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DISTANCE BETWEEN DREAM AND REALITY

22-10-2026





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HIGHLIGHTS

- INTERNATIONAL NEWS
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TODAY NEWS HIGHLIGHT

- International Kullu Dussehra Festival 2026
- NPPA imposes 30% cap on trade margins for 137 anti-cancer drugs
- French Open Badminton 2026 — Super-750 tournament of the BWF World Tour
- Pumped Storage Projects (PSPs) — An Important Means of Renewable Energy Storage
- Rajnath Singh to represent India at the 25th SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting in Tajikistan
- STPI and IIT-BHU organised AI Tech Conclave for Health and Assistive Technologies in Varanasi
- US government orders removal of Chinese AI model DeepSeek from government IT systems
- India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) comes into effect, giving 100% duty-free access to Indian exports

1. International Kullu Dussehra Festival 2026



The International Kullu Dussehra Festival in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh, is scheduled to be held from October 21 to October 27, 2026. Dedicated to Lord Raghunath, this festival's tradition dates back to the 17th century, to the reign of Raja Jagat Singh. Unlike in many other parts of the country, the main festivities in Kullu begin on the day of Vijayadashami. The procession of deities in palanquins, the chariot procession, the 'Kullu Nati' folk dance, and traditional music are the key attractions of this festival.

2. NPPA Caps Trade Margin on 137 Anti-Cancer Drugs at 30%



In October 2026, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) capped the trade margin on 137 selected non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs at 30% of the Maximum Retail Price (MRP), excluding GST. Established in 1997, the NPPA operates under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers. This decision was taken under Paragraph 19 of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013, and could lead to a reduction of up to 70% in the prices of the affected drugs. The notification was issued on October 17, 2026, and the revised prices will come into effect on November 9, 2026—a move expected to help alleviate the financial burden of treatment for cancer patients.

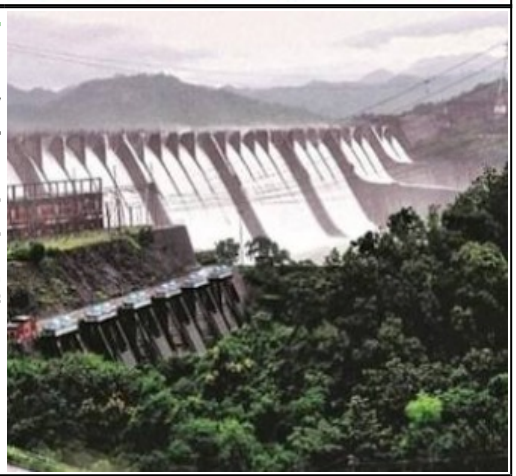
3. French Open Badminton 2026 — A BWF World Tour Super 750 Tournament



The 2026 French Open Badminton Tournament is being held from October 20 to 25 at the Arena Grand Paris in Tremblay-en-France, France. It is a prominent tournament in the Super 750 category of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) HSBC World Tour. The event is organized by the French Badminton Federation (FFBaD). The competition features five categories: men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, women's doubles, and mixed doubles.

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4. Pumped Storage Projects (PSP) — A Crucial Medium for Renewable Energy Storage



A Pumped Storage Project (PSP) is a form of hydroelectric energy storage in which surplus electricity is used to pump water from a lower reservoir to an upper reservoir; this water is then used to generate electricity when needed. Often referred to as a large-scale "water battery," these projects help balance the intermittent availability of solar and wind energy and enhance the stability of the power grid. On April 10, 2023, India's Ministry of Power issued guidelines for the development of PSPs.

5. Rajnath Singh to represent India at the 25th meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government in Tajikistan



India's Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, represented India at the 25th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government, held in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, on October 19–20, 2026. The SCO was established in 2001, and its headquarters is located in Beijing, China. The meeting focused on trade, investment, regional connectivity, economic cooperation, and the action plan for 2026–2030. Rajnath Singh emphasized the need for collective action against terrorism. For India, the SCO serves as a vital platform to strengthen security, energy, trade, and strategic cooperation with Central Asia.

6. STPI and IIT-BHU Organize AI Tech Conclave on Health and Assistive Technologies in Varanasi



On October 18, 2026, STPI and the Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE) at IIT-BHU organized a tech conclave in Varanasi focused on "AI for Health & Assistive Technologies." The objective was to enhance the accessibility, quality, and affordability of healthcare services through artificial intelligence, while also promoting assistive technologies for persons with disabilities. The conclave featured discussions on applications such as early disease detection, medical diagnosis, remote ICU monitoring, and AI-assisted surgical planning.

7. US Government Orders Removal of Chinese AI Model 'DeepSeek' from Government IT Systems



In October 2026, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) ordered the removal of products and related services from the Chinese AI company 'DeepSeek' from federal civilian government IT systems, citing concerns regarding national security and data privacy. DeepSeek develops Large Language Models (LLMs) and reasoning-based artificial intelligence models. This decision was taken under the 'Federal Acquisition Supply Chain Security Act of 2018' to ensure the security of the government's IT supply chain. This development highlights the ongoing US-China technological rivalry, as well as the growing importance of AI security, data sovereignty, and digital self-reliance.

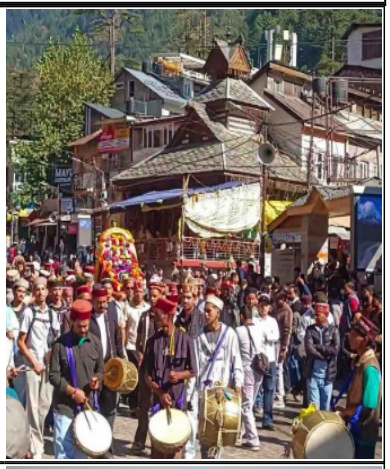
8. India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Comes into Effect; 100% Duty-Free Access for Indian Exports



The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and New Zealand came into effect on October 20, 2026, following its signing in New Delhi on April 27, 2026. Under this agreement, New Zealand has granted zero-duty access to 100% of Indian exports, which is expected to benefit sectors such as textiles, leather, pharmaceuticals, and engineering products. New Zealand has committed to facilitating $20 billion USD in investments into India over the next 15 years, while India has excluded certain sensitive sectors—including dairy—from tariff concessions.

1. In which state is the International Kullu Dussehra Festival 2026 scheduled to be held?

A - Uttarakhand
B - Himachal Pradesh
C - Jammu & Kashmir
D - Sikkim



The International Kullu Dussehra Festival is scheduled to be held in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh, from October 21 to 27, 2026. It is dedicated to Lord Raghunath, and its tradition dates back to the 17th century, linked to Raja Jagat Singh. The palanquins of the deities, the chariot procession, and the 'Kullu Nati' (traditional dance) are its main attractions.

2. How many selected anti-cancer drugs had their trade margins capped by the NPPA in October 2026?

A - 100
B - 125
C - 137
D - 150



In October 2026, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) capped the trade margins for 137 selected non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs at 30% of the Maximum Retail Price (MRP), excluding GST. This decision was taken under Paragraph 19 of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013. The revised prices will come into effect from November 9, 2026, which may help in reducing the cost of cancer treatment.

3. In which country is the French Open Badminton Tournament 2026 being held?

A - Germany
B - France
C - Denmark
D - Switzerland

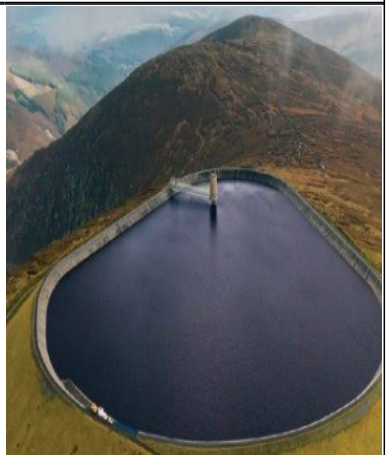


The 2026 French Open Badminton Tournament is being held from October 20 to 25 at the Arena Grand Paris in Tremblay-en-France, France. It is a Super 750-level tournament on the BWF World Tour, featuring five events: men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, women's doubles, and mixed doubles.

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4. By what other name is a Pumped Storage Project (PSP) known?

A - Green battery
B - Water battery
C - Solar battery
D - Thermal battery



A Pumped Storage Project (PSP) is a hydroelectric energy storage technology in which surplus electricity is used to pump water from a lower reservoir to an upper reservoir; this water is then used to generate electricity when needed. As of July 2026, 11 projects with a total capacity of 15,870 MW were under construction in India, while six other projects with a capacity of 8,140 MW had either undergone evaluation or received approval.

5. Where was the 25th meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government held in October 2026?

A - Beijing, China
B - Dushanbe, Tajikistan
C - New Delhi, India
D - Astana, Kazakhstan

India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh represented India at the 25th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government, held in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, on October 19–20, 2026. He emphasized the need for collective action against terrorism. The meeting covered topics such as trade, investment, regional connectivity, economic cooperation, and the action plan for 2026–2030.



6. Where was the "AI for Health & Assistive Technologies" tech conclave organized?

A - Lucknow
B - Varanasi
C - Patna
D - Bhopal

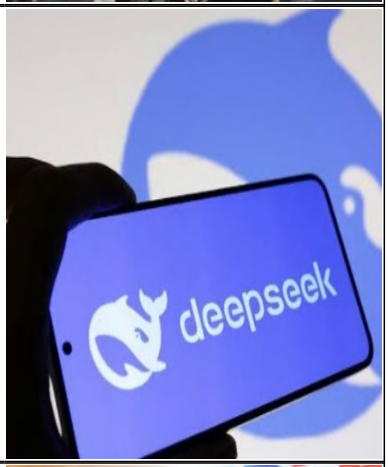
On October 18, 2026, STPI and the Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE) at IIT-BHU organized a tech conclave in Varanasi themed "AI for Health & Assistive Technologies." The objective was to make healthcare services accessible, high-quality, and affordable, while promoting assistive technologies for persons with disabilities. The conclave included discussions on the early detection of diseases, medical diagnostics, remote ICU monitoring, and AI-assisted surgical planning.



7. Which country issued an order in October 2026 to remove DeepSeek products from government IT systems?

A - India
B - America (USA)
C - Japan
D - Britain (UK)

In October 2026, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) ordered the removal of products and related services from the Chinese AI company 'DeepSeek' from federal civilian government IT systems, citing concerns regarding national security and data privacy. This decision was taken under the 'Federal Acquisition Supply Chain Security Act, 2018,' reflecting the ongoing U.S.-China technological competition and the growing importance of AI security and data sovereignty.



8. Under the FTA, what percentage of Indian export items were granted zero-customs duty access by New Zealand?

A - 50%
B - 75%
C - 90%
D - 100%

The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and New Zealand came into effect on October 20, 2026, under which New Zealand granted zero-customs duty access to 100% of Indian export items. New Zealand has committed to facilitating investments worth 20 billion USD in India over the next 15 years, while India has excluded sensitive sectors—such as dairy—from tariff concessions.



One Liner

1. When did the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) come into effect? - October 20, 2026

2. How many selected anti-cancer drugs had their trade margins capped at 30% by the NPPA in October 2026? - 137 drugs

3. In which state is the International Kullu Dussehra Festival 2026 being organized? - Himachal Pradesh

4. Which organizations organized the 'AI for Health & Assistive Technologies' tech conclave in Varanasi? - STPI and the CIIE of IIT-BHU

5. In which year was the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) established? - 2001

6. DeepSeek is an artificial intelligence company from which country? - China

7. Which category of BWF World Tour tournament is the French Open Badminton Tournament 2026? - Super-750

8. Under the India–New Zealand FTA, for what proportion of Indian exports did New Zealand provide zero-duty access? - 100% of Indian exports

9. For what purpose is surplus electricity used in Pumped Storage Projects (PSP)? - To pump water from a lower reservoir to an upper reservoir

10. In which year was the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) established? - 1997