

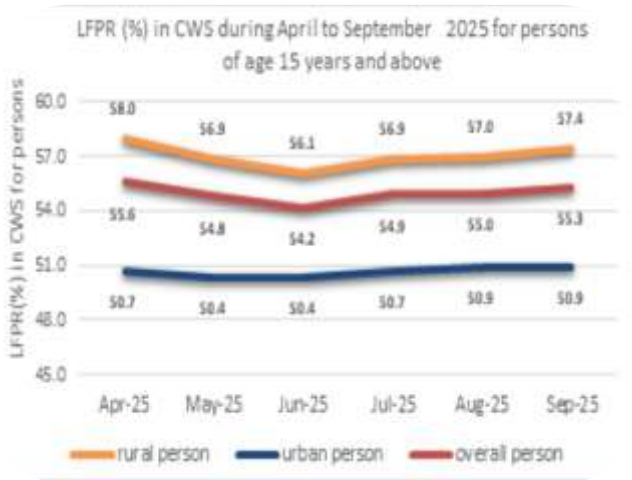


# **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**> 18 OCTOBER 2025**

## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

### 1. NSO Released Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Bulletin for September 2025: India's Unemployment Rate Rises to 5.2%.



On October 15, 2025, the National Statistical Office (NSO), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), released the “Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Monthly Bulletin – September 2025.” The report highlights a marginal rise in India’s overall unemployment rate (UR) and provides key trends in labour participation and workforce ratios.

- According to the PLFS September 2025 bulletin, India’s overall unemployment rate (UR) for individuals aged 15 years and above rose slightly to 5.2%, compared to 5.1% in August 2025. This uptick follows two consecutive months of decline in unemployment across the country.
- The rural unemployment rate increased from 4.3% in August to 4.6% in September 2025, while the urban rate rose marginally from 6.7% to 6.8%. These changes indicate a slight dip in rural employment opportunities amid ongoing economic adjustments.
- Female unemployment in urban areas climbed from 8.9% to 9.3%, pushing the overall female

unemployment rate to 5.5% in September 2025. Male unemployment rates also rose slightly — from 4.5% to 4.7% in rural areas and 5.9% to 6.0% in urban areas.

#### Key Points:-

- The overall LFPR reached a five-month high of 55.3%, up from 54.2% in June 2025, marking the third consecutive monthly increase. Rural LFPR improved from 56.1% to 57.4%, while urban LFPR remained constant at 50.9%. Notably, female LFPR surged to 34.1%, the highest since May 2025, driven by rural workforce expansion.
- India’s Worker Population Ratio (WPR) for individuals aged 15 years and above stood at 52.4% in September 2025.
- The rural WPR was 54.8%, reflecting stronger employment absorption than urban areas, where the WPR remained at 47.4%, indicating persistent urban job challenges despite steady participation levels.

### 2. A.R. Rahman Collaborates with Google Cloud to Launch AI-Powered Metahuman Digital Avatar Band “Secret Mountain”.



In October 2025, Oscar and Grammy-winning composer A.R. Rahman partnered with

Google Cloud, a suite of cloud computing services offered by Google, to develop “Secret Mountain”, an innovative AI-powered metahuman digital avatar band that combines storytelling, music, and lifelike digital avatars for immersive entertainment experiences.

- **Secret Mountain integrates storytelling, diverse music genres, and interactive digital avatars to deliver a unique entertainment experience, aiming to redefine how audiences engage with music and virtual performances.**

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The project leverages Google Cloud's AI technology with multiple components: Veo 3 for realistic avatars and real-time video creation, Imagen and Gemini Flash 2.5 (Nano Banana) for high-quality visuals, and Gemini 2.5 Pro serving as the avatars' “brain” to enable real-time interactions with fans.
- (ii) The band features six diverse digital avatars, including Cara, an Irish singer-songwriter; Zen Tam, a Tamil rapper; and Blessing, an African percussionist and vocalist, showcasing global musical diversity and personalized fan engagement.

## INTERNATIONAL

### 1. Henley Passport Index 2025: Indian Passport Falls to 85th Position, Singapore Tops.



On October 15, 2025, Henley & Partners, a British consultancy specializing in investment migration, released the Henley Passport Index 2025 Global Ranking. The latest ranking shows the Indian passport has slipped to 85th place from 77th in July 2025, offering visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 57 countries, tying with Mauritius.

- **Singapore retains the most powerful passport position, providing visa-free access to 193 out of 227 destinations, followed by Japan and South Korea, which jointly hold the second position.**
- **Japan has been demoted to third place with a visa-free score of 189, just one less than Singapore.**
- **Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, and Switzerland share the 4th position with a visa-free score of 188, while Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, and Netherlands jointly hold the 5th position with a score of 187.**

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has made the most significant progress, moving from 10th to 8th place since July 2025, now offering access to 184 destinations.
- (ii) The UK is ranked 8th globally in 2025,

reflecting a decline from its previous higher position, while the USA, which held the top spot in 2014, has fallen to 12th place, marking the first time in 20 years it has dropped out of the top 10.

(iii) The Indian passport's decline to 85th place reflects its limited visa-free access (57 countries), tying it with Mauritius, indicating a continuing challenge for Indian citizens in global mobility.

## 2. IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025 Held in Abu Dhabi and India Launches National Red List Roadmap.



The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress 2025 was held from October 9 to 15, 2025, at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC), UAE, under the theme "Powering Transformative Conservation", focusing on driving impactful decisions and initiatives for nature and people globally.

- Her Excellency Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak was re-elected as IUCN President for a second term, continuing to work with the newly elected members of the IUCN Commissions and Council to guide global conservation strategies.

- The Republic of Panamá was selected to host the next IUCN World Protected and Conserved Areas Congress in September 2027, serving as the leading global forum for protected area agendas.

- IUCN launched the 4th World Heritage Outlook report, which highlighted that climate change threatens 43% of natural World Heritage sites worldwide, underscoring the urgent need for conservation action.

### Key Points:-

(i) Armenia became a State Member of the IUCN, reflecting its commitment to advancing biodiversity conservation and sustainability at a global level.

(ii) During the congress, Union MoS Kirti Vardhan Singh unveiled India's first National Red List Roadmap, including the first-ever Red List of Endangered Species of India, setting a strategic plan for National Red List Assessment (NRLA) 2025-2030 to monitor the conservation status of Indian flora and fauna.

(iii) On October 10, 2025, Dr. Sonali Ghosh, Field Director of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, Assam, became the first Indian recipient of the IUCN WCPA Kenton R. Miller Award, recognizing her outstanding contributions to wildlife conservation.

## 3. 78th WHO Regional Committee Session for South-East Asia Held in Colombo and SEAR Nations Adopt Colombo Declaration on Healthy Ageing.



The 78th session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee (RC78) for South-East Asia was held from October 13 to 15, 2025, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, under the chairmanship of Sri Lanka's Minister of Health, Nalinda Jayatissa. The event gathered regional health leaders to deliberate on pressing health priorities in the South-East Asia Region (SEAR).

- The session was formally inaugurated by Jagath Wickramaratne, Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, marking the commencement of high-level health policy discussions involving ministers, experts, and WHO officials from across SEAR nations.

- The conference witnessed the participation of Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General (DG) of WHO, and Dr. Catharina Boehme, Officer-in-Charge of WHO South-East Asia Regional Office (SEARO), along with senior health officials from member countries of the region.

- India was represented by Anupriya Patel, Union Minister of State (MoS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW), Government of India (GoI). Her participation underscored India's leadership in strengthening regional health cooperation and advancing a

collective response mechanism for public health challenges in South and South-East Asia.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The session concluded with the unanimous adoption of the Colombo Declaration on "Healthy Ageing through Strengthened Primary Health Care (PHC)", emphasizing the importance of prioritizing elderly health as the ageing population in SEAR is projected to double by 2050.

(ii) The declaration calls for integration of healthy ageing into national health policies and PHC-oriented health systems, promoting accessible, equitable, and age-responsive health services across all levels—from prevention and promotion to rehabilitation and palliative care.

(iii) The session highlighted SEAR's commitment to universal health coverage (UHC), digital health innovations, and pandemic preparedness, reinforcing WHO's mission to strengthen resilient, inclusive, and people-centered health systems across the region.

#### 4. India-Panama Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group Established to Strengthen Bilateral Cooperation.



In October 2025, the Embassy of India in Panama announced the establishment of a 20-member India–Panama Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group at the National Assembly of Panama, marking a new milestone in the diplomatic and parliamentary engagement between the two nations.

- A formal Oath-Taking Ceremony was organized at the National Assembly of Panama to officially launch the Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group, symbolizing the deepening of parliamentary and political cooperation between India and Panama.

- The ceremony was attended by Sumit Seth, Ambassador of India to Panama; Walkiria Chandler, President of the Commission for External Relations; and Jorge Bloise, who took charge as the President of the Friendship Group.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The newly formed group comprises 20 members from the National Assembly of Panama, representing different political affiliations, to ensure broad-based support for bilateral initiatives and dialogue with the Indian Parliament.

(ii) The initiative seeks to enhance collaboration in key sectors including technology, healthcare, trade, and sustainable development, fostering stronger institutional cooperation and knowledge exchange between the two countries.

(iii) The establishment of this Friendship Group underscores Panama's recognition of India as a strategic partner, further reinforcing India's engagement in Latin America and promoting mutual growth through parliamentary diplomacy and people-to-people ties.

## BANKING & FINANCE

### 1. India's GIFT City Climbs to 43rd Position in Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 38).



In October 2025, the China Development Institute (CDI) in Shenzhen and Z/Yen Partners in London released the 38th edition of the Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 38). India's GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City) improved its rank from 46th to 43rd, showing India's growing global financial competitiveness.

- The GFCI evaluates the competitiveness of 135 financial centres worldwide using 140 instrumental factors provided by World Bank, OECD, and United Nations (UN).

- New York (USA) topped the index with a score of 766, followed by London (UK) with 765, and Hong Kong (China) with 764.

#### Key Points:-

(i) India's GIFT City ranked 43rd, rising three spots from the previous edition, while Mumbai and New Delhi were ranked 71st and 84th respectively.

(ii) The Asia-Pacific region showed strong growth, with six centres in the global top 15. Labuan (Malaysia) debuted at 60th position,

and Beijing (China) re-entered the ranking.

(iii) The rankings were based on 28,549 assessments from 4,877 respondents covering factors like business environment, infrastructure, human capital, and fintech innovation.

## MOUs and Agreement

### 1. DRDO Signs MoU with SECI to Develop 300 MW Solar Energy Projects Across Its Establishments.



On October 15, 2025, the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), under the Ministry of Defence (MoD), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), to establish 300 megawatt (MW) solar-based renewable energy projects across DRDO campuses in India.

- The MoU aims to enhance renewable energy capacity within DRDO facilities, promoting sustainable and clean energy practices in defence infrastructure across India.

- The MoU exchange ceremony took place at DRDO Bhawan, New Delhi, in the presence of Dr Samir V. Kamat, Secretary of the Department of

Defence R&D and Chairman of DRDO, and Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Secretary of MNRE.

### Key Points:-

(i) The collaboration targets the creation of net-zero energy campuses across all strategic DRDO locations by 2027, aligning with India's commitment to reduce carbon emissions and promote green technology adoption.

(ii) This partnership reinforces India's national sustainability goals by integrating renewable energy into defence establishments, supporting the broader vision of achieving energy self-reliance and environmental stewardship in government operations.

### 2. Paras Defense Signs MoU with Israel's CIELO for Inertial Navigation Systems and FOG-Based Inertial Solutions.



In October 2025, Paras Defense and Space Technologies Limited (PARAS), a leading Indian defence and space optics, electronics, and electromagnetics company, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Israel-based Cielo Inertial Solutions Limited (CIELO) to jointly develop, market, and produce Inertial Navigation Systems (INS)

and Closed-Loop Fibre Optic Gyroscope (FOG)-based inertial solutions in India.

● **PARAS and CIELO will leverage their expertise to promote and pursue opportunities in India for the adaptation, marketing, sale, and production of advanced inertial sensors, supporting India's defence and aerospace sectors.**

#### Key Points:-

(i) INS are navigation devices that use accelerometers, gyroscopes, and onboard computers to calculate a moving object's position, orientation, and velocity without relying on external signals, making them vital for defence and aerospace applications.

(ii) The partnership will focus on Closed-Loop Fibre Optic Gyroscope (FOG)-based systems, which offer high precision, reliability, and robustness for navigation in complex environments, enhancing India's indigenous defence technology capabilities.

### 3. Dr. Ambedkar Foundation Signs MoUs to Establish Three New Dr. Ambedkar Chairs in Indian Universities.



On October 15, 2025, the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJ&E), signed

Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with Mumbai University (Maharashtra), Jaipur National University (Rajasthan), and GB Pant University of Technology and Agriculture (Uttarakhand) to establish three new Dr. Ambedkar Chairs aimed at promoting research and education on social justice and empowerment.

● **The signing ceremony was chaired by Union Minister Dr. Virendra Kumar, MoSJ&E, and attended by Amit Yadav, Secretary, MoSJ&E, senior officials, university representatives, and members of the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, held at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC), New Delhi.**

● **With the addition of these three Chairs, the total number of operational Dr. Ambedkar Chairs in India now stands at 28, facilitating expanded research and academic programs.**

#### Key Points:-

(i) The new Chairs will promote interdisciplinary research, policy discussions, and educational programs focusing on the legacy and ideals of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, particularly in areas of social justice, equality, empowerment of marginalized communities, and constitutional values.

(ii) The Dr. Ambedkar Foundation is a statutory body under MoSJ&E, established to carry forward Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's legacy through initiatives in education, research, advocacy, and public outreach, reinforcing his vision of an equitable society.

### IMPORTANT DAYS

**1. Global Handwashing Day (GHD) 2025: "Be a Handwashing Hero!" Observed on October 15.**



Global Handwashing Day (GHD) is observed annually on October 15 to promote the importance of washing hands with soap and water, a simple, cost-effective method to prevent infections. In 2025, the observance marks the 18th GHD, emphasizing hand hygiene as a life-saving action for both individuals and communities.

- The theme for 2025 is “Be a Handwashing Hero!”, highlighting the critical role of consistent hand hygiene in preventing diseases and protecting community health.

- GHD was launched by the Global Handwashing Partnership (GHP) in August 2008 during the annual World Water Week (17–23 August 2008) in Stockholm, Sweden. The first-ever GHD was celebrated on 15th October 2008, establishing it as an annual global initiative to raise awareness about hand hygiene.

- Apart from GHD, the World Health Organization (WHO) observes World Hand Hygiene Day annually on 5th May to promote the importance of handwashing as a key infection-prevention measure across healthcare settings.

#### Key Points:-

(i) GHP is an international coalition of public and private stakeholders that advocates for

handwashing with soap. Its mission is to make hand hygiene accessible, affordable, and effective in improving public health, preventing infections, and reducing child mortality.

(ii) Proper handwashing is critical because around 80% of infectious diseases are spread through dirty hands. Washing hands with soap for at least 20 seconds significantly reduces the risk of illnesses such as influenza, COVID-19, and norovirus.

(iii) Surveys indicate that 62% of people know that 20 seconds of handwashing is sufficient, while 13% underestimate and 24% overestimate the required time; men are slightly more likely to underestimate.

## 2. World Students’ Day 2025 Observed on 15 October to Honor Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.



World Students’ Day (WSD) is observed annually on 15 October to honor the birth anniversary of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, India’s 11th President (2002–2007) and the “Missile Man of India.” The day celebrates students and highlights the transformative role of education in shaping society.

- Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was born on 15 October 1931 in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu (TN). He

overcame humble beginnings to become a globally respected scientist and leader, inspiring generations of students.

- Dr. Kalam was a distinguished aerospace scientist who made major contributions to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), playing a pivotal role in India's missile and space programs.

- He served as the 11th President of India from 2002 to 2007, nominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its National Democratic Alliance (NDA). His presidency was marked by efforts to connect with youth and promote education, innovation, and national development.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Dr. Kalam received multiple prestigious awards, including the Padma Bhushan (1981) in Civil Service, Padma Vibhushan (1990) in Science and Engineering, and the Bharat Ratna (1997), India's highest civilian award, for his outstanding contributions to science and engineering.

(ii) The 2025 theme, "Empowering Students as Agents of Innovation and Change," reflects Dr. Kalam's vision of encouraging students to innovate, lead, and drive societal progress.

(iii) 15 October 2025 marks his 94th birth anniversary, with the theme "Empowering Students as Agents of Innovation and Change."

## DEFENCE

### 1. India and Indonesia Commence 5th Edition of Bilateral Naval Exercise 'Samudra Shakti 2025' in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.



In October 2025, the Indian Navy (IN) and the Indonesian Navy (TNI AL) began the 5th edition of their bilateral maritime exercise 'Samudra Shakti 2025' in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The exercise, conducted from October 14–17, 2025, aims to strengthen interoperability, mutual trust, and maritime security cooperation between the two Indo-Pacific nations.

- 'Samudra Shakti 2025' is a bilateral naval exercise designed to enhance maritime partnership and operational coordination between India and Indonesia.

- The 2025 edition is being conducted in two distinct phases — Harbour Phase and Sea Phase. The Harbour Phase (October 14–15) includes professional exchanges, cross-deck visits, and Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEE), while the Sea Phase (October 16–17) features advanced naval warfare drills including air defence, anti-submarine warfare, and helicopter operations.

- The Indian Navy is represented by INS Kavaratti, an Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Corvette of the Eastern Fleet under the Eastern Naval Command (ENC). Indonesia's participation includes KRI John Lie, a Corvette equipped with an integral helicopter, reflecting both nations'

growing blue-water capabilities and maritime surveillance strength.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The exercise is a vital component of India's maritime diplomacy under the Act East Policy (AEP), focusing on regional peace, stability, and cooperative maritime security. It underscores the strategic partnership between New Delhi and Jakarta in countering non-traditional threats such as piracy, illegal fishing, and maritime terrorism in the Indo-Pacific region.

(ii) The Samudra Shakti series was initiated in 2018, with its first edition held in Surabaya, Indonesia. The 4th edition, conducted from May 17–19, 2023, took place in the South China Sea. Over the years, it has evolved from basic maritime coordination to complex tactical manoeuvres, reflecting the deepening defence cooperation between both navies.

(iii) 'Samudra Shakti 2025' aims to enhance operational synergy, standardize joint maritime procedures, and share best practices for humanitarian assistance, disaster relief (HADR), and maritime domain awareness (MDA).



In October 2025, V Narayanan, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), announced ambitious plans for India's space program, including a crewed moon mission by 2040 and the maiden human spaceflight mission 'Gaganyaan' scheduled for launch in 2027.

- These updates were shared during the 35th convocation of Birla Institute of Technology (BIT) Mesra, Ranchi, Jharkhand.

- ISRO plans to conduct three crewed Gaganyaan missions by 2026, with the first mission in December 2025 including a half-humanoid robot named Vyommitra. The maiden human spaceflight mission is progressing on schedule for 2027.

- ISRO has set a long-term target to launch India's first crewed moon mission by 2040, marking a significant step in the country's space exploration ambitions.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The Government of India (GoI) has approved the Venus Orbiter Mission (VOM) to study Venus' surface and atmosphere, expanding India's planetary exploration efforts beyond the Moon and Mars.

(ii) India's first space station, Bharatiya

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### 1. ISRO Sets 2040 Crewed Moon Mission Target and Gaganyaan Launch Scheduled for 2027.

Antriksh Station (BAS), designed along the lines of the International Space Station (ISS), is planned for 2035, with initial modules expected to be launched into space as early as 2027.

## 2. DRDO Successfully Conducts 32,000-Foot Combat Free-Fall Jump Using Military Combat Parachute System (MCPS).



In October 2025, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted a combat free-fall jump from an altitude of 32,000 feet using the Military Combat Parachute System (MCPS). The test, executed by Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel, demonstrated the system's advanced design, operational efficiency, and strategic capabilities for high-altitude missions.

- The combat free-fall jump was performed from 32,000 feet, with the parachutes deployed at 30,000 feet. The operation showcased controlled descent and precision landing at the designated drop zone.

- The jump was executed by Wing Commander Vishal Lakhesh, Master Warrant Officer (MWO) RJ Singh, and MWO Vivek Tiwari of the IAF,

demonstrating the parachute system's reliability in real operational conditions.

- The MCPS is the only operational parachute system in the Indian Armed Forces (Indian Army, Indian Navy, and IAF) capable of deployment at altitudes above 25,000 feet, enabling high-altitude tactical operations.

### Key Points:-

(i) The system provides controlled descent with superior steering, ensuring safe exit, navigation, and precise landing. It is compatible with India's indigenous satellite navigation system, Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC), making it resistant to external interference or denial-of-service attacks.

(ii) MCPS was developed by DRDO laboratories – Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE), Agra, Uttar Pradesh and Defence Bioengineering and Electromedical Laboratory (DEBEL), Bengaluru, Karnataka – integrating advanced navigation, steering, and safety features.

(iii) MCPS facilitates mass induction of indigenous parachutes, reduces reliance on imports, and ensures maximum operational readiness with minimal maintenance. The 32,000-foot jump meets global standards for High Altitude High Opening (HAHO) and High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) operations, marking a significant milestone for India's airborne capabilities.

**Static GK**

<b>Indonesia</b>	President : Prabowo Subianto Djojohadikusumo	Capital : Jakarta
<b>DRDO</b>	Chairman: Sameer V. Kamat	Headquarters: New Delhi
<b>Henley &amp; Partners</b>	Chief Executive Officer : Dr. Juerg Steffen	Headquarters : London, United Kingdom (UK)
<b>International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)</b>	Director General (DG) : Grethel Aguilar	Headquarters : Gland, Switzerland
<b>WHO SEARO</b>	Regional Director : Saima Wazed	Headquarters: New Delhi
<b>Indian Space Research Organisation(ISRO)</b>	Chairman : Dr. V. Narayanan	Headquarters : Bengaluru, Karnataka