Tamil Nadu government - signed an agreement with KfW, German development bank, for a loan assistance of €203 million (₹1,575 crore) on September 26

- The pact will help purchase 2,213 BS-VI buses and 500 electric buses in the initial phase, which will be introduced in all 8 transport corporations in the early part of next financial year.

- The agreement to purchase climate-friendly modernisation of buses in the major cities of Tamil Nadu was signed in the presence of chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami and transport minister M R Vijayabaskar at the secretariat.

- The financial assistance will also be used for the financial turnaround of the transport undertakings, capacity building of workforce, and strengthening and improving bus depots and infrastructure.

- The move to procure the modern buses is aimed at protecting the environment and reducing air pollution.

- The state government had earlier signed ‘clean bus declaration’ with C-40 Cities Climate Leadership Group last year.

- In the long run, the government plan is to procure 12,000 new BS-VI buses and 2,000 electric buses at a budget of ₹5,890 crore with KfW loan assistance to encourage people to use public transport.

- For operating electric buses, the state will be providing amenities like charging infrastructure, procurement of software and hardware components, digital display counters and cashless transaction facility.
Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - signed 15 MoUs with various firms across sectors – from auto components to energy, IT to textiles — attracting investments to the tune of ₹7,175.71 crore

- Japanese-based MAHLE Electric Drives India and Korea’s Younghwa Tech, the motor manufacturers for electric vehicles are investing in the state to boost the production of e-vehicles
- MAHLE is planning to set up a unit at RKG Industrial Estate in Coimbatore and Younghwa in SIPCOT industrial park near Chennai.
- Schwing Stetter India’s construction machinery unit will produce a range of equipment in SIPCOT-Cheyyar at an investment of ₹350 crore.
- Infosys signed an agreement to expand its existing set up in Sholinganallur which would generate 16,000 jobs, while the foundation stone was laid for Tata Consultancy Services’ unit in SIPCOT IT park in Siruseri.
Tamil Nadu government - has invited non-government organizations (NGOs) to open schools in remote and inaccessible tribal villages in the state.

- The move is expected to reduce school dropouts and improve the standard of education among tribal children.
- The literacy rate of Tamil Nadu tribals is just 54.34% as against the state’s average of 80%.
- The aim of the exercise is to provide 100% free and quality education to all tribal children and make them competitive enough to find their livelihood.
- The Department of tribal welfare has identified 19 blocks in the hilly regions of 10 districts to establish schools with full financial assistance and welfare aid by the Government.
- The Government would provide salary for teaching and non-teaching staff and boarding grants and student expenditure assistance as per the norms of the Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009.
- The organisations should have at least three years of experience in running educational programmes or community service.

**STATES**

Jammu Central University and Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) - has signed an MoU to establish Kalam Centre for Science and Technology (KCST) in the region.

- This centre will be established in Jammu Central University to provide facilities of basic and applied research and technology development in the identified research areas.
- It will be equipped with all modern facilities and equipment to assist the research scholars in various areas.
NATIONAL

◆ The Centre – to roll out ‘One Nation One Tag’ initiative soon to end the use of multiple smart tags on tolled roads
  ✓ At present, FasTag, the RFID-based smart tag, can be used to pay toll on the national highways and a few state roads.
  ✓ A meeting of transport ministers and top officials, to be chaired by minister Nitin Gadkari, to decide on the initiative will be held in the second week of October

◆ India – to hold the second edition of joint hackathon with Singapore, at IIT-Madras on September 28 and 29
  ✓ The winners of the “Singapore India Hackathon 2019” will be awarded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
  ✓ The move is aimed at promoting collaboration of Indian students with their international peers to work on solutions to problems faced by our societies
  ✓ There are 20 teams with six members each, including three from India and three from Singapore.
  ✓ They are working on developing solutions to problem areas identified in India.

◆ The transport ministry - has removed the minimum educational qualification for obtaining a driving licence for commercial vehicles including trucks and buses.
  ✓ Earlier, as per section-8 of the central motor vehicles rules, minimum Class VIII pass was required to get commercial driving licence
  ✓ The minimum educational qualification was now removed as many trained drivers from backward regions were denied getting licences due to the lack of it
  ✓ The new norm will come into effect from September 30

INTERNATIONAL

◆ The first of its kind, Bedari Kindness Institute - was unveiled recently at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
  ✓ The institute will strive to empower citizens and inspire leaders to build more humane societies through the study of actions, thoughts, feeling and social institutions associated with kindness.
  ✓ The University of Wisconsin already has a Center for Healthy Minds, in which preschoolers were introduced to sensory games, songs and stories that are designed to help them pay closer attention to their emotions
  ✓ This is the first time that the discipline of ‘kindness’ will get a dedicated centre in the form of a full-blown institute
AWARDS

The Union Government - has constituted Sardar Patel National Unity Award, the highest civilian award for contribution to India’s unity and integrity.

- The award will be announced on National Unity Day on October 31, on the occasion of Sardar Patel’s birth anniversary.
- The award will be presented by the Indian President at a ceremony along with the Padma awards presentation at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.
- The award will not carry any monetary grant or cash reward, but comprises a medal and a citation.
- Further, not more than three awards will be given in one year.
- The awards committee will be constituted by the prime minister.
- It will include the secretary to the president, principal secretary to the prime minister, Cabinet secretary and home secretary as members and 3-4 eminent persons, who will be selected by the Prime Minister.

SPORTS

Rupa Gurunath, daughter of former BCCI president N Srinivasan - took charge as the new president of the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA).

- Rupa and the other office-bearers were unanimously elected for a three-year term from 2019-20 to 2021-22.
- The 45-year-old Rupa, whole-time director, India Cements, has become the first woman to take over as president of a state association in the BCCI.
India - has improved by four places to be ranked 44th in the IMD World Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2019 (WDCR)

The World Digital Competitiveness Ranking measures the capacity of countries to develop, adopt and explore digital technologies.

The countries are ranked based on three parameters - Knowledge, Technology and Future readiness.

The US continued to top the rankings list, followed by Singapore at 2nd, Sweden at 3rd, Denmark at 4th rank and Switzerland at 5th rank.

India was ranked at 48th position last year.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

World Tourism Day 2019 – September 27

The day intends to raise awareness about the role of tourism around the world and to promote social, cultural, political and economic values of various countries.

Theme 2019 - "Tourism and jobs: a better future for all"

This year India is hosting the World Tourism Day 2019.

India was chosen because it has a different geographical and cultural entity than the rest of Asia.

The day of September 27 was chosen for World Tourism Day because the Constitution of the World Tourism Organization was accepted on this day in 1970.

The United Nations decided to celebrate September 27, 1980, as the first World Tourism Day.
Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu gave away the National tourism awards in various categories on the occasion.

Best State award for overall growth in tourism category was bagged by Andhra Pradesh.

Madhya Pradesh and Goa were the winners in the Adventure Tourism category.

While Telangana bagged the award for the best state in the innovative use of IT category, Uttarakhand was awarded as the best film promotion friendly state.