

SC NOTICE TO EC, CENTRE

'Will annul decisions not taken by unanimity or majority'

■ The top court refused to pass any interim direction to restrain Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar from taking any decision till final disposal of pleas

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (PTI)

THE Supreme Court on Monday issued notices to the Election Commission and the Centre on pleas alleging that the poll body took several decisions without the approval of the two election commissioners and said it will annul decisions found not to be in



accordance with law.

The top court, however, refused to pass any interim direction to restrain Chief Election

Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar from taking any decision till the final disposal of the petition. A bench of Chief Justice of

Form 6 modification not approved by us, says SC; Declaration has SC nod: EC

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (PTI)

THE Supreme Court on Monday said that it has not approved any modifications to Form 6 being used by the Election Commission (EC) during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in various States.

Form 6 is an application through which an eligible person seeks inclusion in the electoral roll.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana said, "Any modification to Form 6 has not been approved by us."

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India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana said that it may examine the immunity clause put in

the law which gives protection to the CEC even after holding the office.

"We will examine all the deci-

sions. If any decision is not in accordance with the law, we will annul it. You know the power of the court," the bench said as it pointed out that the immunity granted to the CEC is something which even judges don't have.

Senior advocate Vikash Singh, appearing for petitioner Rakesh Kumar Singh, sought a direction in the interim to restrain Kumar from taking any further decisions. He also sought the CEC's suspension, saying that every citizen is feeling unsafe with respect to voting rights. The bench also issued notice on a connected petition filed by advocate Shailendra Mani Tripathi and tagged it with Singh's petition.

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Oman overtakes US as India's top LNG supplier in September

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (IANS)

OMAN emerged as India's largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in September by replacing the United States as the country continued to diversify



energy imports amid ongoing geopolitical disruptions in West Asia, according to a report.

According to data from Kpler, India imported 585,000 tonnes of LNG from Oman during September, up 11.6 per cent from August,

giving the Gulf nation a 27 per cent share of total LNG imports.

Nigeria became the second-largest supplier with shipments of 351,000 tonnes, although volumes were down 35 per cent from the previous month. The US, which had topped the supplier list in August with 848,000 tonnes, slipped to third place after exports to India declined 59 per cent, accounting for 16 per cent of September imports.

Qatar, once India's dominant LNG supplier with a market share of around 45 per cent, fell to sixth position and supplied about 94,000 tonnes during the month. The UAE supplied 311,000 tonnes, while Angola exported 205,000 tonnes to India.

No SC relief for Centre on PILs over Great Nicobar project

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (PTI)

THE Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain the Centre's plea against the Calcutta High Court order upholding the maintainability of PILs alleging violations of the Forest Rights Act in obtaining consent for the Great Nicobar Island mega-infrastructure project.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana dismissed the Centre's plea while noting that the matter is already pending before the High Court and is scheduled to come up for hearing on November 25 and 26.

It asked the High Court to hear the matter, including all pending petitions, on the date fixed.

At the outset, Attorney General R Venkataramani submitted that the issue was of "great national importance" and questioned the maintainability of the PIL on the issue. He submitted that the environmental clearance for the project had already been challenged before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and expressed concern over multiple proceedings being initiated subsequently.

"Somebody comes and files a petition years later, and then three different petitions try to challenge it in three different



ways. Then they say the tribal are affected and they are not before

the court. Now they have got those tribal groups impleaded,"

Venkataramani submitted.

He contended that the question of maintainability went to the root of the matter and requested the court to allow the Centre to make further submissions on the issue.

"I just want to keep the door open; nothing else. Allow us to at least say something," he said.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, also appearing in the matter, said that the proceedings before the NGT concerning the environmental clearance have seen two rounds.

Crime against women: SC stresses on creating fear in minds of miscreants

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (PTI)

STRESSING the need to instill fear in the minds of anti-social elements, the Supreme Court on Monday said there appears to be a feeling that women are not safe in the city, more particularly in some vulnerable pockets of the National Capital Region.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and K Vinod

Chandran said it must be ensured that every woman should feel safe even at 11 pm or late at night whether travelling on the roads or in the metro.

The bench asked Delhi Police to focus on intensifying surveillance, patrolling at public places including bus stands, railway and metro stations, parks, and schools and colleges where women are more vulnerable.

"Don't let us down. Rise to the occasion. Every woman, every girl molested is our sister, our mother. It is a huge challenge for the police department. Don't allow such things to happen. Take up the challenge," Justice Pardiwala observed.

Some senior officials of Delhi Police were also present during the hearing of the suo motu case titled 'In Re: Recent rape incidents in Delhi NCR'.

Lab worker's death from 'unknown infection' sparks plague fears in Russia, hundreds quarantined

MOSCOW, Oct 5 (ANI)

AUTHORITIES in Russia are responding to an alleged research facility mishap in Siberia following the fatality of a laboratory technician who suffered from an affliction categorised as pneumonia of "unknown" origin, according to CNN.

The occurrence unfolded at the Anti-Plague Research Institute situated in Shelekhov near Irkutsk, based on reports

from Russian state-run news outlet TASS. Uncertainty persists regarding the specific pathogen involved, as Rospotrebnadzor, Russia's federal body responsible for infectious disease oversight, stated that the staff member received a diagnosis of "pneumonia of unknown aetiology", indicating an unidentified origin.

According to CNN, Rospotrebnadzor maintained that "the sanitary and epidemiological situation in the Irkutsk

region, the cities of Irkutsk and Shelekhov is stable". The agency added that it implemented specialised protocols "in connection with the case of an employee of the Irkutsk Anti-Plague Institute". Despite official reassurances, the fatality has sparked anxieties surrounding a potential instance of pneumonic plague.

Alexei Tsydenov, leader of the adjacent republic of Buryatia, noted that the deceased 28-year-old female worker perished "pos-

sibly from the plague.

Artem Fominikh, who heads the Irkutsk Aluminium Plant, advised individuals to stay tranquil amidst circulating speculation, stating that "there are many rumours and conflicting reports circulating". "All identified close contacts are under medical supervision. At present, they show no signs of the disease, and their laboratory test results are negative," Fominikh remarked, according to CNN.

SC seeks Centre, States' response on vacancies in SHRCs

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (PTI)

THE Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre, the National Human Rights Commission, and all State Governments on a PIL alleging that several State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs) are understaffed, defunct, or have vacant leadership positions.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana issued notices after taking note of a petition filed by the Association of Retired Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts of India through advocate Srishti Agnihotri. The petition, filed on September 21, has sought time-bound directions to the States to fill vacancies in the posts of chairpersons and members of SHRCs in accordance with Section 21 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, and the SC's directions in the case of DK Basu vs State of West Bengal.

"Issue a writ of mandamus or any other appropriate writ, order or direction, directing Respondent Nos. 3 to 30, to forthwith fill all subsisting vacancies in the posts of chairperson and members of their respective State Human Rights Commissions, in strict compliance with Section 21 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 and this court's directions in DK Basu vs State of West Bengal, within a time-bound period to be fixed by this court," the plea said. The plea specifically alleges that the SHRCs in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Jharkhand are currently defunct.

Ukraine to get 1.3 billion euros from Germany



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on Monday.

KYIV, Oct 5 (IANS)

UKRAINE will receive a new support package from Germany worth more than 1.3 billion euros (1.46 billion US dollars), Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced following his meeting here with visiting German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

"It includes weapons that will help us now, as well as support for our energy sector ahead of winter -- an important energy package," Zelenskyy said on X, noting that he particularly discussed with Merz the need for air defence.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine and Germany currently have 15 agreements worth more than 8.5 billion euros. The documents cover security cooperation, Ukraine's orders for German industry, and joint projects within Ukraine, among other areas, Zelenskyy said.

The new military aid package focuses primarily on air defence capabilities, including the joint production of interceptors against jet-powered drones. Merz noted that recent technical breakthroughs in this area would help swiftly strengthen Ukrainian air defences.

US trade talks reached plateau, trade balance favoured India: Sitharaman

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (IANS)

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday that India-US trade negotiations are continuing but may have hit a plateau and added that the bilateral trade balance currently favours India.

Speaking at the Munich Leaders Meeting 2026 here, FM Sitharaman said the proposed trade agreement had been hard and very vigorously negotiated.

"The negotiations are still ongoing although we would like to believe both sides have reached a plateau beyond which giving or taking might be very, very difficult," she said.

The Minister said the two countries could still explore whether there was any room for further negotiations.

The trade balance currently favoured India and that the United States was seeking to reduce its trade deficit, said FM Sitharaman.

She said the US position



reflected concerns over losses it believed had accumulated in its trade relationship with India over the years. The negotiations are being held under a framework for an interim trade agreement announced in February 2026.

India and the US had said they would work towards finalising the interim pact while continuing talks on a broader bilateral trade agreement.

Moreover, the Finance Minister cited the India-European Union trade agreement as an example of India's approach to negotiating trade

Next phase of GST reforms to support PM's 'Viksit Bharat' vision: Nirmala

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (IANS)

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said that the next phase of Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms will focus on making compliance simpler to advance Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat'.

Sharing an article on LinkedIn, FM Sitharaman said the Next-Gen GST reforms were aimed at providing relief to taxpayers while giving greater momentum to the economy.

She said the rate changes introduced on September 22, 2025 were the first part of the reforms, while the next phase of process-related changes will come before the GST Council.

"The next phase of process reforms will come before the GST Council shortly," FM Sitharaman said.

pacts. "The mother of all deals" was an apt description for the agreement, FM Sitharaman said, referring to a phrase used by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

She said India had opened up 92.5 per cent of its tariff lines and about 97 per cent of trade value under the agreement, while the

EU had opened up about 99 per cent of trade value and around 97 per cent of tariff lines.

FM Sitharaman said the selection of market access commitments was based on the complementarity of the two economies and the need to ensure that India's competitiveness was not adversely affected.

Rajnath to launch FSS-1, lay keel of FSS-5 in Vizag today

VISAKHAPATNAM, Oct 5 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh is scheduled to launch Fleet Support Ship-1 (FSS -1), lay the keel of FSS-5 and also inaugurate the upgraded Slipway-4 and a 300-tonne Goliath Crane at the Hindustan Shipyard Limited here on Tuesday.

These are significant demon-

strations of India's indigenous shipbuilding capabilities, said a release from PIB on Monday.

The upgraded Slipway-4, with its extended length and enhanced load-bearing capability, supported by the Goliath crane, will enable shipyard to build and launch vessels of up to 45,000 DWT. This is a prominent expansion of the shipyard's capacity.

Rajnath to lay foundation stone for Rs 218 cr Shakti engine facility at HAL unit in Odisha

KORAPUT, Oct 5 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh is scheduled to lay the foundation stone on Tuesday for a Rs 218 crore new facility linked to Shakti engines at Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd's

Koraput unit in Odisha.

He will also inaugurate a function marking the delivery of the 2,000th aero-engine by HAL Koraput division in the Sunabeda area, it said. The event will also be attended by CM Mohan Charan Majhi.

India visit to strengthen ties, says Swiss President



Swiss Confederation's President Guy Parmelin pays homage to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat in New Delhi on Monday. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (IANS)

SWISS Confederation President Guy Parmelin on Monday said that his visit to India is a "stepping stone" towards strengthening of the "close and long-standing partnership" between the two nations.

Swiss Confederation President Parmelin was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi warmly welcomed the visiting President upon his arrival at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Speaking to the reporters following the ceremonial welcome, Parmelin said, "The visit is an excellent opportunity to emphasise the importance that both Switzerland and India attach to this relationship."

He said that the relationship

EAM meets Parmelin

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (IANS)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar called on Swiss President Guy Parmelin in New Delhi on Monday and expressed appreciation for his sentiments towards deepening ties between the two nations.

"Pleased to call on President Guy Parmelin of the Swiss Confederation, visiting India on a State Visit. Deeply appreciate President Parmelin's sentiments towards deepening our partnership, building on the promise of India - EFTA TEPA," EAM Jaishankar posted on X.

between India and Switzerland is built on "shared democratic values as well as on trust and mutual respect".

"My visit is a stepping stone towards further growth, deepening and strengthening of our close, broad and long-standing partnership. I am pleased and honoured that we have the chance to exchange views on matters of bilateral and global importance," the Swiss President said.

"I am especially glad that my stay in India will enable us to commemorate the first anniversary of the entry into force of the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement, TEPA," he mentioned.

The India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) is a comprehensive free trade agreement between India and the four European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member states—Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. Signed on March 10, 2024, the agreement officially entered into force on October 1, 2025.

"It is the right moment to celebrate how far we have come together, but even more importantly, to shape our joint future," Parmelin said.

The Swiss President arrived in India on Monday for a three-day State visit at the invitation of Prime Minister Modi. The visit is set to focus on strengthening bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, science, technology, innovation and mobility.