The Union Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) ministry - to set up a technology centre in Vallam, Sriperumbudur in 10 acres area with ₹200 crore investment

- The park will be exclusively for SMEs and MSMEs, to help small businesses embrace latest technologies.
- The proposed centre will have sophisticated design units and facilities for reverse engineering, testing and consulting, besides tie-ups with various central laboratories.
- The Sriperumbudur region in the state is among the most industrialised belts in India with the presence of small scale engineering and automotive companies running factories.
- The ministry has planned to set up 120 more technology centres across the country for the MSME sector so that units could have access to latest technologies.
- Currently, the MSME sector has 18 technology centres (or tool rooms), and 15 more with ₹3,000 crore investment have been announced to be set up.
- Tamil Nadu was one of the largest contributors to the MSME sector with more than 13 lakh registered units, providing employment opportunities to about 81 lakh people.
- The MSME sector, which contributes 29% to the nation’s GDP, has 6 crore industries employing 11 crore people, producing over 8,000 products ranging from traditional items to high-tech precision items.
- Export share of the MSME sector stands at 45%

Tamil Nadu Government – to release a state-level policy for two key emerging technologies including blockchain and Artificial Intelligence within the next ten days

- The AI policy will be the world’s first policy addressing safe and ethical use of AI
✓ No state or country has so far announced a standalone policy to address the safety and ethics associated with AI
✓ Earlier this year, the Telangana government released a draft Blockchain Policy for the state to attract blockchain enterprises to set up companies in the state.
✓ AI is the simulation of human intelligence processes through machines, especially computer systems being used for predictions
✓ A blockchain, is nothing but a list of records, called blocks, that are linked using cryptography.
✓ Each block contains a cryptographic hash of the previous block, a timestamp, and transaction data and therefore by design, it is difficult to modify the data making the technology safe
✓ Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami recently announced a blockchain platform created by the TN e-Governance Agency (TNeGA) for better e-service delivery to citizens.
✓ The platform will provide a predictive system for government service delivery and through it, various identity certificates will be issued without citizens having to apply for it.
✓ One of the state’s most recent successful case for AI has been an AI-powered attendance system for students in two corporation schools.

◆ Tamil Nadu Day – to be observed on November 1 across the entire state
✓ This is the first time the occasion is being observed in the state on its Formation day
✓ The celebration of the day was announced by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami earlier this year.
✓ The Madras Presidency was formed 1 November 1956.
✓ Former Chief Minister Annadurai renamed the Madras Presidency as Tamilnadu on January 14, 1969

◆ The Directorate of elementary education (DEE) – announces the new system for the common annual examination for students of Classes V and VIII in Tamil Nadu’s state board schools from this year
✓ The written exam for Class V students will test basic concepts, practices and learning outcomes in three subjects — Tamil, English and Maths
✓ The Class VIII exam will test basic concepts, content and learning outcomes in five subjects - Tamil, English, Sciences, Social Science and Maths
✓ Class VIII students will be tested for the full year’s syllabus at the end of three terms, which is a deviation from the current system of term-based exams
✓ For Class V students, the focus would be on testing basic literacy
✓ These papers will be for a total of 60 marks out of 100 marks
The students’ average marks scored in three formative assessments — their performance in classroom assignments and other activities — will be taken into account for the remaining 40 marks

The question papers and answers keys would be prepared by the Directorate of government examinations (DGE) and despatched to the districts.

NATIONAL

Jammu & Kashmir - ceases to be a state of the Union on the midnight of October 31, making way for 2 new Union territories, J&K and Ladakh

It culminates the process which began on August 5 with the landmark announcement for the abrogation of Article 370 as well as end of statehood for J&K.

This also put an end to J&K’s flag and constitution, symbols of the state’s special status.

The new lieutenant governors of the two UTs — G C Murmu in J&K and R K Mathur in Ladakh — will be sworn in at separate ceremonies in Srinagar and Leh, respectively on October 31

The creation of the UTs of J&K and Ladakh coincides with the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on October 31

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was credited with the merger of over 560 states with the Indian Union

The Centre will be in direct control of police and law & order in J&K from October 31, while land will be under the elected government

The UT of Ladakh will be under the direct control of the central government which will administer the region through the LG.

Right to Information (RTI) and Right to Education were not applicable in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which will now come into force in the new UTs

Now, Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) will be able to do the scrutiny of government expenditures.

Indians from other states of the country can own property and settle in J&K and Ladakh.

Women will be free to work and get educational degrees, as no Sharia law will restrict any women henceforth

The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will have an assembly like Puducherry, while Ladakh will be a Union Territory with no assembly on the lines of Chandigarh.

NITI Aayog – proposes the draft Medical Devices (Safety, Effectiveness and Innovation) Bill, 2019

As per the bill, Medical device makers and importers can face penalty of up to ₹1 crore if products sold in India are found to be unsafe or if they fail to protect personal health information of patients
It also proposes to create a National Register of Medical Devices (NRMD), a unique identification number (UID) to be displayed on the label of a product in a prescribed format.

The bill also lays provisions for compensation for harm or injury due to the usage of any device.

It also intends to set up a separate regulator or Medical Device Administration (similar to US Food and Drug Administration (US FDA)) to oversee the functioning of regulators of food, drugs and medical devices.

As per draft, the administration will consist of a chairperson, four full time members, six ex-officio members and an ex-officio member-secretary.

The draft bill also has stringent penalty provisions, including imprisonment for offences related to sale of medical devices, clinical trials and fraud.

As per the proposed provisions, all medical devices will have to be registered in the NRMD before they enter the market.

Hindi - remains the most widely spoken Indian language in the US, followed by Gujarati and Telugu.

67.3 million residents or 21.9% of US residents, speak a foreign language at home

These details are provided by the American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2018 (it measures the US population as of July 1, 2018), recently released by the US Census Bureau.
The Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), a US-based thinktank, has also released its own report, based on the census data. According to the CIS report, in America’s five largest cities, just under half (48%) of residents now speak a language other than English at home. As per the CIS report, the largest increase in those who speak a language other than English at home, between 2010 and 2018, was among speakers of Spanish (up by 4.5 million), Chinese (up 6.63 lakh) and Arabic (up by 3.94 lakh). The Hindi-speaking population with a growth of 2.65 lakh, occupied fifth position.

**INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS**

- **Pakistan** - had invited former Punjab minister Navjot Singh Sidhu for inaugural ceremony of the Kartarpur corridor on November 9.

  Earlier, Sidhu had attended the ground-breaking ceremony of Kartarpur corridor in November 2018. However, he has not been included in the ‘inaugural’ Punjab government jatha which will be visiting Kartarpur Sahib in November 2019. PM Imran Khan’s party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf confirmed about the invitation extended to Sidhu in Islamabad.

- **India** – plans to take the domestic RuPay card network global

  Recently, during the Prime Minister Modi’s visit to Saudi Arabia, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and Saudi Payments for acceptance of RuPay in the Kingdom. The MoU comes soon after the launch of RuPay in the UAE during the PM Modi’s visit to Abu Dhabi in August.

  The objective of launching the RuPay card in the region was to enable Indian visitors use their RuPay cards in popular tourist destinations like Dubai. The Government also has plans to get UAE banks and Indian banks in the region issue RuPay cards locally.

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**79% RISE IN TELUGU SPEAKERS IN 8 YRS**

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Notes: Ranking is based on 2018 numerical figures; Data of Telugu, Bengali and Tamil speaking individuals for 2010 is sourced from CIS report, as the government data had dubbed several languages together.
In July, NPCI had signed an agreement with Japanese payment major, JCB International, together with Indian banks, for the launch of Ru-Pay JCB Global Cards.
These cards can be used in India as well as JCB card accepting points outside India for both POS and ATM transactions.
Currently, there are nearly half a billion RuPay cards in circulation.

COMMITTEES

The High-Level Advisory Group (HLAG) headed by economist Surjit Bhalla – has submitted its final report to the government on boosting India’s share in global trade.
The panel had S Jaishankar (now external affairs minister) and principal economic adviser Sanjeev Sanyal as members.

It had recommended major reform initiatives such as labour reforms, tax reforms, easier entry rules for those investing in stock markets and faster investment approvals.
The panel had also proposed a complete revamp of regime for offshore fund management, foreign individuals investing in Indian stocks and long-term bonds for infrastructure.
The group has also recommended that the government could launch a tax amnesty scheme, where those disclosing undisclosed income or assets could pay 15% tax and park 40% of the amount in Elephant Bonds, which will yield 5% over a period of 20 years.
CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

The 35th Summit of The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) - begins in Bangkok on October 31

- It will conclude on November 4
- PM Modi will attend the summit on November 3rd and 4th.
- Theme 2019 - Advancing Partnership for sustainability
- ASEAN is a group of 10 countries that promotes economic, social and political co-operation in the region.
- Apart from the members countries, 8 dialogue partner countries are also participating in the summit.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) - plans to put in place the Indian Space Station with 3 astronauts in the next five to seven years

- The space station will be an extension of the human spaceflight programme Gaganyaan.
- The initial designs for the space station suggest a 20-tonne modular structure in the low earth orbit (LEO), at an altitude of 120km to 140km
- The International Space Station (ISS), jointly managed by the US, Russia, Europe, Japan and Canada, orbits at an average altitude of 400km

A space station, with its zero-gravity environment and exposure to space, provides a unique laboratory for scientific research, which cannot be replicated on Earth

- Some of the major experiments being conducted at ISS include those on Parkinson’s disease and resistance of cancer cells to chemotherapy.
- Research in space has applications in material development, disaster relief, food and water conservation and waste management.
- Gaganyaan mission plans to send three Indian astronauts to space and bring them back in the same crew module in 2022
- Isro plans to use technologies from Gaganyaan for the space station, which includes orbital module, life-support system and human-rated launch vehicles for space station programme.
Isro is likely to conduct a docking experiment, which is the key to manned space missions, next year.
The docking technology will allow transfer of humans from one vehicle or spacecraft to another and refuel spacecraft.
The department of space has earmarked ₹10 crore for this technology.
Gaganyaan will include participation from about 650 private industries.

**APPOINTMENTS**

*Justice Amareshwar Pratap Sahi - is likely to be sworn in as the chief justice of the Madras high court by November 13*

The President notified Justice Sahi’s transfer on October 30 and directed him to take charge on or before November 13.

On October 17, the collegium recommended transfer of Justice Sahi, the sitting chief justice of the Patna high court, to Chennai High court.

Earlier, the collegium had announced its decision to transfer chief justice of the Meghalaya high court, A K Mittal, to the Madras high court, which was then reconsidered.

On September 6, former chief justice of the Madras HC Justice V K Tahilramani resigned, without accepting her transfer to the Meghalaya HC.

On September 20, the President had appointed Justice Vineet Kothari, the senior-most judge of the Madras High Court, to perform duties attached to the office of the Chief Justice, with immediate effect.

**AWARDS**

*The 28th Vyas Samman of the year 2018 was given to renowned writer Leeladhar Jagoori.*

He was awarded for his Hindi poetry collection ‘Jitne Log Utne Prem’ published in 2013.
The award was given by KK Birla Foundation since 1991 for an outstanding literary work in Hindi authored by an Indian citizen published during the last 10 years.
It consists of a citation, Rs 4 lakh and a symbol of the KK Birla Foundation.
SPORTS

BCCI - has asked SG, the makers of the red balls used in first-class cricket in India, to provide 72 new balls for the inaugural D/N Test match against Bangladesh, to be played at Eden Gardens from Nov 22.

✓ The balls are likely to be delivered to BCCI by next week
✓ The major problem with the pink ball is retaining the colour and shape of the ball
✓ The Duleep Trophy was played with Kookaburra pink balls for three seasons and not SG, before the BCCI went back to red ball this year
✓ The first D/N Test was played between Australia and New Zealand at the Adelaide Oval between November 27 to December 1, 2015 with Australia winning the match by three wickets
✓ Till now, 11 D/N Tests have been played with the pink ball, with all of them producing the result
✓ The Eden test match could well be the first winter test match to be played with pink ball
✓ The D/N test matches aims to bring back the dwindling crowd to the test matches and to make it more viewer friendly for people who wanted to watch cricket after a day’s work.
✓ Even though all the balls, red or white, are same, the major difference is that the pink ball is not dipped in grease like the red ball which stops water from seeping into the ball.
✓ Reverse swing is virtually non-existent in the Pink balls and spinners also do not get much turn.

NATIONAL DAY

National Unity Day or Rashtriya Ekta Diwas - October 31

✓ The day marks the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who is also known as the 'Iron Man of India'
✓ This year the day marks the 144th birth anniversary of the illustrious leader
✓ PM Modi will be participating in the Rashtriya Ekta Divas Parade
✓ The ‘Run for Unity’ event is also being organized across the country to encourage citizens from all walks of life in India to run together.
✓ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was India’s first deputy Prime Minister and first Home minister
He played a major role in persuading over 500 princely states to accede to the independent Indian Union.

The National Unity Day was first observed in 2014 when the Narendra Modi-led NDA government came to power.

The Statue of Unity, which is the world’s tallest statue, depicts Vallabhbhai Patel on the banks of river Narmada facing the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Kevadia, Gujarat.

The 182m Statue of Unity was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 31, 2018, on the 143rd birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

It was designed by prominent Indian sculptor Ram V Sutar.

Sardar Patel was honoured with the Bharat Ratna posthumously.