



October 26, 2020 - Monday

## Key Developments

### India wants end to border row with China but will not cede land: Rajnath

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said India wants an end to the border tension with China in eastern Ladakh, but at the same time asserted that Indian soldiers will never allow even an inch of the country to be taken away by anyone.

The defence minister made the remarks after performing "Shastra Puja" -- the customary worship of weapons -- at the Sukna-based headquarters of the Indian Army's 33 Corps in Darjeeling district of West Bengal on the occasion of Dussehra. The defence minister was scheduled to perform the puja at Sherathang, a high-altitude border area near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China in Sikkim, but could not go there due to inclement weather, officials said. "India wants an end to the ongoing border tension with China and restoration of peace. This is our objective. But at times, some nefarious incidents keep happening. I am very confident that our soldiers will never allow even an inch of our land to be taken away by anyone," Singh said after performing the "puja".

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-wants-end-to-border-row-with-china-but-will-not-cede-land-rajnath-120102500332\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-wants-end-to-border-row-with-china-but-will-not-cede-land-rajnath-120102500332_1.html)

### India reacted early and well on COVID-19, has potential to shape global agenda: Klaus Schwab

Bullish on India's power to shape the global agenda, the WEF's Founder and Chairman Klaus Schwab has said the country's early policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic was strong and now its biggest opportunity lies in leapfrogging to a more digital and sustainable economy. He further said he remains optimistic about India and as the country continues its quest to build "a stronger and more equal nation, the world will watch it for inspiration." "With its demographic advantage and extensive diversity, India has the power to shape the global agenda and define our collective future," Schwab told PTI in an interview from Geneva where the World Economic Forum (WEF) is based. Schwab, who founded WEF over 50 years ago, said, "The early policy response in India to mitigate the impact of the pandemic was strong; from an early lockdown, to large-scale food rations to over 800 million people risking starvation, to collateral-free credit for small businesses."

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-reacted-early-and-well-on-covid-19-has-potential-to-shape-global-agenda-klaus-schwab/2113357/>

### The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) likely to be attached with department of commerce

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), which is increasingly being involved in prescribing quality norms for imports, may be shifted to the ministry of commerce and industry from the department of consumer affairs, official sources said. Officials are preparing a note for the Committee of Secretaries to take the proposal forward, they said. "BIS is likely to be attached with department of commerce as the national standard body has to function in close coordination with commerce ministry specially for making standards and quality norms for imported items," said a senior consumer affairs ministry official.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/the-bureau-of-indian-standards-bis-likely-to-be-attached-with-department-of-commerce/articleshow/78862820.cms>

## Economy

### **Govt staff can submit several bills to avail LTC voucher scheme benefit**

Central government employees can submit multiple bills of goods and services purchased in their own name to avail the benefit of the LTC (Leave Travel Concession) cash voucher scheme, according to the Finance Ministry. The Expenditure Department, under the Ministry, has issued a set of FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on LTC cash voucher scheme, clarifying that an employee can also avail the scheme utilising the applicable LTC fare without leave encashment.

The government on October 12 announced the LTC cash voucher scheme under which central government employees can purchase any goods or services with GST rate of 12 per cent or above to avail the benefit. Till now, employees got LTC benefits only on travels made, or had to forgo the amount.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-staff-can-submit-several-gst-bills-to-avail-ltc-voucher-scheme-benefit-120102500419\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/govt-staff-can-submit-several-gst-bills-to-avail-ltc-voucher-scheme-benefit-120102500419_1.html)

### **NITI Aayog begins groundwork on identifying more PSUs for sale**

NITI Aayog has begun the groundwork for selecting the next set of public sector enterprises for strategic sale and disinvestment. A preliminary meeting will be held at the Aayog on Monday to identify more state-owned companies across sectors that can be put up for sale, a top government official aware of deliberations told ET.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/niti-aayog-begins-groundwork-on-identifying-more-psus-for-sale/articleshow/78862688.cms>

### **India has to be careful during festivals as Covid-19 crisis continues: PM**

Indians have to show restraint as the country enters a month-long period of festivals during the coronavirus pandemic, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday. "Dussehra marks the victory of truth over falsehood. It also marks the victory of patience over trouble. People are living their lives and celebrating festivals with great restraint (against the coronavirus). Our victory in this fight is certain," said Modi in the seventieth edition of Mann ki Baat, his monthly radio address to the nation.

"Previously, a large number of people used to gather in Durga Pandals--it was a fair-like atmosphere during Durga Puja and Dussehra, but this time it didn't happen. Many more festivals are to be observed; we've to work with restraint during this crisis," he said. "Please wear masks, wash your hands and maintain a distance between yourselves," he said in a speech in which he spoke about local manufacturing and appealed citizens to light lamps in honour of Indian soldiers defending the nation's borders.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-has-to-be-careful-during-festivals-as-covid-19-crisis-continues-pm-120102500284\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-has-to-be-careful-during-festivals-as-covid-19-crisis-continues-pm-120102500284_1.html)

## **Banking and Finance**

### **FPIs remain net buyers in October so far, pump in Rs 17,749 crore**

Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) remained net buyers in Indian markets in October so far, pumping in a net Rs 17,749 crore in the month as better than expected quarterly results, the opening of the economy, and resumption of business activities kept investors' interest intact.

In equities, FPIs invested a net sum of Rs 15,642 crore and the debt segment saw an inflow of Rs 2,107 crore during October 1-23, the depositories data showed. The total net investment during the period under review stood at Rs 17,749 crore. In September, FPIs were net sellers at Rs 3,419 crore. The investment in Indian markets has come at a time when most of emerging markets like Brazil, South Africa, Taiwan, and Thailand have seen net outflows in 2020, co-founder and COO at Groww Harsh Jain noted. This shows that foreign investors perceive India to be performing well in the immediate as well as long horizon, he added.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/fpis-remain-net-buyers-in-october-so-far-pump-in-rs-17-749-crore-120102500511\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/fpis-remain-net-buyers-in-october-so-far-pump-in-rs-17-749-crore-120102500511_1.html)

### **Bitcoin rallies to reach highest level in over a year with PayPal support**

Bitcoin has breached the \$13,000-mark for the first time since July 2019 after online payments company PayPal decided to allow the customers to buy, sell and hold this and other virtual coins using its online wallets. PayPal customers will also be able to use cryptocurrencies to shop at the 26 million merchants on its network starting in

early 2021. The California-headquartered company plans to support Bitcoin, Ethereum, Bitcoin Cash and Litecoin at first. The service will be available to PayPal account holders in the US in the coming weeks.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/bitcoin-rallies-to-reach-highest-level-in-over-a-year-with-paypal-support-120102500650\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/finance/bitcoin-rallies-to-reach-highest-level-in-over-a-year-with-paypal-support-120102500650_1.html)

## Industry

### **Festive season: Amazon, Flipkart roll out another sale; focus on smartphones, electronics, appliances**

E-commerce companies Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart are back with another round of festive sales. While Amazon announced Happiness Upgrade Days, which started October 24 and would last till October 28, Flipkart's Big Diwali Sale will take place from October 29 to November 4. Its Dussehra Sale is already underway from October 22 to October 28. However, Amazon's latest sale is part of its month-long festivity that began October 17. India's e-commerce sector had generated \$3.1 billion in sales during the first 4.5 days (October 15-19) of the first leg of festive sales out of the forecasted \$4 billion, according to consulting firm RedSeer.

Amazon said that customers would be able to choose from more than 1,100 new product launches from top brands while it "continues to empower SMBs with a wide selection of products from lakhs of sellers under various programs such as Local Shops, Amazon Launchpad, Amazon Saheli, and Amazon Karigar," according to a statement.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/festive-season-amazon-flipkart-roll-out-another-sale-focus-on-smartphones-electronics-appliances/2113429/>

### **Cooperatives absorb Covid shock, help milk farmers beat crisis**

Like many other sectors in India, the dairy sector faced the heat of Covid-19. But farmer-owned cooperatives shielded dairy farmers from the brunt of a drop in demand from bulk consumers by absorbing the shock at a time when small and big private players, including milk processors, left the field waiting for the market to recover. Though milk as farm commodity can't be compared with food grains, the management of this perishable liquid through cooperatives may offer farmers and policy makers some insights. The milk cooperative model can be an apt example when the sector, backed by newly enacted farm laws, looks to offer options for small and marginal farmers, accounting for 86% of India's farming community, through promoting an additional 10,000 farmer producers' organisations (FPOs) over next five years.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/cooperatives-absorb-covid-shock-help-milk-farmers-beat-crisis/articleshow/78854336.cms>

## Agriculture

### **Quarter of India's onion buffer stock likely to be damaged: Nafed**

A quarter of the onion buffer stock of 1 lakh tonnes is likely to be damaged due to loss of moisture during storage. S K Chadha, managing director of Nafed, the state owned cooperative marketing federation which maintains stocks for central government, said onions have a shelf life of three and a half months, after which they dehydrate. "We have been buying onions since March-April for the buffer stock. It's been 6-7 months. So, damages in the stock is quite normal," he said. He said Nafed had offloaded about 43,000 tonnes of onions in the market, and can release another 22,000 tonnes by the first week of November. "The remaining 25,000 tonnes are likely to be damaged," he said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/quarter-of-indias-onion-buffer-stock-likely-to-be-damaged-nafed/articleshow/78858814.cms>

### **Telangana to triple area under redgram to 25 lakh acres**

As new projects bring in additional irrigation facilities, the Telangana government is planning to triple the redgram acreage to 20-25 lakh acres.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/telangana-to-triple-area-under-redgram-to-25-lakh-acres/article32940272.ece>

## Infrastructure

### **Govt to seek Parliament nod for Rs 37,000 crore infra push in second supplementary demands for grant**

The government will seek Parliament's approval for Rs 37,000-crore additional spending on infrastructure development in the second batch of supplementary demands for grant. Earlier this month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced additional budget of Rs 25,000 crore as capital expenditure (capex) on roads, defence, water supply, urban development and domestically produced capital equipment. Besides, the central government approved issuance of a special interest-free 50-year loan to states of Rs 12,000 crore for infrastructure development. Approval for this additional spending will be sought through second supplementary demands for grants, sources said. This was part of the third stimulus announced by the government earlier this month to boost demand during the festival season. The additional spending of Rs 37,000 crore is over and above Rs 4.13 lakh crore capex plan approved by the government in Budget 2020-21.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/govt-to-seek-parliament-nod-for-rs-37000-crore-infra-push-in-second-supplementary-demands-for-grant/articleshow/78855291.cms>

### **441 infra projects show cost overruns of Rs 4.35 lakh crore**

As many as 441 infrastructure projects, each worth Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of over Rs 4.35 lakh crore owing to delays and other reasons, according to a report. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above. Of the 1,661 such projects, 441 reported cost overruns and 539 time escalation. "Total original cost of implementation of the 1,661 projects was Rs 20,90,931.27 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 25,26,063.76 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,35,132.49 crore (20.81 per cent of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for August 2020 said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/441-infra-projects-show-cost-overruns-of-rs-4-35-lakh-crore/articleshow/78854780.cms>

### **Maiden seaplane service to take off on Oct 31 from Sabarmati riverfront: Mandaviya**

India's maiden seaplane service is likely to take off from Sabarmati riverfront to the Statue of Unity on October 31 if all goes as per plans, Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said. No-frills carrier SpiceJet is in the process of procuring a seaplane for the venture from the Maldives which is expected to arrive on October 26 for the first regular service on the about 205 km stretch. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier used a seaplane flight from Sabarmati riverfront in Ahmedabad. "The first seaplane service in the country is likely to be launched on October 31 from Sabarmati riverfront to Statue of Unity which will be a new beginning for the country...Infrastructure is ready for it on both the sides including the floating jetty," the shipping minister told.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/shipping/-/transport/maiden-seaplane-service-to-take-off-on-oct-31-from-sabarmati-riverfront-mandaviya/articleshow/78856069.cms>

### **DGCA allows airlines 13,000 flights in winter, 44% lower than last year**

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said it has approved 12,983 weekly domestic flights of airlines for the winter schedule that begins on Sunday and ends on March 27 next year. In last year's winter schedule, the aviation regulator had approved 23,307 weekly domestic flights.

The DGCA said on Sunday it has approved 6,006 weekly domestic flights of IndiGo for this year's winter schedule. IndiGo is India's largest airline. SpiceJet and GoAir have got 1,957 weekly domestic flights and 1,203 weekly domestic flights approved, the regulator said.

Currently, airlines in India are allowed to operate a maximum 60 per cent of pre-Covid weekly domestic flights. In comparison to last year's winter schedule, when 23,307 weekly domestic services were approved by the DGCA, this year's winter schedule has got just 55.7 per cent (12,983 flights) of those flights approved, according to the aviation regulator.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/dgca-approves-12-983-weekly-domestic-flights-in-winter-schedule-120102500560\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/dgca-approves-12-983-weekly-domestic-flights-in-winter-schedule-120102500560_1.html)

### **NHAI, IIT Jodhpur sign collaboration to share expertise, skills for betterment of country's road infrastructure**

In a novel collaboration, the central body for constructing and maintaining the national highways National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has joined hands with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jodhpur to work on improving the state of the highways, news agency PTI reported. As part of the collaboration, the NHAI and IIT Jodhpur will share

their expertise to bring a turnaround and betterment of the highway structure. The collaboration agreement between the two institutions was signed at the IIT Jodhpur campus on Friday.

IIT Jodhpur Director Santanu Chaudhury who was present at the occasion was quoted as saying that the MoU will facilitate the joint working of the two institutions in various domains including transportation engineering, structural engineering, geotechnical engineering, among others. The other areas which will see a cooperation between the two institutions will be hydraulics engineering, infrastructure systems, earthquake engineering, urban and rural planning and disaster management and planning, Chaudhary said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/infrastructure/nhai-iit-jodhpur-sign-collaboration-to-share-expertise-skills-for-betterment-of-countrys-road-infrastructure/2113387/>

## Energy

### USD 75 million investment so far in four OALP bid rounds, according to DGH

Having committed USD 2.3 billion investment, energy firms such as Cairn Oil & Gas spent USD 75 million (about Rs 550 crore) in oil and gas hunt in the first two years of India's maiden open acreage licensing policy, according to the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH). In a bid to expedite oil and gas exploration and raise domestic production, the government had in 2018 launched the first bid round under the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) that allowed explorers to carve out desired areas for exploration and offered liberal terms. Five rounds have been concluded so far, with winners of the fifth bid round announced on Thursday. In the first four rounds, USD 2.317 billion investment was committed by firms such as Vedanta Group firm Cairn Oil & Gas, state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd in 99 blocks awarded for exploration and production of oil and gas, according to the latest data put out by the DGH.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/usd-75-million-investment-so-far-in-four-oalp-bid-rounds-according-to-dgh/articleshow/78855142.cms>

### India may see \$206 bn investment in oil and gas in next 8-10 years

The country's oil and natural gas sector is likely to see investment to the tune of \$206 billion during the next eight to ten years. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the top global executives at the India Energy Forum by CERA Week on Monday, it is expected he would further entice companies to promote an oil and gas self-reliant India. This when the domestic fuel market is recovering from the pandemic-driven decline. The three-day forum will see participation from Dan Brouillette (US Secretary of Energy), Prince Abdulaziz (Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabia) and Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber (CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company).

“The importance of such a global meet comes when you realise that the country is set to see such large investment this decade. This includes investments to the tune of \$67 billion in gas infrastructure -- LNG capacity increase, pipelines and CGD networks. Global players like Total, Exxon Mobil and Shell have shown their interests in this field” said a government official.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-may-see-206-bn-investment-in-oil-and-gas-in-next-8-10-years-120102500488\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-may-see-206-bn-investment-in-oil-and-gas-in-next-8-10-years-120102500488_1.html)

### Coal imports rise 12% to 19 MT in September on improved consumption

India's coal import rose 11.6 per cent to 19.04 million tonnes in September on account of a recovery in consumption by thermal power plants and other industries as also helped by competitive prices in international markets. The country imported 17.06 million tonnes (MT) of coal in September 2019, showed data available with mjunction services limited. mjunction — a joint venture between Tata Steel and SAIL — is a B2B e-commerce company and also publishes research reports on coal and steel verticals. “The steady recovery in consumption by thermal power plants and other industries coupled with competitive prices in the international markets led to a resurgence of demand for imports ahead of the festive season,” mjunction Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Vinaya Varma said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/coal-imports-rise-12-to-19-mt-in-september-on-improved-consumption/2113303/>

## States

### Air quality turns 'severe' in Delhi as people face breathing problems

The air in the national capital on Sunday further deteriorated with the rise of pollutants in the atmosphere. The Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 422 in Bawana, 423 in Mundka and 416 in Jahangirpuri, all three in 'severe' category as per the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) data.

The national capital witnessed a thin layer of smog this morning. According to experts, the severe category affects the health of people and seriously impacts those with existing diseases.

An AQI between 0-50 is marked good, 51-100 is satisfactory, 101-200 is moderate, 201-300 is poor, 301-400 is very poor and 401-500 is considered severe. Amid the rise in pollution levels, people are having problems with breathing and some children have started facing throat problems due to contaminated air.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/air-quality-turns-severe-in-delhi-as-people-face-breathing-problems-120102500152\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/air-quality-turns-severe-in-delhi-as-people-face-breathing-problems-120102500152_1.html)

## Healthcare

### NITI looking at reform ideas in health sector, says member V K Paul

Government think tank Niti Aayog is looking at many reform ideas in the health sector, including aligning traditional and modern approaches for a 'larger good', its member (health) V K Paul said on Sunday. Paul said the government is committed to strengthening the traditional system of medicine (homoeopathy and Ayurveda) as well as the modern system of medicine (allopathy). "It makes eminent logic that the best of traditional medicine and best of modern medicine therapies be brought together for a larger good of people and there are ways of practising integrated medicine," he told. Paul, pointed out that it has already happened to an extent, as yoga is now part of practice in several conditions like in hypertension.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/niti-looking-at-reform-ideas-in-health-sector-says-member-v-k-paul/articleshow/78855511.cms>

### Covid-19 Factoid: Kerala has most active cases; Bengal numbers worrying too

The global count of coronavirus cases is nearing 43 million, of which over 10 million are currently active. The global death toll is now over 1.15 million, with the US having the greatest number of deaths. In India, the confirmed case count is now over 7.8 million, of which 668,154 cases are currently active. Recovery rate has now touched 90 per cent and the death toll stands at 118,534. India has so far recorded 7.07 million recoveries, which is 90 per cent of the total 7.86 million reported cases. India has the second-highest recovery rate among the top ten worst-affected countries, a tad below Peru, which has a recovery rate of 90.7 per cent.

Kerala has an active cases ratio of over 35 per cent, highest among all India states. The total confirmed cases count in the state stands at 386,087, of which nearly 100,000 cases are currently active. Kerala is followed by Manipur and Nagaland with an active cases ratio above 20 per cent. The current case tally in West Bengal stands at 345,574. The state is witnessing a consistent rise in daily new cases, adding over 4,000 cases daily for five days in a row. Over 300,000 cases have already recovered in the state while 6427 people have succumbed to the virus.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/covid-19-factoid-kerala-has-most-active-cases-bengal-numbers-worrying-too-120102500403\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/covid-19-factoid-kerala-has-most-active-cases-bengal-numbers-worrying-too-120102500403_1.html)

## External

### India and Philippines commence negotiations on investment treaty

India and the Philippines have commenced negotiations on a new bilateral investment treaty even as there has been a recent upswing in economic engagement that both sides are keen to accelerate. The first round of talks on a new treaty took place last week in a virtual meeting between the Department of Economic Affairs and the Philippines department of trade and industry. "Both sides had exchanged their respective drafts a few years ago after India had decided to work on a new model Bilateral Investment Treaty text. With the recent upswing in economic engagement with the Philippines, both sides are seeking to reach early agreement on a range of initiatives," an official said. In the recent past, Indian companies have made significant investments in the Philippines. These include Wipro Enterprises completing a \$200 million acquisition of Philippines personal care brand Splash in 2019 and GMR completing two major airport projects in Cebu and Clark.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/india-and-philippines-commence-negotiations-on-investment-treaty/articleshow/78861677.cms>

### **Staff representation of India in WTO secretariat stagnant in past 25 years**

India has pitched for taking measures to increase the number of staff strength from the country at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) secretariat as its staff representation has remained stagnant in the past 25 years. It has stated that smaller countries, with less population, have more staff in the secretariat than India, which is the world's second most populous country, and its professionals have made a mark across the world with their skills and talent. "The staff representation of many members, including India has remained stagnant in the past 25 years. For instance, India's share in the total WTO staff in 1995 was 2.2 per cent and now it is 2.1 per cent. "Almost no change! In the professional staff category, it has in fact gone down from 4.1 per cent in 1995 to 3.5 per cent in 2019," according to a statement made by India in the WTO's CBFA (Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration) meeting on October 22.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/staff-representation-of-india-in-wto-secretariat-stagnant-in-past-25-years/articleshow/78855922.cms>