

October 28th news:

International:

Catalonia declares independence from Spain

The parliament of Catalonia has voted to declare independence from Spain. Seventy legislators voted in favour, 10 voted against, while two cast blank ballots. The decision was made during a secret vote in Barcelona 27th October

The names of those who voted for independence were withheld, as the Spanish attorney general promised to charge those who voted in favour of independence with "rebellion".

After the declaration, the Spanish government said it will depose the Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and his cabinet, allowing Madrid to directly administer the breakaway region. The Spanish Prime Minister also announced the suspension of the top officials of Catalonia's regional police.

During the vote for independence, two right-wing parties, Citizens (Cs) and People's Party (PP), along with the centre-left Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSC), left the Catalan parliament before the vote in protest.

Why Catalonia want to leave Spain?

Catalonia is one of Spain's wealthiest and most productive regions and has a distinct history dating back almost 1,000 years. Before the Spanish Civil War it enjoyed broad autonomy but that was suppressed under decades of Gen Francisco Franco's dictatorship from 1939-75.

When Franco died, Catalan nationalism was revived and eventually the north-eastern region was granted autonomy again, under **the 1978 constitution**.

A 2006 statute granted even greater powers, boosting Catalonia's financial clout and describing it as a "nation", but Spain's Constitutional Court reversed much of this in 2010, to the anger of the regional authorities.

Angered by having their autonomy watered down as well as by years of recession and cuts in public spending, Catalans held an unofficial vote on independence in November 2014. More than two million of the region's 5.4 million eligible voters took part and officials declared that 80% had backed secession.

Separatists won Catalonia's election in 2015 and set to work on holding a binding referendum, defying Spain's constitution, which states that Spain is indivisible.

National:

Technocity Project launched in Kerala

The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, launched the Technocity project in Thiruvananthapuram on 27th October and laid the foundation stone for the first government building in Technocity. The development of Technocity will provide new opportunities for the young people of Kerala.

President also laid the foundation stone of the first government building in the Technocity in Pallipuram. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that technocity project is expected to be completed by 2019.

Technocity is a technology park and integrated township in Thiruvananthapuram, dedicated to electronics, software, and other Information Technology (IT) ventures. It is conceived in 2005 as the fourth phase of development of Technopark, Technocity is a complete IT City, spread across about 500 acres (200 hectares), which includes not just space for IT/ITES firms but also residential, commercial, hospitality, medical and educational facilities. The project is a new self-dependent satellite city, which would not strain the resources and infrastructure of the city of Thiruvananthapuram

SC panel to evaluate HC additional judges' verdicts

Two Supreme Court Judges will evaluate the judgments of additional judges of High Courts to determine their suitability for appointment as Permanent Judges.

In a unanimous decision taken on Thursday, the SC Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra modified its decision taken on March 3 by which it had done away with the professional evaluation of additional judges of High Courts for the purpose of determining their suitability for appointment as Permanent Judges.

The other members of the SC collegium are: Justice J Chelameswar, Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Justice Madan B Lokur and Justice Kurian Joseph. The collegium has now decided that the judgments of additional judges shall be called for from the Chief Justices concerned and shall be evaluated by a committee of two judges of the SC nominated by the CJI

On March 3, the collegium had decided to do away with the professional evaluation of additional judges while recommending their name for confirmation as Permanent Judges.

What is the Collegium system?

The Collegium system is one where the Chief Justice of India and a forum of four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court recommend appointments and transfers of judges. However, it has no place in the Indian Constitution. The system was evolved through Supreme Court judgments in the Three Judges Cases (October 28, 1998)

Why is Collegium system being criticised?

The Central government has criticised it saying it has created an imperium in imperio (empire within an empire) within the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court Bar Association has blamed it for creating a “give-and-take” culture, creating a rift between the haves and have-nots. “While politicians and actors get instant relief from courts, the common man struggles for years for justice.”

Bilateral:

India, France agree to strengthen bilateral defence cooperation

India and France have reiterated to strengthen bilateral defence cooperation as a key Pillar of strategic partnership between the two countries.

Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman and French Minister for the Armed Forces, Ms Florence Parly on 27th October discussed a range of measures to expand military to military ties, including enhancing the scope of their joint exercises, in particular the VARUNA naval exercise scheduled in early 2018.

Both countries will also actively explore additional measures to facilitate operational level interactions between their respective armed forces. The ministers reiterated their strong intention to further expand bilateral cooperation on counter-terrorism.

Economy:

Piyush Goyal launches first set of solar plants with capacity of 5 MW

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launched the first set of solar plants with a total capacity of 5 megawatt in New Delhi area. The project is part of the government's National Solar Mission in which Indian Railways plans to commission one thousand Megawatt solar plants across its network. The railways are working towards speeding up its electrification and road-map for identifying various solutions to achieve larger goal of transforming Railways as a 100 per cent de-carbonised and most energy efficient.

National Solar Mission

The **Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission**, also known as the **National Solar Mission**, is an initiative of the Government of India and State Governments to promote solar power.

The mission is one of the several initiatives that are part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change. The program was inaugurated by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on 11 January 2010 with a target of 20GW by 2022 which was later increased to 100 GW by the Narendra Modi government in the 2015.

The objective of the National Solar Mission is to establish India as a global leader in solar energy, by creating the policy conditions for its diffusion across the country as quickly as possible

India has 3rd Highest Number of Family-Owned Businesses

India has 108 publicly-listed family-owned businesses, third highest in the world, while China tops the tally with 167 such companies followed by the US which has 121, according to the Credit Suisse report.

As per the Credit Suisse Research Institute's (CSRI) latest "CS Family 1000" report, with an average market capitalisation of USD 6.5 billion, India ranks 5th in Asia Pacific excluding Japan, and 22nd globally, in terms of average m-cap.

Sports:

Puducherry Becomes an Associate Member of BCCI

The Cricket Association of Puducherry (CAP) was chosen by the Committee of Administrators (CoA) as an associate member of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). This means Puducherry will be allowed to play the Ranji Trophy in 2018.

India's Sangram Dahiya, Amanpreet Singh win medals

Sangram Dahiya and Amanpreet Singh won a silver and a bronze each in the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Final in New Delhi on 27th October.

Double trap exponent Sangram clinched his first-ever senior medal in the tournament after years of toil, while Amanpreet bagged a well-deserved bronze after scoring 202.2 in the men's 50m pistol event.

Both shooters were taking part in the prestigious event for the first time. Sangram shot 76 out of 80 targets, three behind gold medallist Hu Binyuan of China. Italy's Gasparani Davi took the bronze. Sangram had won a gold medal at the Asian Shooting Championship for junior way back in 2009. Amanpreet finished behind gold medallist Damir Mikec of Serbia and silver winner Oleh Omelchuk of Ukraine.

In the women's 25m pistol event, Korea's Kim Minjung won the gold beating China's former world champion Jingjing Zhang in the final. Both Kim and Zhang ended with 34 points each in the final after which Kim prevailed in a shoot-off. Zorana Arunovic of Serbia won the bronze.