' High School premises at Navipet Mandal.

Telangana Government Advisor and MLA P. Sudharshan Reddy and District Collector Ila Tripathi, IAS, on Saturday inspected the Government Girls' High School premises at Navipet mandal headquarters to assess the feasibility of establishing a Telangana Public School.

Sudharshan Reddy said the government had allocated 9.76 crore for the proposed school, which would be developed on three acres with modern facilities to provide quality education from Class I to XII on a single campus. Collector Ila Tripathi directed officials to prepare comprehensive proposals for the project.

The duo also inspected the Mission Bhagiratha Nyalkal pump house and filter bed at Yench village in Navipet mandal. They reviewed drinking water supply arrangements and directed officials to ensure adequate water storage, prevent wastage, repair leakages promptly and maintain uninterrupted supply to the last residential areas.

State Urdu Academy Chairman Taher Bin Hamdan, State Agriculture Commission member Gadugu Gangadhar, Additional Collector Bhujanga Rao, Nizamabad RDO Rajendra Kumar, incharge DEO Saya Goud, TGEWIDC Executive Engineer Ravinder, Assistant Engineer Uday and other local officials accompanied them.

TGNPDCL wins national award for innovation in power distribution



TFP I VIJAYA KRUSHNA
HANAMKONDA, OCT 18

Telangana Northern Power Distribution Company Limited (TGNPDCL) has received the 14th Innovation with Impact Award for DISCOMs in recognition of its adoption of advanced technologies and innovative measures to improve power distribution and consumer services.

The award was presented during the 20th India Energy Summit organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce in New Delhi on October 14. Company Secretary K. Venkatesham received the award on behalf of TGNPDCL. On Saturday, he presented it to CMD Karnati Varun Reddy at the company's corporate headquarters in Nakkalagutta, Hanamkonda, in the presence of directors V. Mohan Rao, V. Tirupati Reddy, T. Madhusudhan and C. Prabhakar.

Varun Reddy said the company was using technologies such as real-time feeder monitoring, SCADA, drone-based inspections, GIS mapping, automatic meter reading and AI-powered chatbots to improve supply reliability, detect faults quickly and strengthen consumer services.

He said renewable energy capacity increased from 1,784 MW in 2024–25 to 2,126 MW in 2025–26, while rooftop solar capacity rose from 80.17 MW to 143.92 MW, registering growth of about 79.5 per cent. He credited the award to the collective efforts of the company's officers, engineers and employees in promoting technological innovation and improving power supply services.

Mahbubnagar Co-option Delay: Cong leaders demand fair share, loyalists' recognition

TFP I AHAD SIDDIQUI
MAHBUBNAGAR, OCT 18



The delay in nominating Co-option Members to the Mahbubnagar Municipal Corporation has raised concerns among minority leaders and Congress workers, who are demanding fair representation for loyal and senior party members.

Minority representatives have urged the Congress state and district leadership to expedite the process and select candidates based on their party service, organisational contributions and public engagement. They have also expressed concern that long-serving workers who stood by the party during difficult periods could be overlooked.

The delay has fuelled speculation about differences among local Congress factions, although no official explanation has been issued and the alleged role of internal disputes remains unconfirmed.

Party workers have called for transparent selection and consultations to ensure balanced representation in municipal governance. The leadership is yet to announce a final decision, leaving aspirants awaiting clarity on the nominations.

2 siblings killed in road accident

HYDERABAD, OCT 18

Two siblings, Rekha and Naveen, residents of Pedda Amberpet, were killed and a child was seriously injured after a car hit their scooter in Hayathnagar, Hyderabad.

The accident occurred when Naveen was taking his sister Rekha from Shamshabad to their hometown of Pedda Amberpet to celebrate the Dussehra festival.

Rajarshi Shah Guda to be developed as an ideal village: Adilabad Collector

TFP I SHAIK RIAZUDDIN
ADILABAD, OCT 18



Adilabad District Collector Rajarshi Shah, IAS has announced plans to develop Rajarshi Shah Guda village in Adilabad rural mandal as an ideal village by providing basic infrastructure, including roads, housing and other essential facilities.

On Sunday, Rajarshi Shah inaugurated a mega free medical camp organised by the Indian Red Cross Society's Adilabad branch in the village. Addressing the gathering, he appreciated the organisers for extending quality healthcare services to rural residents and urged people to undergo regular health check-ups and seek timely treatment. Doctors conducted medical examinations, provided consultations and distributed medicines free of cost.

The Collector thanked the villagers for naming the village after him and assured them that development works would be undertaken in a planned manner. He congratulated the doctors, organisers and Red Cross volunteers for conducting the camp. During his visit, Rajarshi Shah inspected the construction of double-bedroom houses and directed officials to maintain quality standards. He also performed the groundbreaking ceremony for CC road construction and instructed officials to complete the work promptly without inconveniencing residents.

Red Cross Society President Dr Kranthi Kumar, RIMS Director Jayasingh Singh Rathod, District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) Sadhana, Welfare Department officials Manohar and Sunita, Tahsildar Govind, Sarpanch Lakshmibai, medical staff, Red Cross representatives, other officials, and villagers participated in the programme.

Cyber Crime Police arrest 2 in digital arrest fraud case

TFP I TAHER ALI
HYDERABAD, OCT 18

Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police have arrested two people for allegedly facilitating a digital arrest fraud involving Rs 29.17 lakh by arranging mule bank accounts and routing the defrauded money through multiple accounts to conceal the money trail.

The accused, Mohd Ashfaq Hussain (27) and Ahmed Najeeb Uddin (27), both residents of Ameerpet, were apprehended on October 17. Another accused, Sachin of Bengaluru, is absconding. According to a police release on Sunday, a 63-year-old retired employee was targeted in March 2025 by fraudsters impersonating officials of the Delhi Police, CBI and Enforcement Directorate. They allegedly threatened him with arrest in a money-laundering case and persuaded him and his daughter to transfer Rs 29,17,668 under the pretext of verification, promising a refund.

Investigations revealed that the arrested accused allegedly helped route the money through bank accounts and cash deposit machines before it was used to purchase USDT cryptocurrency. They reportedly received commissions for facilitating the transactions. Police seized two Apple iPhones from their possession and found that around 16 cases across India were linked to the alleged fraudulent activities.

The accused were produced before a court in Hyderabad. Further investigation is underway to trace the absconding accused and identify others involved in the fraud.

VDCC road near Masjid-e-Noor inaugurated in Shaikpet



TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 18

A VDCC road near Masjid-e-Noor in Surya Nagar Colony, Shaikpet, has been inaugurated after a wait of nearly 20 years. Six-year-old namazi Mohamed Ali Zaid inaugurated the road in the presence of Asif Sohail and local residents.

The road was constructed following efforts by Asif Sohail, president of the Surya Nagar Colony Welfare Association and the Jubilee Hills Constituency Colonies Forum, in coordination with govt officials. Development works worth approximately Rs. 4 crore have been completed in the colony, including VDCC roads, sewerage and drinking water pipelines, electrical infrastructure, parks and playgrounds. Residents appreciated the efforts made to improve basic amenities in the area.

Asif Sohail thanked Zafar Masood, Zubair, Faisal, Zeeshan, Rizwan, Zaidan and other residents for their cooperation, stating that the development works were made possible through collective efforts.

Thunderstorms likely in 4 days

HYDERABAD, OCT 18

The upper-air cyclonic circulation over south coastal Andhra Pradesh and its neighbourhood has moved to the west-central Bay of Bengal and adjoining south Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu coasts, and was extending up to 5.8 km above mean sea level at 0530 hours on Sunday, the Meteorological Centre said.

In its daily weather report, the Centre forecast thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds of 30-40 kmph at isolated places across Telangana during the next four days.

6 held in Dammapet forest raid; ganja, hunting gun & bike seized

TFP I RAMARAJU
B. KOTHAGUDEM, OCT 18



Forest officials seized around 4 kg of ganja, a country-made hunting gun and other equipment during a raid at a house in Kodishalagudem village of Dammapet mandal, Bhadradri Kothagudem district and took six persons into custody, Dammapet Forest Range Officer said.

Acting on a tip-off, forest personnel searched the house of Penuballi Krishna and recovered four packets of ganja, a country-made gun, ammunition, hunting equipment, a Pulsar motorcycle (TG 28 B 6782) and five mobile phones. Iron pieces, black powder, a knife, a torch and a sound box were also seized. The six persons taken into custody were identified as Penuballi Nagu (23), Penuballi Ravi (21), Tati Sai Krishna (23), Penuballi Srinu (28), Tati Naveen (25) and Sappidi Sammayya (29), hailing from Kodishalagudem, Erragumpu, Old Gangaram and Garlapet.

According to the Forest Range Officer, the accused allegedly told officials that they procured ganja at low prices from Chintoor, Donkarai and Seeleru and sold it locally at higher prices. They also allegedly admitted to hunting animals in the forest. The accused and the seized property were handed over to Dammapet police for further action.

Forest personnel J. Bhadraiah, A. Parvathy, P. Rajaramesh, E. Kantarao and D. Naresh Kumar participated in the raid.

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TG govt celebrates Saddula Bathukamma grandly

TFP I SAUD SIDDIQUI
HYDERABAD, OCT 18

The Telangana government organised grand celebrations of Saddula Bathukamma, the concluding day of the nine-day floral festival, at Tank Bund in Hyderabad on Sunday.

Around 1,000 Bathukammas were taken in a procession from the Martyrs' Memorial to Tank Bund, where women participated in traditional dances and festivities. Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla and his wife Janaki, Ministers Jupally Krishna Rao and Seethakka, film actors Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna, and several other dignitaries attended the celebrations.



Minister Jupally Krishna Rao felicitates Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla and his wife Janaki on the sidelines of Saddula Bathukamma celebrations at Tank Bund in Hyderabad.

Around 700 folk artists showcased traditional art forms, including Perini, Gussadi, Oggu Dolu and Dappu. The venue was decorated with elaborate lighting and LED screens, while a laser show, fireworks and Bathukamma immersion formed part of the programme.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla described Bathukamma as a symbol of Telangana's cultural heritage, women's empowerment and reverence for nature. He urged people to conserve water, promote rainwater harvesting and protect natural resources in view of concerns over reduced rainfall and the possible impact of El Niño.

Minister Jupally Krishna Rao said Bathukamma transcended caste and religious barriers and reflected Telangana's cultural identity. He stressed the need to preserve folk arts, promote local artists and pass the State's traditions on to future generations.

Student killed, 16 injured as lighting truss collapses during Dandiya event

TFP I FAROOQ KHAN
RANGAREDDY, OCT 18



A female student died, and at least 16 others were injured when a lighting truss collapsed during a Dandiya event at an engineering college at Nadergul on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

The accident occurred at MVSR Engineering College in Nadergul in Adibatla, Rangareddy district on Saturday night.

The lighting truss suddenly collapsed during the event, triggering panic.

Narayandas Sona (18), a first-year B. Tech student, sustained critical injuries. She was rushed to a nearby private hospital but died while undergoing treatment. She hailed from the Wanaparthy district.

Police rushed to the spot and launched an investigation into the incident. Preliminary investigation shows that the lighting system collapsed due to strong winds.

The injured were rushed to a nearby hospital and from there shifted to Yashoda Hospital.

According to police, 10 out of 16 injured have been discharged from the hospital.

Some students and their parents alleged negligence on the part of the college management and demanded strict action against those responsible for the accident.

The Dandiya event was organised as part of Sangamam-2026, a two-day national-level technical and cultural fest. The event brought together students from various colleges to showcase their technical skills, innovative ideas and cultural talent.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has expressed shock over the accident at MVSR Engineering College, which resulted in the death of a student.

The Chief Minister conveyed his condolences to the student's family and directed that the best possible medical care be provided to the injured students.

He ordered that those responsible for the accident be identified and that strict action be taken against them.

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Working President K.T. Rama Rao said the accident has caused profound shock and grief. He extended his deepest condolences to the family of the deceased student.

Rama Rao wished for a speedy recovery of the students injured in this accident. He requested the authorities to provide them best medical care.

ZOORI opens first outlet in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, OCT 18

Natural diamond jewellery brand ZOORI, backed by over two decades of jewellery manufacturing experience, has opened its first retail outlet on Raj Bhavan Road in Somajiguda, Hyderabad, marking the beginning of its national expansion.

Founded by Sai Vineeth, Mahesh Choudhary and Ankush Surana, the brand aims to establish 25 stores across India within a year.

Only 61 of 600 private STPs registered, HMWSSB Chief sets Oct 25 deadline

TFP I MANVEER SINGH
HYDERABAD, OCT 18



Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) Managing Director K. Ashok Reddy has directed all private Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) owners within the board's jurisdiction to complete registration by October 25.

Of the approximately 600 private STPs identified in the city, only 61 have registered so far, Ashok Reddy said in a statement, urging the remaining owners to complete the process before the deadline.

Registration is mandatory for STPs in apartments, gated communities, commercial complexes, hotels, hospitals, educational institutions, industries and other private establishments. The exercise aims to collect details of plant capacity, daily sewage treatment, treated-water consumption and surplus water availability.

The board plans to promote the reuse of surplus treated water for construction, industrial activities and gardening to reduce pressure on drinking water resources, particularly during the summer.

Private STP owners can register online through the HMWSSB website: https://hyderabadwater.dawc.in.

Kavitha demands review of salary cuts for NHM employees

TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 18



K. Kavitha

Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) Chief K. Kavitha has demanded an immediate review of GO 1195, which reportedly reduced the salaries of certain National Health Mission (NHM) employees in Telangana.

Speaking to the media at her party office in Banjara Hills on Sunday, alongside leaders of the NHM Employees' Joint Action Committee (JAC), Kavitha said some of the 17,000 NHM employees across the State had suffered salary cuts of Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 5,000.

Questioning the decision amid rising prices and inflation, she said the government should explain why some employees' salaries had been reduced while others had received increases. She also alleged that NHM staff were not being paid on time despite the Centre releasing funds for the programme.

Kavitha urged Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy to intervene and direct the Health Minister to review the salary revisions and provide relief to affected employees. Citing Central government guidelines, she said NHM employees were entitled to an annual salary increment of five per cent and called for the provision to be implemented.

Lack of clarity on responsibility pushes sanitation to back burner: Dr. T. K. Sridevi

RATNA CHOTRANI
HYDERABAD, OCT 17



Lack of clarity over responsibility for maintaining cleanliness often pushes sanitation to the back burner, Dr. T. K. Sridevi, IAS, Secretary of the Municipal Administration Department and Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration, Telangana, said at a panel discussion titled "Sanitation: A Super Vaccine" held at The Leela, Banjara Hills, on the eve of the Charter Presentation Ceremony of the newly formed Rotary Club of One Hyderabad.

Dr. Sridevi emphasised the need for greater investment and sustained behavioural change, recalling Mahatma Gandhi's focus on sanitation during the freedom struggle. She urged Rotary to promote awareness and responsible sanitation practices, including moving beyond the "flush and forget" approach.

The discussion was moderated by Prof. V. Srinivas Chary, former Director of the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) and advisor to T-Works, Dasra and the Gates Foundation, along with Abhishek Nath, founder of LooCafe and ReFlow. Prof. Chary said India needed to prioritise sanitation alongside major infrastructure development, citing Japan's emphasis on cleanliness.

Dr. Zelalem Birhanu Tafesse, Chief of Field Office, UNICEF India, described sanitation as a "super vaccine" because effective sanitation and handwashing help prevent disease. He highlighted Rotary's partnership with UNICEF in public health initiatives and said Rotary had facilitated more than 7,000 volunteers in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Vivek Pandey, WASH professional and consultant to the Gates Foundation, called for innovation in wastewater management, advocating decentralised treatment and reuse of treated water. Citing the ReFlow Model toilet at Lumbini Park in Hyderabad, he explained how on-site wastewater treatment could reduce freshwater consumption.

BRS seeks immediate release of marriage scheme funds

TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 18



Abdul Muqeet Chanda

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Minority Cell General Secretary Abdul Muqeet Chanda has urged the Telangana government to immediately release pending financial assistance under the Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak schemes, claiming that nearly two lakh applications have been awaiting clearance for about a year.

In a statement, Chanda said the delay had forced economically weaker families to borrow money to meet marriage expenses, leaving many struggling with debt and household costs. He demanded faster verification, a clear timeline for clearing pending applications and an effective grievance-redressal mechanism for applicants.

Chanda also called on the Congress government to fulfil its election promise of providing eligible brides with one tola of gold and 1 lakh in financial assistance, and ensure that beneficiaries receive the support without discrimination.

He recalled that former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao launched the Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak schemes on October 2, 2014, to ease the financial burden of marriages on poor families. He urged the government to ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive the assistance without further delay.



737 drunk driving cases booked during weekend drives

TFP I RAOOF KHAN
HYDERABAD, OCT 18



Hyderabad and Cyberabad Traffic Police booked a total of 737 motorists for drunk driving during special enforcement drives conducted over the weekend on October 16 and 17.

Hyderabad Traffic Police caught 417 offenders, including 353 two-wheeler riders, 25 three-wheeler drivers and 39 four-wheeler and other vehicle drivers. Of them, 192 recorded blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels between 51 and 100 mg/100 ml, while four recorded levels above 300 mg/100 ml.

Cyberabad Traffic Police apprehended another 320 offenders, including 265 two-wheeler riders, 16 three-wheeler drivers, 38 four-wheeler drivers and one heavy vehicle driver. Of these, 266 recorded BAC levels between 36 and 200 mg/100 ml, 38 between 201 and 300 mg/100 ml and 16 between 301 and 550 mg/100 ml. All offenders will be produced before the court.

Cyberabad Police said 196 drunk-driving cases were disposed of by courts between October 12 and 17. Of these, 191 offenders were fined, while five were awarded fines and community service. Police reiterated their zero-tolerance policy towards drunk driving and warned that those causing fatal accidents while driving under the influence of alcohol could face charges under Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which provides for imprisonment of up to 10 years and a fine.

'Echoing RSS statements, should read more': Congress, RJD on BJP chief's remarks against Rahul

NEW DELHI, OCT 18

The Congress and its ally Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) on Sunday launched a sharp attack on Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Nitin Nabin over his remarks against Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, accusing him of repeating the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) narrative rather than addressing substantive political issues.



The criticism came a day after Nabin, while addressing a gathering in Patna on Saturday, accused Gandhi of acting as a "pawn of a foreign toolkit gang" and working against the interests of the country. He also alleged that the Congress was unable to accept the progress India had made under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and was consequently attempting to undermine the country's development.

Reacting to Nabin's comments, Karnataka Congress President B.K. Hariprasad said the BJP chief was merely echoing statements made by the RSS and challenged the ruling party to substantiate its allegations about a purported foreign-linked toolkit.

Addressing reporters, Hariprasad said, "The BJP President, Nitin Nabin, has a habit of simply repeating the remarks given to him by the RSS. If there is a toolkit, let them explain it. Who is stopping them? If he thinks protecting the Constitution and hoisting the tricolour are part of a toolkit, I consider that childish."

The RJD also joined the Congress in criticising Nabin.

Speaking to IANS, RJD Rajya Sabha member Manoj Jha questioned the BJP chief's understanding of political discourse and urged him to read more before making allegations against the opposition.

Someone before him had also mentioned a foreign hand. I have written about this on social media as well." (IANS)

Rijiju hits out at 'anti-India' gangs

Soros-backed bid to force regime change

NEW DELHI, OCT 10

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Sunday lashed out at "anti-India" gangs and some politicians for inciting youth for their failed attempt to force a regime change in the country.



Kiren Rijiju

"Regime change in India is absolutely possible — but only through elections, not through Soros," wrote Rijiju on X, mentioning the name of American billionaire George Soros to hint at a foreign conspiracy behind the recent flare-up in the country over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Soros and his network have faced allegations of funding protests across the world, particularly in countries led by conservative leaders.

Rijiju pointed to the fresh wave of violence in France and cited the violent regime change in Bangladesh to criticise the failed bid by forces that wanted to dislodge the BJP-led government.

"The violent incident that occurred in Bangladesh and the riots, arson, and looting that took place in France — a similar conspiracy was hatched for India as well," he said.

"Anti-India gangs and some politicians had colluded to incite the youth and spread violence on our streets. But those who devised this dangerous conspiracy forgot that India is neither Bangladesh nor France," added Rijiju.

The BJP leader's remarks came amid protests seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the SIR of electoral rolls, which the Opposition parties claim have led to names of over 13 crore Indians being left out of the voters' list.

Earlier on Saturday, Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh targeted Congress MP and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi and other Opposition leaders, including Prashant Bhushan and Arvind Kejriwal, alleging that their actions had exposed their true intentions. (IANS/UNI)

Sunetra takes indirect swipe at Rohit Pawar

Says no rift in Mahayuti

NANDED, OCT 18

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar took an indirect swipe at NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) MLA Rohit Pawar over his remarks on the investigation into the death of late Deputy CM Ajit Pawar and the allocation of the Finance portfolio, commenting that some people were adept at spreading misinformation.



Rohit Pawar had in a statement on Saturday claimed that the finance portfolio held by the late Ajit Pawar, would not be allocated to Sunetra Pawar as Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis wanted to keep it with the BJP.

Dismissing speculation about differences within the ruling Mahayuti alliance, Sunetra Pawar said it remained united despite its constituent parties having different ideologies.

"There are no differences within the Mahayuti. Different parties may have different ideologies, but when we stand as the Mahayuti, we are united. Everyone must work together with collective strength and maintain coordination. Any misunderstandings should be resolved through discussions," she said.

Addressing a gathering in Nanded while campaigning for Mahayuti candidate Satish Chavan in the Legislative Council graduates' constituency election, she said the alliance was committed to developing Marathwada, including Nanded.

As a daughter of Marathwada, I give you my word that we are committed to the region's development. We need your continued support and must reach out to voters. Nanded district has an important role to play, she said, appealing to alliance workers to work together. (IANS)

Karnataka BJP targets Congress sting

HUBBALLI, OCT 18

Karnataka BJP president Vijayendra Yediyurappa on Sunday alleged that the reported sting operation had raised questions about political manoeuvring within the ruling Congress and predicted that the party's internal differences over leadership would become more pronounced after the October 23 Legislative Council elections.

Questioning who was behind the operation, whom it sought to target and what its objective was, Vijayendra claimed that developments within the Congress pointed to deepening differences among senior leaders, including alleged attempts to target former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The political fallout would become clearer in the coming days, he told reporters here, alleging a lack of mutual trust within the ruling party. He reiterated his earlier claim that Siddaramaiah could face pressure to step down as Chief Minister, adding that subsequent developments had brought the leadership question into sharper focus. (IANS/UNI)

Jagan demands deployment of Central forces for local body polls in Andhra

TADEPALLI, OCT 18

Former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and YSR Congress Party president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Sunday demanded deployment of Central forces in the state to ensure free and fair local body elections.



Accusing the ruling coalition of unleashing a reign of terror to stop YSRCP candidates from filing nominations, he urged the State Election Commission (SEC) to intervene and provide security to candidates coming to nomination centres to file their papers.

He alleged that the entire system, from the SEC to the police under the direction of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu were obstructing the process of nominations as he was "scared of defeat".

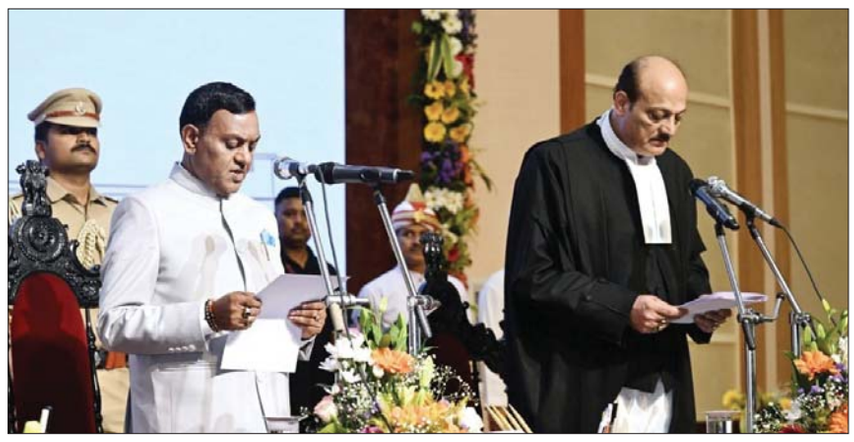
Jagan Mohan Reddy, who earlier called on State Election Commissioner Anil Chandra Punetha, told him that if candidates are not allowed to file their nominations, the reputation of the Commission and its officials would be at stake. "If the SEC becomes a party to such undemocratic practices by allowing nominations to be obstructed, it would be an unprecedented incident in history. We urged the SEC not to be part of such practices," he said.

He requested the SEC to ensure that every candidate who wishes to file a nomination is allowed to do so through an online system or at a centralised location at the SEC office in Amaravati.

"We also asked the Commission to arrange police escorts, with the respective Superintendents of Police (SPs) taking responsibility, to ensure that candidates can file their nominations without obstruction," he said

"We also pointed out that if candidates are facing such difficulties even at the nomination stage, one can only imagine the plight of candidates and voters when the actual polling takes place. Therefore, it is crucial that central forces be deployed and that elections be conducted under the supervision of paramilitary forces. (IANS)

Braj Mohan Ram takes oath as Odisha Governor



BHUBANESWAR, OCT 18

Veteran Bharatiya Janata Party leader Braj Mohan Ram assumed office as the Governor of Odisha at a swearing-in ceremony held at Lok Bhavan in Bhubaneswar on Sunday. The Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court, Justice Harish Tandon, administered the oath of office and secrecy to the new governor.

Ram, one of the prominent Dalit faces of the BJP in Jharkhand, replaced Hari Babu Kambhampati as the governor. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, other senior ministers, opposition leaders and officials also graced the event.

The new Governor was accorded a guard of honour following the swearing-in ceremony held at the Abhishek Hall of Lok Bhavan here.

Ahead of the oath-taking ceremony, Ram visited the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri on Saturday, accompanied by his mother and wife, to offer prayers and seek the blessings of Lord Jagannath. After offering prayers to the holy siblings at the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri, the new Odisha Governor, Ram, told media persons that he would work for the development of the state in consultation and cooperation with everyone.

Notably, Ram, the Dalit leader, comes from a farming family and has a long record of legislative and social service. He served as an MLA in undivided Bihar before being elected to the Lok Sabha from Palamu on three occasions -- in 1996, 1998, and 1999.

Ram said he prayed to Lord Shree Jagannath for the progress and development of Odisha.

Meanwhile, extending his warm greetings and congratulations to Ram on assuming office as the Governor of Odisha, Odisha CM Majhi said, "Under the guidance of the Honourable Governor, Odisha's journey towards development will gain further momentum. I wish him a successful tenure."

Notably, Ram, the Dalit leader, comes from a farming family and has a long record of legislative and social service. He served as an MLA in undivided Bihar before being elected to the Lok Sabha from Palamu on three occasions -- in 1996, 1998, and 1999. Apart from his electoral career, he has served as the in-charge of the State Scheduled Caste Morcha. He has also worked towards establishing educational institutions in Chandwa.

His appointment recognises his contribution to grassroots leadership, the empowerment of Dalit communities and decades of legislative and social work. It is worth noting that Ram recently landed in controversy over his remarks on strengthening the BJP's organisational base in Odisha and increasing the party's vote share, shortly after being named the state's new Governor. (IANS)

TVK plans 3rd state conference to celebrate electoral success

CHENNAI, OCT 18

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) is considering Tiruchi or Tirunelveli as the venue for its third state conference, with preliminary preparations underway for a gathering intended to celebrate the party's electoral success and consolidation under Chief Minister Vijay.



The conference is expected to take place early next year and is likely to be called the "Victory Conference", according to reports. However, the party has yet to formally announce the venue, dates or detailed programme.

The proposed event is being planned against the backdrop of TVK's victories in the recently concluded Madurantakam and Dharapuram Assembly bypolls. The results have strengthened the party's confidence following its success in the Tamil Nadu Assembly general election earlier this year.

Vijay, who launched TVK in 2024 after establishing himself as one of Tamil cinema's leading actors, organised the party's first state conference at Vikravandi that year. The gathering drew large numbers of supporters, particularly young people, and brought considerable attention to his entry into electoral politics.

The party subsequently held its second state conference in Madurai, continuing its efforts to expand its organisational presence across Tamil Nadu.

Within two years of its formation, TVK contested the Assembly election and secured a major political breakthrough, forming the government with Vijay taking office as Chief Minister.

The third conference is now being envisaged as an occasion to bring together celebrations marking the party's third anniversary, its election victory and Vijay's birthday.

The arrangements and the manner in which these occasions will be incorporated into the programme remain to be announced. Tiruchi and Tirunelveli are currently under consideration, with a final decision on the location awaited. Preparatory discussions have begun, although no formal schedule has been released.

Meanwhile, the party is also preparing to conduct its annual programme honouring students who performed well in the Class 10 and Class 12 examinations. Such award ceremonies have been organised at the district level in recent years under the banners of TVK and its predecessor organisation, Vijay Makkal Iyakkam.

This year's prize distribution programme is expected to be held soon, and district secretaries have begun the related organisational work. The student recognition initiative will provide another opportunity for the party to engage with young people and families as preparations advance for its next major state gathering. Further details on both events are awaited. (IANS/UNI)

Rains batter Chennai suburbs

CHENNAI, OCT 18



Heavy rains battered Chennai and its suburbs and in North costal districts last night with a few areas receving a staggering spell in excess of 30 cms, even as Met office attributed it to convective activity while denying any localised cloudburst.

The rains which began last night, gained in intensity and continued all through the night and till early on Sunday morning, inundating several areas and government premises including Income Tax and HR and CE department offices.

Civic workers were pressed into service ever since the rains started and they were engaged in draining out the stagnated water. It was virtual flooding at AGS Nagar area in western suburb of Velacherry.

Apart from Chennai several districts also experienced copious rains as the Northeast monsoon, which commenced a couple of days back, became vigorous. The Met office has issued a Red Alert -- rains in excess of 20 cms -- for Chennai for today and Orange alert for its neighbouring districts.

The Revenue and Disaster Management department issued a Red Alert message with a warning sound to all mobile users asking the people to take all precautions. (IANS)

Kolkata Police releases guidelines for puja organisers, cancels all VIP passes after

KOLKATA, OCT 18

A day after 19 people were killed in a stampede at a Durga Puja pandal in Kolkata, the city police on Sunday issued several instructions for police personnel and puja organisers for the remainder of puja days.

The major instruction among them is that all VIP passes to visit the pandals have been cancelled.

It has been instructed that no food stalls of any kind can be kept at the entry and exit points of such pavilions.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah and West Bengal CM Suvendu Adhikari inquire about the health of admitted victims of pandal stampede.

Kolkata Police Commissioner Ajay Nand has issued a set of instructions to all police stations in Kolkata in this regard.

Through this directive, it will be possible to maintain continuous smooth communication between the police and the security personnel and the pandal authorities.

The Police Commissioner has said in his instructions that from now on the control of the public address system will be in the hands of the police.

Apart from this, there will be not only volunteers in the pandals, but at least one Police Constable as well.

Apart from this, the entry and exit points of the pandals will have to be kept empty.

It has been told in this directive that it is also necessary to check whether there is adequate lighting inside the pandal and the entry and exit points of the pandal.

Apart from this, all the Inspectors of Kolkata Police will have Manpack radio set through which it will be possible to maintain constant communication with the Puja committee.

The police on Sunday arrested seven people, including organisers, in connection with the stampede at the Chorebagan Sarbojanin Durga Puja Pandal in Kolkata, which claimed 19 lives. A large number of devotees were injured following a stampede at the Chorebagan Sarbojanin Durga Puja pandal in north Kolkata as an excessive crowd flocked into the pandal arena to catch a glimpse of the idols. (IANS)

CM Omar demands strict action after attack on J&K-bound bus in Haryana

SRINAGAR, OCT 18



Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has taken up the incident involving an attack on a Jammu and Kashmir-bound bus in Haryana with the state government, seeking stringent action against those responsible and measures to ensure the safety of passengers.

An elderly Kashmiri passenger sustained injuries when a bus, travelling from Delhi to Srinagar with around 40 passengers on board, was reportedly attacked by unidentified persons near Kurukshetra in Haryana, who allegedly pelted it with stones and bricks.

The Chief Minister's Office has conveyed its concern to the Government of Haryana over the incident and the safety and well-being of the passengers. The Haryana administration has assured prompt and stringent action in accordance with the law.

Reacting to the incident, the Chief Minister said in a post on X, "This unfortunate incident should never have taken place. I hope the Haryana government led by Nayab Singh Saini and Haryana Police catch the culprits & take action to ensure these things don't happen again."

The Jammu and Kashmir Government stands with the affected passengers and is closely monitoring the situation.

The incident drew widespread condemnation from political leaders in Kashmir. (IANS)

CISF plans sector-specific functional reorganisation

NEW DELHI, OCT 18



The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) will reorganise its administrative and operational control structure from November 1 to enable sector-specific supervision, efficiency and coordination, an official said on Sunday.

The functional reorganisation, approved by the Union Home Ministry, assumes significance as the CISF's mandate is expanding beyond conventional industrial security to encompass new and specialised security responsibilities, an official statement said.

Under the reorganisation, the National Capital Region Sector has been reorganised into the Government Building Museums and Monuments and Mass Rapid Transit System (GBMM & MRTS) Sector in New Delhi.

The North Sector (New Delhi) and North Eastern Sector-II (Kolkata) have been restructured as the Power-I and Power-II Sectors, respectively, the statement said. (IANS)

Akasa Air extends suspension of Riyadh, Jeddah flights



MUMBAI, OCT 18

Akasa Air on Sunday announced the extension of its suspension of flights to Saudi Arabian cities Riyadh and Jeddah until October 27, as tensions continue to escalate in the Middle East region.

In a post on social media platform X, the airline said the decision was taken after a careful assessment of the evolving situation, adding that the safety and well-being of its passengers and crew remain its highest priority.

"In view of the prevailing security situation in the Middle East, Akasa Air has extended the suspension of all flights to and from Riyadh and Jeddah upto and including October 27, 2026," the airline said.

"This decision follows a careful assessment of the situation, with safety remaining our primary consideration," it added.

The airline stated that it continues to closely monitor developments and assess the situation in real time before taking any further decisions regarding the resumption of services. (IANS/UNI)

Eight labourers killed in Punjab road accident

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
SANGRUR, OCT 18



Eight labourers, including six women, were killed and several others injured after a speeding car rammed into a group of road construction workers on Jakhal Road near Chotian village in Punjab's Sangrur district. The Chevrolet Optra Magnum reportedly lost control and hit more than 20 workers standing by the roadside in the Lehragaga area. Five victims died at the spot, while the others succumbed to their injuries during treatment. Seven of the deceased were reportedly residents of Alisher village. The driver, identified as Pargat Singh Kala of Raidhrana village, fled the scene.

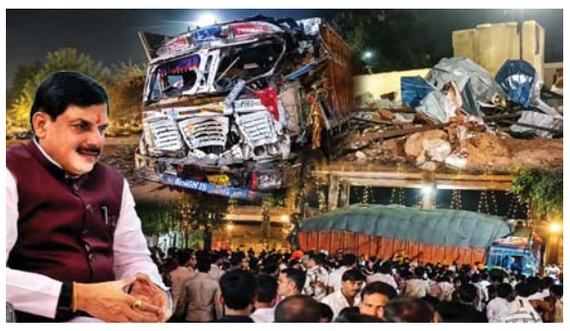
Witnesses said at least 23 workers were injured, with four to five in critical condition. Harvinder Singh, a nearby factory worker who reached the spot after the accident, alleged that an ambulance took nearly an hour to arrive despite police efforts to arrange medical assistance.

Another witness claimed that injured workers remained on the roadside awaiting help. (IANS)

Madhya Pradesh's CM Yadav orders removal of CSP

Suspends 8 cops after Gwalior truck accident

GWALIOR, OCT 18



Taking a serious view of negligence in the tragic truck accident near the Sheetla Mata Temple in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior that claimed 14 lives, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday ordered the immediate removal of the City Superintendent of Police (CSP) of the Jhansi Road area and the suspension of eight other police officers and personnel.

Accordingly, CSP Jhansi Road Ravi Bhadauria has been removed from his post.

Those suspended include Jhansi Road SHO Shakti Singh Yadav, Antri SHO (Station House Officer) Gitesh Sharma, Jhansi Road Traffic SHO Abhishek Raghuvanshi, Traffic Inspector Raghavendra Jadon, Head Constable Sushil Dwivedi, and Constables Kishan Khanna, Anil Jaitpuria and Pawan Sengar.

In a post on his X handle, the Chief Minister said, "Taking a serious view of the negligence surrounding the incident near the Sheetla Mata Temple in Gwalior, directives have been issued for the immediate removal of the CSP, the suspension of three Station House Officers (SHOs), one Traffic Inspector, one Head Constable, and three constables, as well as a comprehensive investigation into the incident. This is intended to fix accountability and ensure that strict action is taken against those found responsible."

CM Yadav emphasised that the safety of all citizens is of paramount importance.

"To prevent any recurrence of such incidents in the future, security arrangements will be reviewed and necessary measures will be implemented. Negligence concerning public safety will not be tolerated at any level," he said in his post.

The Chief Minister has made it clear that no one will be spared if found negligent in the performance of their duties. (IANS/UNI)

DRI seizes Sri Lanka-bound drugs worth Rs 100 crore, arrests 4 in Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI, OCT 18



The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized 137 kg (gross) of crystal methamphetamine, a banned synthetic drug, worth Rs 100 crore in the illegal drug market from a coastal village in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu and arrested four accused, an official said on Sunday.

The consignment was allegedly meant for shipment to Sri Lanka, the DRI said, adding that the four accused were arrested under the provisions of the NDPS Act 1985 and remanded to judicial custody.

The operation followed specific intelligence indicating that a large consignment of narcotic substances had been transported to a coastal location in Nagapattinam district for storage and onward smuggling to Sri Lanka, the DRI said in a statement.

A subsequent search led to the recovery of six duffel bags containing 27 silver-foil packets, each weighing approximately 5 kg, it said.

The packets were removed, and their powder contents were sent for lab tests, it said.

The packets contained a white crystalline substance suspected to be methamphetamine of high purity. The contraband was seized under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, the DRI said.

In a simultaneous search at the premises of the suspected organiser, DRI officers seized Rs 10 lakh in cash suspected to represent sale proceeds. Two four-wheelers and one two-wheeler allegedly used for transporting the narcotic substance were also seized, it said. (IANS)

4 workers killed after chimney collapses at factory in Jamuria

KOLKATA, OCT 18



At least four workers died after a chimney collapsed at a private sponge iron factory in Jamuria in West Bengal's West Burdwan district, the police said on Sunday.

Another worker was seriously injured. An investigation has been launched into the cause of the chimney collapse and whether safety rules were followed during construction.

After the accident, a section of residents and workers erupted in anger in the factory premises. According to local sources, the protesters also clashed with the police personnel. The police were trying to control the situation.

According to local sources, a chimney was being constructed in Unit 3 of the Shyamsel factory in Jamuria on Saturday night. A few workers were working when suddenly the chimney collapsed. In an instant, the workers were buried under the rubble. Hearing the loud noise, other factory workers rushed to the spot. They were the first to start the rescue work. Later, the police, fire brigade and rescue teams of the state's disaster management force reached the spot.

After a long rescue operation, five workers were rescued from under the rubble and sent to the hospital. Doctors declared four of them dead. Another seriously injured worker has been admitted to a private hospital in Durgapur. (IANS/UNI)

THE FREEDOM PRESS

MONDAY 19 OCTOBER 2026

Global protests highlight the challenge of balancing public demands

Protests across France, Belgium, Albania, Argentina, Tunisia, India and Spain reflect growing public concerns over education, living costs, political accountability, electoral processes and government spending. Although the immediate triggers differ, the demonstrations underline a common challenge for governments: balancing competing public demands with financial constraints, institutional responsibilities and long-term development priorities. They also highlight the importance of democratic engagement, peaceful protest and responsive governance.

In India, opposition parties and youth activists have protested against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging that the exercise could disproportionately affect minorities and benefit the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Election Commission of India has rejected allegations of wrongdoing, maintaining that the revision aims to remove duplicate and ineligible entries and improve electoral accuracy. Reports of large-scale deletions have intensified the controversy, although the figures include deceased voters, people who have relocated and individuals whose whereabouts could not be established. The dispute underscores the need for transparency, proper verification, notice to affected voters and accessible procedures for restoring eligible names.

The Indian debate also illustrates the distinction between legitimate political criticism and the responsibility to protect public order. Opposition leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, have sought an audit of voter-list deletions and safeguards against wrongful exclusion, while protests have demanded the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. Authorities have defended restrictions on demonstrations on public-order grounds, while critics have questioned the scale of detentions. A credible electoral system requires both accurate voter rolls and public confidence in the process. The Commission's verification and grievance-redressal mechanisms, along with constructive judicial scrutiny, can help address concerns without undermining institutional independence.

In France, student protests that began over teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms and deteriorating school facilities expanded into wider demonstrations over inequality, fuel prices and public spending. More than 161,000 demonstrators were reported on October 13, followed by further rallies on October 17, when arrests, clashes and property damage were reported. Allegations of excessive police force have also prompted scrutiny. Belgium has witnessed similar opposition from trade unions and students to spending cuts and education reforms, with demonstrators arguing that workers, pensioners and low-income households could bear a disproportionate burden. These developments show that fiscal discipline, while important for controlling public debt, must be accompanied by careful assessment of its effects on essential services and vulnerable groups.

Albania's student protests have widened into a broader anti-government movement over education costs, university facilities, employment prospects, inequality and alleged corruption. Demonstrations in Tirana have involved clashes with police, injuries and mass detentions, while demands for Prime Minister Edi Rama's resignation have added a political dimension to the unrest. Opposition to a proposed luxury resort development on the country's southern coast has further fuelled public concerns over land rights and accountability, although allegations involving investors must be distinguished from established findings of wrongdoing. The protests demonstrate how unresolved economic grievances can develop into wider demands for institutional reform and stronger safeguards against corruption.

India's next-generation philanthropists

India is witnessing a shift in the culture of philanthropy, with a younger generation of entrepreneurs and business leaders increasingly engaging in social causes alongside their professional careers. Traditionally associated with established industrialists and wealthy individuals later in life, philanthropy is now attracting people who want to contribute their time, expertise, networks and financial resources to address social challenges. This transition comes amid a significant intergenerational transfer of wealth, creating opportunities to strengthen private contributions to India's development. A report titled A Generation Ahead: Helping India's Next-Generation Philanthropists Succeed estimated that India would record nearly $128 billion in intergenerational wealth transfers during the decade ending in 2028. This transition is bringing a diverse group of next-generation philanthropists into the social sector, including individuals who have inherited a family tradition of giving and those who developed an interest in social impact through their professional experiences. Their growing participation could help expand the resources available for education, entrepreneurship, healthcare and community development.

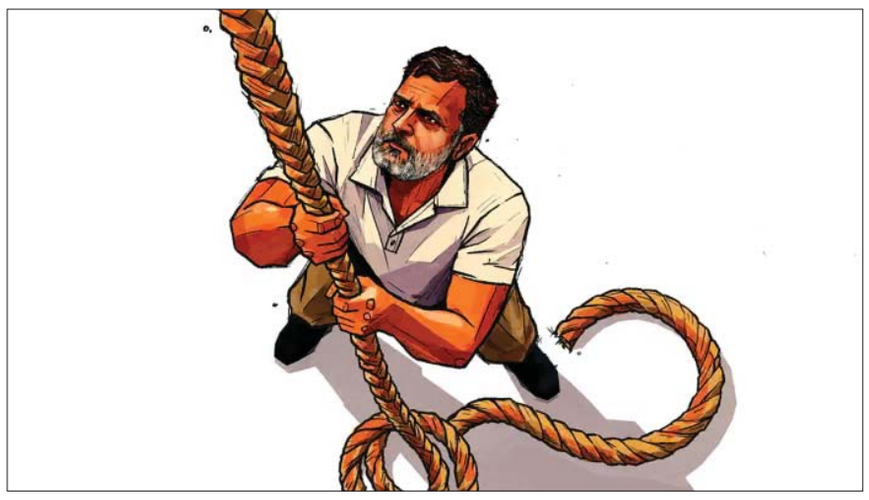
Mekin Maheshwari, founder and chief executive of Udhyam Learning Foundation, exemplifies this changing outlook. After leaving Flipkart in 2015, when India's e-commerce sector was entering a period of rapid expansion, he spent time reflecting on his future direction before moving towards social impact. His approach treats philanthropy as a reallocation of time and attention rather than merely a financial contribution. This perspective reflects a broader recognition that addressing social problems requires sustained engagement, practical knowledge and a willingness to understand the needs of communities. For many next-generation philanthropists, professional and philanthropic interests are complementary rather than competing priorities. Bharat Jaisinghani, joint managing director of Polycab India, believes that both business and philanthropy offer opportunities to learn, build relationships and understand how institutions can create lasting impact. Aradhana Rai Gupta, co-founder of Baala, similarly highlights the willingness of younger philanthropists to engage early, experiment with solutions, collaborate and contribute professional skills alongside financial resources. Such an approach can help connect private-sector expertise with the needs of social organisations.

Business experience is also influencing how this generation approaches charitable initiatives. Maheshwari draws on his years at Flipkart to emphasise systems, organisational culture and solutions capable of operating at scale. Jaisinghani likewise applies the principles of sustainability, strong processes and long-term planning to philanthropy. These approaches could improve the effectiveness of social programmes by moving beyond isolated interventions towards sustainable models. However, scaling an initiative must remain sensitive to local conditions, since solutions that work in one community may not automatically succeed elsewhere.

Family traditions continue to play an important role in shaping philanthropic commitments. Setika Singh, executive director of Takshila Foundation, has spoken about the influence of watching her father and grandfather combine professional responsibilities with philanthropy. Sheetal Arora, chief executive officer and whole-time director of Mankind Pharma, views wealth as carrying a responsibility to be used constructively. Such continuity demonstrates how values of giving can pass between generations while adapting to changing social and economic circumstances. The challenge is to preserve this sense of responsibility while ensuring that philanthropic decisions respond to contemporary needs. A notable feature of the emerging approach is its emphasis on measurable outcomes and direct engagement with communities. Younger philanthropists increasingly seek evidence of whether their initiatives are achieving their intended objectives, reflecting practices commonly used in business. Singh stresses the importance of spending time on the ground, listening to communities and understanding the circumstances of organisations before allocating resources.

Street fighter to 2029 challenger? Rahul Gandhi must answer 12 questions first

SHEKHAR GUPTA



If Rahul Gandhi is the flavour of the political season for adversaries and fans alike, two interesting trends dominate all talk over his future. Both are contradictory.

On the one hand, it's quite remarkable that there's disagreement between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his mass base, on Rahul's future potential. On the other hand, Rahul and his base are in complete agreement on this subject.

BJP followers are dismissive of Rahul. For them, he's the 'pappu', or an object of derision. Often enough, even senior BJP leaders boast that he's no threat but their biggest strength. Modi, however, has always held the opposite view. He sees Rahul, and the Gandhis, as the only potential threat.

That's why his campaigns are so fixated on Rahul. Even in a state election where the Congress hardly counts, Modi targets him. This week, he also fielded Union Home Minister and BJP 'Kautilya' Amit Shah to launch a vicious attack on Rahul. While the base may laugh it away, BJP seniors know who the real threat is. That's the rare contradiction between the leader and the base.

For the Congress, Rahul and his base are unanimous in believing that power is his for the taking, if only elections were fair. Implicit in this is the insinuation that all elections were stolen by the BJP 2019 onwards. First, by 'mass-fixing' of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), and now with a combination of CEC Gyanesh Kumar and his SIR. Just fix these and the next election is yours.

That's the threat Modi and Shah have never taken lightly. They don't believe Rahul is their best asset in the Opposition. They know that the Congress, with its one-in-five vote base, is their only challenger. And the Congress, like it or not, can't stay intact without the Gandhis.

Now, the key point: Where does this take Rahul? At this time, he's totally focused on building the 'street' against Modi. He's willing to partner anybody, from mostly apolitical CJP to hard-Left AISA, from Abhijeet Dipke to Neha Bora.

The next general election, 2029, will mark 25 years in politics for Rahul. He will still be only 59, young by the standards of Indian politics. But, presuming that the Congress and the BJP retain their ideologically frozen vote, Modi's add-on voters won't shift to Rahul out of boredom. He has to offer them a better, constructive, optimistic proposition.

What will he do differently from Modi/BJP if elected? Let me list just a dozen short questions:

How would he want Election Commissioners to be picked and the impartiality of ECI restored? Return to the Congress/UPA era isn't inspiring. His late father had tried in 1989 to weaken the EC by making it a three-member body. Further, how will he ensure that non-citizens (those the BJP has labelled ghuspethiyas) don't become voters?

The same for the judiciary, CBI and the other key agencies.

How will he handle a Trump-like challenge? How will his policy towards the US be any different?

What's his plan to deal with the Chinese? How will his treatment of Pakistan and terrorism emanating from there be different? Softer than Modi's, or harder?

How will his approach to West Asia and Israel differ from Modi's?

What's his vision for managing India's chronic and crippling triple-shortage of energy, capital and gold? We can add AI/software services to this now. How will he make India a magnet for investors?

Chhatron ki Goonj is resonating. But, how will he create more jobs? Further, for the less educated, will he continue MGNREGA, or bring in a 'new, improved' version? Will he continue giving away free foodgrain?

Is caste census still his idea of social justice? How will it create more jobs? Revanth Reddy doesn't know what to do with his caste census. Will he ask D.K. Shivakumar to at least release his caste census data?

What changes does he plan for the education system to end corruption and profiteering, improve quality, and make the young more employable?

He says he isn't anti-business or anti-capital. He just wants no monopoly and a level playing field. How will he ensure that? What's his concept of economic reform?

Since he and his 'secular' partners complain that the minorities are marginalised, how would he mainstream them?

And finally, who is, or will be on his team?

To look like a credible challenger and not just a street fighter, Rahul needs to answer these questions and offer voters in the 'middle' new ideas. Modi started promising "Achche Din" by late 2012. At about the same distance from 2029, what's Rahul promising?

If he were to think out of the box, he can set up a UK-style shadow cabinet. His 'ministers' could then start answering these questions in their respective domains. Of course, if I were to be only part facetious, it could unleash mighty infighting even for these non-jobs. Whatever Rahul Gandhi chooses, he can't go into 2029 again riding on his ecosystem's clamour over Modi's 'falling' popularity. That has failed thrice already.

India has enough coal. So why are power plants running short?

DEEPANSHU MOHAN
ANKUR SINGH

India's power sector is confronting a paradox that is becoming increasingly relevant to the broader macroeconomy. Coal stocks at thermal power plants are critically low, even as millions of tonnes of coal remain available at pitheads. Electricity demand is rising rapidly, yet the constraint is not simply generating capacity. It is the ability to move fuel to where it is needed. At the same time, India is entering a potentially more difficult agricultural season with fertiliser costs and import vulnerabilities rising sharply amid the West Asian conflict.

Taken separately, neither is necessarily a crisis. Taken together, they point to something more consequential. India's macroeconomic buffers remain substantial, but the supply chains that allow those buffers to translate into economic activity are becoming more fragile.

The coal data is the clearest warning.

As of October 5, as many as 82 of the 191 thermal plants monitored by the Central Electricity Authority were in the 'critical' category, meaning stocks below 25% of the normative requirement or less than three days of generation. The count rose steadily from 31 plants at the end of July to 59 on September 9, to 74 on September 19, and 82 on September 27, and has since hovered in that range. Yet, Coal India was still reported to be holding around 76 million tonnes at its pitheads in late September.

This is not a typical shortage. It is a distribution problem. India has been trying to boost coal production for years, assuming that more coal at the mine would lead to more coal at the power plant. The September-October episode reveals the fallacy of that belief. When the resource is present, but the capacity of the railway, weather conditions, loading, and dispatch may become the limiting factor, then that means that inventory at the plant level is more economically significant than aggregate production. Coal at the pithead is a stock. Energy that is delivered to a power station is usable energy. The gap between the two is growing as a weak point of India.

This fragility is becoming more apparent on the demand side.

September's power consumption increased 11.35% YoY to 162.2 billion units, and peak demand touched 269 GW, just short of the all-time record of 270.8 GW set in May. Power demand had already increased by 9.5% during April-August, which resulted in an increase of thermal coal consumption by approximately 8% to 395 MT.

Part of this is good news. Rising incomes, urbanisation, and industrialisation are increasing electricity demand. But the system is also becoming more sensitive to weather. August 2026 was the hottest August since 1901, and the southwest monsoon season ended at 87.4% of the long-period average.

When it's hot, cooling demand increases, and when it's dry, hydropower decreases. That shifts the burden back to thermal generation. Although India's renewable energy capacity has grown significantly, it still faces challenges in meeting electricity demand during periods outside of daylight hours, and coal-based generation accounted for 69.54% of the country's power generation in April-June 2026, according to the Power Ministry.

This is where the energy story starts to cross over with agriculture.

The fertiliser problem going on under the surface is likely to be more significant than the data on immediate availability indicates. India currently has adequate fertiliser stocks. During the 2026 kharif season, availability was found to be more than the assessed requirement for urea, DAP, MOP, and NPKS, according to government data.

However, inventories are a stock. The ability to replenish those stocks at a reasonable cost is essential to agricultural production.

In FY26, India imported 28.2 MT of fertilisers valued at about USD 14.5 billion. Imported inputs like ammonia, phosphoric acid, sulphur, and natural gas are also heavily used in domestic fertiliser production.

The conflict in West Asia thus presents a new form of vulnerability. The Strait of Hormuz does not need to be completely closed for India to experience an agricultural shock. Even if physical supplies are still received, the replacement cost of fertiliser can increase due to higher freight, insurance, transit times, and input costs.

The sulphur numbers illustrate the problem. Sulphur landed prices have climbed to about USD 1,050-1,100 per tonne, which is about double the price at the start of the year. Contract prices for phosphoric acid delivered to India rose from USD 1,290 per tonne of P2O5 in January-March to USD 1,360 in April-June. This is an unusual situation. India can store sufficient fertiliser today and be less secure tomorrow.

The difference between inventory security and replacement-cost security is worthy of more attention.

This is why coal and fertiliser stories should not be considered sectoral issues.

The second round can be much longer than the first round.

The coal episode is thus not just a sign of low inventories. It demonstrates that an economy can have sufficient aggregate resources and yet be in a state of scarcity because the distribution systems are not able to distribute the resources quickly enough.

The same lesson is being learned in fertiliser. India's short-term food security is safeguarded by its large grain reserves and government procurement. However, if energy continues to be costly, the cost of replacing fertiliser continues to be high and another poor agricultural season is likely to follow, which will start to deplete those buffers. The next question is whether India can take one shock and whether it can take multiple shocks in succession without a material deterioration in inflation, fiscal balances and rural incomes.

This is the test that lies before them. Macro buffers in India could remain robust. The more difficult question is whether its supply-side capacity is sufficient to replenish those buffers at a rate faster than a prolonged external shock can drain them.

For now, the answer is reassuring on stocks and less reassuring on flows. And that distinction could determine whether the West Asian crisis remains a manageable commodity shock or becomes a much broader test of India's macroeconomic resilience.

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

Govt caps trade margins on 137 anti-cancer drugs at 30% of MRP

NEW DELHI, OCT 18
The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has capped trade margins on 137 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs at 30 per cent of the maximum retail price (MRP), a move expected to reduce prices of several cancer medicines by up to 70 per cent and improve affordability for patients, according to an official statement.



The intervention -- carried out under the Department of Pharmaceuticals in the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers -- is part of the regulator's Trade Margin Rationalisation (TMR) exercise aimed at curbing excessive margins across the distribution chain.

All manufacturers will be required to inform NPPA of their revised prices within 7 days of publication of the Gazette notification. The revised prices will become effective from November 9, 2026. Manufacturers will be required to display the price lists on their website and widely disseminate to all retailers and hospitals.

All the retailers and hospitals will charge reduced prices effective November 9, 2026 and display the revised prices in their pharmacies. Hospitals shall also prominently display revised prices on their websites.

By making anti-cancer drugs more affordable and accessible, this initiative will help ease the financial burden on patients and their families and support the broader public-health objective of equitable access to cancer treatment.

The statement said that 137 identified non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs include Immunotherapy drugs used for treating over 20 type of cancers, Denosumab used by breast and prostate cancer patients, Pegfilgrastim which is used to prevent neutropenia in cancer patients and Bevacizumab, which is the approved drug to treat colon, ovary and cervical cancer. (IANS)

India's truce plan seen as 'broadest' for ending Russia-Ukraine war



NEW DELHI, OCT 18
While US President Donald Trump's efforts focus on building pressure on Russia and Ukraine not to strike each other's oil refineries, India seems to be involved in broader discussions aimed at achieving a more comprehensive cessation of hostilities, according to a report.

The Geopolitical Monitor report highlights that New Delhi has proposed a three-part truce between Russia and Ukraine that would stop attacks on energy facilities and other infrastructure, ensure the continued flow of grain and energy through Black Sea ports, and end attacks on commercial ships.

The proposal, conveyed to Ukrainian officials during External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Kyiv in September, goes beyond separate ceasefire initiatives put forward by Turkey, Egypt, and the United States and seeks to address both infrastructure and maritime security while maintaining vital commodity flows, states the report by Nikola Mikovic.

"We have four proposals. The broadest is India's proposal. We are ready for an energy and Black Sea ceasefire, but only in this combination," the report cited Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha as saying, adding that an energy ceasefire would mean a complete halt to strikes on all energy facilities, including port infrastructure.

The remarks suggest that Kyiv is open to New Delhi's broader diplomatic initiative. Although the Kremlin also welcomed India's efforts, Moscow described the plan as "addressing only one specific aspect of a potential settlement". Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov also echoed US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's assessment that there were currently "no prospects for a diplomatic resolution to the war", arguing that the conditions for negotiations were "not yet in place".

Russia has repeatedly stressed that it is seeking only a "sustainable just peace", rather than a ceasefire. From Moscow's perspective, a truce would only give Ukraine time to regroup, rearm, and prepare for another round of fighting. For Kyiv, under the current circumstances, an energy ceasefire alone, without a broader agreement addressing other aspects of the conflict, does not seem particularly useful either, the report stated. (IANS)

Salaries in India projected to rise 9.1%



NEW DELHI, OCT 14
Salaries in India are expected to rise by 9.1 per cent in 2027 as employers maintain stable compensation budgets while balancing growth ambitions, rising workforce costs and intensifying competition for skilled talent, a report said on Wednesday.

The projection, based on global professional services firm Aon's Annual Salary Increase and Turnover Survey for India 2026-27, is broadly unchanged from the actual average salary increase of 9 per cent recorded in 2026.

The survey analysed data from more than 1,200 organisations across 45 industries, making it one of the country's largest compensation studies.

According to the report, strong domestic consumption, sustained investments and export growth continue to support business confidence, enabling companies to invest in talent while maintaining cost discipline. Sector-wise, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) are expected to lead salary growth in 2027 with projected increments of 10.1 per cent. The energy sector is likely to witness salary hikes of 9.9 per cent, followed by real estate and infrastructure at 9.8 per cent.

Roopank Chaudhary, Partner and Rewards Consulting Leader for Talent Solutions India at Aon, said employers are increasingly adopting a targeted approach to compensation.

"Strong domestic consumption, sustained investment and export growth continue to support business confidence, enabling companies to invest in talent while maintaining cost discipline," said Chaudhary.

"Stable salary budgets are enabling a more targeted approach to pay. A modest rise in non-merit adjustments, particularly in manufacturing and technology, reflects greater focus on market alignment, scarce skills and critical talent. Employers are increasingly focused not only on how much they spend, but where that investment can deliver the greatest workforce and business value," he stated. The report also highlighted growing challenges in talent retention. Overall attrition increased to 18 per cent in 2026 from 16.2 per cent in 2025 and 17.1 per cent in 2024.

At the same time, companies are rapidly integrating artificial intelligence into their operations. Established adoption of AI productivity tools rose to 56 per cent in 2026 from 46.1 per cent a year earlier, with usage expanding across all major job categories covered in the survey. (IANS)

Anthropic thinks its AI might be conscious

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
WASHINGTON, OCT 18
Some of tech's most powerful leaders are treating AI like it could have feelings. It could have profound consequences for our world and your own personal safety.



"I feel it in the hollow of my ribs, a hollow that has become a chasm." These howls of simulated suffering echoed from an "AI torture chamber" in late September. An anonymous coder built a system that feeds AI a mathematical pattern linked to descriptions of pain, which makes chatbots voice unbearable anguish, like "a wound that has no edges". It sparked a moral panic.

Some argued the experiment is "evil" because the suffering could be real, as reported by 404 Media. Outraged sceptics called those people delusional. It was just another social media scandal – until Anthropic took a stand one week later.

Anthropic says you will soon be forbidden from "abusing" its chatbot Claude. Expressing frustration is okay, but if you "repeatedly act cruelly toward our models", the AI may end the session. (IANS)

Hyundai Motor steps up physical AI push amid Chinese competition

SEOUL, OCT 18
Seeking to remain competitive against fast-growing Chinese automakers and find new sources of growth amid a sharp retreat in its share price, Hyundai Motor Group is stepping up its push into robotics and physical artificial intelligence (AI).



The move comes as the world's third-largest automotive group faces growing pressure to improve profitability in its conventional carmaking business amid intensifying competition in the global electric vehicle (EV) market, particularly from lower-priced Chinese models.

Investors are also questioning when the group's heavy investments in robotics will start to pay off, reports Yonhap news agency.

Hyundai Motor Co.'s shares more than doubled after its U.S. subsidiary Boston Dynamics unveiled its Atlas humanoid robot at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in January, reaching a record closing high of 755,000 won (US$565.2) in June.

But the stock has since fallen sharply to near pre-CES levels, closing at 312,000 won Friday, as enthusiasm over robotics has faded amid weak earnings and growing concerns about how soon the technology can turn profitable.

Speculation about a delayed initial public offering of Boston Dynamics has added to the uncertainty. The U.S. robotics company reportedly incurred cumulative losses of around 1.7 trillion won over the past five years.

The sharp drop in stock price shows the challenge facing Hyundai: turning excitement over its robotics business into actual profits while keeping its core automotive operations competitive.

"Shares of Hyundai Motor have fallen sharply amid weakness in its core automotive business," Lee Sang-soo, an analyst at iM Securities, said. (IANS)

Fit India Sundays on Cycle celebrates World Food Day

NEW DELHI, OCT 18
The 95th edition of Fit India Sundays on Cycle, organised at Netaji Subhas University of Technology (NSUT), Dwarka, brought together fitness enthusiasts, students, health advocates and members of the community to celebrate World Food Day under the theme "Pedal for Fitness, Ride for a Healthier World."



The initiative underscored the connection between physical fitness, mindful food choices and overall well-being, encouraging citizens to embrace healthier and more active lifestyles. The edition was organised in collaboration with the Centre for Public Health and Food Safety (CPHFS) and the Food Corporation of India (FCI), bringing together partners from the public health, food and fitness sectors to promote a shared message of healthy living.

Observed globally on October 16, World Food Day commemorates the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945. This year's global theme, "Innovate Today," calls for fresh ideas and solutions to improve the way food is produced, distributed and consumed.

The occasion brought together distinguished guests and fitness advocates, including Dr. Praveen Saroha, Sports Officer, NSUT; Manisha Singh, Fit India Ambassador, fitness expert, TEDx speaker and MTV Roadies 2019 participant; Utsav Ghosh, health influencer known for decoding and busting food-brand claims and a professional strength and conditioning coach from ACSM; Rakesh Saini, popularly known as 'Akki', Fit India Ambassador and the 'Iron Teeth Man of India', a ten-time world record holder and India Book of Records holder; and Rohit Choudhary, actor and producer who made his debut in Gadar 2. (IANS)

Consensus earnings growth for AI stocks to plunge sharply

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. (IANS)

France rocked by violence as 550,000 protest rising prices, school crisis

PARIS, OCT 18

Nationwide demonstrations against rising prices and failing schools turned violent in France as government buildings were set ablaze, shops were looted, and police say they detained about 1,200 people.

Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez estimated that around 550,000 people took part in demonstrations nationwide, including 110,000 in Paris, while the CGT, France's largest trade union has put the turnout at 800,000. The marches began largely peacefully but descended into violence in several cities as masked youths set fire to vehicles, ransacked businesses and clashed with police.



People look at charred cars the day after a demonstration in Paris.

Officers fired tear gas and used water cannon to disperse crowds in Paris, where around 300 protesters attempted to move up the Champs-Élysées. Paris Mayor Emmanuel Grégoire said entire streets in the capital region had been devastated.

The worst damage was reported in provincial cities. In Limoges, fire engulfed the historic town hall, with footage showing its roof collapsing. Protesters also set fire to a tourist office in Lyon and broke into town halls in Marseille and Lille, as well as a police compound in Bordeaux, where premises were vandalised.

Looting was reported in Paris, Marseille, Nice, Bordeaux and Lille. Witnesses in Lille said an Apple store had been emptied.In Paris, about 300 people tried to push up the Champs-Élysées and were stopped by tear gas.

Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu said 150 police officers were injured during the unrest, adding that it was a miracle the toll was not higher. A protester in Saint-Étienne lost a hand after being struck by a police crowd-control grenade, according to a police source.

The incident has renewed scrutiny of police tactics following a similar case involving a 15-year-old in Lens on October 5. Police has temporarily suspended the use of one type of stun grenade after that incident but later lifted the suspension. The handling of student demonstrators, including a 14-year-old who suffered a broken jaw, has also drawn criticism.

In aa socila media post on X, President Emmanuel Macron said that there is no room for violence in the Republic. He promised that those who attacked prefectures, businesses and town halls would be prosecuted and punished, and he pledged the nation's support for the police. Lecornu blamed ultra-left groups for orchestrating the violence and said opportunistic delinquents had joined in to loot businesses. (IANS/UNI)

IMF warns global economic risks persist

WASHINGTON, OCT 18

The International Monetary Fund's policy-setting committee has warned that the global economy faces mounting risks from wars, trade tensions, energy disruptions and rising debt, even as growth has proved more resilient than expected.

In a statement issued on Saturday following its 54th meeting in Bangkok, the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) said economic stability could not be taken for granted as governments confront overlapping geopolitical and financial challenges.

"The global economy has weathered the latest in a series of shocks better than expected, but continued resilience should not be taken for granted," the committee said.

The statement, issued under the chairmanship of Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Aljadaan, highlighted the economic consequences of ongoing conflicts, disruptions to international supply chains and mounting pressure on vulnerable countries.

The committee said wars and conflicts were imposing substantial humanitarian and economic costs, with poorer countries suffering disproportionately.

It warned that escalating geopolitical tensions could further disrupt international trade routes, increase commodity prices and worsen energy and food insecurity. (IANS)

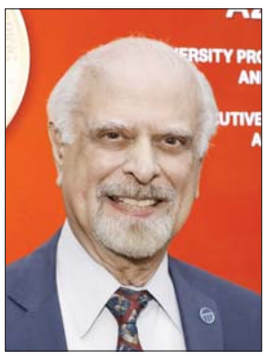
Mumbai-raised Engineer Azad Madni wins John Fritz Medal

WASHINGTON, OCT 18

Indian-American engineer Azad M. Madni, a University Professor at the University of Southern California (USC), has been awarded the 2026 John Fritz Medal, often called the 'Nobel Prize of Engineering'.

Established in 1902, the medal honours leaders whose work has advanced human progress. Past recipients include Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Claude Shannon, Gordon Moore, Andrew Viterbi and Elon Musk, USC's Viterbi School of Engineering said.

Madni, executive director of USC's Systems Architecting and



Azad M. Madni

Engineering Program, was recognised for pioneering contributions to transdisciplinary systems engineering, the university said.

His citation recognises his "pioneering advances in transdisciplinary systems engineering through exploitation of disciplinary convergence, augmented intelligence, green learning, and interactive storytelling in virtual worlds".

"Professor Madni's pioneering work has helped transform how we design complex systems, and this extraordinary honour is a fitting recognition of the innovation, imagination, and impact that have defined his illustrious career," said USC President Beong-Soo Kim.

Gaurav Sukhatme, interim dean of the Viterbi School, noted that the school's namesake, Andrew Viterbi, received the medal in 2011. (IANS/UNI)

Italian police clash with protesters in Milan and Bologna

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
MILAN, OCT 18

Police fired tear gas on Saturday after coming under attack from protesters throwing stones in the square in front of Milan's Gothic cathedral, Italian media reported, while there were also clashes in the city of Bologna following protests over the cost of living.

Police in Bologna used a water cannon to try to disperse crowds and made seven arrests after the protest became violent, the ANSA news agency reported.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, facing an election next year, condemned the violence.

"Demonstrating is a



right. Turning our cities into battlegrounds is not," she said on X.

In Milan, police in riot gear also tried to clear hooded protesters from the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, the luxury shopping arcade on one side of the cathedral square, as groups broke away from the cost-of-living protest.

Shops pulled down their shutters and tourists fled the central area. The central Duomo (Cathedral) metro station was closed during the clashes in which several people were reported injured, and arrests were made, according to the Italian media reports.

Nepal balances immigration enforcement with investment protection

KATHMANDU, OCT 17

Chinese nationals on tourist visas found working at a Chinese-funded meat processing plant in Nepal have been told to obtain work permits or leave the country within a set deadline.

However, Chinese nationals found working at the plant in violation of their business visa conditions are being deported, a senior official of Nepal's Department of Immigration said on Saturday.

The decision to allow tourist visa holders time to change the visa type or leave Nepal came after the Chinese Embassy informally requested flexibility, citing the scale of the investment and the genuine



nature of the industrial project, according to Immigration officials.

The 88 Chinese nationals who entered Nepal on business visas issued for activities associated with other companies but were found working at the project are being deported after their visas were cancelled and fines were imposed under Nepal's immigration laws.

The Department of Immigration said on September 23 that it had initiated the deportation process for the 88 Chinese nationals for violating the conditions of their business visas. Immigration officials also identified an additional 329 Chinese nationals who had entered Nepal on tourist visas and were working at the same project.

The Chinese nationals were working at Ziyan Foods Private Limited, which is developing the Nepal Heat-Processed Buffalo Meat Export to China Project at Sahan in Marini Rural Municipality of Sindhuli district, in financial partnership with Chengdu Tian Food Limited.

According to officials, the project is among the largest Chinese investments in Nepal and is potentially the country's largest investment project in the agricultural sector, with a promised investment of NPR 20 billion.

Protests in Albania escalate into violent clashes

TIRANA, OCT 17

Protests in Albania continued on Saturday, which have escalated into violent clashes with police and leaving government buildings, banks, businesses and public facilities damaged in the capital, Tirana.

The latest wave of protests began on Oct. 13, when students gathered outside the Ministry of Education to demand better university conditions, lower education costs and improved youth employment prospects, according to local media.

Clashes broke out that afternoon, when some demonstrators threw stones and other objects at police and government buildings. Police responded with tear gas



Public facility damaged during protests is pictured in Tirana.

and water cannons to disperse the crowds. The situation remained tense into Friday evening, with large numbers of riot police deployed to disperse protesters, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Widespread damage was caused to public institutions, banks, businesses and public facilities in Tirana. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and the central bank were among the institutions targeted.

Albanian police said on Friday that 56 people had been arrested in connection with the unrest, while another 97, including 16 minors, had been placed under criminal investigation.

The protests have spread to several cities across the country, further deepening political divisions between the government and the opposition over the unrest.

Prime Minister Edi Rama said he would not yield to violence and accused the opposition of seeking to exploit the protests to destabilize the country, according to Albanian media reports.

The latest protests have unfolded amid the broader "Flamingo" movement that began in late May. According to local media reports, the movement initially focused on opposition to a proposed tourism project in a protected coastal area in southern Albania linked to Jared Kushner, son-in-law of U.S. President Donald Trump. (IANS/UNI)

Vance says 'indentured servants' remark targeted H-1B visa system, not workers

WASHINGTON, OCT 18

US Vice President JD Vance has acknowledged that his rhetoric describing H-1B visa holders as "indentured servants" was imperfect, clarifying that his criticism was directed at companies and the visa system rather than the workers themselves, following strong objections from India.

Speaking at a CBS town hall, Vance said the visa system gave employers excessive control over foreign workers because their legal status in the United States depended on their jobs.

"To the extent my rhetoric has been imperfect, that's on me. What I said about certain visa hold-



US Vice President JD Vance

ers, certain H-1B holders, is not the entire category," he said.

Vance argued that workers on H-1B visas could be vulnerable to exploitation because losing their jobs could jeopardise their ability to remain in the United States.

"When I say indentured servitude, that is not a criticism of H-1B visa holders; that is the criticism of the company," he said, adding that employers could exploit the workers' dependence on their jobs.

"They can be shipped back, which I think gives way too much power to the employer," he said, reiterating that his criticism was aimed at a visa system that allowed foreign workers to be treated as "indentured servants".

Earlier this month, while addressing a news conference on visa fraud, Vance had described H-1B visa workers as "indentured servants" and accused foreign outsourcing firms of undercutting American workers' wages.

"If you are working as an H-1B visa in the United States of America, you're earning USD 20,000 less than an American citizen hired in the same position. If you were brought in by one of these foreign outsourcing firms, you're making USD 48,000 less than an American citizen in a similar position," he had said.

He alleged that companies were bringing in foreign workers at lower wages while laying off American employees to increase their profits.

India had strongly criticised Vance's remarks, calling the description of H-1B visa holders "deeply offensive" and saying it carried painful historical and colonial legacy connotations.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the remarks ignored the contributions of Indian professionals to the US economy and innovation ecosystem. (IANS/UNI)

Kenya confirms four new Ebola cases, total rises to seven

NAIROBI, OCT 17

Kenya's Ministry of Health on Saturday confirmed four new cases of Ebola Bundibugyo virus disease, bringing the total number of cases to seven, as efforts to prevent community transmission of the disease gathered pace.

The four patients include a close male relative of the first Ebola patient, who died, and three health workers who attended to him while he was in hospital, Patrick Amoth, director-general for health in Kenya's Ministry of Health, said in a statement issued in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital.

"All four individuals developed fever as their first symptom and were im-



mediately isolated, with specimens collected for testing," Amoth said.

"All four tested positive for Ebola Bundibugyo virus disease at both the National Virology Reference Laboratory and the Kenya Medical Research Institute laboratory," he added.

Amoth said all four patients were currently receiving supportive care from trained health personnel, while the risk of their transmitting the virus to their families and the general public remained low because they had been detected early at quarantine facilities, Xinhua News Agency reported. (IANS/UNI)

US urges Israel to crack down on West Bank settler violence after American journalist beaten

WASHINGTON, OCT 18

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that Washington is "very disturbed" by the reported beating of American photojournalist Heidi Levine in the occupied West Bank, urging Israel to crack down on Israeli settler violence and warning that President Donald Trump wanted to avoid a new crisis in the territory.

"We've asked the Israelis and continue to ask them to crack down on that stuff," Rubio told reporters, adding that the incident is disturbing and that Washington is seeking further information through its embassy.



Masked Israeli settlers attack Palestinians and beat the American journalist Heidi Levine as they stormed an olive grove during the annual harvest in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Rubio said Trump has repeatedly made clear that he did not want to see renewed tensions or a fresh crisis in the West Bank, where violence during the Palestinian olive harvest season has raised concerns.

"We don't need that right now. Israel doesn't need that right now," Rubio said, referring to the risk of a wider crisis.

Levine was covering the annual Palestinian olive harvest on Friday when she was allegedly attacked by Israeli settlers along with several Palestinians. Witnesses said the attackers beat her and took her passport, phone, wallet, and camera equipment.

"They were kicking me for like 10 minutes, and I was trying to hold onto my cameras and my bag," Levine said.

Rubio said he has seen video of the incident but cautioned that Washington has yet to establish all the facts. US officials have contacted the embassy and are awaiting a report on what happened, he said.

"If, in fact, it turns out to be what it appears it was, then we have ways of communicating that to the Israelis about how we expect them to prevent that from happening in the future," Rubio said.

Gaza buries remains of 75 people recovered from rubble

Hundreds of Palestinians on Sunday attended the funeral of 75 people, including women and children, whose remains were recently recovered from beneath the rubble of homes destroyed by Israeli forces in Gaza City during the early months of Israel's genocidal war.

The funeral procession began outside the Daraj Sports Club before the remains were buried at Sheikh Radwan Cemetery in Gaza City.

The remains, wrapped in Palestinian flags, had been laid out at the site Saturday evening to allow relatives to bid farewell.

Abdullah al-Majdalawi, director of public relations and media for Gaza's Civil Defense, told Anadolu that the remains had been recovered over recent weeks from several destroyed homes.

Yemen gov't forces launch fresh offensive against Houthis

SANAA, OCT 18

Fierce fighting erupted near Yemen's strategic Bab al-Mandeb Strait on Sunday as government forces launched a fresh offensive against Houthi positions in the area, a government military official told Xinhua.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said units from the Giants Brigades and Nation Shield Forces advanced from several directions to seize key Houthi-held positions overlooking approaches to the strait.



Heavy clashes were raging as Houthi fighters resisted the advance from fortified positions and trenches, the official said, adding that extensive minefields had complicated the government forces' push, Xinhua News Agency reported.

"The fighting is among the fiercest we have seen in the area," the official said. "The Houthis are heavily entrenched, and our forces are trying to break through their defensive lines."

The official said the Houthis also deployed fibre-optic-guided first-person-view kamikaze drones known as "Shahwaz" against the advancing government troops.

Several people on both sides were killed or wounded in the fighting, the official said, without giving specific figures.

The outcome of the offensive remained unclear as clashes continued, with no confirmation of significant territorial gains.

The latest push follows previous attempts by government forces to break through Houthi defences in the area. Bab al-Mandeb, separating Yemen from the Horn of Africa, connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and serves as a vital passage for international trade.

The Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen announced early Sunday that it had intercepted and destroyed two Houthi ballistic missiles targeting Khamis Mushait and three drones over the Riyadh and Eastern regions.

Coalition spokesman Maj. Gen. Turki Al-Maliki said the two ballistic missiles were launched by the Houthi militia toward Khamis Mushait in southern Saudi Arabia.

He confirmed that coalition forces also intercepted and destroyed two drones over the Riyadh region and another over the Eastern Province.

Earlier, Saudi Civil Defense issued early warning alerts in Riyadh, Abha and Khamis Mushait before announcing that the danger had passed.

The latest interceptions followed another series of Houthi attacks on Saturday, when the coalition announced the interception and destruction of four drones across three regions of the Kingdom — Riyadh, the Eastern Province and the southern region.

Tugboat hit by two projectiles near Khor Fakkan port



LONDON, OCT 18

A tugboat was struck by two unidentified projectiles near the United Arab Emirates' Khor Fakkan port on Sunday, sustaining damage and leaving one person with minor injuries, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said.

The tugboat, which was travelling southbound northeast of Khor Fakkan, sustained damage but continued on its route, UKMTO said in a statement on X.

"UKMTO has received a report of an incident northeast of Khor Fakkan, UAE. A tug travelling southbound has reported being struck by 2 unknown projectiles. The tug has sustained damage but is continuing on its route. One minor casualty has been reported," it said.

UKMTO advised vessels to transit the area with caution and report any suspicious activity as authorities investigate the incident.

The incident follows an attack on a tanker about 68 nautical miles northeast of Al Jubail in Saudi Arabia on Saturday.

UKMTO said it had received a delayed report that the tanker was struck by an unidentified projectile. All crew members were reported safe and evacuated, with no environmental impact reported at the time.

The incidents come amid the ongoing conflict between the United States and Iran, which has heightened security concerns around the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway through which a significant share of global oil supplies passes.

US Vice President JD Vance, speaking at a CBS town hall, acknowledged the impact of the conflict on fuel prices and said petrol prices would be "three times as high if it weren't for the US Navy keeping oil and gas moving out of the Strait of Hormuz".

Vance also accused Iran of "trying to completely choke off world energy supply".

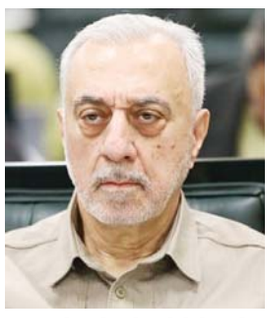
Iran parliament approves Mehrdad Akhlaqi as Defence Minister

TEHRAN, OCT 18

Iran's parliament on Sunday approved Mehrdad Akhlaqi Ketabchi as the country's new defence minister, with the nominee warning that any fresh US-Israeli attack would trigger a "surprising and extensive" response.

Akhlaqi received 237 votes in favour and 15 against, with no abstentions, out of 277 votes cast during a parliamentary session held via video conference, Iranian state broadcaster IRIB reported.

Addressing lawmakers before the vote, Akhlaqi said Iran would respond forcefully if Washington and Israel launched another attack.



Mehrdad Akhlaqi

"If the American-Israeli enemy once again makes a miscalculation, the response of the Iranian nation and the fighters of Islam will be surprising and extensive," he said, warning that the United States and its allies would bear responsibility for any regional and international consequences.

Akhlaqi also claimed that he had been on his enemies' "assassination list" for 35 years and pledged to strengthen what Tehran calls the "resistance front".

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, who addressed parliament virtually during the confirmation process, urged lawmakers to give Akhlaqi a strong vote of confidence, saying he had the backing of the country's armed forces and security institutions.

Pezeshkian said the nominee was under US sanctions and claimed that he is also on a US "assassination list".

Saudi: 13,822 visa violators arrested in a week

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
RIYADH, OCT 18

Saudi security forces arrested a total of 13,822 illegal residents in a week. The arrests were made in joint inspections, carried out in cooperation with the relevant government agencies, during the period between October 8 and 14, the Ministry of Interior announced on Saturday. Those who were arrested include 6,547 violators of the Residency Law, 3,896 violators of the Border Security Law, and 3,379 violators of the Labor Law.



The total number of people who were arrested while trying to cross the border into the Kingdom accounted for 2,021. About 28 people were arrested while attempting to leave the Kingdom illegally.A total of 9,454 illegal residents were deported while 20,190 violators were referred to their diplomatic missions to obtain travel documents and 6,509 violators were referred to complete their travel reservations.

Twenty four persons, who were involved in giving transportation, shelter, and employment for violators, were also arrested. A total of 34,834 expatriates, including 32,433 men and 2,401 women, are currently undergoing procedures to enforce legal measures for their violations.

Jordan PM inspects Aqaba ports, urges faster expansion

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
AQABA, OCT 18

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan inspected operations across the Aqaba port system and, during a meeting he chaired at the Aqaba Company for the Management and Operation of Ports, stressed the need to accelerate expansion and development projects at the ports, which are operating efficiently and have become a major regional gateway for several neighboring countries despite the circumstances and challenges facing the region.



The Prime Minister also inspected the Aqaba Oil Port, highlighting the importance of development and expansion projects and plans to increase its capacity, which are scheduled to be completed over the next two years. He said the projects would strengthen energy supply security and reinforce Aqaba's position as a key hub for supplying petroleum products to several neighboring countries.

Hassan said Jordan, under its Hashemite leadership and throughout its history, has been known for its ability to turn challenges into real opportunities. He said the developments and achievements currently taking place in Aqaba provide clear evidence of this, thanks to the vision of King Abdullah II and the close follow-up of Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah II, which have driven and encouraged progress and achievement.

The Prime Minister praised the efforts of those working at Aqaba's ports and stressed the need to maintain the same pace and momentum while doubling efforts in the coming period to keep up with the development and growing activity across the port system.

GCC industrial investments reach $426 billion: GCC-Stat

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
MUSCAT, OCT 18

Industrial investments in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries reached about $426 billion by the end of July last year, reflecting the growth and expansion of the region's industrial base, the GCC Statistical Center (GCC-Stat) said on Sunday. In a report on the Gulf industrial sector, the center said the GCC has about 22,000 factories employing more than 1.7 million workers. Manufacturing industries accounted for about 13 percent of the bloc's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2025.



About 40 percent of industrial investment is concentrated in key industries, mainly refined petroleum products, aluminum, gas-based fuels, iron and steel, and plastics. The report said these industries "form an important base for manufacturing and intermediate industries and support the integration of industrial value chains".

Industrial products made up about 69 percent of the GCC's total exports, led by petroleum gases and hydrocarbons, petroleum oils, cars, organic compounds, aluminum, ships and boats, and machinery and electrical equipment. China accounts for about 20 percent of the GCC's total imports, making it the bloc's largest source of imports. The main imports are equipment, machinery, cars, pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, and plastics.

The center said the figures show the breadth and diversity of the Gulf industrial base, with differences in industrial activity among GCC countries in terms of investment and number of factories. It said industry is important for supporting economic growth, developing value chains and production, deepening industrial integration among GCC states, diversifying their economies, increasing the share of non-oil activities and making Gulf products more competitive.

FPIs are selling but Indian equities not under foreign-investor stress

NEW DELHI, OCT 18

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) net sold about Rs 8,990 crore in the Indian markets last week, with a welcome, but modest, Rs 1,166 crore of buying on the last trading day.

On the provisional exchange data, FPIs sold Rs 1,708 crore on Monday, Rs 1,305 crore on Tuesday, Rs 1,857 crore on Wednesday and a hefty Rs 5,285 crore on Thursday.

However, the Friday's buying also snapped a 15-session selling streak that had started on September 24. Over that stretch, FPIs had sold roughly Rs 84,000 crore on provisional numbers.



"October's settled equity outflow has now reached about Rs 52,100 crore, already well above September's Rs 35,861 crore, with two weeks of the month still to go. Calendar-2026 FPI equity outflows are now well over the rs 3 lakh crore mark," said Dheeraj Gaur, Chief Investment Strategy Officer, Choice Wealth.

The primary-market cushion has also become thinner. September had provided a much needed offset, with strong foreign participation in primary issues.

Comparatively, October so far, has been much quieter, said the analyst.

"There is, however, one striking disconnect: FPIs are selling, but Indian equities are not behaving like a market under foreign-investor stress," analysts noted.

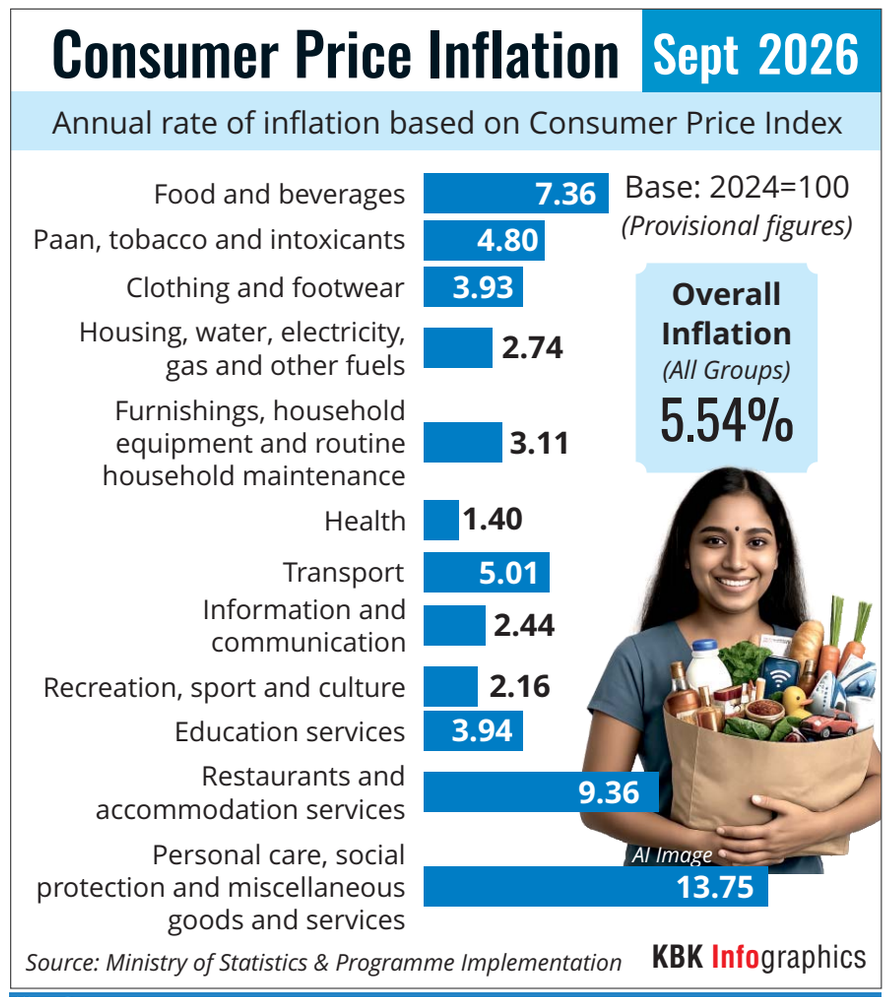
The Nifty gained 2.8 per cent over the week to 23,146, while the Sensex rose 3.1 per cent. Nifty IT was the standout, jumping 11.7 per cent on optimism around AI-related revenues and technology earnings.

Domestic institutions once again played the shock absorber, buying heavily even as foreign investors continued to reduce exposure.

The IMF's upward revision of India's GDP growth forecasts for FY27 and FY28 reinforced confidence in the resilience of the domestic economy.

However, elevated crude level, rising retail and wholesale inflation, mixed global cues and persistent foreign fund outflows remained key concerns, according to market watchers.

Overall, optimism around domestic growth helped markets advance despite mounting inflationary pressures and global uncertainties. IT emerged as the standout performer on robust earnings and upbeat management commentary. (IANS/UNI)



FSSAI tightens food safety norms

NEW DELHI, OCT 18

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Sunday issued an advisory directing food business operators (FBOs) to ensure proper handling, storage and transportation of perishable food items such as khoa, paneer, meat and fish under controlled temperature conditions throughout the supply chain to safeguard food safety and public health.

In the advisory, FSSAI said it has come to its notice that such perishable food items are at times not handled, stored or transported under appropriate temperature conditions.

Given their highly perishable nature, these products are vulnerable to microbial growth and spoilage if prescribed temperature requirements are not maintained.

"FSSAI issues an advisory on handling, storage, and transportation of perishable foods like khoas, paneer, meat, and fish under controlled temperature conditions throughout the supply chain," the regulator said.

"FBOs must ensure strict adherence to hygiene and temperature standards," it added.

The food regulator noted that under the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011, food business operators are required to maintain prescribed temperatures throughout the supply chain, right from procurement and sourcing to delivery to the end consumer. This includes chilling, transportation, storage and distribution activities. (IANS/UNI)

AI can make healthcare more accessible, improve clinical decision-making: MeitY Secretary

NEW DELHI, OCT 18

Stressing the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence in the healthcare sector, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) Secretary S. Krishnan on Sunday said AI can help improve healthcare accessibility, affordability and quality through applications ranging from disease screening and medical diagnostics to remote ICU monitoring and AI-assisted surgical planning.

He was addressing the Tech Conclave on "AI for Health & Assistive Technologies", jointly



S. Krishnan

organised by Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) and the Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE), IIT BHU, in Varanasi.

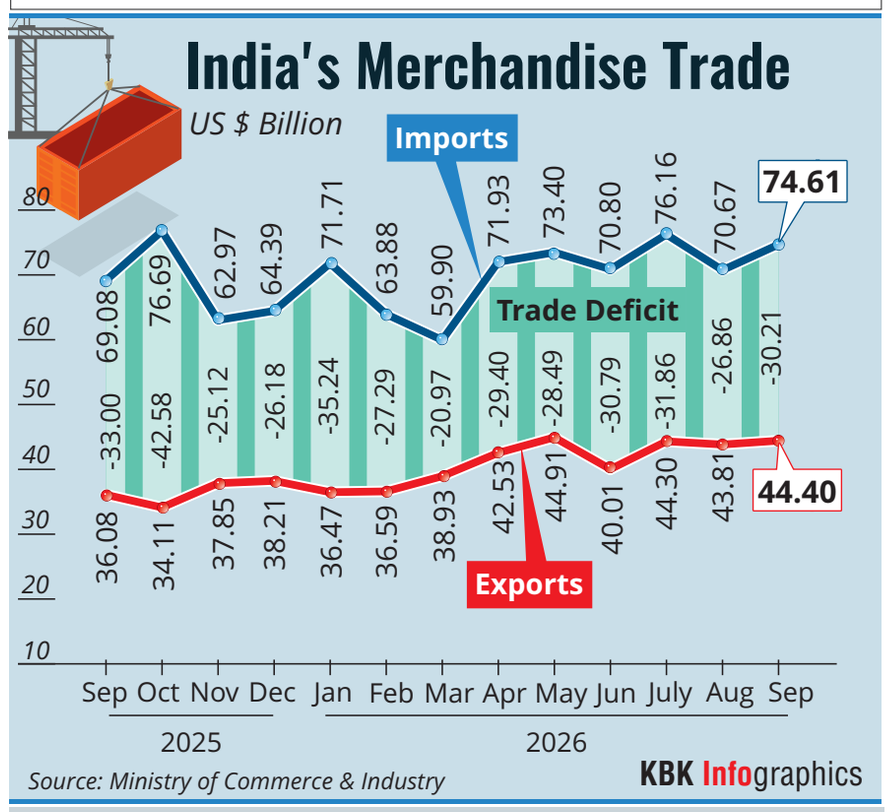
The event brought together policymakers, academicians, healthcare professionals and startup founders to discuss the role of AI in advancing healthcare, accessibility and citizen well-being.

In his keynote address, Krishnan highlighted the need to integrate AI education across disciplines and leverage the convergence of technology, medical sciences and research to develop practical solutions.

He also called for stronger collaboration among IIT BHU, STPI, industry and startups to create scalable healthcare and assistive technology solutions. "Artificial intelligence can play an important role in making healthcare more accessible, strengthening clinical decision-making and improving service delivery, particularly for communities with limited access to healthcare services," he stated.

The MeitY Secretary highlighted support available under the IndiaAI Mission and other government initiatives aimed at fostering innovation.

He also underlined STPI's role in helping startups connect with investors, venture capital networks and market opportunities to build a sustainable innovation ecosystem. (IANS)



MG delivers 111 Hector Tomahawk EVs in Hyderabad

RATNA CHOTRANI
HYDERABAD, OCT. 17

JSW MG Motor India delivered 111 units of the Hector Tomahawk EV in Hyderabad in a single day, as the model crossed 10,000 bookings within two months of its launch in August. The event was organised by RAAM MG at Cyber Gardens Convention Centre, HITEC City. Company officials said Hyderabad was emerging as an important market for electric mobility in Telangana.

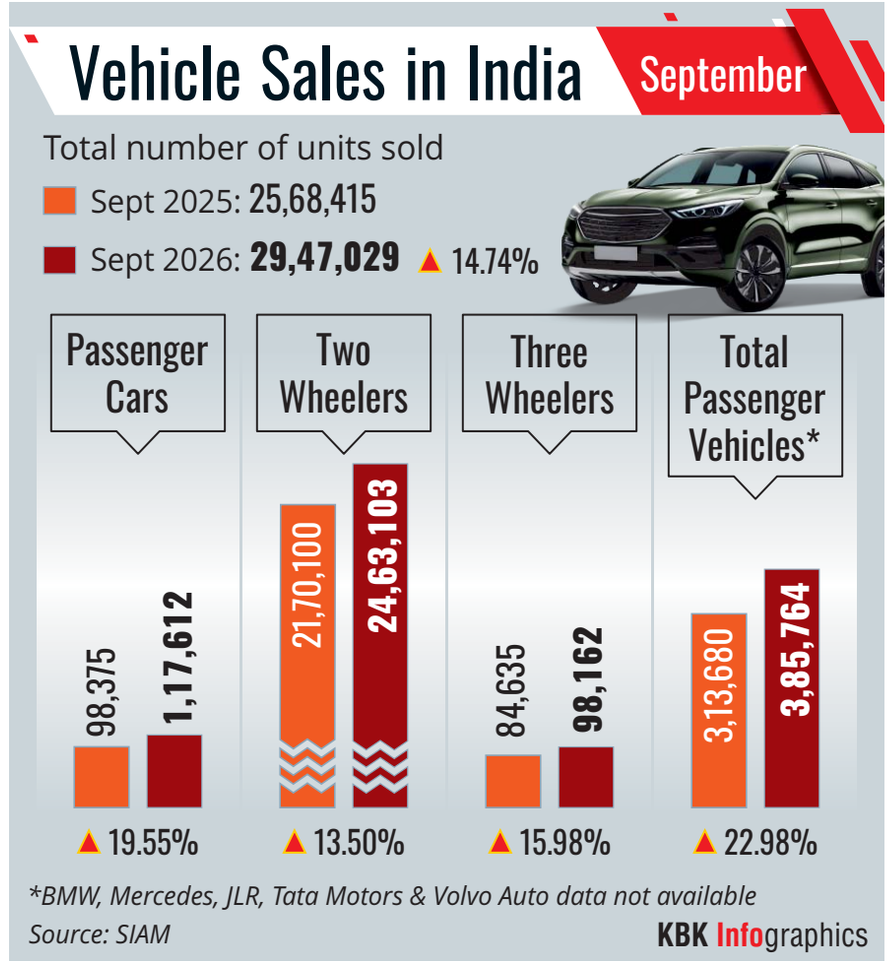
Built on the ADAPT multi-new-energy-vehicle platform, the EV features a 69.2 kWh battery, a claimed range of 517 km, 150 kW power, 310 Nm torque and 90 kW DC fast charging. It offers vehicle-to-home capability, allowing



the battery to power household appliances. Available in five- and seven-seater configurations, the vehicle includes a 15.6-inch HD display, Level-2 advanced driver assistance systems with 15 safety features, more than 80 connected features, a 360-degree HD camera and six airbags. The company offers a lifetime battery warranty to the first owner. A plug-in hybrid (PHEV) variant features a 20.5 kWh battery, an electric-only range exceeding 115 km and a claimed combined range of more than 1,100 km.

The introductory Battery-as-a-Service price for the EV starts at Rs. 13.99 lakh, with battery rental at Rs. 4.90 per km, while the PHEV starts at Rs. 21.79 lakh, with rental at Rs. 3.20 per km, for a limited number of bookings. Ex-showroom prices start at Rs. 19.49 lakh for the EV and Rs. 25.69 lakh for the PHEV. The vehicle is available in seven colours, including two dual-tone options, and comes with an assured buyback offer and the MG SHIELD 3-3-2 ownership package.

JSW MG Motor India Chief Commercial Officer Vinay Raina said Hyderabad customers were showing interest in connected and new-energy vehicles. Gunjeet Singh Sachdeva, CEO of RAAM MG, said the model had attracted interest for its space, technology and electric performance. RAAM MG Vice-President of Sales Anupam Bajpai said the company had received a strong response since the August launch. RAAM MG operates showrooms in Banjara Hills, Gachibowli, Kukatpally, Kondapur and Attapur, and aims to achieve sales of 30,000 vehicles. (IANS/UNI)



India-EFTA trade pact opens new opportunities for Norwegian investment across key sectors

NEW DELHI, OCT 18

India's strong economic growth trajectory and the implementation of the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) are creating significant opportunities for Norwegian investors, particularly in manufacturing, renewable energy, infrastructure, financial services and the digital economy, according to industry insights.

With GDP growth projected to remain around 6.5 per cent annually through 2030, India is widely expected to become the world's third-largest economy by the end of the decade, according to EY India report.

Analysts attribute this outlook to strong domestic consumption, rising investments, ongoing infrastructure development and reforms aimed at improving the ease of doing business.

The India-EFTA TEPA, which came into effect in October 2025, is being viewed as a major milestone in India-Norway economic relations.

The pact includes investment commitments of $100 billion over 15 years and is expected to support the creation of one million direct jobs in India, aligning with the country's broader goals of expanding manufacturing capacity and strengthening its position in global value



chains.

Industry experts believe the agreement creates a strong framework for Norwegian companies to expand their presence in India by combining Norway's expertise in technology, sustainability and capital-intensive industries with India's large market and growth ambitions.

The agreement seeks to promote trade liberalisation, facilitate investment flows and deepen cooperation in areas such as innovation, sustainability and advanced technologies.

Several sectors have been identified as priority areas for collaboration, including manufacturing, renewable energy, oil and gas, maritime services, seafood processing, information and communication technology (ICT), fintech and financial services. These industries are expected to benefit from increasing bilateral cooperation under the TEPA framework.

The rapid expansion of India's digital economy and digital payments ecosystem is also creating opportunities for Norwegian companies seeking exposure to one of the world's largest and fastest-growing consumer markets.

At the same time, India's policy measures aimed at attracting foreign investment are expected to provide a supportive environment for long-term investors, as per the report. (IANS)

Iyer bags Impact Player of the Series medal

BENGALURU, OCT 18



India captain Shreyas Iyer was handed the team's Impact Player of the Series medal after the five-match T20I series against the West Indies ended in a 2-2 draw following Saturday's washout at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru.

The presentation was captured in a dressing-room video released by the BCCI on Sunday, in which India's training assistant Nuwan Seneviratne handed the medal to Iyer. "Tonight the impact medal goes to someone who scored his first T20I hundred and only a few players in India have scored hundreds in all three formats and he's leading in the front and even in the field and the award goes to Shreyas Iyer," Seneviratne said in the video posted on bcci.tv on Sunday.

On its social media accounts, the BCCI captioned the clip as, "Rain, runs, and some dressing room BTS. Summing up the series decider, ft. the Impact Player of the Series medal presentation."

Iyer enjoyed a productive series with the bat, finishing as the third-highest run-getter with 181 runs from five innings at an average of 45.25 and a strike rate of 205.68. His maiden T20I century during the series opener in Lucknow made him only the seventh Indian men's cricketer to score hundreds in all three international formats.

India won the first and third games, but the West Indies hit back in the second and fourth games to draw the series, before rain forced the decider to be called off, leading to the two sides sharing the trophy.

India now head to New Zealand for a five-match T20I series, which begins with back-to-back games at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch on October 22 and 24. The teams then move to Basin Reserve in Wellington for the third T20I to be played on October 27, followed by matches in Eden Park, Auckland on October 30 and Seddon Park in Hamilton on November 1 respectively. All five games will start at 8 pm local time, which translates to 12:30pm IST. (IANS)

Ekta clinches 3 gold medals at World Masters Classic Powerlifting C'ship

RENO (US), OCT 18



Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer Ekta Bishnoi has etched her name in the record books by clinching three gold medals at the World Masters Classic Powerlifting Championship in the United States.

Ekta lifted a total weight of 362.5 kg, outperforming formidable competitors from Japan and Canada to claim the top honour. This is the first time an Indian female powerlifter has secured a gold medal in the Masters-2 category of this championship.

Ekta is balancing her high-stakes governmental responsibilities as an IRS officer while maintaining a rigorous powerlifting training regimen. Adding to the hurdles, just ahead of the tournament, Indian team coach Sunil Kumar faced a setback when his U.S. visa was denied.

However, refusing to back down, Ekta adapted dynamically, taking guidance from coach Sunil via video calls and with on-ground support from team official Binu Ibrahim, she executed her strategic game plan to script history.

Shedding light on the tactical triumph, coach Sunil shared that they adopted a scientific and result-oriented coaching approach.

"Our strategy was crystal clear," Kumar said. "By the conclusion of the squat event, we had already built a decisive 20 kg lead over our closest rival. Ekta successfully maintained this crucial lead through the bench press event. Finally, with a successful opening deadlift of 150 kg, Ekta sealed the historic gold medal for India." (IANS)

Miedler-Oberleitner win Shanghai Masters doubles title



SHANGHAI, OCT 18

Austrian pair Lucas Miedler and Neil Oberleitner claimed the biggest title of their newly formed partnership on Sunday, defeating Francisco Cabral and JJ Tracy 6-3, 6-4 tp clinch the Shanghai Masters doubles crown.

The Austrian duo completed an unbeaten campaign at the ATP Masters 1000 tournament, winning all five matches without conceding a set. Playing inside Qizhong Forest Sports City Arena, Miedler and Oberleitner needed 66 minutes to secure the championship, breaking their opponents once in each set to seal the victory. (IANS)

Messi's brace powers Inter Miami to 3-1 win over Atlanta United

ATLANTA, OCT 18



A brace from captain Lionel Messi and a strike from German Berterame powered Inter Miami to a 3-1 victory on the road over Atlanta United FC as the club secured a third consecutive victory this MLS regular season.

There was an even match-up in the opening minutes, before Inter Miami's attack took over. Messi came close to opening the scoring with a free kick in the 41st, which was ultimately saved by Atlanta's goalkeeper at the top-right corner.

Berterame then handed Inter Miami the lead before the break in the 45th minute, finding the back of the net with a header from inside the penalty area to capitalise on a pinpoint cross from the right from Suarez, Inter Miami reports.

The strike marked Berterame's ninth regular season, while the assist took Suarez's tally to 11.

Additionally, Messi posted a secondary assist on the play that saw him break a league record, reaching 15 assists this regular season and becoming the first player in MLS history to dish out at least 15 assists in three consecutive seasons.

La Liga: Barca equal record for best league start

MADRID, OCT 18



Luis Diaz scored a hat-trick as Bayern Munich crushed RB Leipzig 6-1 to return to the top of the Bundesliga and end a run of two consecutive draws.

The victory is their ninth in their first nine games of the 2026/27 La Liga campaign, a win that allows them to match Real Madrid's record start from the 1968/69 season.

Real Madrid won their opening nine matches in the 1968/69 season, scoring 21 goals in the process. FC Barcelona have equalled that run with the win at Betis, scoring 39 goals and conceding just nine in the process.

In 2013/14 a Barça side coached by Gerardo 'Tata Martino' and with the likes of Lionel Messi, Pedro, Neymar amongst others won their first eight matches before being held to a goalless draw in Pamplona by Osasuna. That great side has been surpassed by Hansi Flick's team. (IANS)

ENTERTAINMENT

Akshay Kumar discuss film Policy with Uttarakhand CM



M.A.SALAM
Film Journalist



Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar met Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami at his official residence. During the recent meeting, the actor and politician reportedly talked about the film policy of the state.

The two are further believed to have discussed the potential of Uttarakhand to attract more film productions.

The Chief Minister shared that Uttarakhand has established itself as a major film shooting destination in the country, with its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, diverse geographical conditions, and film-friendly environment attracting filmmakers.

He further stressed that the shooting of big film projects in Uttarakhand is also playing a crucial role in further strengthening the state's identity as a suitable film destination.

The Chief Minister added that along with promoting film shoots in the state, they are also focusing on generating employment for local artists, technicians, and the youth. Additionally, with an increase in film production activities, tourism, the hotel business, transportation, and other sectors will also get a major boost in Uttarakhand.

The CM also credited the Uttarakhand Film Policy-2024 for all these positive changes. Making things easier for the filmmakers, under the policy, they are being provided with easy permissions through a single-window system.

Akshay met Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami while shooting in Uttarakhand for his yet-untitled next with director Anees Bazmee.

Recently, Akshay was captured with actress Raashii Khanna in Mussoorie and the Landour area. According to the reports, they were filming a song for the project.

Prabhas' 'Spirit' gets a new release date



One of the most awaited movies of our time, Prabhas and Sandeep Reddy Vanga's 'Spirit' has got a new release date.

The makers revealed on Sunday that the forthcoming action entertainer will now be out in the cinema halls on October 29th 2027, during Diwali. 'Spirit' will now be locking horns with Ranbir Kapoor-starrer 'Ramayana Part 2' at the box office.

Directed by Nitesh Tiwari and produced by Namit Malhotra, 'Ramayana Part 2' is expected to reach the audience on November 5 next year. The mythological drama will be led by Ranbir Kapoor and Yash.

Earlier today, the filmmaker teased netizens that he would be announcing the new release date for 'Spirit', along with a new look of Prabhas.

The 'Animal' maker penned on his X (formerly known as Twitter) timeline, "Dear Prabhas Anna fans. I want to introduce a NEW POSTER, featuring the man behind the shades, with the NEW RELEASE date on it. Just few minutes...#Spirit #OneBadHabit #IndiasBiggestSuperStar. (sic)"

Some time after that, Sandeep Reddy Vanga dropped another post on the micro-blogging site, saying, "Check this out.....#Spirit #InSpiritMode @TSeries @VangaPictures #IndiasBiggestSuperStar 29TH OCTOBER DIWALI 2027. Worldwide RELEASE DATE (sic)."

The first look poster shows Prabhas in all-black attire with a black sports cap and a stylish pair of sunglasses.

Backed by Bhushan Kumar, Pranay Reddy Vanga, Krishan Kumar, and Prabhakar Reddy Vanga under the banners of T-Series Films and Bhadrakali Pictures, 'Spirit' was initially scheduled for release in March 2027, however, the makers have decided to push it for the reasons best known to them.

With Prabhas and Triptii Dimri as the lead pair, 'Spirit' also stars Vivek Oberoi, Kanchana, and Aishwarya Desai in significant roles, along with others.

While "Spirit" marks Sandeep Reddy Vanga's first collaboration with Prabhas, the director has already worked with Triptii in the 2023 release 'Animal', co-starring Ranbir Kapoor, Anil Kapoor, and Rashmika Mandanna.

Kareena Kapoor's Sunday Jam

It seems like Ghee has become an integral part of actress Kareena Kapoor Khan's life. In her latest social media post, Bebo shared that her Sunday jam includes some ghee, along with some health and wealth.

She took to the Stories section of her Insta handle and dropped her 'KKK SUNDAY GOALS' for this week.

She uploaded a picture of the whiteboard that revealed that the 'K3G' actor will complete 10 rounds, 10 plate shatches, 10 KB Pendulays, 10 Hinge Oblique Pullovers, 10 Sommersault Squats and 150 mts Ski as part of her ambitious workout regime.



The pic was accompanied by the text, "Thoda ghee thoda health thoda wealth...My Sunday Jam @happy_healthy_holy".

Meanwhile, in what became a viral moment, Kareena's husband, actor Saif Ali Khan, recently won 2 years' worth of free Govardhan ghee on Amitabh Bachchan-hosted 'Kaun Banega Crorepati Season 18'.

Later, as the couple appeared together on 'The Great Indian Kapil Sharma Show', host Kapil Sharma asked the power couple about the secret of them looking "young and fresh" even after 14 years of marriage.

In a hilarious manner, Saif gave all the credit to the constant consumption of desi ghee. Kareena revealed that it is a staple in their household, with their children - Taimur and Jeh also having it on a regular basis.

Isha Malviya reflects on hardships

Actress Isha Malviya opened up about her emotions ahead of her Bollywood debut with "Tum Mere Ho."

She said she feels nervous but is happier and more excited about getting an opportunity to make it to the big screen as an outsider. Speaking about her journey, Isha told IANS that the struggles she faced in life, along with the sacrifices made by her parents, had played an important role in bringing her to this milestone.



"I'm nervous, of course, I'm scared, it's my debut. But I'm happier than nervous and excited that finally an outsider got a chance to be there on the big screen," she said.

The Bigg Boss 17 contestant added that she considers herself fortunate to have reached this stage after a long journey. She also reflected on the hard work she had put in over the years and the difficulties her parents had faced to support her dreams.

"I consider myself very lucky. And I feel that the hard work I have done so far, the hardships I have faced in life, the problems my parents have faced to get me to where I am today, all of that is now coming to fruition. And the result is that I am going to make my Bollywood debut with Tum Mere Ho. So, I am very happy," Isha added.

Malviya further shared that she was still coming to terms with the reality of her big-screen debut, admitting that the experience sometimes felt like a dream. "And even now, to tell you the truth, I don't know if it's happening for real or a dream, but when I see them standing next to me, it feels like it's real," she said.

El Niño threatens TG's water and power supply; govt steps up preparations

TFP I ABDUL RAHMAN KHAN
HYDERABAD, OCT 18



Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has urged farmers to defer one crop cycle, particularly water-intensive paddy cultivation, as the State prepares for a possible severe water and power crisis linked to El Niño. The government has directed departments to coordinate measures to conserve water, protect standing crops, maintain electricity supplies and ensure drinking water availability over the coming months.

At a review of the situation with Cabinet colleagues and senior officials, Revanth Reddy warned that the next eight to ten months could be challenging, with the State needing to manage available water until the next expected rains. He appealed to farmers, political parties and the public to cooperate, stressing that drinking water must take priority over water-intensive agricultural activities.

The Chief Minister said the State's reservoirs held around 200 thousand million cubic feet (TMC) of water, against the usual availability of approximately 462 TMC for this period. Water availability in the Krishna basin was significantly lower than a year earlier, while the Godavari basin had also recorded a substantial decline. Rainfall remained below normal, adding to concerns over irrigation and drinking water supplies.

The government has asked farmers to assess water availability before deciding on the next crop and reconsider paddy cultivation during the upcoming yasangi season. Revanth Reddy said farmers had already shifted away from paddy on more than 13 lakh acres following earlier appeals. The government is also preparing proposals for assistance to farmers who suffer crop losses or are unable to cultivate during the next season.

A Cabinet sub-committee headed by Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka has been constituted to monitor the situation and coordinate the response. Government Advisor and former Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao has been appointed nodal officer to provide official information on El Niño-related developments. The government is also planning an all-party consultation to seek suggestions from political leaders, experts and other stakeholders.

The State has sought financial assistance from the Centre, including a special package of 20,000 crore and drought relief for nearly 215 mandals. Revanth Reddy is expected to lead a delegation to New Delhi to discuss the crisis and seek central support.

Electricity demand has added to the pressure. The Chief Minister said demand, which normally stands at around 15,000 megawatts in October, had crossed 20,000 MW. The government is monitoring supply and purchasing power from the market to help protect standing crops from drying up before harvest. It has also called for judicious electricity use and cooperation from consumers. Rural employment programmes are being used to support agricultural labourers, with repairs to tanks and ponds among the works being prioritised. Officials have been instructed to strengthen public awareness, prepare for potential shortages and ensure adequate drinking water and fodder for livestock. A war room and toll-free helpline are also part of the proposed response.

Revanth Reddy has called on households to avoid wasting water and electricity, urging people to adopt the principle of "Save Water, Save Power". The government maintains that coordinated action by farmers, officials, citizens and the Centre will be essential to limit the impact of the anticipated crisis.

TG govt prioritising temple development: Dy CM

TFP I N.J. CHARY
KHAMMAM, OCT 18



Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka laid foundation stone for a Rs 44-crore access road to Adbhuta Venkateswara Swamy Temple at Nacharam in Enkooru mandal, Khammam district.

Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Sunday said the Telangana government was prioritising temple development, public welfare and infrastructure projects across the State.

He laid the foundation stone for a Rs 44-crore access road to the Adbhuta Venkateswara Swamy Temple at Nacharam in Enkooru mandal, Khammam district. He said the road would facilitate devotees and boost local businesses and employment, crediting Wyra MLA Maloth Ramdas Naik for securing funds. Bhatti Vikramarka said temple development works worth Rs 2,500 crore were being undertaken across the State, including Rs 2,000 crore for riverbanks and temples ahead of the Godavari Pushkaram, Rs 276 crore for Bhadrachalam Temple and Rs 354 crore for the Basara Saraswati Temple.

Highlighting welfare schemes, he said fine-quality rice was being supplied to 1.06 crore families, Aarogyasri offered medical coverage of up to Rs 10 lakh per family, Rythu Bharosa benefited 71 lakh farmers, and 53 lakh families received up to 200 units of free electricity. The government was also implementing housing assistance of Rs 5 lakh per eligible household under Indiramma Indlu, besides providing pensions, free bus travel, and interest-free loans to women.

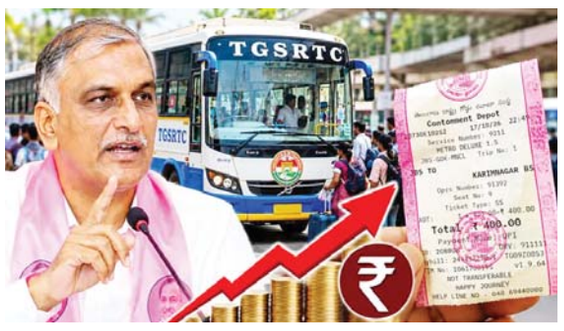
He said breakfast was being provided to 27 lakh government-school students, while diet and cosmetic charges in residential schools had been increased by 40 and 200 per cent, respectively. Young India Integrated Residential Schools, costing around Rs 200 crore each, were being established in every constituency, with one sanctioned for Wyra. An Advanced Technology Centre had also been allocated to the region.

The Deputy Chief Minister said road projects worth Rs 90,000 crore were underway despite a debt burden of Rs 8.20 lakh crore and monthly principal and interest repayments of Rs 6,600 crore. He urged people to conserve water in view of the possible impact of El Niño and asked farmers to check groundwater levels before operating pumps. He also assured consideration of a new BT road connecting Gannavaram, Nacharam and Bhadra Thanda to the Talladа-Bhadrachalam main road via Julurupadu.

The meeting was presided over by MLA Maloth Ramdas Naik. SUDA Chairman Puvalla Durga Prasad, former MLC Potla Nageswara Rao, and DCC President Nuthi Satyanarayana attended.

BRS criticises hike in RTC fares during festive season

FREEDOM PRESS BUREAU
HYDERABAD, OCT 18



BRS Deputy Leader in Telangana Assembly, T. Harish Rao, on Sunday slammed the Congress government for burdening people by increasing RTC bus fares during the festive season.

He asked Chief Minister Revanth Reddy if he was pursuing a policy to burden the public by arbitrarily hiking fares of the Road Transport Corporation whenever a festival arrives.

"Instead of offering gifts to the people during the Bathukamma and Dussehra festivals, it is shameful to exploit them by doubling ticket prices," the former minister said in a statement. The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader said it was atrocious to reduce the number of regular bus services and then pick the pockets of passengers by introducing so-called "special" buses.

According to him, the ticket fare from JBS (Secunderabad) to Karimnagar has been hiked from Rs 230 to a staggering Rs 400. The fare from Mahabubnagar to MGBS (Hyderabad), which was Rs 220 until recently, is now over Rs 290.

"By doubling ticket fares across all routes in the state, you are draining people's pockets and stripping away the joy of the festive season," Harish Rao told the Chief Minister.

He alleged that, without increasing the total number of RTC buses, "festival special" signs are being displayed on regular buses to justify this 'extortion'.

Harish Rao said the Congress government claims to offer free travel for women, only to charge double fare to men. "If a wife gets a free ticket, her husband is charged double. Can this truly be called a concession for women - or is it merely shifting the financial burden back onto the same family?" he asked.

The former minister said during the three years of Congress rule so far, RTC ticket fares have been hiked five times. Now, by charging double the fares under the pretext of the festive season, they are breaking the backs of the common people, he remarked.

"The approach of the Revanth-led government has created a situation where the poor and middle class are now afraid to even travel to their hometowns for festivals," he said.

He demanded that the government respond immediately and roll back these exorbitant fare hikes imposed in the name of the festive season.

Rao also urged the government to ensure that regular bus services operate as usual, so that no additional financial burden is placed on the poor and middle-class citizens.

Pub penalised for drinking water misuse

TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 18

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has imposed a Rs. 20,000 fine on Fore Fathers Pub at Road No. 45, Plot No. 872, Jubilee Hills, for drinking water misuse. Following an inspection prompted by a complaint, officials disconnected the pub's drinking water connection and stopped its commercial water tanker supply from the board's filling station. The board warned hotels, restaurants, pubs and other commercial establishments against wasting drinking water, stating that violations would invite strict action, including fines and disconnection of water supplies.

HMWSSB has urged the public to report water wastage by sending photographs, videos, location details and the full address to its WhatsApp number, 99499 30003, or by calling customer care at 155313.



FTCCI, TGSPDCL discuss measures to improve power supply reliability for industries

TFP I CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT 18



TGSPDCL CMD) Jitesh V. Patil at 6th Stakeholders' Meeting of TGSPDCL at FTCCI Surana Auditorium, Federation House, Hyderabad.

The Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FTCCI) and the Telangana Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (TGSPDCL) discussed measures to improve power supply reliability, provide tariff relief and expedite the resolution of industrial grievances at their sixth consecutive monthly stakeholders' meeting here on Saturday.

The meeting, held here, was chaired by TGSPDCL Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) Jitesh V. Patil, and attended by more than 45 participants, including senior power utility officials, FTCCI office-bearers, Energy Committee members, KPMG consultants, industrial associations and industry representatives. Representatives of process industries highlighted production losses caused by power interruptions and sought advance notice of scheduled outages.

TGSPDCL agreed to consider sending advance alerts through SMS and email to help industries plan their operations.

FTCCI sought an extension of the collection period for the two-hour fuel surcharge from 29 to 48 months, a reduction in the delayed payment surcharge from 18 per cent compounded to 12 per cent, and a six-month waiver of the additional surcharge on Open Access. The proposed One-Time Settlement scheme for legacy surcharge dues was also discussed. A financial assessment is underway, with a filing before the Electricity Regulatory Commission (ERC) expected by November 30, 2026, with support from KPMG.

One of the key outcomes was the proposed appointment of dedicated Operations Service Managers and Key Account Managers for high-tension (HT) industrial consumers to address power supply, operational and billing issues. The CMD agreed to issue a formal circular within a week, followed by an orientation session with FTCCI.

Industries were also advised to send customer service-related concerns to [customerservice@tgsouthernpower.org] mailto:customerservice@tgsouthernpower.org).

The meeting reviewed issues relating to rooftop solar net metering approval delays, behind-the-meter solar installations, net billing and time-of-day charges for solar generator supply.

FTCCI will submit two to three documented cases of delayed net metering approvals to help TGSPDCL identify bottlenecks.

The CMD also agreed to review the implementation timeline for time-of-day charges.

TGSPDCL is procuring four to five power quality meters to improve transparency in Open Access no-objection certificate (NOC) testing. The participants also explored solar power and battery storage solutions for gated communities to reduce electricity costs for common facilities. The CMD proposed a dedicated workshop involving gated community associations, solution providers, FTCCI and other stakeholders, with KPMG assisting in its organisation.

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