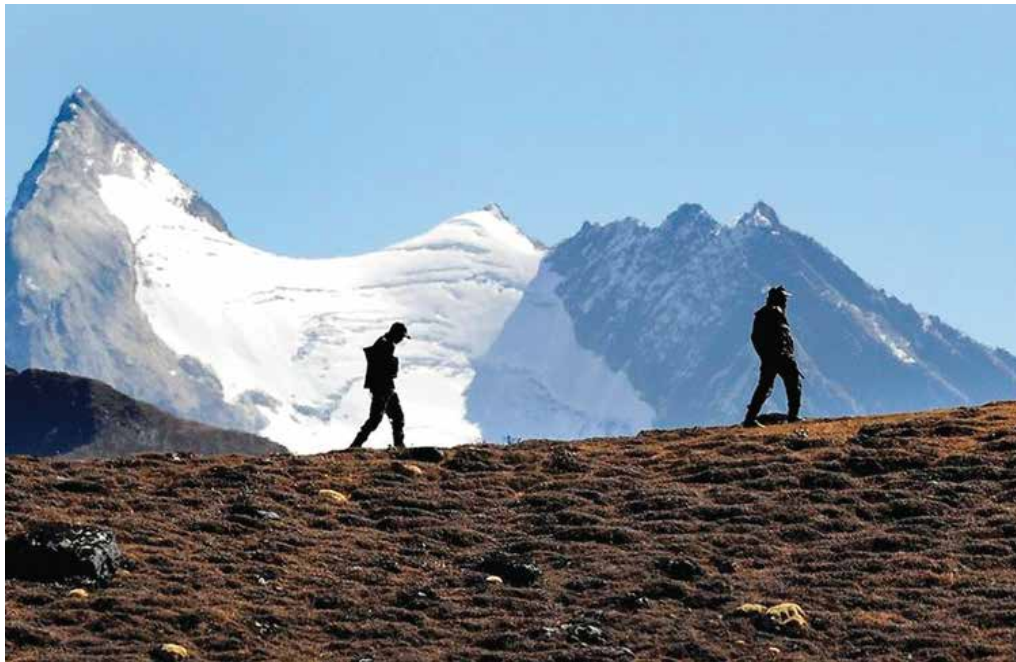


India, China to undertake 'coordinated patrolling'

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



India and China plan to conduct coordinated patrols in Depsang and Demchok along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh to prevent confrontations, with patrols expected to resume by the end of October. Disengagement is anticipated to be completed by October 29. Additionally, it was agreed that Chinese patrols in Yangtse, Arunachal Pradesh, will continue as they did previously and will not be obstructed.

Army sources reported that disengagement, which began on Tuesday, is expected to be completed by

October 29, restoring the situation to pre-April 2020 conditions, with patrols resuming afterward. A general framework agreement was reached diplomatically, followed by a detailed agreement on disengagement and patrolling at the Corps Commander level. This agreement specifically addresses the two remaining friction points: Depsang and Demchok.

The agreement aims to restore the situation to what it was before April 2020, allowing the Indian Army to resume patrols up to Patrolling Points (PP) 10, 11, 11A, 12, and 13 in the Depsang area, which they last accessed in January 2020. Previously, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) had been obstructing Indian patrols from advancing beyond the Y-junction in the Depsang plains.

Yangtse understanding

An official source indicated that there is an agreement allowing Chinese patrols in Yangtse, Arunachal Pradesh, similar to previous arrangements, meaning their movements will not be obstructed. Yangtse, located in Tawang, is a disputed area where Chinese patrols have been notably larger than in other regions. The area has seen consistent transgressions since 2011, with one reported each summer. Sources indicated that measures are being implemented to prevent direct confrontations between troops, with patrols being coordinated and spaced to avoid face-offs. Although patrols are set to symbolically resume soon, the onset of winter will lead to a temporary halt in activities in the area for a few months.

It's unclear if 'buffer zones' will continue

Following the announcement of progress in Indo-Chinese border talks and the start of the disengagement process at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), experts and former diplomats have urged for full transparency regarding the details of the resolution. There are specific concerns about whether the "buffer zones" established in eastern Ladakh since 2020 will be removed.

While the government claims that troops will return to pre-2020 positions, at least two senior officials indicated that the "buffer zones" will not be part of the current patrolling arrangement, which is limited to Demchok and Depsang. Former Ambassador to China Ashok Kantha expressed concern that the agreement does not address these buffer zones, suggesting a contradiction in the government's statements about returning to the pre-2020 situation. He warned that the government may be prematurely declaring disengagement as complete. The MEA did not respond to requests for comment on whether the buffer zones would remain, but an official denied any "contradiction" in the statements.

'Return to 2020 situation'

Experts noted that confusion regarding the buffer zones stems from the initial announcements about the "breakthrough" made on October 21, just before a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping. On the same day, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar mentioned ongoing negotiations since the 2020 standoff, stating that an agreement on patrolling had been reached and that the situation had returned to where it was in 2020. He also claimed that the disengagement process with China was complete.

Manoj Joshi, a Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, highlighted the lack of clarity regarding the future of the buffer zones and whether patrols would be allowed in those areas. Ashok Kantha cautioned against returning to "business as usual," emphasizing that unresolved structural issues still pose risks and that peace in the border region remains incomplete. He advised maintaining vigilance, stating, "This is not a reset." Meanwhile, former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao acknowledged the developments as positive but stressed the need for continued efforts to enhance peace and confidence-building measures between the two sides.

PM raises Ukraine, Gaza conflicts in meet with German Chancellor

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



During a meeting on Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz discussed the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. Mr. Modi expressed India's commitment to finding solutions to these crises, stating that both conflicts are a concern for their nations. He emphasized India's belief that war is not a solution and affirmed the country's readiness to contribute to restoring peace. This dialogue was part of the 7th Intergovernmental Consultations between India and Germany.

The discussion between Prime Minister Modi and Chancellor Scholz followed Modi's return from the 16th BRICS summit, where he advocated for efforts to ensure peace in Russia and Ukraine. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri indicated that the Indian delegation updated the German Chancellor on Modi's recent conversations with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Misri clarified that "India is not neutral" in the conflict, stating that the country stands firmly on the side of peace.

DGCI finds 49 drug samples not of standard quality

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

India's drugs regulator ordered the recall of 49 medicines after samples were found to be "not of standard quality." Additionally, action has been taken against the manufacturers of four spurious drugs produced by unauthorized companies. Dr. Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi, the Drugs Controller General of India, noted that some of the substandard samples included painkillers, antifungals, and diabetes medications.

Several samples found to be of substandard quality included metronidazole tablets (400 mg) by Hindustan Antibiotics Ltd. for treating infections, oxytocin injection (5 IU/1 ml) by Pushkar Pharma for aiding delivery, metformin hydrochloride (500 mg) by Swiss Biotech Parenterals for blood sugar control, and various other medications such as diclofenac sodium tablets by Hindustan Antibiotics, nimesulide and paracetamol tablets by Innova Captab Limited, pantoprazole tablets by Alkem Health, cefpodoxime tablets by Aristo Pharmaceuticals, amoxicillin and potassium clavulanate tablets by Alkem Health, and ciprofloxacin tablets by Cadila Pharmaceuticals.

Centre to relaunch mission to preserve ancient manuscripts

ART & CULTURE

The Union Ministry of Culture plans to "revive and relaunch" the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) and is considering creating an autonomous body to preserve ancient texts in India. Currently, the NMM is part of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts. The proposed new entity, likely called the National Manuscripts Authority, would operate independently under the Ministry. This initiative was discussed in a meeting chaired by Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on October 14.

The NMM stated that till date metadata of 52 lakh manuscripts has been prepared and roughly over 3 lakh titles have been digitised, he said. However, only one-third of them have been uploaded. The NMM also stated that over the past 21 years, it had undertaken preventive and curative conservation of 9 crore folios.

Dana brings rain to Odisha, Bengal

DISASTER MANAGEMENT



Severe cyclonic storm Dana crossed the coast in Kendrapara district, Odisha, on Friday with much-reduced intensity, resulting in less destruction than anticipated. In West Bengal, heavy rain and gusty winds affected Kolkata and southern districts, leading to two fatalities—one in Kolkata and another in South 24 Parganas. The India Meteorological Department reported that the storm passed over Habalikhati Nature Camp with wind speeds of 100 to 110 km/h between 1:30 a.m. and 3:30 a.m., weakening to a cyclonic storm over north coastal Odisha, where sustained wind speeds around the cyclone's center reached 80-90 km/h.

The cyclone resulted in heavy rainfall of 16 cm near Chandbali in Bhadrak and Rajkanika in Kendrapara. A storm surge of one to two meters was noted in low-lying areas of Bhadrak, Balasore, and Kendrapara. While there were instances of uprooted trees and minor damage to power infrastructure, no major destruction was reported, and crop damage was less than expected. Early morning vehicle movement was disrupted by fallen branches, but disaster response teams quickly cleared the roads.

Minimal damage

Chief Minister Mohan Majhi announced that the Odisha government achieved its goal of "zero casualties" during cyclone Dana, attributing this success to prompt evacuation of six lakh people and effective government response. He directed district collectors to assess damages for compensation. By Friday afternoon, power was restored to 11.4 lakh homes, with full restoration expected by night.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reported the evacuation of 2.16 lakh people from low-lying areas due to the cyclone. She and her team monitored the situation overnight and directed officials to focus on the most affected districts: North and South 24 Parganas, and Paschim and Purba Medinipur, for the next 48 hours. She emphasized the need for field surveys to assess agricultural damage. Areas like Diamond Harbour, Kolkata, and Digha experienced very heavy rainfall.

ISRO-DBT sign agreement to conduct biotechnology experiments in space station

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) have signed an agreement to design and conduct experiments for India's upcoming indigenous space station, the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), which is projected to be developed between 2028 and 2035.

Health impact

Proposed experiments for the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) include studying the effects of weightlessness on muscle loss, identifying algae suitable for nutrition and food preservation, exploring algae processing for jet fuel, and assessing radiation's impact on health in space. Prior to the BAS, ISRO is focused on the Gaganyaan mission, India's first crewed space mission, expected to launch in 2025-2026.

Before the Gaganyaan mission, there will be three uncrewed test flights, during which some biology experiments may be included. ISRO Chairman S. Somanath mentioned that specific experiments for these flights are still to be determined, and findings from them could influence the Gaganyaan mission. However, the main focus remains on the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS).

Bio-manufacturing

The collaboration between ISRO and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) is part of the BIOE3 policy, which aims to boost bio-manufacturing in India, projected to reach a \$300 billion bio-economy by 2030. Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary of DBT, stated that this agreement will drive innovation in human health research, pharmaceuticals, regenerative medicine, and waste management technologies, while also supporting various start-ups in the space bio-manufacturing sector.



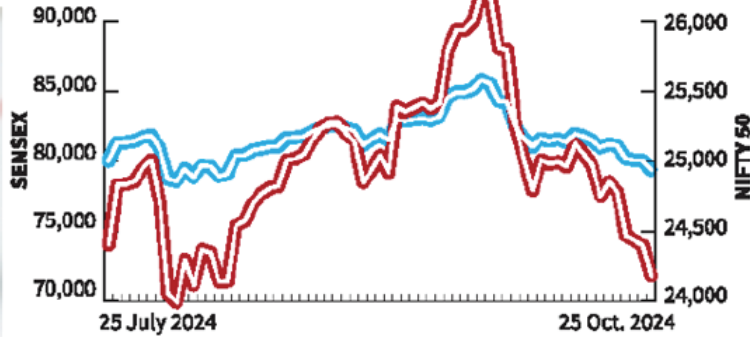
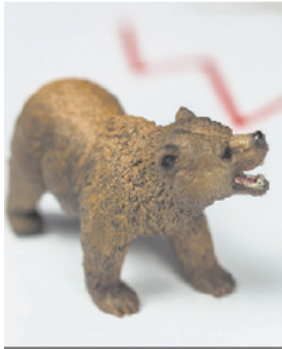
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Bear grip: Sensex dives below 80,000

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Dalal Street Blues

The chart shows the S&P BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty 50 indices' trends over the past three months, from July 25, 2024 to October 25, 2024. Both indices hit a two-and-a-half month low on Friday



SOURCE: NSE, BSE

India's benchmark stock market indices fell to a two-and-a-half month low on Friday, with the S&P BSE Sensex dropping below 80,000, down 7.5% from its peak of 85,836.12 on September 26. The Sensex fell by 663 points (0.83%) to close at 79,402, while the NSE Nifty-50 index decreased by 218.60 points (0.90%) to 24,180.80. Deepak Jasani from HDFC Securities noted that the Nifty ended weakly for the fifth consecutive session, with increased

cash market volumes but significant declines in small and midcap indices, indicating panic among retail and high net worth investors.

At the BSE, the midcap index fell 1.48%, and the small-cap benchmark dropped 2.44%. Mr. Jasani attributed the decline to selling pressure from foreign portfolio investors, disappointing Q2 corporate results, and rising U.S. treasury yields. Key Sensex stocks that experienced significant losses included IndusInd Bank (18.56%), M&M (3.93%), and L&T (3.35%). Rajesh Bhosale from Angel One noted it was a challenging week for investors, with a broad-based sell-off causing the Nifty to drop over 2.65% and slip below 24,200 after two weeks of consolidation, particularly impacting mid-cap stocks.

Govt. doubles loan limit under Mudra Yojana to ₹20 lakh

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

The government has doubled the loan limit under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) to ₹20 lakh to promote entrepreneurship in the country. This increase aspires to further the overall objective of the Mudra Scheme which is funding the unfunded, the Finance Ministry said in a statement. As announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23 in the Union Budget 2024-25, the limit under the PMMY has been enhanced.

The limit of Mudra loans will be enhanced to ₹20 lakh from the current ₹10 lakh for those entrepreneurs who have availed and successfully repaid previous loans under the 'Tarun category'. This enhancement is specifically beneficial to upcoming entrepreneurs facilitating their growth and expansion. The move is in alignment with the government's commitment in fostering a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem. As per the notification issued in this regard, the new category of Tarun Plus is for loans above ₹10 lakh and up to ₹20 lakh and would be available to entrepreneurs who have availed and successfully repaid previous loans under the Tarun category. The guarantee coverage of PMMY loans for amounts up to ₹20 lakh will be provided under the Credit Guarantee Fund for Micro Units (CGFMU).

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Varanasi court rejects plea for additional ASI survey of entire Gyanvapi Mosque premises

POIITY & GOVERNANCE



A Varanasi court on Friday rejected the plea filed by Hindu petitioners seeking additional survey by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) of the entire premises of the Gyanvapi complex.

Civil Judge (Senior Division), Varanasi Fast Track Court, Yugal Sharma dismissed the plea filed in February in addition to the main 1991 suit concerning the Gyanvapi Mosque-Kashi Vishwanath Temple. The court said that the report of the ASI survey done on plot number 9130 last year, where the mosque stands, is yet to be examined. It added that the Supreme Court has protected the structure where the 'Shiva Linga' is stated to have been found on the mosque premises.

The counsel for the petitioners, Vijay Shankar Rastogi, had requested the court to get an ASI survey done of the entire cellar beneath the Gyanvapi mosque by removing the newly constructed brick walls. The aim was to find out whether there exists the main 'Swayambhu Jyotirling' (representation of Hindi god Shiva). The petitioners had stated that the survey should be done without harming the disputed structure. The Supreme Court and the Allahabad High Court also ordered to conduct the survey by using non-invasive methodology and not to use excavation technique and no destruction of the property will be done. Apart from this, no reasons for further survey are cited by plaintiffs in their application and Hon'ble High Court has left it to the discretion of the court below to issue necessary direction for further survey.



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