ILTC Narsapur Celebrates Gandhi Jayanti with 'Swachhata Hi Seva' program

On 2nd October 2025, the Southern Region Branch Office of ILTC, Narsapur, observed Gandhi Jayanti by organising the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' program. The event was held under the leadership of Mr. K N Tulasi Rao, COA Member and Southern Region Convenor, EPCH, along with exporters like, Mr. K Ra jeev Chandra and Mr B Uday.

Lace artisans and ILTC staff actively participated in the cleanliness drive, spreading awareness about the importance of hygiene and community responsibility among local residents. The team also cleaned the surroundings outside the ILTC campus, reinforcing the message of collective action for a cleaner environment. As part of the outreach, Mr. K N Tulasi Rao and the exporters visited the Govt. Hospital, Narsapur, where they distributed fruits and bread to patients and lace artisans. The gesture reflected the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of compassion, service and social responsibility, inspiring everyone to contribute for a better society. ■

U.S. Consumer Sentiment Points to a Less Predictable, More Extended 2025 Holiday Shopping Season

U.S. consumer sentiment and intentions suggest that the 2025 holiday shopping season will be less predictable and more spread out than any other year. Most holiday shoppers plan to spend about the same as last year, but there is an increase in those planning on spending more, according to the annual holiday purchase intentions consumer survey from Circana™. More than 80% of holiday shoppers expect prices to be higher this year as a result of tariffs and other economic factors. That expectation of higher prices will impact what, where and when consumers shop, with more holiday shoppers planning on getting an earlier start to avoid possible future price increases and take advantage of early season promotions.

"The volatility of consumers is evident in their feelings about the holiday shopping season, which means the flow of the 2025 holiday shopping season will be less predictable," said Marshal Cohen, chief retail advisor, Circana. "While consumer spending has demonstrated resilience, final retail holiday results will be greatly influenced by timing of everything from promotions to news of the day."

Consumers plan to spend more, and they are planning ways to mitigate that additional spending. Going hand-in-hand with the expectations of higher prices, on average, consumers plan to spend $796 on holiday shopping this year, which is 3% higher than last year's spending intentions.

More than a third (34%) of holiday shoppers say they will take advantage of more deals this year. Higher prices may result in fewer gifts to wrap, as 31% of shoppers say they will buy fewer items this holiday. Holiday shoppers have expanded the duration of their shopping season with an early start. Almost half of consumers plan on starting their holiday shopping before Thanksgiving and 24% have already started or even finished, up nearly 4% points from last year. Black Friday remains most popular of traditional shopping days, with 19% planning it as the kick-off to their holiday shopping. The number of consumers planning to wait till December, thereby getting a late start to holiday shopping, is the lowest (19%) it has been in recent years. Practicality takes center stage as consumers are planning on spending more on things like home appliances, housewares, and sporting goods. Consumers plan to spend more on lower cost indulgences like beauty products, but planned spending is down for some of the traditionally higher ticket purchases like technology, electronics and home improvement products. Nearly two-thirds of consumers indicate that their household grocery costs will have an impact on their holiday shopping this year. Marketers will need to be diligent in their efforts to inspire the consumer, whether it is tapping into pent-up demand for products from key industries or appealing to the consumer's core value of the moment. ■ *Source: Circana*

Australia: Record Black Friday weekend bonanza tipped to hit $6.8 billion as shoppers chase value

Australians are poised to spend a record $6.8 billion over the Black Friday–Cyber Monday weekend, according to the Australian Retailers Association (ARA) in partnership with Roy Morgan — a 4% increase on last year. ARA CEO Chris Rodwell said the four-day event from 28 November – 1 December plays a vital role in boosting momentum for retailers across the crucial peak season trading period. "Black Friday has firmly cemented its place on Australia's retail calendar — delivering critical cashflow to discretionary retailers and small businesses who've faced subdued consumer activity for the past two years."

The survey reveals women are almost evenly split between using Black Friday to buy Christmas gifts (17%) or for themselves (16%), while men are around four times more likely to shop for themselves (27%) than for Christmas gifts (7%).

Overall, around 6 million Australians are expected to take part in Black Friday sales this year. Women make up 3.5 million of this group, men 2.5 million.

The survey also shows that two-thirds of shoppers (66%) plan to buy both gifts and items for themselves, with the main motivations being low prices (42%), great deals (38%) and saving money on Christmas gifts (25%). Average planned spending is $804 per person – $750 for women and $882 for men.

Mr Rodwell said shoppers remain intentional with their spending. "Shoppers are savvy and more deliberate — they're waiting for big sales events like Black Friday to make larger purchases — but it's not just about price. Australians are looking for value, reliability and a trusted retail experience."

Recent research highlights consumers focus on key gift categories. Afterpay reports 45% of Australians are holding out for discounts on big-ticket purchases. However, clothing and shoes (45%), toys (34%), books (33%), and interiors and décor (32%) topped sales wish lists.

According to Deloitte, participation in Black Friday is also growing among Australian retailers — with 44% expected to take part this year, up 3% from 2024.

"Retail is Australia's largest private sector employer, contributing $430 billion or 18% of national GDP. Every dollar spent with a local retailer or national brand this Black Friday helps build confidence, employment and long-term resilience across the sector," said Mr Rodwell.

"Unlike overseas ultra cheap digital platforms, our local and national retailers invest in training, wages, innovation and community connection — that's worth backing this season." ■

Source: Australian Retail Association

Furniture feels pressure as U.S. manufacturing extends slide

US factory activity shrank in October for an eighth straight month, driven by a pullback in production and tepid demand. The Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing index eased 0.4 point to 48.7, according to data released recently. Readings below 50 indicate contraction, and the measure has been stuck in a narrow range for most of this year. The group's production index slid 2.8 points to 48.2, marking the second month in the last three that output has contracted.

Meanwhile, inflationary pressures continued to ease. The index of prices paid for raw materials fell 3.9 points to 58, the lowest since the start of the year. Since a recent peak in April, during the height of the tariff rollout, the price gauge has dropped nearly 12 points. Economists and policymakers are relying more on private reports such as the ISM survey for clues on the economy and job market in the absence of official data because of the US government shutdown. Friday's scheduled employment report is also poised to be delayed as a result.

Manufacturing industries contracted in October, led by textiles, apparel and furniture. Six industries, including primary metals and transportation equipment, reported growth. The survey illustrates general malaise among the nation's manufacturers who are contending with lingering uncertainty around trade policy. Producers are navigating evolving supply chains as they source materials. The ISM measure of supplier deliveries rose to a four-month high, indicating longer lead times. Bookings shrank for a second month in October, though at a slower pace, the ISM report showed. Order backlogs, another indicator of demand, also contracted. Inventories at manufacturers shrank by the most in a year. Customers' stockpiles also remained low, suggesting some scope for orders to pick up and support production. ■ *Source: Furniture Today*