Core sector growth hits record 10.9% in October

Coal production and electricity generation lead the growth, with cement and iron ore output also contributing; a low base, following 0.8% growth in October last year, also boosts the latest figure

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Growth in the core industrial sectors of the economy climbed to a series-high of 10.9% in October 2026, driven by a surge in electricity generation and coal, cement, and iron ore production, and a low base effect, official data released on Friday showed.

Data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on the Index of Core Industries show that growth in October surpassed 8.2% in September, the previous series high. The new index, released this year with a base year of 2022-23, has data that go back only up to April 2024. However, the data also show that the strong growth figure in October was likely aided by the fact that the index grew a relatively poor 0.8% in October last year.



"While core output surged by 10.9% in October 2026, this was supported by a low base related to the shift in the festive calendar, with output having expanded by a marginal 0.8% in the year ago month," Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA, said. "While the growth print for October signals a strong start for the third quarter of FY2027, this is largely optical," she added. "The average performance for October-November would provide a better assessment, as this would adjust for festive base effects."

Within the index, the coal sector saw growth accelerating to 23.05% in October 2026, far faster than the 10.7% registered in September. October's performance, however, is likely also due to low base effect, since the sector contracted 8.4% in October last year. The growth in the index, however, is in line with what the industry itself has reported. Coal India, the country's largest coal company, reported that production increased about 19% to 67.2 million tonnes (MT) in October.

A major reason for the growth in coal production was likely demand from the power sector, which saw electricity generation jump by 21.6% in October 2026, up from 12.6% in the previous month.

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SHAURYA SSB PC (8368104520)

Cultural connect is biggest guarantee of global peace, PM says at SCO forum

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Cultural connect is the biggest guarantee of global peace, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday. He was speaking at the first civilisational dialogue forum of the 10 nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) grouping. He said it was important that at a time when war and unrest were dominating the world, India was holding a dialogue on shared civilisations.

The SCO forum is being attended by Pakistan for the first time since the four-day conflict between the two countries in May 2025. Pakistan has nominated Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Mr. Musadik Masood Malik, to lead its delegation to the event being held in the historic Purana Qila in the national capital from November 20 to 22.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with an exhibitor at the first SCO civilisational dialogue forum at Purana Qila, in New Delhi. PTI

Speaking to the media at the SCO forum, Mr. Malik said, "It is a tremendous opportunity for us to have a multilateral dialogue about civilisation. I think cultures and civilisations cut across boundaries, and it is fantastic that we are here and talking about our history, geography, and our cultures and civilisations..."

He is scheduled to address the forum on November 21.

On Friday, Mr. Modi said Indian culture had taught "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, that is, the whole world is our family". "Therefore, our desire for our own well-being is deeply rooted in the spirit of global well-being. We consider mutual harmony the foundation of global well-being."

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SAURAV SETIA (9368104529)

U.K. and EU move closer with deals on carbon permits, youth mobility

The youth mobility scheme will provide 100,000 places for 18- to 31-year-olds, allowing them to spend up to three years across the U.K.-EU border; the U.K. govt. plans to introduce legislation next week involving the adoption of certain EU laws

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

At their second Summit, the U.K. and EU on Friday announced agreements on freer trade in certain food products, youth mobility and the linking of their emission trading systems (carbon permits).

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham, who travelled to Brussels for the Summit, said this was the "limit" of what the two sides would converge during this Parliament (U.K.), i.e., until 2029.

A "structured" discussion on migration, a digital partnership and a dialogue on economic security were also set in motion at the Summit.

"Today, we do draw a line on a decade of drift and division by reconnecting with old friends, by building a much more constructive relationship with our nearest neighbours and our largest market," Mr. Burnham said at a joint press conference in Brussels with European leaders.

The two sides have stated that they will conclude a deal on tuition fees in six months. The EU has rejected the discounted fee that the U.K. has offered its students and wants the fee to be lowered until it equals what British students pay at U.K. universities.

The U.K. government would introduce legislation in the U.K. Parliament next week, Mr. Burnham said. This will involve the U.K. adopting EU law in certain areas (such as SPS, or Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures).

The youth mobility scheme, with 100,000 places for 18- to 31-year-olds, would allow young people to spend up to three years across the U.K.-EU border to study, travel and work.

The deal would add 0.5% or GBP 17 billion to U.K. GDP, according to Mr. Burnham. His government has argued that the deal on food and drink will bring down the cost of food for British consumers in supermarkets.



Andy Burnham attends a roundtable with business leaders during his visit for the EU-U.K. Summit, in Brussels on Friday. AP

Adhering to red lines

Mr. Burnham, who is taking forward some of the discussions held with Brussels by his predecessor Keir Starmer, committed to adhering to the red lines outlined in the Labour 2024 manifesto for the duration of this Parliament (2029).

These red lines include not joining the bloc, its customs union or its single market, and not allowing the "free movement" of people across U.K.-EU borders. However, Mr. Burnham has said the U.K. would have to decide on its long-term options for its ties with the EU - including rejoining the EU. On Friday, Mr. Burnham and EU leaders suggested there would be an "informal brainstorming process" ahead of next year's summit to determine the long-term options for the U.K.

The EU remained open to the "closest possible relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom", European Council President Anotnio Costa said at Friday's briefing, while reiterating the "indivisibility" of the bloc's "four freedoms" - a reference to the EU's principle of the free movement of people, goods, services and capital within its borders.

The nature of the future relationship between the U.K. and the EU is likely to be a campaign issue when Britain approaches its next general election. The leader of the Reform UK party, Nigel Farage, who was the de facto leader of the British campaign to leave the EU in 2016, held a rival press conference in Brussels on Friday. He called Mr. Burnham a "globalist" and said the Prime Minister lacked a mandate to make these changes to the U.K.-EU relationship.

More arson in Bangladesh amid Hasina's return plan

Agence France-Presse
DHAKA

New arson attacks erupted in Bangladesh on Friday as authorities restored communications with the home town of convicted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, after days of unrest over her planned return from exile.

Ms. Hasina, 79, has vowed to return to Bangladesh in December from India, despite being sentenced to death in absentia for crimes against humanity over a deadly crackdown during the 2024 uprising that ousted her.

Ms. Hasina's former ruling party, the Awami League, whose activities are now banned, called for strikes this week to mark the anniversary of the day Ms. Hasina received her death sentence.

Hundreds of paramilitary troops have been deployed to contain the unrest, in which at least three people have been killed.

A petrol bomb was hurled at the residence of a junior Foreign Minister, Humaiun Kobir, in the northeastern city of Sylhet on Friday, police said.



Policemen stand guard outside the ancestral home of Muhammad Yunus after it was set on fire, in Chattogram on Wednesday. AP

Mr. Kobir said Dhaka would deal with attacks "very firmly".

"It is not possible to bring back a 'fled terrorist' by throwing petrol bombs," he told pressperson on Friday.

Rampant attacks

Ms. Hasina has said repeatedly she wants to return next month, telling AFP in an email this week that she was "fully aware" she could be hanged.

Attackers also set fire to the home of a former junior Foreign Minister from the Awami League in Rajshahi on Thursday.

Protesters wielding machetes also torched a police station in Gopalganj, Ms. Hasina's political stronghold, the same day. Communications have since been restored.

The police said 124 people linked to the Awami League had been arrested in the capital Dhaka over the past 24 hours, without providing further details.

The family home of Nobel laureate and former interim leader Muhammad Yunus in the port city of Chittagong was also targeted in an arson attack.

Grameen Bank, founded by Mr. Yunus, said more than 20 of its branches had been targeted in arson attacks this month.

SHARYA SSF TRC (

Italian workers, students stage general strike over wages and public services

Reuters
ROME

Tens of thousands of workers and students took to the streets across Italy on Friday as the country's largest trade union, CGIL, staged a general strike, demanding higher wages and greater investment in public services.

The demonstrations coincided with a broader wave of youth mobilisation across Europe. Student protests were also planned in Germany, France, Britain, Austria, Belgium and Spain over rising living costs and military spending.

"Today is also a very important day because young people are taking to the streets not just in Italy but across Europe," CGIL leader Maurizio Landini said.



Thousands take to the street in Turin, northern Italy, during a general strike against the government's budget Bill on Friday. AP

"Across Europe and among ordinary people, the demand for change is growing," he added.

Other Italian unions, including the grassroots Cobas movement, also called separate strike action, while student demonstrations were planned nationwide amid simmering discontent over the policies of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government.

The CGIL strike was scheduled to last the entire working day and involved workers in both the private and public sectors, including schools and healthcare.

Air and rail transport services were excluded from the general strike, while its impact on local public transport was limited by minimum-service requirements.

Mr. Landini said more than one million people had taken part in demonstrations across 100 cities.

Nuclear arms limits with China, Russia will be very hard to achieve, says Trump

Reuters
Washington, November 20

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump said on Thursday after talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin that a mutual agreement to limit nuclear weapons will be hard to achieve but that he will keep working on it.

"I love the concept of it but in terms of pure negotiation, it's a very hard thing for me as a president to do," Trump told Reuters by phone as he flew back to Washington from his trilateral summit in China.

A top priority for Trump on his Asia trip was to begin three-way talks on nuclear arms control, a topic China is reluctant to address as it mounts a large nuclear buildup to catch up with Russian and American dominance.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists estimated China had roughly 410 nuclear warheads in 2023, compared with about 3,708 in the United States, according to a separate report. A later Bulletin estimate put Russia's arsenal, the world's largest, at about 5,420 warheads as of March 2026.

China has been rapidly expanding its arsenal, with the Pentagon projecting more than 1,000 operational warheads by 2030. Trump said on Thursday that Xi agrees with him on the concept of limiting nuclear weapons "but at the same time it's very hard for somebody to say 'We have 4,000 nuclear weapons, we'll give up half.' It's hard to do."



"...at the same time it's very hard for somebody to say we have 4,000 nuclear weapons, we'll give up half... it should be done, but it's hard to do psychologically"
DONALD TRUMP,
PRESIDENT OF UNITED STATES

He said he would keep bringing up the subject "because it should be done, but it's hard to do psychologically."

A joint statement after the talks said that the leaders "reaffirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" and that they would "conduct a dialogue on reducing nuclear risks and preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons."

SBTRG (8368104529)
SHAURYA SSB

UK, EU ink trade, emissions deals, pledge to rebuild ties after Brexit

Associated Press
Brussels, November 20



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen with Britain's PM Andy Burnham and European Council President Antonio Costa at the EU-UK summit in Brussels on Friday. AP

BRITAIN AND European Union agreed deals on trade, carbon emissions and youth movement Friday, and pledged to rebuild ties with an "ambitious and dynamic" post-Brexit relationship.

In a joint statement after a summit in Brussels, the UK and EU confirmed agreements will scrap checks on trade in plant and animal products, link their emissions trading schemes and let 100,000 young adults from each side live and work in others' countries for up to three years.

Other areas remain a work in progress, with the two sides giving themselves six months to reach an agreement on the level of student fees for EU students in the UK and vice versa.

Friday's summit is part of efforts to forge a closer relationship, a decade after Britain voted to leave the EU and six years after the divorce became final.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the deal is "a turning point" in EU-UK relations, and UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham called it a "landmark." "This is a good day for Britain. This is a good day for Europe," he said.

Burnham said the summit was a step toward undoing a decade of damage caused by the divorce. "The Brexit we were given has not worked. We have lost more than we gained," he said this week.

SHALBRYA SSB TRG 9368104523

India unveils first indigenous H5N1 vaccine: 'An example of self-reliance'

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, November 20

IN A significant breakthrough for India's animal health research, scientists at a Bhopal-based government institute developed the country's first indigenous vaccine against H5N1 — the highly pathogenic strain of avian influenza.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan dedicated the vaccine to the nation on Friday at a ceremony in Bhopal, where he also announced a Rs 300-crore state-of-the-art animal disease research laboratory. "This vaccine is an example of India's self-reliance. Bird flu causes large-scale chicken deaths and huge economic losses for poultry farmers. The indigenous vaccine will strengthen bird flu control in India and protect chickens."

Scientists at the ICAR-National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) developed the vaccine, which is priced at just Rs 1-2 per dose. Its development is seen as a significant addition to India's indigenous vaccine research, potentially reducing dependence on external technologies and making disease prevention more accessible to poultry farmers.

Announcing the proposed Rs 300-crore laboratory, he said NIHSAD had emerged as a symbol of India's scientific capabilities. The new facility is expected to strengthen the country's infrastructure for researching high-risk animal pathogens and developing vaccines.

He praised the commitment of the research team behind the H5N1 vaccine, comprising Dr S Nagarajan, Dr Manoj Kumar, Dr C Tosh, Dr H V Murugkar, Dr Aniket Sanyal, Dr Senthil Kumar D, Dr Naveen Kumar and Dr Yogisharadhya R.

He further noted that they worked continuously for months under demanding biosafety protocols, foregoing weekends and holidays. The restrictions included stringent sanitisation procedures before and after laboratory work and avoiding keeping pets at home during the research period.



Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan unveils the first indigenous H5N1 vaccine in Bhopal on Friday. ANI

Chouhan highlighted the economic importance of animal health, saying livestock and poultry were essential sources of regular income for rural households. Citing government estimates, he said diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease, Lumpy Skin Disease, Brucellosis and Peste des Petits Ruminants together caused annual losses of approximately Rs 56,000 crore.

The minister said that 147.16 crore free vaccine doses had been administered against Foot and Mouth Disease under the National Animal Disease Control Programme. He cited the development of the Lumpi-ProVacInd vaccine following the 2022 Lumpy Skin Disease outbreak.

Chouhan also used this occasion to attack the Congress party. Without naming Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, he said: "Those who go abroad and question the capabilities of the country's constitutional institutions, scientists, and military should see India's achievements. The world should see today's self-reliant and developed India. We must not sin by underestimating the country's capabilities," he said.

SHAURYA ESS TRG (836-04-99)

India's civilisational gambit in China's backyard



Vinay Kaura

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There are buildings which hold memories that run deeper than those of the people walking within them. The Purana Qila is one of them. The walls of the Purana Qila were built by Sher Shah Suri during the 16th century, and as per tradition and substantial archaeological evidence, the ancient city of Indraprastha can be found under it. And now, beginning November 20, the Ministers of culture of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), along with dialogue partners from over 25 countries, have gathered within the walls of the Purana Qila for the first Civilisational Dialogue Forum of the SCO. The idea was proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Tianjin in 2025, and is being conducted by the Ministry of Culture along with the Ministry of External Affairs.

If one wants to have a better sense of why India wants to host such a forum, one needs to realise that the term 'civilisation' has become a contested territory in international politics. In the two decades since the end of the Cold War, the West had a monopoly over the language of universal principles such as democracy, markets and human rights. While the language was meant to be universally applicable, it implicitly belonged to those who had written the textbooks.

Emerging powers while not rejecting the language, have relativised it. Beijing, for example, moved quickly to institutionalise it. Xi Jinping unveiled the Global Civilization Initiative in 2023. One year later, the UN General Assembly, on a Chinese initiative, designated June 10 as the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations. In association with the 2023 initiative, China also organised a Ministerial-level meeting of the Global Civilizations Dialogue in July 2025, while the Nishan Forum on World Civilizations launched its 12th edition in September 2026 with the theme 'Civilization, Order, and Justice' at the birthplace of Confucius. Even the Internet conference at Wuzhen this month featured a sub-forum dedicated to civilisation. Clearly, China is not just experimenting in this area; it is developing a franchise which signals a much-recycled message – that modernity has many addresses.

India's rebranding within the SCO

India has viewed these developments with the look of a man who has found someone selling his family silver at the fair. After all, India has the better claim of being the centre of civilisation than many of the current claimants vying for the position. The conference in Delhi is India's attempt to set up its own stall in an organisation that has its secretariat in Beijing. It also fits a pattern of agenda-setting, with the AI Impact Summit earlier this year and the BRICS chairmanship now.

New Delhi's success lies in constructing an Asian identity where China could participate without dominating, and India becomes the bridge between the Global South, the West and Central Asia

The behaviour of a great power is driven more by what it believes about itself than by what it states as its objective. There are three objectives of India here, and only one is explicitly stated: soft connectivity, which includes Buddhist circuits, Sufi lineages and the trade routes that ran from Taxila to Samarkand much before anyone drew maps.

The other objective is to achieve authorship within the SCO. India has never been a comfortable guest in the SCO household. It rejects the Belt and Road Initiative; has a dispute with Pakistan at almost every conference; and even though it has been trying to normalise ties with China since 2024, it cannot shake off the bitter taste of Galwan. A flagship project by India gives it something more valuable than just a veto – a brand name. It lets India highlight that the SCO is not just China's platform but one which India also helps shape.

The third goal, which is least discussed, is to establish that civilisational depth and democratic pluralism are not at odds. China's civilisational argument implies that ancient continuity justifies centralised order. India counters this by arguing that its continuity has been plural, argumentative and layered from the very beginning; proof can be found in the Purana Qila itself.

Moreover, this event is in complete conformity with India's foreign policy. But this can also be a weakness. Multi-alignment is not just non-alignment with a fresh coat of paint. It is the art of belonging to all relevant clubs without giving the key to any one of them. In September, India hosted the BRICS summit. On November 9, India and the European Union held their seventh Strategic Partnership Review in Delhi, just after concluding talks regarding India's membership in Horizon Europe, the EU's flagship research program. On November 17, India participated in the Quad Leaders' Summit in Manila.

The real currency of soft power

The West holds no rival meeting of civilisations. Nonetheless, a Huntingtonian frame of reference is increasingly creeping into Western debates on migration and identity, suggesting that the contrast is beginning to fade. By temperament, the West approaches diplomacy, not in civilisational terms, but in technological, commercial and regulatory ones. Rulebooks on AI, chips and carbon borders are its civilisational statements. India's counterweight to the SCO stage is therefore not a copycat event but one which moves on a parallel track: semiconductors with Brussels, supply chains with Washington and Tokyo, and maritime security through the Quad. Each track hedges the others.

China will also benefit from the Delhi forum. Every forum that sees the world in terms of civilisations strengthens China's argument that universal standards of conduct are simply a Western imposition. A Delhi forum, hosted by a democracy, makes that claim look less like China's self-serving argument and more like an Asian consensus. The risk is that Delhi's democratic legitimacy could become the wrapper for Beijing's content. China will bring its five thousand years of history, its Silk Route and finally, its claim to Buddhism, which matters for the succession of the Dalai Lama.

While it would flatter New Delhi to call this a clever move to outflank China, it would also be an undersell to call it mere pageantry. What is unfolding is a contest over words rather than territory. India can never out-spend China in Central Asia. But it can deny Beijing a monopoly over the term 'civilisation' in the diplomatic language of Eurasia. This may sound like a small objective, but it is a realistic one. And in statecraft, realistic aims usually succeed more often than grand ones. Agenda-setting, not attendance, is the real currency of soft power.

An inclusive alternative

States often become hostage to the language they choose. The civilisational argument carries a danger in that it is often seen by critics as a favourite alibi of authoritarian regimes. India must be careful not to lend its democratic credibility to a language that such regimes use to justify repression.

As the session unfolds, the effectiveness of the forum will not depend on its declarations, but on the nature of the Asia that India wants to build. Multipolarity does not mean inclusivity because rival claims of antiquity can breed more conflict.

New Delhi's success lies in constructing an Asian identity where China could participate without dominating, and India becomes the bridge between the Global South, the West and Central Asia.

Purana Qila is older than any dynasty that called it home. The lesson from this is that civilisations derive their strength from embracing and absorbing; not by claims that they are better than others. For Beijing, civilisation is not a shared inheritance but a claim of ownership. If India uses the forum to show the inclusive alternative, it will have won something that China cannot copy. If instead India uses the forum to prove that it is older than its competitors, it walks straight into Beijing's trap.

SHAURYA SSD (T-2281)