



**COTTON
ASSOCIATION
OF INDIA**

Established 1921

ISO 9001:2015



News Relating to **Cotton and Textile Sector**

Date-22-10-2026

Sr. No.	Topics	Page No.
News Relating to Cotton and Textile Sector		
1	CAI's Spot Rates- 22nd October 2026	3
2	ICE Cotton Futures: 21st October 2026	4
3	Cotlook "A" Index: 21st October 2026	4
4	Thiagarajar Mills Group and Germany's Euro Textiles Announce Rs.100-Crore Textile Manufacturing Venture in Tamil Nadu	4-6
5	The LYCRA Company India Summit highlights stretch and performance tech	6-7
6	ICE cotton futures rise for third straight session on weaker dollar	7-9
7	FTA Pact with US Delayed with Odds Against India	10-12
8	HTBt Cotton Used by 66% of Surveyed Telangana Farmers	12-13
9	Drought Threatens Adilabad Cotton Yields	13
10	India, New Zealand agree to share trade origin data electronically	14
11	Secretary DARE Calls for Reimagining Agricultural Higher Education Through Global Partnerships	14-16

ICE Cotton Futures: 21-10-2026

ICE COTTON CLOSE						21 Oct 2026
CONTRACT MONTH	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	SETTLE	CHANGE	Op. Int.
Cotton (CT) - Quote: Cents/Pound - Contract Size: 50,000 Pounds.						
Dec-26	80.92	82.10	80.50	81.83	▲ 0.95	1,65,005
Mar-27	84.31	85.43	83.84	85.20	▲ 1.02	1,02,254
May-27	86.00	87.06	85.50	86.84	▲ 0.98	61,440
Jul-27	86.45	87.48	85.95	87.26	▲ 0.94	35,923
Oct-27	80.37	80.45	80.23	80.23	▲ 0.14	26
Dec-27	79.52	79.80	79.25	79.50	▲ 0.13	33,761
Mar-28	80.18	80.30	79.99	80.01	▲ 0.02	2,456

Cotlook Index: 21-10-2026

91.75 (+0.60)

Thiagarajar Mills Group and Germany's Euro Textiles Announce Rs.100-Crore Textile Manufacturing Venture in Tamil Nadu

Thursday, 22nd Oct 2026, (Source: www.indiantextilemagazine.in)

Advanced Jacquard Air-jet Weaving Facility to Target Global Markets; Commercial Production Planned Within Eight Months.

Thiagarajar Mills Private Limited, Madurai, through its group company, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Euro Textiles GmbH & Co. KG, Germany, to establish a new textile manufacturing enterprise at Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu, with a proposed investment of Rs.100 crore.

The venture aims to strengthen India's export-oriented textile industry through advanced manufacturing technology and enhanced access to international markets.

Hari Thiagarajan, Chairman & MD, Thiagarajar Mills

The proposed facility will manufacture premium-quality 100% cotton jacquard fabrics and other value-added textile products for export markets, with commercial production targeted to commence within eight months.



State-of-the-Art Manufacturing Infrastructure

The project envisages the installation of 48 advanced Air-jet looms equipped with Jacquard technology, supported by modern warping and sizing facilities. This sophisticated infrastructure will enable the production of high-quality cotton jacquard woven fabrics featuring intricate designs, consistent quality and the flexibility to meet evolving international customer requirements in the fashion and design industry.

The first phase is planned to achieve an annual production capacity of **3 million metres**, with the second phase envisaged to double capacity to **6 million metres annually**, enabling the venture to scale operations in line with export demand. The second phase will also envisage investment into value added technical textiles and niche patented textile fabrics catering to the growing non-conventional textile space.

Krishna Javaji, Managing Director, Euro Textiles, Germany



A Strategic Indo-German Partnership

Established on 26 June 1935, Thiagarajar Mills has a longstanding presence in the Indian textile industry, with expertise in cotton yarn, combed yarn, hosiery yarn and related textile products. Its manufacturing capabilities, technical expertise and commitment to quality will underpin the proposed venture.

Euro Textiles GmbH & Co. KG, based in Germany, brings experience in textile trading, sourcing and international market access. The partnership will combine Thiagarajar Mills Group's manufacturing strengths with Euro Textile's established market access,

new product development, go to market strategy and international business network creating a strong platform for expanding the global reach of Indian-made cotton fabrics.

India-EU Trade Partnership: An Emerging Opportunity

The proposed investment comes at a pivotal time for India's textile export industry. India's fabric exports to the EU stood at approximately **USD 0.08 billion**, while the EU's fabric import was valued at **USD 2.38 billion in 2025**.

The India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which is yet to be finalised and implemented, is expected to create significant opportunities for Indian fabrics in the European market and drive substantial growth in the textile industry. Strategic investments in advanced weaving technologies, value-added products and globally benchmarked quality standards will be instrumental in capitalising on this potential and accelerating export-led growth.

Strengthening Tamil Nadu’s Textile Industry

The proposed project facility is expected to support southern Tamil Nadu’s industrial development, create employment opportunities and reinforce Tamil Nadu’s position as a major textile manufacturing hub. By integrating advanced weaving technology with international market expertise, the venture aims to meet growing global demand for premium cotton fabrics and differentiated textile products.

This collaboration reflects the partners’ shared commitment to technological advancement, product excellence and export-led growth. With a proposed investment of Rs.100 crore, a phased production capacity of up to 6 million metres annually and a clear focus on international markets, the venture is poised to contribute to the continued growth of India’s textile manufacturing and exports.

The LYCRA Company India Summit highlights stretch and performance tech

Thursday, 22nd Oct 2026, (Source: www.fibre2fashion.com)

Insights

The LYCRA Company showcased stretch, performance and sustainability-focused technologies at its India Summit, connecting mills, brands and value-chain partners.

Innovations included LYCRA ADAPTIV, LYCRA FiT400, COOLMAX CloakFX and LYCRA Anti-Slip fibres for denim, activewear and intimate apparel, supporting wider adoption amongst Indian mills and brands.



The LYCRA Company and its partners Banswara Syntex, Bhaskar Denim, Exim Knits, Kumaraguru Knitex, LNJ Denim, Nahar, Oswal Denim, Ramco and Fibercraft, together with the RADCCO team, showcased a range of stretch, performance and sustainability-focused textile technologies at the India Summit in September.

The summit highlighted technologies including LYCRA Anti-Slip fibre,

LYCRA ADAPTIV fibre, LYCRA FiT400 fibre and COOLMAX CloakFX fibre, with several solutions already being evaluated or adopted by leading mills and brands.

Speaking to Fibre2Fashion on the sidelines of the summit, R. Thiruvengadam, South Asia commercial director, The LYCRA Company, said the event was designed to bring different value-chain partners together on one platform and introduce global textile technologies to the Indian market.

“Global trends include the recent success of LYCRA ADAPTIV fiber, which supports easy stretch, comfort and fit in garments,” Thiruvengadam mentioned.

Amongst the technologies showcased, LYCRA FiT400 fibre was described by Thiruvengadam as a relatively new concept for India’s apparel industry, delivering stretch without spandex.

Thiruvengadam also highlighted The LYCRA Company’s sustainability-focused and performance-oriented materials, including Renewable LYCRA fibre, as well as branded speciality polyester solutions such as COOLMAX EcoMade fibre and THERMOLITE EcoMade fibre.

The summit also demonstrated technologies across denim, intimate apparel and activewear through Indian value-chain partners. Thiruvengadam said the participating companies were showcasing their technologies to local brands and retailers, whilst the event also aimed to engage upcoming mills looking to upgrade their products and develop more value-added ranges.

Thiruvengadam highlighted that LYCRA VintageFX fabric helps provide comfort stretch whilst retaining a vintage denim appearance. He added that LYCRA ADAPTIV fibre, used to support easy stretch and comfort in denim applications, is beginning to move into commercial applications through mill-developed concept collections.

Through the summit, The LYCRA Company is seeking to deepen collaboration amongst value-chain partners, including mills, garment manufacturers and brands, whilst expanding the commercial application of its stretch, performance and sustainability-focused fibre technologies in India’s growing denim, non-denim, activewear and intimate apparel segments.

ICE cotton futures rise for third straight session on weaker dollar

Thursday, 22nd Oct 2026, (Source: www.fibre2fashion.com)

Insights

ICE December 2026 cotton settled at 81.83 cents, up 1.17 per cent, its highest close since September 28, as a weaker US dollar and buying interest supported prices.

Trading volume jumped about 48 per cent to 57,445 contracts, while deliverable stocks stayed at 16,618 bales.

A faster US harvest and caution before USDA export sales data and the Federal Reserve meeting may limit gains.



ICE cotton futures extended their gains for the third consecutive session on Wednesday, supported by a weaker US dollar and improved buying interest. The benchmark December contract recorded its highest settlement since September 28, while a sharp increase in trading volume indicated stronger market participation. However, the advancing US cotton harvest and uncertainty ahead of the USDA export sales report and next week's Federal

Reserve meeting kept traders cautious.

The ICE cotton December 2026 contract settled at 81.83 cents per pound, up 0.95 cent or 1.17 per cent from Tuesday's close of 80.88 cents. The contract gained a cumulative 183 points over three sessions, rising by 13, 75 and 95 points, respectively. Other contracts closed between 1 and 102 points higher.

Wednesday's settlement was the highest since September 28, when the December contract closed at 82.86 cents per pound. The benchmark contract remained within its 12-session trading range of 79.23–82.25 cents, although the latest increase brought prices closer to the upper end of the range.

The December contract settled 109 points above the range midpoint of 80.74 cents and just 42 points below the upper boundary of 82.25 cents. It also moved above the earlier resistance zone of 80.86–81.00 cents, suggesting an improvement in near-term market sentiment.

Trading volume increased sharply to 57,445 contracts from 38,788 contracts in the previous session, representing a rise of approximately 48 per cent. The increase indicated stronger participation following several sessions of relatively subdued activity. Updated open interest figures were unavailable, while the previously reported open interest stood at a record 398,469 contracts. ICE deliverable No. 2 cotton futures certificated stocks remained unchanged at 16,618 bales as of October 20.

The weaker US dollar provided additional support to cotton prices by making American cotton more competitive for overseas buyers. The dollar index edged lower on Wednesday as traders reassessed inflation risks associated with rising crude oil prices.

Market analysts said market participants continued to monitor US harvesting conditions while awaiting Thursday's USDA weekly export sales report. Investors were also closely watching next

week's Federal Reserve meeting for indications about the future direction of interest rates. A potential interest rate increase could strengthen the dollar and adversely affect US cotton exports. However, market expectations generally favoured unchanged interest rates at the upcoming meeting.

Meanwhile, the latest USDA crop progress report showed that the US cotton harvest continued to advance faster than its historical average. As of October 18, harvesting had reached 41 per cent of the crop, compared with 31 per cent a week earlier and the five-year average of 37 per cent.

The proportion of the US cotton crop rated good to excellent improved marginally to 35 per cent from 34 per cent in the previous week. Nevertheless, the faster harvesting pace suggested improving near-term supplies, potentially limiting further price gains.

Cotton futures also outperformed major agricultural commodities on Wednesday. Chicago corn, wheat and soybean futures declined amid progress in the US harvest and renewed diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Cotton's gains despite weakness in grain markets indicated relatively stronger buying interest.

Market participants are now watching whether the December cotton contract can break above the 12-session range high of 82.25 cents. A sustained move beyond that level could bring 82.86 cents, the September 28 settlement, and subsequently 83.00 cents into focus.

On the downside, the previous resistance zone of 80.86–81.00 cents could provide initial support, followed by 79.80–80.00 cents and the range low of 79.23 cents.

The immediate market direction will depend largely on Thursday's USDA export sales figures, movements in the US dollar, harvesting progress and the outcome of next week's Federal Reserve meeting. Positioning ahead of the December contract's first notice day on November 23 is also expected to influence trading activity.

For Indian textile mills, movements in ICE cotton futures will remain important for assessing import costs and comparing the competitiveness of US cotton with Brazilian supplies.

This morning (Indian Standard Time), December 2026 cotton was traded at 81.26 cents per pound (down 0.57 cent). Cash cotton was traded at 79.58 cents (up 0.95 cent), while the March 2027 contract traded at 84.69 cents (down 0.51 cent). The May 2027 contract traded at 86.30 cents (down 0.54 cent), the July 2027 contract at 86.79 cents (down 0.47 cent), and the October 2027 contract at 80.23 cents (up 0.14 cent). A few contracts remained at their previous closing levels, with no trading recorded so far today.

FTA Pact with US Delayed with Odds Against India

Wednesday, 21st Oct 2026, by S. Venkitachalam (Source: www.apparelviews.com)

The US Ambassador Sergio Gor's recent statement in New Delhi that "the trade deal is, in price able almost everything is done" A lot of legal technical language that needs to be sorted out. So I am optimistic we will get done should inspire Indian policy makers. But alas, these kind of statements often come from the US side, leading nowhere. The deals as it now looks with the West – Asia War dragging on is likely to be delayed with the US "threatening to impose a 12.5 tariff on India over "forced labour" and a steep 100 percent tariff on India and others for buying Russian oil.

Lets analyse GOR's statement, "With a month of getting here (New Delhi) at one point we announced that we had a deal. Supreme Court struck down a big part of what the deal was based on – so right now we are reconfiguring some of that text" GOR said.

The US ambassador said the bilateral trade agreement under discussion is on its way while pointing to surplus trade members. The numbers don't lie. If you look at the trajectory of our relationship, just go by the numbers. And so, 15 years ago, our bilateral trade was dollar 20 billion. Today it is dollar 240 billion. And it's continuing to grow. The two leaders Donald Trump and Narendra Modi deal set an ambitious goal of dollar 500 billion in the next few years said GOR. He continued we have two of the biggest economies, working together is a natural partnership and you can look decade by decade and forget the daily bumps. The relationship has been doing this decade by decade and growing.

The US Trade representative (USTR) recently proposed a 12.5 percent tariff on exports from 53 countries, including India because of their failure to prohibit import of goods, using forced labour. The announcement came amidst discussions between US officials and their Indian Counterpart in New Delhi regarding details of the frame work agreement which commerce minister Piyush Goyal had said was close to finalisation.

USTR is expected to make known its report on the second probe launched by it regarding excess capacity in 16 countries, including India – a move to replace the temporary 10 percent in place till July 14.

The Commerce Ministry said "India remains engaged with the US on the matter as a part of section 301 proceedings. In its submissions to the USTR the ministry made it clear that businesses had dismissed the allegations and described the probe as unjustified. It argued that it was an issue on which there were global rules.

India officials who had discussions with their US counterpart expect USTR to rely on section 301 to impose additional tariffs. This is a main policy lever employed by America to discourage exports and get countries to negotiate duties bilaterally.

Reports have it that a bipartisan group of US senators had unveiled a bill seeking to impose 100 percent tariff on five countries, including India and China for purchase of Russian oil. The new version of the bill includes a provision that allows Trump to waive the sanctions, if he deems it in the US national interest to do so.

On the USTR's second probe Rajesh Agrawal, Commerce Secretary had said that it will take four to six weeks after the provisional findings are made public that the final levy can be levied. He however indicated that the issue will be handled through the bilateral trade agreement with "possible pathways", part of the deal that is being negotiated.

"But we are on a safe way, our understanding is safe, both sides are very clear what is there in the framework deal, what is being negotiated under FTA, and are progressing there, he said.

The commerce secretary reiterated India's demand for comparative advantage in the trade deal "deals are about comparative advantage, trade deals are all about that". In the past, Piyush Goyal had said that India wanted to have a tariff advantage over rivals such as China, Asian nations and Bangladesh which compete in segments such as textiles and footwear.

According to Agrawal, "there is no negativity or any sort of differences between India and the US. Both sides know each other's expectations, what is coming in the framework deal and both sides know what is beyond the framework deal that is being negotiated between the two sides".

Goyal dismissed a report that there was no consensus during the visit of USTR JAMIESON GREER'S visit to India "both sides reaffirmed their commitment to an agreement that is balanced, commercially meaningful and delivers tangible benefits for businesses, farmers, workers and consumers in both countries. Our teams remain fully engaged in achieving this objective. US Ambassador too trashed the report "Both sides had very constructive meetings and reaffirmed through commitments to finalising the trade deal", he added.

Among other products, India has a stake in the textile sector in the US. Readymade garments, the most important item in the textiles export basket, attract an average duty of 15 percent in the American market. India does not enjoy comparative advantage as Bangladesh being a least developed country, enjoy zero duty access in the US.

Unlike in the US India gets duty – free access for garments in the UK and 27 member European Union (EU). The FTA with the EU – called the mother of all FTAs by the European commission President VAN Der Zeyen will be signed by this year end. "We have been moving fast to deliver our commitments", she said adding the work on an investment agreement will get accelerated. At the recent G-7 summit, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed the conclusion of negotiations for the India – EU FTA as a "Historic achievement". The FTA would unlock "huge opportunities for

trade and investment and contribute towards diversification of supply chains, particularly in the current turbulent political context”.

Modi said the India – EU FTA will benefit Indian start – ups by easing access to funding and innovation eco-systems. The deal would accelerate the Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign and strengthen the resolve of the “make in India make for the world” under the agreement with the EU. More than 99 percent of India’s exports will be either zero or very low duty, benefiting industries such as textiles leather, gems and jewellery etc., It will bring in more investment into India.

HTBt Cotton Used by 66% of Surveyed Telangana Farmers

Thursday, 22nd Oct 2026,, Yash Chouhan, (Source: www.smartinfoindia.com)



66% of Surveyed Farmers in Telangana Use HTBt Cotton Seeds, Study Reveals

Hyderabad, Telangana: Herbicide-Tolerant Bt (HTBt) cotton seeds are being used on a large scale in Telangana. According to a study, approximately 66 percent of the farmers surveyed in the state are using these seeds. However, the commercial cultivation of HTBt cotton has not yet received official approval in

India.

The study was conducted by the South Asia Biotechnology Centre (SABC) in collaboration with the Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII) and the National Seed Association of India (NSAI). It analyzes the unauthorized cultivation of HTBt cotton, its spread, and its potential impacts.

Growing Acreage of HTBt Cotton in the Country

According to the study, it is estimated that HTBt cotton is being cultivated on approximately 24 to 30 percent of the total cotton-growing area in the country. The market for these unauthorized seeds is valued at an estimated ₹820 to ₹880 crore.

Among the samples examined in the study, 98.2 percent were found to contain at least one genetically modified (GM) trait. Specifically, 72.7 percent of the samples contained the CP4EPSPS protein—associated with glyphosate tolerance—while 53.7 percent contained the Vip3A protein, which is linked to pest resistance.

Savings on Weed Control Costs

Farmers are increasingly turning to HTBt cotton due to labor shortages and rising costs associated with weed control. Many of the farmers surveyed reported savings of 60 to 80 percent on weed control expenses.

However, according to agricultural scientist G.V. Ramanjaneyulu, herbicide tolerance is not a trait

that directly increases crop yield. Experts have raised concerns regarding the potential health and environmental risks of glyphosate. They have emphasized the need for independent scientific assessment, monitoring of seed supply, and the provision of safe alternatives for farmers before granting approval for HTBt cotton.

Drought Threatens Adilabad Cotton Yields

Thursday, 22nd Oct 2026, by Yash Chouhan, (Source: www.smartinfoindia.com)



Drought Threatens Cotton Crop in Adilabad, Telangana; Farmers Fear Losses Due to Declining Yields

Adilabad, Telangana: The cotton crop in the Adilabad district of Telangana is being adversely affected by a lack of rainfall and high temperatures. Due to insufficient soil moisture, cotton plants have begun to wither in many areas. Farmers fear that the lack of adequate rain

could lead to a significant drop in production this season.

Cotton has been cultivated across approximately 4.30 lakh acres in the district. A prolonged dry spell has caused the condition of the crop to deteriorate in several villages. However, the extent of the damage varies depending on soil type, rainfall levels, and the availability of irrigation facilities.

Fears of a Decline in Cotton Yields

Kareniwal Gopal, a farmer from Tantholi village in the Adilabad rural mandal, stated that he has cultivated cotton on six acres. Despite having access to irrigation, he anticipates a lower yield. According to Gopal, for farmers who lack irrigation facilities, the yield could drop to as low as two quintals per acre.

Farmers note that black soil retains moisture for longer periods, which has kept the cotton crop in better condition compared to crops grown in red soil.

Expectations of a Rise in Cotton Prices

Farmers are hopeful that cotton prices could rise from the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of ₹8,667 per quintal—as mentioned in the initial report—to as much as ₹10,000 per quintal. Whether such an increase will actually occur, however, will depend on market conditions.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture Department has prepared a preliminary report on the drought situation and submitted it to the state government.

According to the initial report, there is growing concern regarding water availability in the region's irrigation projects. Emphasis is being placed on reserving existing water stocks to meet drinking water requirements.

India, New Zealand agree to share trade origin data electronically

Thursday, 22nd Oct 2026, (Source: www.fibre2fashion.com)

Insights

India and New Zealand have signed an MoC on electronic exchange of origin data for trade in goods under their FTA.

The pact between CBIC and the New Zealand Customs Service was signed ahead of the FTA taking effect on October 20.

It aims to improve customs cooperation, reduce information gaps and give eligible businesses greater certainty on trade.

India's Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and the New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS) recently signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) for the electronic exchange of origin data on trade in goods under the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The FTA entered into force on October 20. The MoC is aimed at strengthening customs cooperation and facilitating bilateral trade between the two countries by enabling advance electronic exchange of origin data on goods trade.

Vivek Chaturvedi, chairman, CBIC, and Christine Stevenson, comptroller and chief executive, NZCS, signed the MoC, the Ministry of Finance said in a press release.

The arrangement reflects the two countries' shared commitment to use digitalisation and enhanced information exchange for more efficient, secure and predictable cross-border trade. It is expected to improve operational efficiency, reduce information gaps and provide greater certainty to traders engaged in bilateral trade.

The MoC will also support effective use of trade preferences under the India-New Zealand FTA and help ensure that benefits negotiated under the agreement reach eligible businesses in both countries more efficiently and with greater certainty.

Secretary DARE Calls for Reimagining Agricultural Higher Education Through Global Partnerships

Thursday, 22nd Oct 2026, (Source: www.pib.gov.in)

Addressing Indian agricultural diaspora at the World Food Prize Foundation programme in the United States virtually, Dr Jat highlights industry-academia collaboration, policy dialogue and international knowledge exchange

Dr. M. L. Jat, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), has called for reimagining agricultural higher education to prepare future professionals to address global challenges, including climate change, natural resource degradation, biodiversity loss and the growing demand for nutritious and healthy food.



Addressing a Roundtable organized on the sidelines of the '2026 Norman E Borlaug International Dialogue' during the World Food Prize Foundation at Des Moines in the United States virtually, Dr. Jat delivered his remarks as President of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS), India. He acknowledged the Academy's representation at the programme by its Secretary, Dr. B.S. Dwivedi; Foreign Secretary, Dr. Karim Meredia; and Convener of the International Chapter for the Western Hemisphere, Dr. P.V. Varaprasad.

In his address, Dr Jat emphasised the need to transform agricultural education and research to meet the evolving requirements of agri-food systems. He highlighted India's long-standing partnerships with global institutions, noting that international collaboration enables mutual learning and provides opportunities to share scientific and educational advancements.

He stressed the importance of moving beyond production-centric agriculture towards an integrated agri-food systems and value-chain approach. He underscored the need for stronger collaboration between academia and industry to develop industry-ready human resources and facilitate industry participation across the agri-food value chain, including support for farmers.

Highlighting the role of NAAS in agricultural policy and research, Dr Jat noted the importance of policy dialogues, policy papers and policy briefs in addressing critical issues in agricultural research and development. He emphasised the need to bring together researchers, policymakers, academic institutions, industry and other stakeholders to develop collaborative solutions to emerging challenges.

Dr Jat also highlighted efforts to connect the Indian agricultural diaspora with domestic research and educational institutions. Strengthening these networks, he noted, can facilitate international knowledge exchange and contribute to reimagining agricultural higher education through global expertise and experience.

Referring to efforts to expand international institutional partnerships, Dr Jat highlighted the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST). The partnership is expected to create new avenues for cooperation in agricultural research, capacity development and knowledge exchange.

Dr. Jat expressed confidence that stronger international partnerships would contribute to advancing agricultural research, education and extension, with particular relevance for countries of the Global South. He called for collective efforts to transform agri-food systems and build a more resilient and sustainable future for agriculture worldwide.



**COTTON
ASSOCIATION
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of Origin**



**Indian Cotton
Statistics**



Publications

Represented on various International Cotton Fora
i.e. ICAC, ICA, CICC, ACSA, ITMF and several
other International Cotton Associations

Commerce Dept steps up FTA outreach amid low utilisation

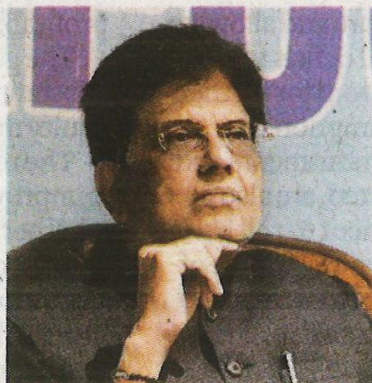
Amiti Sen
New Delhi

The Commerce Department is organising a series of outreach initiatives across the country to improve the utilisation of free trade agreements (FTAs), as it seeks to help exporters, particularly small businesses and MSMEs, take greater advantage of preferential access to overseas markets, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said.

As part of the 'Leveraging FTAs - Outreach Programme', the Commerce Department has lined up State-level workshops, including in Gandhinagar and Mumbai this week, in collaboration with State government agencies to familiarise industries and exporters with the opportunities offered by trade pacts, industry sources said.

"The multiple FTAs concluded in recent years have opened immense opportunities for our exporters. The Modi government's focus is on ensuring these benefits reach our farmers, workers, women, youth, MSMEs & small businesses, enabling them to take more Made in India products to global markets," Goyal stated in a social media post on Wednesday.

While these agreements



Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal V RAJU

provide preferential access to partner markets, exporters need to understand the tariff concessions available for their products and comply with the rules of origin and documentation requirements to claim the benefits.

India's utilisation of its FTAs has remained low, with many opting to pay full import duties rather than claim preferential tariff benefits, as they find the associated compliance requirements and documentation procedures difficult to navigate.

WIDENING TRADE DEFICIT

India's trade deficit with most of its FTA partners has also been widening, per a NITI Aayog report published in January.

"India's trade performance with its FTA partner countries in Q1 FY26 reflected a widening trade deficit,

as imports grew faster than exports," it observed.

STATE-LEVEL EFFORTS

In the last five years, India has implemented FTAs with the UAE, Mauritius, Australia, Oman, the EFTA bloc, the UK and New Zealand. "To help exporters make the most of these opportunities, the Commerce Department is organising dedicated FTA outreach initiatives in collaboration with State governments," Goyal said.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade is teaming up with the Directorate of Industries in various States to organise the workshops to explain preferential market access and international trade opportunities to industries and exporters. Last week, one such outreach was organised in Jaipur.

The State-level workshops are expected to help businesses identify opportunities under the agreements and understand how to use the provisions to improve their access to international markets.

"More such initiatives will be organised to help every State unlock its unique export potential, ensure greater utilisation of FTAs and give fresh momentum to India's export growth," Goyal added.

Inflation risks overshadow 7.8% growth as MPC raises repo rate by 25 bps

CALIBRATED TIGHTENING. Supply shocks and strong demand push panel towards pre-emptive rate action

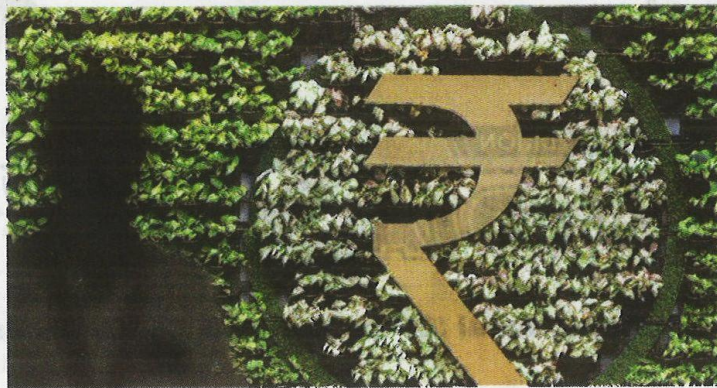
Our Bureau
Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) unanimously voted to raise the repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.50 per cent from 5.25 per cent at its October 5-7 meeting, citing mounting inflationary pressures despite the economy growing a robust 7.8 per cent in the first quarter of FY27.

According to the minutes of the meeting, while all six members backed the rate increase, only two members, Nagesh Kumar and Ram Singh, favoured retaining the policy stance at neutral.

The remaining four members supported a shift to a 'calibrated tightening stance amid concerns that inflationary pressures could become more entrenched.

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said that although the



COST CONCERNS. Members warn of persistent price pressures from crude oil, food and demand despite resilient economic growth

Indian economy had displayed remarkable resilience amid a turbulent global backdrop, inflationary pressures were building up.

SUPPLY-SIDE PRESSURE

"As regards supply-side inflation requiring a monetary policy response, it is pertinent to mention that monetary policy primarily acts by curtailing second-round effects (wage expectations and

firm level pricing behaviour) of a supply shock. It is difficult to distinguish between the second-round effects and the indirect impact of supply-side pressures (in production cost through energy and other inputs) as both are present in core inflation," he said.

Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta noted that inflation was largely driven by external supply-side shocks,

but warned against complacency. "Yet, with projections indicating the likelihood of headline inflation hitting the upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent, one may not want to wait for more definitive evidence of generalisation," she said, adding, "Rather than waiting any longer, in view of rising inflation and resilient growth, I favour raising the policy repo rate by 25 bps in this policy."

Executive Director Indranil Bhattacharyya said the inflation outlook required greater attention as food and crude oil price pressures were unlikely to ease quickly. "Therefore, I feel it is better to set aside the 'cautiousness bias' and act in a pre-emptive manner at this juncture rather than wait and watch," he said.

Nagesh Kumar observed that inflation was being driven primarily by supply-side factors, including a defi-

cient monsoon, high crude prices and exchange rate depreciation. While there were no signs of overheating, he stressed the need to manage inflation expectations.

Economist Saugata Bhattacharya said data increasingly suggested that price pressures were becoming entrenched. "The totality of information indicates a strong economic case at this time for tightening monetary policy, to bring inflation closer to the target sooner rather than later and anchor inflation expectations," he said.

Ram Singh warned that inflation had spread beyond the direct effects of higher fuel and commodity prices. "For now, there is a case for incremental, mild repo rate hikes, not high-for-long rates," he said, while stressing the need for vigilance against broader inflation generalisation.

Fresh 'low' in Bay to trigger heavy rain over South

Vinson Kurian

Thiruvananthapuram

A fresh low pressure area over the south-west Bay of Bengal off the Tamil Nadu coast is likely to trigger another spell of intense North-East monsoon rain from the weekend into early next week.

Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Kerala, Mahe and Lakshadweep are likely to see widespread showers, with isolated spells of very heavy rain.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast isolated very heavy rainfall of 11-20 cm over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal for three days from Thursday.

Kerala and Mahe are likely to receive similar spells on Thursday, Saturday and

Sunday, while Lakshadweep faces the prospect of very heavy rain on Friday and Saturday.

The IMD has forecast isolated heavy rainfall of 7-11 cm over south interior Karnataka for four days from Thursday. Kerala and Mahe could see heavy rain on Friday and again on Monday and Tuesday, while Lakshadweep is likely to receive heavy spells on Thursday and Sunday. Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal could see heavy rain on Monday.

FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS

The broader atmospheric conditions are also turning favourable for an intense rain spell.

A favourable phase of the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) appears to be working in tandem with the positive phase of the Indian Ocean

Dipole (IOD), strengthening circulations over the South Peninsula ahead of a likely weekend peak.

The two climate drivers appear to have shifted the El Niño-related suppression and dry conditions towards the Maritime Continent around Indonesia, at least for now.

The earlier unfavourable conditions over the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal had contributed to a destructive dry spell, hastening the withdrawal of the South-West monsoon.

LADEN WITH MOISTURE

Both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea are now laden with moisture and clouds, favouring repeated spells of rain over the South Peninsula.

The wet spell is expected to continue through the remainder of the week and into

early next week, as the new low-pressure area moves across the southern tip of the peninsula and emerges over the south-east Arabian Sea, off Kerala and near Lakshadweep.

The projected track is reminiscent of the circuitous path taken by the system that preceded very severe cyclonic storm Ockhi in November 2017.

Meanwhile, the eastern Bay of Bengal is showing signs of renewed activity. A cyclonic circulation over the Gulf of Thailand and adjoining parts of Thailand and Myanmar is expected to move over the north Andaman Sea and develop into a low-pressure area over the south-east and adjoining east-central Bay by Friday. The system may initially move towards the Tamil Nadu-Andhra Pradesh coasts before intensifying further.

'Illegal HTBt cotton makes up about 30% of crop area'

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

Unauthorised herbicide-tolerant Bt (HTBt) cotton cultivation has spread to around 24-30 per cent of the acreage under the fibre crop in the country, with labour shortage and rising weed control costs driving the adoption in about 65-72 lakh acres during the Kharif 2025 season, says a study.

Conducted by the South Asia Biotechnology Centre (SABC) and supported by the Federation of Seed Industry of India and the National Seed Association of India (NSAI), the study estimated the value of the informal HTBt cotton seed market in the country at ₹820-₹880 crore.

Based on field surveys and stakeholder interactions across 16 cotton-growing districts in Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, the study found that farmers were increasingly turning to unauthorised seeds to address acute labour shortages, rising cultivation costs and the need for more efficient weed management.

GLYPHOSATE OFFTAKE

As a result, the consumption of glyphosate, a key herbicide that is a central pillar of the HTBt technology, has increased alongside the spread of the cotton variety.

Glyphosate-based weed management costs farmers around ₹750-850 an acre, compared with ₹12,000-₹15,000 for manual labour,



making herbicide-tolerant cotton an attractive option for growers, the study said.

The usage of glyphosate has increased by 26 per cent from 27,271 kl (kilo litres) in 2024-25 to 35,642 kl in 2025-26, corroborated by import data, and the herbicide is increasingly being sourced through underground networks in bulk, in up to 20 litre drums, it said.

Shortage of labour and high weed management costs are forcing farmers to go in for unapproved HTBt seeds

Maharashtra has emerged as the epicentre of HTBt cotton cultivation, with adoption estimated at 58 per cent and reaching 76 per cent in Yavatmal district. Adoption was also high in Telangana, at 66 per cent, and Andhra Pradesh, at 49 per cent, with rates reaching 82 per cent in Mahabubabad and 75 per cent in Kurnool, respectively.

In contrast, adoption remained negligible in Rajasthan, where the shorter crop duration and relatively manageable weed pressure reduced the incentive to adopt the technology.

The study found that 98.2 per cent of samples (223 of 227) tested positive for at least one genetically modified (GM) trait. While Cry1Ac and Cry2Ab genes, associated with Bollgard-II technology, remained dominant at 95.1 per cent and 84.1 per cent, respectively, the unapproved herbicide-tolerance gene CP4EPSPS was detected in 72.7 per cent of samples and the insect-resistance gene Vip3A in 53.7 per cent, indicating the growing presence of additional traits in cotton cultivation.

The study identified 14 combinations of four genes, indicating a shift towards multi-trait cotton hybrids across major growing regions. Overall, 72.7 per cent of samples carried the herbicide-tolerance gene CP4EPSPS, while many contained the next-generation insect-resistance gene Vip3A, indicating the widespread presence of these traits across cotton-growing belts. The findings raise concerns about seed quality, biosafety and the development of resistance to herbicides and insect-control technologies.

The study attributed the spread partly to regulatory delays and called for a transparent, time-bound approval process for next-generation cotton technologies.

Core sector growth in Sep hit 30-month high at 7.9%

HIMANSHI BHARDWAJ
New Delhi, 21 October

Output growth in India's nine core industries— electricity, refinery products, steel, crude oil, coal, iron ore, cement, natural gas, and fertilisers—rose to a 30-month high of 7.9 per cent in September, the highest level under the new series with 2022-23 as the base year, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MCI) on Wednesday.

A sharp rebound in coal, a jump in iron ore, a record growth in refinery products, and a favourable base lifted the headline figure from an upwardly revised 5.9 per cent in August. Additionally, seven of the nine sectors, barring electricity and cement, improved in September against August.

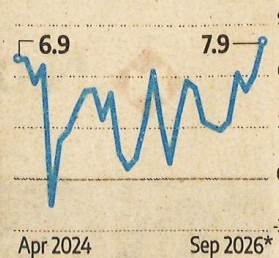
Core output had grown just 3.1 per cent in September last year. On a month-on-month (M-o-M) basis, the overall index fell to a five-month low of 118.3 from 120.4 in August, a sequential fall of 1.74 per cent, even as year-on-year (Y-o-Y) growth jumped.

Six of the nine sectors grew during the month, compared with five in August's provisional data. Iron ore, electricity, coal, refinery products, cement, and steel continued to expand, while fertilisers, natural gas,

Gaining momentum



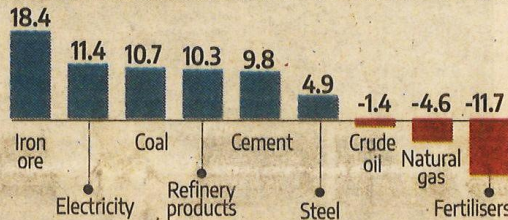
Core sector growth rate (Y-o-Y in %)



Iron ore leads the charge

Sectoral trends in September* (Y-o-Y chg in %)

*Provisional



Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

and crude oil contracted.

Aditi Nayar, chief economist at Icria, said the uptick in core sector growth was broad-based, with seven of the nine sectors, barring electricity and cement, recording an improvement in their performance in September vis-à-vis August 2026. "Notwithstanding the uptick in core output expansion, Icria expects the IIP (index of industrial production) growth to ease somewhat to 6.0-7.0 per cent in September 2026 from 8.0 per cent in August 2026, with an elevated base weighing on the non-core segment growth in

the month," she added.

The core sectors account for about 40 per cent of the IIP that grew at 8 per cent in August. Cumulatively, the index grew 5.1 per cent during April-September 2026, compared to the 2.5 per cent recorded in the same period a year earlier.

Iron ore, which carries a weighting of 4.9 per cent in the index of core industries (ICI), overtook electricity as the fastest-growing sector. Its growth more than tripled to 18.4 per cent from 5.5 per cent in August. Electricity, the heaviest component of the index at 30.9 per cent

weighting, grew 11.4 per cent, easing from an upwardly revised 13.1 per cent in August.

Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Bank of Baroda, said the growth shows buoyancy in infrastructure where the government has been spending. "Expenditure on roads has boosted cement, while railway outlay has fed into iron and steel output demand. The heatwave contributed to higher demand for electricity, which registered 11.4 per cent growth. Exports too supported growth," he added.

Coal, weighted at 5.6 per cent, swung back to growth of 10.7 per cent from a 3.8 per cent contraction in August. That is its fastest growth in 13 months.

Growth in refinery products, the second-heaviest component at 22.6 per cent weighting, rose to a 30-month high of 10.3 per cent from 5.6 per cent in August. This is the strongest reading under the new series, indicating heightened industrial activity as demand for fuel is up. Cement growth slowed to a four-month low of 9.8 per cent from 11.7 per cent in August. Steel growth picked up to a three-month high of 4.9 per cent in September from 3.5 per cent in the preceding month.

Meanwhile, fertilisers fell 11.7 per cent, a slight easing from August's 12.4 per cent drop.

Goyal to visit Germany and Netherlands to boost trade ties

Accompanied by about 100 business leaders, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will visit two European countries — Germany and the Netherlands — from October 22-27 and discuss ways to boost trade and investments between India and these nations, an official statement said on Tuesday. In Berlin (October 22-24), the minister will engage with international policymakers and global business leaders to highlight India's macroeconomic stability, manufacturing

capabilities and its pivotal role in building resilient global supply chains. He will also hold bilateral meetings with the German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy and the Economic and Financial Policy Advisor and G7/G20 Sherpa at the Federal Chancellery of Germany. In the Netherlands (October 24-27), Goyal will lead comprehensive government-to-government (G2G) engagements in The Hague, where he will hold bilateral ministerial meetings. PTI

India, NZ sign digital trade pact under FTA

India and New Zealand have signed a cooperation pact to enable the electronic exchange of origin data for trade in goods, a move aimed at facilitating cross-border trade and improving the utilisation of tariff concessions under their free-trade agreement (FTA). The Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) was signed by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and the New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS), according to a statement issued by the finance ministry on Wednesday. The pact was signed on October 19 by CBIC Chairman Vivek Chaturvedi and New Zealand Customs Service Comptroller and Chief Executive Christine Stevenson. OUR BUREAU

Joshi: Working on policy to push Agrivoltaics

The government is working on a policy to boost adoption of agrivoltaics in India, as around 30 per cent of the 160 million hectare of cropland has potential for non-fossil fuel based projects. The policy aims at enhancing farmers' income as agrivoltaics allows combining agricultural cultivation and solar energy generation on the same land, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also pitched for the 'agrivoltaics' technique to generate solar power and crop production on the same land but cautioned that farm output should not fall by adopting this practice. PTI

India targets year-end start for five-nation Africa trade talks

KRITY AMBEY

New Delhi, 21 October

India is likely to initiate talks for a preferential trade agreement (PTA) with the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) by December, according to a person aware of the matter. Both sides have already signed the terms of reference (ToR) for the deal.

"It is moving slightly slower, but there should be some clarity soon," the person said, requesting anonymity, as the discussions are private. "Talks may be launched by year-end," the person added.

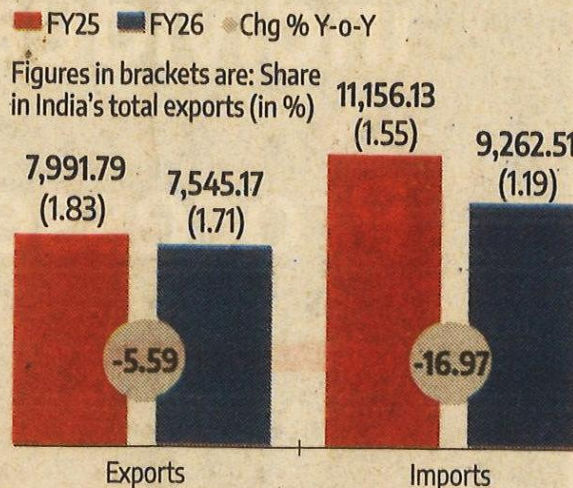
An email sent to the Ministry of Commerce seeking comments did not elicit an immediate response.

India signed the ToR for the deal with the five-nation bloc — comprising South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, and Eswatini — in August. The two sides aim to conclude the pact within a year, according to the ToR. The agreement is expected to cover eight areas: trade in goods and market access; rules of origin; Customs procedures and trade facilitation; trade remedies; sanitary and phytosanitary measures; technical barriers to trade; dispute settlement; and legal and horizontal provisions.

Talks on a trade agreement

Muted exchanges

India's trade with SACU (in \$ million)



Source: Department of Commerce

with SACU come at a time when African economies have increasingly featured among India's important export destinations. Within SACU, South Africa has ranked among India's top 10 export destinations in each of the past six months of FY27. It is also by far India's largest trading partner within the bloc, accounting for 93 per cent of India's trade with SACU in 2025-26. Both sides have decided to begin with a PTA focused initially on merchandise trade to maintain flexibility.

India and SACU are both developing economies, with overlapping interests in some sectors and potential complementarities in others. A narrower agreement could allow both sides to test the commercial potential of deeper integration without immediately

exposing sensitive sectors to sweeping tariff concessions.

According to experts, the case for deeper engagement with the region also extends to India's broader diplomatic alignment with African economies. India and South Africa, in particular, have often found common ground at the World Trade Organization (WTO), where both have advocated for the interests of developing economies and defended the multilateral trading system.

"South Africa and India maintain a powerful, active alliance at the WTO, consistently joining forces to champion the interests of developing nations, defend multilateralism, and push back against wealthy economies," Global Trade Research Initiative founder Ajay Srivastava said.

'Pretty close' to sealing India trade deal: Trump

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/Jamnagar, 21 October

Amid Secretary of State Marco Rubio's India visit, United States (US) President Donald Trump told reporters at the Oval Office on Tuesday that India and the US were "pretty close" to finalising a trade deal. He added that this deal will be much different than the earlier pacts. "They want to make a deal. We're going to make a deal. Pretty close, yeah," Trump said in response to a question.

"It's going to be a much different kind of deal than we've done," the president said.

Rubio arrived in Jamnagar a day after calling India a crude-refining "superpower" and urging more processing of Venezuelan crude there. Almost the entire Ambani family, led by billionaire tycoon Mukesh Ambani, welcomed Rubio at Jamnagar as he began a tour of the world's largest single-site refinery. In the morning, Rubio met Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani and Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran in Mumbai.

The day also included a visit to Reliance's Vantara animal rescue centre and giga factories being developed by the conglomerate.

The visit puts a private industrial empire at the centre of US-India energy diplomacy, analysts said.

Officials have described the Ambani-hosted programme as a "private visit". It comes as US diesel prices surge ahead of the mid-term elections.

No details of the visit were released by either side.

Rubio was welcomed by Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries Ltd, his wife Nita and children Isha and Anant, people familiar with the visit said.

Akash Ambani, Mukesh Ambani's eldest son and managing director of Jio Platforms, was overseeing the opening of the telecom giant's initial public offering (IPO).

Reliance's Jamnagar com-



(From right) US Secretary of State Marco Rubio with Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, and Reliance's Executive Director Anant Ambani in Jamnagar, where the company's and the world's largest oil refinery is located

PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Rubio terms protests as India's 'internal matter'

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday refused to comment on the recent protests against the Election Commission, terming it an "internal political matter." Rubio was also dismissive of the reference to UN experts' criticism of the protests. "The UN experts are the oxymoron," said Rubio, who is currently in India on an official visit.

"It's a domestic political matter. I'm not going to get involved in their politics. This is a democracy. They

have elections here, so I'm not going to opine on their domestic political matters," he said. He said that even the US witnesses protests every day and are reflective of the political discourse and difference of opinion. On Tuesday, more than 20 UN human rights experts in Geneva expressed alarm over what they described as a "repeatedly heavy-handed police response" to peaceful youth-led demonstrations in the national capital.

PTI

their differences. Rubio said only "a small number of items" remain unresolved on a trade deal.

Reliance is already a key player in Washington's oil diplomacy. It is the biggest buyer of Venezuelan crude after the US itself, at a time when Washington is urging India to buy more, the people said. Reliance's proposed Texas refinery adds a reciprocal dimension to its energy ties with the US.

US President Donald Trump recently announced that Reliance is partnering to build a new 168,000 barrels-a-day refinery project in Brownsville, Texas.

While Washington is seeking to encourage more processing of Western Hemisphere crude at Jamnagar, the Indian conglomerate is also positioning itself to handle US oil closer to its source.

Who cares what the 'white man' has to say: Congress

"Who cares what the 'white man' has to say about our protests?" Congress leader Pawan Khera said on Wednesday after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio sought not to comment on the recent protests in India by opposition parties, activists and students as it is a "domestic political matter".

plex can process 1.4 million barrels of crude a day and is the world's largest and most complex single-site refinery. Its fuel exports make it a hub for global supply.

Rubio told Reliance-owned *Network 18* that Washington wants to work more closely with Reliance on refining energy from the Western Hemisphere, calling that helpful to both countries.

The other stop on Rubio's visit was the Dhirubhai Ambani Green Energy Giga Complex — Reliance's integrated clean-energy manufac-

turing hub at Jamnagar, covering solar, storage, fuel cells, electrolyzers, and power electronics. It is being built on a 5,000 acre site at an expected cost of ₹75,000 crore.

For Washington, Jamnagar offers a way to turn Western Hemisphere crude into diesel at scale, a pressing concern before the midterms, analysts said.

For Reliance, the visit is validation, and a chance to show the US it is an investor as well as a buyer, they said.

For New Delhi, it comes as both governments try to settle