

Marco Rubio and Jaishankar hold talks in Mumbai to finalize trade deal

Mumbai, Oct 20 (GNS): U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio held talks with Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in Mumbai on Tuesday as the two countries seek to deepen energy cooperation and move closer to finalizing a trade deal. New Delhi and Washington seek to revive trade negotiations stalled for months by tensions over U.S. tariffs and India's purchases of Russian oil.

"We're very, very close. I would say we're about as close as you can be without having executed the agreement. I think there's a small number of items left to wrap up, so I think that will happen shortly," Rubio told reporters in Mumbai on Tuesday.

India's foreign ministry said the talks were expected to cover key areas of bilateral cooperation, including energy, trade, investment and defense. Washington im-



posed tariffs of up to 50% on most Indian goods in August 2025 after trade talks broke down. Under a framework agreed in February 2026, the tariff rate was reduced to 18%, but negotiations have since stalled.

Earlier this month, Indian

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the talks had "plateaued." India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, however, said last week that the first tranche of a trade deal was in its final stages. India says its final tariff rate

should be similar to those of competing manufacturing countries, such as Vietnam. India's purchases of discounted Russian crude since the start of the war in Ukraine have at times strained ties with the U.S. New Delhi has said it will expand energy

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imports, including from the U.S., while diversifying suppliers to maintain market stability and keep prices affordable. Despite tensions, the two countries continue to deepen defense and technology ties, with Washington viewing India as a key counterweight to China in the Indo-Pacific.

Rubio's visit to India follows a trip to Uzbekistan this week to promote trade and ties with Central Asia.

Speaking to reporters in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Rubio said Sunday that India had diversified its energy sources but continued

to buy substantial volumes of Russian oil, making an immediate shift to other suppliers difficult. "You've got countries like India, for example, that have voluntarily diversified their energy portfolio but are still getting a substantial amount of energy from Russia because it's hard to pivot from one day to the next. But they're also an important ally and partner of the United States," he said. Rubio is scheduled to visit a refinery in Jamnagar city in Gujarat state on Wednesday and meet business leaders, according to the U.S. State Department.

Rajnath Singh Announces 1st SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum in India



Dushanbe, Oct 20 (GNS): Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday announced that India will host the first Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Civilisational Dialogue Forum by the end of this year and invited all member countries to participate in it. Singh made these remarks while addressing the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

"India, at the end of this year, will host the first SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum. We invite all SCO member countries to participate in it," Singh said.

During the SCO summit of the Council of Heads of State in Tianjin in 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed to create a Civilisational Dialogue Forum to strengthen people-to-people ties and allow sharing of the richness of ancient civilisations, art, literature, and traditions on a global stage.

Singh also mentioned the 25-year journey of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. "At the SCO Summit in Bishkek, our leaders had highlighted the 25-year journey of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. That occasion was not only for reviewing our shared journey but also for deliberations on the future direction."

In Bishkek, Prime Minister Modi had reiterated India's vision for security, connectivity, and opportunity for the SCO.

"These three pillars are mutually reinforcing. Security makes investments possible, and connectivity facilitates trade. Opportunity is what security and connectivity both enable us to provide for our people."

Prime Minister Modi had said, "The time has come to move these three pillars beyond vision and translate them into concrete outcomes. The first and foremost requirement for this is peace and security." The prime minister said the SCO cooperation should reach people directly. In Dushanbe, Defence Minister Singh also underlined that India's global initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure contribute to affordable clean energy & climate-resilient development. He added that Mission LIFE promotes sustainable lifestyles and responsible consumption, while the Global Biofuel Alliance fosters cleaner and more sustainable energy solutions.

The Heads of Delegation adopted the Joint Communiqué of the 25th Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, including the SCO budget for 2027, relevant financial and administrative decisions, and the PMTEC Action Plan for 2026-2030, according to an official statement released by the Press Information Bureau.

UN rights experts flag police action on protests in India

New Delhi, Oct 20 (GNS): Over 20 UN human rights experts on Tuesday voiced alarm at the "repeatedly heavy-handed police response" to peaceful youth-led demonstrations in New Delhi and other cities over the past three months, calling on authorities to "respect, protect and fulfil" the right to peacefully protest.

"This crackdown reflects a broader, troubling pattern," the experts said in a statement in Geneva. "We have repeatedly alerted the Indian authorities to undue restrictions on peaceful assembly, excessive use of force, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and the targeting of student activists, amongst others."

The experts said they are "alarmed" by the "repeatedly heavy-handed police response to peaceful youth-led demonstrations" in New Delhi and other parts of the country over the past three months.

Amit Shah meets families of Punjab drug victims, promises justice

Ludhiana, Oct 20 (GNS): Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday met families of people who died in incidents linked to Punjab's drug problem, assuring them that justice would be pursued. The day-long visit covered Gurdaspur, Sangrur and Mansa, with the drug menace emerging as a key political issue ahead of the state's Assembly elections.

In Sangrur, Shah met the family of Gulzar Singh, who allegedly died by suicide on September 7 after raising concerns about drug supplies in his locality. His family alleged that he consumed poison after facing harassment and casteist slurs for questioning Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema about the issue.

Gulzar's son, Shahbaz Singh, said Shah assured the family that those responsible would not be spared. The family also demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the death.



Earlier, in Gurdaspur district, Shah met the family of Bikramjit Singh, who was killed on October 15. Villagers alleged that he was targeted for opposing drug peddling, while police attributed the murder to a dispute between two groups over a mobile phone. The family sought justice and submitted a memorandum of demands to Shah. Shah also met Mohanjit Singh, a resident of Sheron village in Sangrur, who alleged that Punjab Police tortured him in custody after he was detained

for waving a black flag near Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's public outreach programme on September 2. Mohanjit said Shah discussed the issue of synthetic drugs, locally known as chitta, and stated that they would be eradicated.

In Mansa, Shah met the family of anti-drug activist Parvinder Singh Jhota, who was shot dead inside a medical store on October 13 after confronting its owner over the alleged sale of drugs to an elderly man. The accused, Ashwani Kumar, was arrested in Rajasthan.

Ranka, Das move HC over extended detention



New Delhi, Oct 20 (GNS): Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) leaders Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka on Tuesday approached the Delhi High Court seeking an urgent hearing against the extension of their judicial custody. With the high court closed this week for the Dasehra vacation, Das and Ranka sought a night hearing against the extension of their custody.

A newly appointed Special Executive Magistrate (SEM) at the Mandir Marg police station on Monday extended their judicial custody by two more days after they were produced before him. The two have been in custody since October 13.

The leaders have alleged that their continued detention violates their fundamental right to liberty and that the SEM extended custody without independently examining whether their detention was necessary.

A key contention in their plea is that the SEM cited non-furnishing of the required bond, while the petitioners claim that sureties had already been produced as required under the law. The leaders have also alleged that the SEM acted on the police application without conducting an independent assessment of the circumstances warranting their detention.

Gujarat moves to gift disputed Vadodara plot to Yusuf Pathan

Vadodara, Oct 20 (GNS): Months after Yusuf Pathan broke away from the Trinamool Congress, the Gujarat government has proposed to hand over a long-disputed municipal plot in Vadodara to the former cricketer, gifting 500 square metres of the land and offering the rest at a concessional rate. The proposal, submitted by the Vadodara municipal commissioner, will be presented for final approval before the BJP-ruled civic body's standing committee on October 23, as per the agenda shared on Monday.

The proposal comes nearly four months after Pathan, who was elected from West Bengal's Baharampur in 2024, joined a group of 20 TMC MPs who broke away from the Mamata Banerjee-led fold and merged with the NCP (Nationalist Citizens Party of India) to join the NDA ranks in Parliament. Pathan had been seeking the 978-square-metre residential plot located next to his family home in Vadodara's Tandalja locality since 2012, but faced years of legal hurdles and encroachment notices from the civic body. As per the new proposal, 500 square metres of the VMC-owned land will be "gifted" to Pathan, while the remaining 478 square metres will be offered at a 45 per cent concession — valued at 55 per cent of the rate fixed by the Vadodara



Urban Development Authority (VUDA) Valuation Committee. The allotment will be made "subject to specific terms and conditions" in accordance with a 2024 resolution issued by the state's Urban Development and Urban Housing Department, the proposal states.

The plot has been at the centre of a decade-long dispute between the cricketer-turned-politician and the civic body. In 2012, Pathan had requested to purchase the land adjacent to his home. Though the VMC initially agreed, the Gujarat government rejected the sale in 2014.

In 2024, after Pathan was elected to the Lok Sabha from Baharampur in West Bengal on a TMC ticket, the civic body issued him a notice asking him to remove the alleged encroachment and vacate the VMC-owned land.

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"This crackdown reflects a broader, troubling pattern," the experts said in a statement in Geneva. "We have repeatedly alerted the Indian authorities to undue restrictions on peaceful assembly, excessive use of force, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and the targeting of student activists, amongst others."

The experts said they are "alarmed" by the "repeatedly heavy-handed police response to peaceful youth-led demonstrations" in New Delhi and other parts of the country over the past three months.

They called on Indian authorities to "respect, protect and fulfil" the right to peacefully protest, and ensure justice for human rights violations reported during these and previous protests. "We call on the authorities to immediately cease the use of excessive force, rescind blan-



ket assembly bans, and refrain from the misuse of digital surveillance, including through biometrics, and internet disruptions," they said.

The experts called for an independent, impartial, and thorough investigation into the conduct of law enforcement and affiliated forces to be launched without delay to ensure full accountability, justice, and victims' reparations.

They said that despite the non-violent nature of the assemblies, "law enforcement agencies have reportedly deployed force against unarmed students, including lathi charges and have prevented thousands from joining the protests."

Russia hits civilian areas in Ukraine as Zelenskyy seeks aid

Kyiv, Oct 20 (GNS): Russia unleashed another missile and drone blitz of civilian areas in Ukraine, killing at least nine people, officials said Tuesday, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy scrambled to ensure more American and European help during his visit to Norway.

US envoy Steve Witkoff, who, along with Jared Kushner, has tried without success to steer Russia and Ukraine toward a settlement and end their war, was also in Oslo. Kushner, who is US President Donald Trump's son-in-law, was due to attend the meeting with Zelenskyy by videoconference.

Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and Finnish President Alexander Stubb were also scheduled to meet with Zelenskyy in Norway's capital. "We are maintaining all contacts that can help bring peace," Zelenskyy said in a post on X after he arrived in Oslo. He said that officials gathered in Norway would discuss strengthening Ukraine's air defences and joint production of weapons.

Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters



that Moscow hopes that a meeting in Russia with the US envoys can be organised soon, though he didn't give any indication about where or when. He said that Russian President Vladimir Putin's meetings with Trump's envoys - potentially as early as Wednesday - would be "very important." "We highly appreciate the mediation efforts of the American negotiators," Peskov said.

Zelenskyy speaks with Rubio after US support slows

With further US support for Ukraine in doubt as relations between Zelenskyy and Trump sour again, the Ukrainian leader said that he spoke with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is on a trip to Asia.

Demographic invasion, a national crisis

Shiban Khaibri
One who fights against one's own country is never a hero; and one who becomes used to deluding oneself, one who fails to face one's faults with honesty, and even lies to oneself, is most likely to become a traitor, since lying is beginning of treachery ..” Whatever we presently see around in our country, politically at national level, cannot simply be brushed aside, giving it a rating of being of little importance and carrying ignorable value. What is the fuss all about is not any difficult to be read and known. An air of diversion, deception and division is tried to be created in the name of so called "saving" democracy, constitution and now "voter adhikar". Anarchy like conditions are sought to be created where an autonomous constitutional institution like the Election Commission of India is, sought to be proved faulty, partisan, in league with the dispensation and facilitating "theft" of votes to benefit the ruling government. Now EVMs are not the problem but a new narrative of "theft of votes" is peddled. Hence lies are spread and victim card played, so much so that constitutionally and democratically three times elected Prime Minister is openly targeted and held "responsible" for the peddled cheap allegation of "vote chori". The "inevitable", therefore, must happen in the scheme of some of the opposition parties' things – that of asking the Prime Minister, in unambiguous manner – to leave the chair by ranting – "Vote Chor – Gaddi chod". Congress leader Rahul Gandhi spearheading "voter adhikar Yatra" in Bihar says, "Now, small



children are coming out, it is a very strange phenomenon. They are coming to me and "whispering" in my ears – "Vote choor, Gaddi Chod" – one after the other – these are not adults but children – even -6- year old children are aware, not one but thousands, the ECI should talk to these children, they will come to know, this is a very unique phenomenon." Whispering in his ears "vote chor, gaddi chod" appears as it should in reality – a hoax, a ruse and a humbug. The question is as to why in his ears and not openly? That means, they are probably asking him to leave the chair and not speaking so loudly only to give him a reprieve from embarrassment since this very Election Commission saw him winning on both the seats – Amethi and Wayanad – in 2024 elections and then Priyanka Ji winning in that very Wayanad as a result of Rahul Gandhi quitting that seat. In this connection, otherwise also, by any amount of logic or even by any level of falsehood, can a -6- year old child

understand what is "Vote" and how "Vote Chori" is done that, now, according to Rahul Ji, the Election Commission must talk to (convince) them? Where and in which manner, has this manufactured "vote chori" taken place and why so far no specific case has been filed in a court? The "yatra" or campaign against the much required Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Bihar is on account of the fears of transparency and a pure scientific culmination of enumeration form submission drive of the electoral roll to delete the names of non existing, duplicate, two or multiple voter IDs, enrolled at multiple places voters, and non Indian national voters. It is startling to observe that over 3 lakh non-Indian Nationals on Bihar Voter List were detected, prompting ECI to send notice to them as under the orders of the Supreme Court, no deletion without notice had to be made. Why should it jitter any political leader or party, is beyond comprehension. Why

should, in many districts be Aadhar cards issued in excess of the number of people living there and rectifying such mistakes opposed? It is nothing but openly encouraging and facilitating demographic invasion at micro levels. The consequences could be disastrous at the national level. Instead of educating voters, mistrust is sown in their minds and constitutional Body like the ECI projected as untrustworthy and unreliable as also suspicious of acting "like an agent of the BJP". It is a mockery of truth and fairness to say that reviewing the voter list was aimed at "deletion of pensioners" names from getting pension and cancelling ration cards to deny getting monthly rations etc as openly announced by Tejaswi Yadav partner of Rahul Gandhi's Bihar "yatra". Just recall the same narrative peddled in 2024 elections about "changing" the constitution and "withdrawing" reservation etc. Even Joseph Goebbels would have looked as a

dwarf in the art of masterminding such a type of propaganda. Shocking, that it is all being done in the name of "democracy" and "saving the constitution". However, amazing as it looks, what a poor "Vote Choori" by the Prime Minister that from 309 in 2019, the BJP got squeezed to 240 seats in 2024, not cobbling even a simple majority. What a pitiable "Choori" that the Ayodhya (Faizabad) seat was lost by the BJP even after construction of a massive Shree Ram temple. What a cheap "choori" that in UP the BJP got not even half of seats in 2024 as much as in 2019. What a mockery of "vote choori" that the BJP lost Amethi, Rai Bareilly, Saharanpur and many seats in UP and other states and UTs.

We recently saw how entire Monsoon session of the Parliament was stalled and disrupted. That has now become a routine to desperately but deliberately create a sense of mistrust and a feeling of not being all well with the system. Citizens' poor tax money wasted in such (un)democratic luxuries through repeated disruptions, adjournments, planned ruckus, displaying placards and even throwing torn papers on the Home Minister in the House, speaks a lot and hides too little of what type of designs are at work. Thus, as many as 21 precious days and 65% of time of the Parliament proceedings were lost, costing a whopping loss of Rs.222 crores. Should not this amount be recovered from those who stalled the Parliament? Let it be asserted that such a type of snafus has to be entangled as we, the citizens are, haplessly watching what a type of regard is bestowed upon our mandate.

Theatrisation Debate Re-Ignited

The long smouldering amber of theatrisation burst into a ball of fire at a fireside chat at the Army War College recently. Chief of Air Staff (CAS) questioned the need for a joint structure, putting the clock back by a few years. In the same conversation, he acknowledged the smooth conduct of Operation (Op) SINDOOR, with four of them planning together. This was a welcome change from 1999, when the Indian Army and Indian Air Force conducted two distinct operations, namely Op VIJAY and Op SAFED SAGAR, respectively. So credible was the integration in Op SINDOOR that until the Air Chief himself revealed it in a speech, most Indians did not know that five of the seven targets hit on 7th May were by the Army and only two by the Air Force. That subsequent retaliation by Pakistan and coup de grace on 10th May could be handled equally smoothly is reason enough to believe that the current structures did deliver.

Readers should know that the appointment of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) was opposed by the IAF equally, if not more, vehemently. This author had a ringside view of all discussions while recording minutes of each meeting of the "Task Force on Management of Defence (TFMD)," headed by Shri Arun Singh, whose recommendations were entirely accepted and subsumed into the Report by the GoM on Security headed by Shri LK Advani and comprising other members of CCS. The task force comprised 11 members – one scientist, four serving bureaucrats, four serving military officers (including the Director General, Defence Planning Staff as the member secretary) and one retired service officer, besides the chairman. All serving officers were additional secretary or of equivalent status. There was complete consensus on every recommendation except the CDS. The final recommendation on CDS was decided through a vote, with numbers mentioned in the report. However, despite the GoM recommendations, CDS appointment took two decades to fructify, perhaps stymied by the objections of not just bureaucrats but also the IAF. In the absence of the CDS, the remaining structure did not quite evolve the way it should have. A common lament in Service HQ is that the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) just added another layer in decision-making between Service HQ and MoD.

CAS, from what is available in the public domain, has flagged two concerns – additional layers in decision-making and lack of resources for dedicated allocation to theatres. As it stands, resources within the Indian Air Force (IAF) are distributed among commands. That does not inhibit concentrated force application when required. The fears regarding decision-making layers perhaps arise not only from the IDS experience, but also from the undefined equation among theatre commanders, service chiefs and CDS. CDS, as the permanent chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) and the principal military adviser to Raksha Mantri (RM), does enjoy the status of the primus inter pares.

However, he does not have an operational mandate over Service HQ. The role of CDS, as envisaged in GoM recommendations, was to integrate planning and budgeting functions for credible perspective planning and necessary force development through optimal utilisation of defence budget. Less than expected results in these objectives does generate apprehensions about unsettling the operational structure. Any discussion on theatre commands must be based on credible operational logic. Agni-Veer is a case in point, where the narrative of saving in pension smothered the logic of a youthful, skilled and motivated force that the Agni-Veer scheme begets.

Jointmanship has a logic, just as three different services for land, sea and air do. New domains of space and cyberspace have since evolved, but without a separate service being raised for them. Back in 1941, Panzer divisions were halted short of Dunkirk for air campaign to progress the war in Western Europe. Fifty years later, air and land battles merged seamlessly in Op DESERT STORM. Five weeks of air campaign were as crucial to victory as 100 hours of land campaign. But the most critical was their joint orchestration. We're three decades down the road from Op DESERT STORM. Jointmanship exists more in words than in thoughts and deeds.

Where is a modern war fought? What does it target? Where is the victory achieved? It is necessary to discuss such questions to bring out the nuances of physical, informational, perceptual and metaphysical dimensions of modern war, and to appreciate the need for joint orchestration of every military asset. War is but an instrument for prevailing of one national will over another, where every element of national power, whether military, economic, informational or diplomatic, is brought to bear its impact. Military acts exclusively in the physical dimension of war. Higher dimensions, where the whole of the nation gets involved, only count impact, oblivious of domain boundaries. Further, tactical impacts are fleeting and waning and, hence, need synergy in time and space. Individual service characteristics, such as speed, lethality, accuracy, knowledge of target, logistic footprint, survivability and resilience, particularly in face of retaliation, fuse into spatio-temporal orchestration. This is the logic of the unitary command structure of the military that most militaries follow. This logic has no geographical basis and, thus, there is no reason for India to be an exception.

Back in 2000, when the CDS was recommended, the fear was that the concentration of command in one individual would render the military vulnerable to politicisation. This legitimate fear, expressed by experienced bureaucrats, imposed caution. Civil control over the military and an apolitical military are the hallmarks of a healthy democracy. CDS without an operational role was, however, not a compromise solution, but an effort to address the priorities in defence management. The military had been far more successful in operations than in perspective planning and force development. Although inadequacies were blamed on bureaucracy, many of the problems lay within and among Service HQs. CDS was to lead integrated planning and detailed budgeting to simplify bureaucratic practices. The Kargil Review Report, authored by the redoubtable Shri K Subrahmanyam, had been scathing in its comments on the functioning of Service Headquarters.

TFMD addressed both the weaknesses and fears by recommending a CDS with a planning, rather than operational role. Theatre commands were also discussed. Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) and Strategic Forces Command (SFC) were, thus, recommended to be under the CDS for incubation as joint services command. In the absence of CDS for two decades, the structure, however, could not mature. CAS remarks against "joint structure" indicate that the structure of the theatre command being presented is less than agreeable. There is no gainsaying that an integrated grid for fire support, mobility support, information support, logistic support and protection/survivability of men and machines would render exercise of operational art in a theatre far more effective. Observe-Orient-Decide-Act (OODA) is as much about decisions as about actions. Initiative and momentum go hand in hand. Loss of one results in loss of the other. Moreover, since wrong moves lead to loss of initiative, decisions ought to be as correct as speedy. Right decisions are based on timely and comprehensive information for which a joint services theatre is immensely more suitable.

CAS also brought up the need for experience in certain skill sets for higher leadership. This argument is specious. IAF has had a Chief who was not a fighter pilot. Higher leadership is about comprehension, perspectives and visualisation. Perspectives are gained more by exposure than experience. While intellect and exposure build upon each other to develop perspectives, mere experience may result in biases. An Air Force officer can make as good a theatre commander as an Army or a Navy officer. A structure evolved through consensus not only gets implemented more credibly, but is also far more sustaining. No written document on reforms is comprehensive. However, when the logic of change is understood and accepted, the gaps are credibly filled and coherence in reforms is maintained. It is, therefore, essential that the structure of joint services theatre and relationship among theatre commanders, service chiefs and CDS be thoroughly discussed and arrived at with willing consensus. As in humans, so in organisations, health at birth is critical to a healthy life ahead. Theatrisation is a much-needed organisational reform to ensure that

military-economy-technology develops as a triad to render a powerful nation. The need to discuss till consensus cannot be overemphasised. The long smouldering amber of theatrisation burst into a ball of fire at a fireside chat at the Army War College recently. Chief of Air Staff (CAS) questioned the need for a joint structure, putting the clock back by a few years. In the same conversation, he acknowledged the smooth conduct of Operation (Op) SINDOOR, with four of them planning together. This was a welcome change from 1999, when the Indian Army and Indian Air Force conducted two distinct operations, namely Op VIJAY and Op SAFED SAGAR, respectively. So credible was the integration in Op SINDOOR that until the Air Chief himself revealed it in a speech, most Indians did not know that five of the seven targets hit on 7th May were by the Army and only two by the Air Force. That subsequent retaliation by Pakistan and coup de grace on 10th May could be handled equally smoothly is reason enough to believe that the current structures did deliver.

Crude at \$80 means serious trouble

Lt Gen SK Saini ret'd
The whole northwestern region of India is bearing the brunt of nature's fury, suffering a series of unprecedented cloudbursts, landslides and floods over the past few weeks. Although such natural disasters have occurred before, the devastation, loss of human lives and livestock, especially in the countryside, have left haunting images of homes and villages reduced to ruins. The situation in the urban areas and metros has not been any better.

The cloudbursts and landslides were caused by an unusual combination of meteorological factors, including intensified western disturbances, low-pressure systems and increased monsoon moisture from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. India is one of the world's most disaster-prone regions, both natural and man-made. Floods, droughts, cyclones, landslides and earthquakes, coupled with other disasters, compound the country's troubles. On an average, about 60 million people in India suffer the adverse effects of natural calamities, claiming about 3,500 lives annually. The severity of the problem continues to escalate as a result of climate change and unchecked urban expansion.

The primary responsibility to manage disasters is that of the state government, with the Centre providing additional resources, depending on the severity of the calamity. Undoubtedly, a lot more needs to be done at all levels to mitigate the effects of disasters on the population. Lives can be saved, damage to property reduced and recovery from disaster accelerated by taking action before floods rise, fires rage, pipes rup-



ture, the ground shakes or contamination spreads. Besides other measures, technology can be harnessed extensively to effectively deal with these catastrophes. At present, it is used in a limited manner for forecasting, early warning and supply of essentials by drones to marooned people. Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a game-changer in disaster risk reduction by enhancing data collection, analysis and response across various phases of the disaster management cycle covering prevention, preparation, emergency response, rehabilitation and reconstruction. AI systems can analyse such vast datasets as satellite imagery, weather data and sensor feeds to detect patterns and issue early warnings for disasters like earthquakes, floods and hurricanes before they strike. These predictive models give communities and authorities vital time to evacuate, reinforce in-

frastructure and minimise casualties. It is instructive to study how Japan, a country highly prone to disasters, deals with them. Recently, it released an AI-generated simulation of the eruption of Mount Fuji, located close to Tokyo. Mount Fuji last erupted in 1707, but is still active and overdue by geological standards. The video shows ash clouds darkening Tokyo within two hours of an eruption. A real eruption could cause power outages, food shortages and shut down transport. The simulation warns residents to stock essentials like water, food and flashlights. It is part of a government effort to raise awareness, not panic, as some citizens found the video unsettling, while others praised its clarity and urgency. Similarly, during the emergency phase of the disaster, AI-powered tools can process live inputs from sensors, drones and social media to provide real-time situational awareness. This

can enable the authorities to respond faster and deploy resources, such as emergency teams, medical supplies and rescue equipment, where they are needed most urgently. Media reports based on data from the Punjab Government's Department of Revenue, Rehabilitation and Disaster Management suggest that there are only 257 boats for 23 districts to respond to emergency situations, but only 114 engines. Motorised boats are vital to negotiate the fast currents of swollen rivers to evacuate marooned people and render succour to areas cut off by raging water. Even these few available boats could have been deployed optimally as per the severity of flood waters in various areas. In Iwate Prefecture, Japan, initiatives are underway to bolster disaster preparedness using AI technologies, spurred by lessons from the devastating 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. Rikuzentakata city

has pioneered an AI-driven system to enhance evacuation procedures. This system automatically contacts registered residents during emergencies, querying their evacuation status and condition via telephone. Responses are converted into text and relayed to emergency centres, addressing challenges in disseminating timely information, particularly to elderly and non-social media users. Effective disaster risk reduction relies on the combination of advanced warning systems and responsible land management to save lives and strengthen community resilience. AI can play a transformative role in minimising destruction from natural disasters by improving prediction, preparedness, rapid response and recovery operations. With AI, disaster management becomes far more proactive, accurate and adaptable significantly reducing impact on people, property and the economy.

India should replicate smartphone export success across industries:Amitabh Kant

India doubles down on domestic production of critical minerals

New Delhi, Oct 20 (GNS): India must replicate its success in becoming a major smartphone exporter in 10 other manufacturing sectors by partnering with global companies and becoming an integral part of the worldwide supply chains, said Amitabh Kant, Non-Executive Director on the Board of Inter-Globe Aviation, on Wednesday. India accounted for 44 per cent of all smartphones imported into the US in q1 FY26, a huge leap from just 13 per cent in the same period last year.

Kant, former G20 Sherpa and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), NITI Aayog, wrote on social media platform X that "India's share of smartphone imports in the USA has jumped 44 per cent YoY in the last three months till June as compared to 13 per cent in the same period last year. It has overtaken China, whose share in US imports of smartphones has fallen from 61 per cent to 25 per cent." "India needs to replicate this story in ten other manufacturing sectors by tying up with global companies and becoming an integral part of global supply



chains," he added.

Most of the decline in US smartphone shipments assembled in China has been picked up by India, mainly due to Apple's 'China Plus One' strategy. The total volume of "Made-in-India" smartphones grew 240 per cent year on year. Apple has scaled up its production capacity in India over the last several years and has dedicated most of its export capacity in India to supply the US market so far in 2025.

Though Apple has begun manufacturing and assembling Pro models of the iPhone 16 series in India, it is still dependent on estab-

lished manufacturing bases in China for the scaled supply needed for Pro models in the US. Samsung and Motorola have also increased their share of US-targeted supply from India, although their shifts are significantly slower and smaller in scale than Apple's. Motorola, similar to Apple, has its core manufacturing hub in China, whereas Samsung relies mainly upon producing its smartphones in Vietnam. The United States smartphone shipments grew by 1 per cent in Q2 2025 as vendors continued to frontload device inventories amid tariff concerns. The uncertain outcome of negotiations

with China has accelerated supply chain reorientation.

Apple built up its inventories rapidly toward the end of Q1 and sought to maintain this level in Q2. Samsung scaled up its inventory stock in Q2, boosting its shipments to grow 38 per cent year on year, predominantly driven by Galaxy A-series devices, said the report. He added, "To emerge as a global manufacturing hub, India must integrate into global value chains, not just through final assembly, but by becoming a critical node for high-value components, design, and R&D."

With the global realignment of supply chains underway, India's window of opportunity is open but limited. Strategic policy implementation and strong industry-government collaboration will be key to replicating the smartphone success story across multiple sectors. India's growing role in smartphone exports reflects the impact of production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes and efforts to attract global manufacturers. Expanding these initiatives to other industries could

help strengthen domestic manufacturing, improve export competitiveness and create employment opportunities across the country.

Electronics manufacturing offers opportunities beyond smartphone assembly, including semiconductor fabrication, display components, battery production and precision engineering. Developing these segments would help Indian manufacturers capture a larger share of the value generated across the electronics supply chain.

Automobile manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy equipment, aerospace, defence production and industrial machinery are among the sectors where India could expand its global footprint. Stronger collaboration between domestic companies and international manufacturers could facilitate technology transfer, improve production standards and increase access to overseas markets.

Experts have also stressed the importance of investing in skilled manpower, research and development, modern infrastructure and reliable logistics.

New Delhi, Oct 20 (GNS): In order to boost domestic production and reduce India's dependence on imported lithium, cobalt and other key materials required for EV batteries, the government has taken several significant steps, including the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) and enhancing the exploration of critical minerals.

The Union Cabinet approved the launch of NCMM for a period of seven years from 2024-25 to 2030-31, with a proposed expenditure of Rs 16,300 crore and an expected investment of Rs 18,000 crore by Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and other stakeholders.

The exploration of critical minerals has been significantly increased. Over the past three years, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) has undertaken 368 exploration projects focused on critical and strategic minerals. In the FY 2024-25, 195 projects are being executed and 227 projects have been approved for the upcoming financial year, said Minister of State for Heavy Industries, Bhupathiraju Sriniva-



sa Varma, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR) has been amended through the MMDR Amendment Act, 2023 w.e.f. 17.08.2023. The Amendment Act, 2023 provides for: According to the government, 100 per cent FDI is allowed under "Automatic" route for mining and exploration of metal and non-metal ores. A foreign company may incorporate an Indian subsidiary company or invest in an existing Indian Company to become eligible for grant of mining and exploration rights.

To further support the critical minerals sector, the

government has eliminated customs duties on 25 minerals and reduced Basic Customs Duties (BCD) on 2 minerals in the Union Budget for 2024-25. India has approximately 7.23 million tonnes (MT) of Rare Earth Elements Oxide.

(REO) contained in 13.15 MT monazite (a mineral of Thorium and Rare Earths) occurring in the coastal beach, teri and red sand and inland alluvium in parts of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Maharashtra, while another 1.29 MT rare earths are situated in hard rocks in parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

India's tier 2 cities have 4,625 EV charging stations: Centre

New Delhi, Oct 20 (GNS): As many as 4,625 EV charging stations are operational in the tier 2 cities in the country (as on April 1, 2025), according to the government.

In addition, Rs. 2,000 crore has been allocated under the Prime Minister Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) Scheme for the establishment of electric vehicle public-charging stations (EV PCS) across India, including tier 2 cities in Tamil Nadu, said Minister of State for Steel and Heavy Industries, Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

The PM E-DRIVE scheme was launched in October 2024 to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) through demand incentives and expand EV charging infrastructure nationwide. The Centre has allocated Rs 10,900 crore for subsidies to EVs under this scheme. "Setting up electric vehicle charging stations is an unlicensed activity and private entrepreneurs can also install the charging stations. The installation of EV charging stations is de-

mand driven activity and no target can be set as installation depends on many factors including EV penetration," the minister added. The Centre has allocated Rs. 873.50 crore towards the installation of 8,932 EVPCS by the three oil marketing companies (OMCs) namely IOCL, BPCL and HPCL under the FAME-II Scheme, he further said. Meanwhile, electric car sales penetration is expected to cross 7 per cent by FY 28, subject to timely resolution of rare earth element (REE) disruptions and the government's continuous push to improve charging infrastructure in the country.

India's EV fleet grew from just over 5,000 units in FY21 to more than 1.07 lakh units in FY25. Meanwhile, over the past three years, the number of public EV charging stations in the country grew from 5,151 to 26,000.

Earlier this month, the government launched a groundbreaking scheme to provide financial incentives for electric trucks (e-trucks) under the PM E-DRIVE initiative, with the maximum incentive set at Rs 9.6 lakh per vehicle. The scheme is

expected to support the deployment of approximately 5,600 e-trucks across the country. The expansion of public charging infrastructure is considered essential to overcoming one of the major barriers to electric vehicle adoption in India. Greater availability of charging points in residential areas, commercial centres, highways and parking facilities could improve convenience for EV owners and encourage more consumers to switch from conventional petrol and diesel vehicles.

The PM E-DRIVE scheme aims to support the development of a broader electric mobility ecosystem by combining financial incentives with investments in charging infrastructure. The allocation of funds for public charging stations is expected to encourage infrastructure development in cities with growing demand for electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers, cars and commercial vehicles. Tier-2 cities are emerging as important markets for electric mobility as urbanisation, rising fuel costs and growing environmental awareness influence transportation choices.

Tata Motors Shares Dip 4% on Iveco Acquisition Buzz

Mumbai, Oct 20 (GNS): Following reports that Tata Motors is in advanced negotiations to purchase the truck division of Italy's Iveco Group in a possible \$4.5 billion deal, the company's shares experienced significant pressure on Wednesday. They fell by almost 4 per cent in early trading.

Tata Motors' stock was down 3.08 per cent from the previous close at Rs 671.85, as of 11:23 A.M. The drop is a result of investor apprehension about the scope and consequences of what might turn out to be the second-largest foreign acquisition for the Tata Group after its \$12.9 billion acquisition of Corus Steel in 2007. The talks with Iveco, which is owned by the Agnelli family, are reportedly centred on purchasing its Defence and commercial truck businesses.

Iveco has admitted to looking into the possibility of selling its industrial vehicle division, but no firm decision has been made as of yet. However, it has been reported that the deal may receive Board-level approvals as early as today.

If completed, the deal

would be Tata Motors' largest acquisition since its 2008 \$2.3 billion acquisition of Jaguar Land Rover and could greatly increase the company's presence in the global commercial vehicle market. The timing is notable, as Tata Motors is spinning off its commercial vehicle business into a separate entity, a process expected to conclude by December 2025. In India, that division has a 30 per cent market share for light commercial vehicles (LCVs) and a 49 per cent market share for heavy commercial vehicles (HCVs). It generated Rs 75,000 crore in revenue in the previous fiscal year.

The foundation of Iveco's industrial operations is its truck business, which generates 70 per cent of total industrial revenue. The company's bus and powertrain divisions each contribute 15 per cent.

Iveco maintained an 8-9 per cent presence in the medium and heavy truck segment and a 13.3 per cent share in the European LCV market in 2024.

The proposed acquisition could provide Tata Motors with access to Ive-

co's established European manufacturing facilities, distribution networks and technology. A stronger international footprint would help the Indian automaker expand its presence in major commercial vehicle markets and diversify its revenue sources beyond domestic operations.

Iveco's expertise in medium and heavy commercial vehicles could complement Tata Motors' existing portfolio of trucks and transport solutions. The combination of engineering capabilities, product development and manufacturing expertise could also create opportunities to improve vehicle efficiency and develop advanced mobility technologies. However, a transaction of this scale would involve significant financial and operational considerations. Investors are likely to assess the proposed purchase price, financing arrangements, potential debt burden and the expected time required to realise benefits from the acquisition. Regulatory approvals and the final terms of any agreement would also be important factors.

NSDL public issue gets fully subscribed, GMP at 16 pc

New Delhi, Oct 20 (GNS): National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL), one of the largest securities depositories in the world, opened its public issue on Wednesday and saw strong investor interest, with the issue fully subscribed in the first three hours of public bidding.

Ahead of listing, the unlisted shares of the company traded with a grey market premium (GMP) of around 16 per cent over the IPO price at Rs 926 apiece, according to multiple reports. The GMP, however, fell 2.50 per cent in last five days.

NSDL launched its IPO to raise Rs 4,012 crore from the capital markets at a price band of Rs 760 to Rs 800 per share. The IPO entirely comprises an offer for sale with no fresh issue component. NSDL will not receive any proceeds from the IPO.

Investors can bid for a minimum of 18 shares, with an investment of Rs 14,400, and in multiples thereafter. At the prevailing GMP, a profit of Rs 2,268 can be expected per lot for allotted investors. The allotments will be finalised on August 2, and the shares will be listed on August 6, 2025, making NSDL

the country's second publicly traded depository after Central Depository Services. The listing of NSDL is crucial in order to comply with SEBI's ownership norms. These regulations require that no entity can hold more than 15% of the shareholding in a depository company.

ICI Securities, Axis Capital, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India), IDBI Capital Markets & Securities, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors, and SBI Capital Markets are the book running lead managers to the issue. Analysts say that investors can look for long term exposure to NSDL shares. NSDL's reliable annuity-like revenue flows, and sectoral leadership support the stock despite regulatory scrutiny and CDSL competition.

National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) is India's first and largest central securities depository and a capital market infrastructure institution for electronic securities settlement and custody. The issue is priced at a P/E multiple of 46.62.

The company raised Rs 1,201.4 crore from 61 institutional investors via anchor book on July 29.

India smartphone market rises 8 pc in April-June amid robust macroeconomic environment

New Delhi, Oct 20 (GNS): India's smartphone market grew 8 per cent (year-on-year) in volume and 18 per cent in value in the April-June quarter (Q2 2025), marking a solid rebound following a muted Q1, a report said on Wednesday.

The iPhone 16 emerged as the most-shipped device in Q2 2025, driven by ongoing promotions, extended EMI options, and improved retail execution, helping Apple register its highest-ever Q2 shipments in India.

According to Counterpoint's 'Monthly India Smartphone Tracker', the recovery was driven by a 33 per cent jump (on-year) in new launches, aggressive marketing, and strong performance during summer sales, with brands offering steeper discounts, easy EMIs, and bundled offers especially in the mid and premium segments.

"India's smartphone market recovery in Q2 2025 was further supported by an improved macroeconomic environment that boosted consumer confidence and spending. Retail inflation

dropped to a six-year low, easing pressure on household budgets, while the central bank's repo rate cuts made financing more accessible," explained senior research analyst Prachir Singh. Additionally, tax relief measures introduced earlier in the year increased disposable incomes and savings, creating a favourable setup for discretionary purchases, he mentioned.

The improving sentiment contributed to the ultra-premium (Rs 45,000 and above) segment's strong 37 per cent YoY growth, making it the fastest-growing price tier.

The ultra-premium segment helped the Indian smartphone market record its best-ever Q2 in value terms and highest-ever ASP.

Apple and Samsung capitalised on this trend through aggressive affordability initiatives such as trade-in programmes, no-cost EMIs, and limited-period summer discounts, making flagship devices more accessible to aspirational buyers, said the report. "During Q2 2025, both OEMs and channels hosted several sales events,

including parallel offline events, which helped some of the OEMs clear existing inventory and push for new launches. Samsung followed as the second-largest brand, supported by aggressive summer promotions on its A and S series and increased traction for its N-1 flagship upgrades, which helped sustain momentum in the mid to premium segments," said research analyst Shubham Singh.

Nothing's Q2 2025 shipments jumped 146 per cent YoY, making it the fastest-growing brand for the sixth consecutive quarter – a feat only achieved by Nothing. The increase was driven by the newly launched CMF Phone 2 Pro and the brand's strong retail expansion efforts. OnePlus' ultra-premium segment grew 75 per cent in Q2 2025, driven by the strong performance of its 13 and 13R series, alongside early traction from the newly launched compact 13s, reflecting the brand's expanding premium portfolio. The growth in smartphone shipments highlights the increasing demand for fea-

ture-rich devices across India, particularly as consumers show greater interest in premium models. Improved financing options, exchange offers and discounts have helped buyers upgrade to newer smartphones, supporting sales across different price categories.

The mid-range segment also remained an important battleground for smartphone manufacturers, with brands competing through improved cameras, faster processors, larger batteries and enhanced software features. Frequent product launches and promotional campaigns have encouraged consumers to compare devices and seek better value for money. The strong performance of Apple and Samsung reflects their ability to attract buyers through established brand recognition, flagship features and wider retail availability. At the same time, the rapid growth of Nothing and the premium expansion of OnePlus indicate that newer brands are also gaining traction by targeting technology-conscious consumers with differentiated products.

Glucon-D maker Zydus Wellness' Q1 net profit falls nearly 13.5 pc on higher costs

Mumbai, Oct 20 (GNS): Zydus Wellness Limited on Wednesday reported a 13.4 per cent drop in its consolidated net profit for the first quarter ended June 30 (Q1 FY26), as some of its seasonal brands were hit by a shorter summer, unseasonal rains, and higher expenses. The company posted a net profit of Rs 127.9 crore, down from Rs 147.7 crore in the same quarter previous year (Q1 FY25), according to its stock exchange filing.

Revenue from operations rose slightly to Rs 860.9 crore from Rs 841 crore in the year-ago period, the company added in its regulatory filing. Total expenses during the quarter increased to Rs 718.6 crore, compared to Rs 694.4 crore in the same period previous year, according to its filing. The company also spent more on advertising and promotions, with expenses rising to Rs 132.5 crore from Rs 124.3 crore a year earlier. Total expenses include the cost of materials consumed at Rs 267.2 crore, employee benefits expense at Rs 68.2

crore, and depreciation and amortisation expense at Rs 10.8 crore. Zydus Wellness, which owns popular brands like Glucon-D, Nutralite, Complian, Sugar Free, Nycil, and Everyuth Naturals, said most of its brands achieved gross margin growth, showing the strength of its portfolio.

However, the contribution of seasonal brands was temporarily affected by unusual weather conditions. "The saliency of seasonal brands was temporarily impacted by shorter-than-usual summers and unseasonal rains," it added. Around 2:15 p.m., the shares of the company were trading at Rs 2047, up by Rs 34.5 or 1.71 per cent. In the last five days, it has delivered a negative return of Rs 61 or 2.9 per cent. In the timeframe of one month, the shares have delivered a return of Rs 23 or 1.14 per cent to their investors, as per the official data.

Despite the decline in quarterly profit, Zydus Wellness recorded a modest increase in revenue, indicating that demand

across parts of its consumer wellness portfolio remained relatively stable. The company's performance reflected the impact of rising operating costs and weather-related disruptions on its overall profitability. Seasonal products, particularly those associated with summer consumption, play an important role in the company's business. Shorter summers and unseasonal rainfall can affect demand for products such as Glucon-D, as consumers may reduce purchases when temperatures remain lower or weather conditions are unpredictable.

The increase in advertising and promotional expenditure reflects the company's continued efforts to strengthen brand visibility and maintain consumer engagement in a competitive market. Higher marketing investments can support long-term brand growth, although they may also put pressure on profitability in the short term.

Zydus Wellness said most of its brands recorded growth in gross

margins, highlighting the underlying strength of its product portfolio. Its presence across health drinks, glucose-based beverages, sugar substitutes, spreads, personal care and skincare products provides multiple revenue streams and helps diversify its business.

The company's financial performance also comes amid changing consumer preferences, with growing attention to health, nutrition and personal wellness. Manufacturers are increasingly focusing on product innovation, distribution expansion and targeted marketing to attract consumers across urban and rural markets.

Going forward, the company's earnings performance will depend on the recovery of seasonal demand, management of operating expenses and the effectiveness of its marketing initiatives. Investors will also monitor revenue growth, margins and consumer spending trends in subsequent quarters to assess whether the company can restore profit growth.

Middle class pockets take hit as rice prices surge in Telangana

"The middle and upper middle class households will be the most affected and the prices might not go down soon because the government has asked farmers to cut down on paddy cultivation," said T Sagar, chief secretary of Telangana Rythu Sangam.

Hyderabad, Oct 20 (GNS): Rice prices have been on the rise for a past few months and are not expected to go down soon, causing a strain on the pockets of daily consumers, especially the middle class. According to wholesale prices of Sona rice variety saw a 65.4 per cent increase from last year, going from Rs 2,068 per quintal in October 2025 to Rs 3,419 in October 2026. At the same time, rice inflation in the state climbed from 4 per cent in April to 13 per cent in September. The retail price had increased to Rs 85 to 90 per kilogram at the start of Navratri, and still sits around the same range, according to prices reflected on Blinkit and Instamart.

The same rice would be around Rs 50-60 without the surge. "The middle- and upper middle-class households will be the most affected and the prices might not go down soon because the gov-

ernment has asked farmers to cut down on paddy cultivation in view of El Nino and drought," T Sagar, chief secretary of Telangana Rythu Sangam, told. Recently, while in a meeting discussing El Nino, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy likened the situation to the COVID-19 pandemic and asked famers to switch to less water intensive crops. According to a report in, the Horticulture Department is pushing Telangana farmers to alternative crops as the state recorded rainfall deficit of 23 per cent this monsoon.

The extent of land used for cultivation of vegetables, fruits, spices flowers and other horticulture crops increased by 1.28 lakh acre from last year. The land for horticulture crops stood at 2.25 lakh acre in Kharif 2025-26 and increased to 3.54 lakh acre this season. Agriculture Department Secretary K Surendra Mohan said



that El Nino contingency plans were prepared in April and awareness about alternative crops was spread during the Praja Palana Pragitiki Pranalika programme.

Seeds to cultivate pulses, vegetables and others were also provided at subsidised prices. However, farmers seem reluctant to the transition as the supply chain

to sell these crops is not as well defined as the paddy supply chain.

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy on October 19 directed officials

to create a food security buffer to protect the 3.42 crore Public Distribution System (PDS) users against the effects of drought, crop losses and rising prices.

He asked officials to plan procurement and stock management in advance to ensure uninterrupted supplies even if deficient rainfall affects the agricultural seasons. The government is preparing to create a foodgrain security buffer covering upto 14 months. Including the Civil Supplies' stock on October 16 and the stock expected through pending custom milled rice (CMR) deliveries, the state currently has the stock to meet welfare requirements upto 11.7 months, or September 2027.

The state has 9.64 lakh metric tonne of rice in the buffer godown and expects another 18.39 lakh metric tonne from CMR deliveries.

The state government is also examining the possibility of distrib-

uting selected essential commodities like wheat flour through PDS to cushion households.

The sustained rise in rice prices has raised concerns among consumers, as rice remains a staple food for households across Telangana. The increase is adding to monthly grocery bills, with lower- and middle-income families facing pressure to adjust their food budgets or reduce spending on other essential items. Market observers note that weather uncertainty could influence paddy production and supply in the coming months. The rainfall deficit and concerns over El Niño have prompted the state government to encourage farmers to consider crops that require less water. However, any significant shift in cultivation patterns could affect the availability of paddy and rice, depending on the scale of adoption and prevailing market conditions.

After building collapse, Hyderabad flags 1500 illegal structures

Hyderabad, Oct 20 (GNS): More than 1,500 illegal buildings have been identified in the three municipal corporations in Hyderabad during a major crackdown.

This is equivalent to the number of illegal structures identified by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) in a year. As part of the crackdown, the Cyberabad Municipal Corporation has demolished 500 structures so far. The GHMC and Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation have identified 1000 illegal constructions in their jurisdictions. The crackdown

comes after the collapse of two under-construction buildings at Anjaiah Nagar in Gachibowli, which killed two, and the tilting of a multi-storey building in Gopanpally. The demolition drive is largely targeting illegal buildings rising five to seven floors on plots just 50 to 75 square yards, posing safety risks to neighbouring properties, officials said.

MMC has demolished over 100 buildings that were still under construction. According to a report, buildings at the centring stage are being targeted during the crackdown. "We have inten-

sified our drive against illegal constructions across our limits over the past month, as several such structures had gone largely unchecked earlier. Notices and speaking orders are being issued regularly, and demolitions are being carried out within two weeks of issuing the notices," MMC Commissioner T Vinay Krishna Reddy was quoted as saying by the newspaper.

He added that the drive will continue, and officials have been asked to closely monitor the areas to ensure illegal constructions do not reappear after demolition.

Bombay HC directs against steps disturbing protected position in CINTAA election dispute



Irfaan Jamiawala Mumbai, Oct 20: On FWICE's contempt petition challenging the proposed fresh CINTAA elections, the Bombay High Court directed both parties to refrain from further steps

disturbing its earlier directions pending disposal of the Notice of Motion on 26 October 2026.

The Court explained that its earlier order was intended to preserve the existing position concerning

the elections conducted by FWICE and protect the effectiveness of the pending proceedings. We call upon all concerned to strictly honour these directions. The Court has reserved its findings on contempt.

Telangana HC dismisses quash petition on ED notices to couple

Hyderabad, Oct 20 (GNS): The Telangana High Court on Monday, October 18, dismissed quash petitions filed by a Hyderabad couple against Enforcement Directorate notices served on them. The hearing pertained to a 2021 case probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) involving forgery, cheating, and offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act; the court noted that these constituted scheduled offences under the PMLA, thereby allowing the ED to initiate proceedings.

The High Court upheld the power of the ED to summon people under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The court also refused to grant them protection from coercive action. Justice J Sreenivas Rao



passed the order recently on a petition filed by Paruchuri Kumar, alias Kanuganti Suresh Kumar, and his wife Pokala Pallavi, alias Paruchuri Pallavi/Kanuganti Pallavi, both engaged in the construction business. The court said that the agency had the authority and jurisdiction to summon the petitioners and found no illegality or jurisdictional error in

the notices issued to them.

The court also observed that the petitioners didn't provide any material suggesting that the ED lacked evidence or jurisdiction to arrest them. Based on the Supreme Court judgment, the court said Section 50 of the PMLA empowers the ED to summon any person to give evidence or produce records. Persons so summoned must appear and state the truth, it noted, adding that courts should exercise restraint and rarely interfere at the summons stage. The High Court also held that the petitioners' pending one-time settlement application with the State Bank of India, or their willingness to repay the amount, would not curtail the ED's proceedings.

Four-day traffic restrictions for road works in Attapur

Hyderabad, Oct 20 (GNS): The Hyderabad traffic police has announced four-day traffic diversions from October 19 to 22 for laying a cement-concrete road at pillar number 37 of the PVNR Expressway. While the traffic restrictions are in place, commuters moving from Attapur towards Nampally and nearby areas via Mehediapatnam can take the diversion at Pillar Number 92, take a U-turn, and proceed via 100 Ft Road – Purana Pool – Jumerath Bazar.

Traffic coming from Shaikpet towards Attapur via Pillar Number 31 can take the diversion at Nanal Nagar, make a right turn towards Balika Bhavan Junction, and go straight towards Lakshmi Nagar and make a U-turn at Pillar Number 59 on Attapur Road. Traf-

fic coming from Shaikpet towards Langer House and Sun City via Nanal Nagar X Road can take the diversion at KFC U-turn – Shaikpet Nala – Banjari Darwaja – Makkai Darwaja – Ramdevguda – Tippu Khan Junction. Commuters moving from Lakdi-Ka-Pool towards Attapur via Rethibowli can take the diversion at Azizia Mosque, then turn left towards Meraj Cafe junction, go straight towards Yadav Bhavan and make a right turn towards Gudimalkapur, Pillar number 68 on Attapur Road.

The traffic police have urged motorists to follow the prescribed diversion routes, plan their journeys in advance and cooperate with traffic personnel to avoid congestion during the road-laying work.

Hyderabad developer ordered to refund Rs 10.95 lakh to plot buyers

Hyderabad, Oct 20 (GNS): The Telangana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (TG RERA) has directed Hyderabad-based BVR Infra Developers to return Rs 10.95 lakh to two plot buyers. This comes after the buyers paid the full amount but did not receive the plot or a registered sale deed. Moreover, TG RERA directed its secretary to start penalty proceedings against the developer for selling plots in SV Golden City-III at Kadthal in Rangareddy district without mandatory RERA registration. It all started after the complainants, M Sheela and Padma Sreeramulu, decided to purchase Plot No. 28 in the venture for Rs 10.95 lakh.

Between August and December 2022, they paid the



full amount in five cash instalments. On February 13, 2024, they signed an agreement of sale. Even after receiving the entire amount, the developer allegedly failed to complete the project, register the sale deed, or hand over possession of the plot. In SV Golden City-III, BVR Infra Developers, promoted by managing partner B Venkateswarlu, had planned 85 residential plots.

It had also secured tentative layout permission from the Directorate of Town and Country Planning (DTCP).

However, the venture had not been registered with RERA. Following the complaint by the plot buyers, the proceedings were conducted. As the developer did not appear before TG RERA despite receiving notices, the proceedings were conducted ex parte.



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Protection of Legal and Human Rights Association Promotes Awareness, Social Welfare

Association Focuses on Human Rights Education, Community Service and Combating Crime and Corruption

Hyderabad, Oct 20 (GNS): The Protection of Legal and Human Rights Association, a non-political, secular and social welfare organization, is working to promote legal and human rights awareness, support underprivileged communities and encourage public participation in building a just and corruption-free society.

According to the organization, it is registered under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), Government of India, and states that it is associated with various institutions, including the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and NITI Aayog. The association also states that it is ISO-certified. The association aims to address the root causes of crime and corruption through public awareness, education and community engagement. It emphasizes that its objective is not

to oppose the government but to promote accountability, justice and awareness of citizens' legal rights and responsibilities.

As part of its social welfare activities, the organization conducts human rights awareness programmes, food and fruit dis-

tribution drives, blood donation camps and health awareness initiatives for needy and underprivileged people. It also organizes legal rights and drug awareness programmes in schools, colleges and public places across different states. The association fur-

ther expresses its willingness to support police departments, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), vigilance departments and other government agencies in efforts to combat crime and corruption and promote transparency, justice and public welfare.

In a message, the Founder and Director said that social awareness, justice and community service are essential for building a stronger nation. The organization believes that collective efforts can help protect human rights, assist disadvantaged sections of society and contribute to a more transparent and responsible social environment.

The association reiterated its commitment to expanding awareness programmes and welfare initiatives across India, encouraging citize.

Syed Abdul Kareem
Founder & CEO Protection of Legal and Human Rights Association

EDITOR, PRINTER, PUBLISHER & OWNER by MOHD ATHER RAHEEM PUBLISHED From FALAKNUMA NEWS English Daily 19-4-276/5/A, Flat No.502. 5th Floor, Lake view Residency, Baquar Nagar, BNK Colony, Miralam Tank, Hyderabad 500 064. Printed at RIYAZ PRINTING PRESS. #22-8-161 Behind Nayaab Hotel Chatta Bazar, Hyderabad- 500002Telangana. Head Office Contact No.0404537318, falaknumanews@gmail.com www.falaknumanews.in