

## Series of development works in pipeline, Madhira set to witness rapid growth

Khammam: The Madhira Assembly constituency in the district is set to witness rapid growth with Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka proposing a series of development works in the constituency. It might be noted that the State government has selected Madhira constituency, represented by the Deputy Chief Minister, to establish an integrated residential school on a pilot basis. The integrated school would have SC/ST/BC and minority residential schools in one place.

According to officials, 20 acres of land required for the construction of the school has been identified recently at Lachagudem in Chintakani mandal in the constituency. The integrated school would be built with an estimated cost of Rs.100 crore. Once the integrated school starts functioning, it would revolutionise and strengthen the education system. It is a good decision to establish integrated residential schools in every mandal, noted Telangana State School Teachers Federation (STF) state general secretary

Devarakonda Saidulu.

Vikramarka proposed to revive Indira Dairy which was initiated in 2013-14 during Congress regime by establishing Indira Dairy Industrial Co-operative Society Limited. At that time, the land required for the dairy was also allotted. It is planned to involve DWCRAs group members in managing the dairy, which could ensure employment to unemployed youth. Indira Dairy would have a production capacity of four lakh litres of milk per day. Milk products would also be manufactured and marketed by the dairy. The Deputy Chief Minister recently announced that rural roads would be developed with Rs.334 crore. In addition, a ring road would be laid around Madhira town to ease the traffic in the town and boost development around it. It is planned to construct a new court building spending Rs.24 crore as the existing court building constructed during the British era reached dilapidated state. It might be noted that a 100-bedded government hospital is



being constructed with Rs.34 crore. If the proposal to develop an underground drainage system in Madhira town comes to fruition,

the town would be the first one to have underground drainage facility in erstwhile Khammam district.

## Telangana to face power shortage; Generation hit in Kothagudem thermal plants



Hyderabad: The unexpected shutdown of the Bhadradi Thermal Power Station (BTPS) due to a lightning strike and a boiler tube leak in Kothagudem Thermal Power Station (KTPS) in Paloncha of Kothagudem district is likely to result in a shortage of power in the State. Due to the shutdown of the two plants, generation of about 1320 megawatts of power has stopped. According to Energy Department officials, there was a huge shortfall in the supply to the State grid due to the disruption in production in these two plants in Kothagudem district. In KTPS, an 800 MW unit was not functioning due to a boiler tube leak and another 250 MW unit was under

annual maintenance. Similarly, at the BTPS plant, a 270 MW unit was damaged after being struck by lightning. Generation of 1320 MW power has come to a standstill affecting the daily supply of power in the State.

According to officials, over 4,000 MW of power was supplied per day to the Genco grid in the State through thermal power plants and since power generation in these two power plants units had stopped due to technical reasons and lightning, the Genco has to look for alternative sources to meet the power demand of the State. According to TGGenco Director

(Thermal) Lakshmaiah, the BTPS plant's unit was expected to take two months to be restored. The unit has suffered a loss of around Rs.25 crore due to lightning. The generator transformer, which was hit by lightning, would be repaired in collaboration with Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL). There was 80 litres of oil inside the transformer when lightning hit the transformer. If it had caught fire, the entire unit would have been in danger, officials said.

The KTPS boiler tube leaked on Sun-

day in the seventh phase plant, due to which generation of 800 MW of electricity was disrupted. The power plant has an installed capacity of 1,800 MW with 4 units in operation. Engineering officials said it would take five days to repair the boiler tube leak. The fifth phase unit of the plant with a generation capacity of 250 MW was undergoing annual repairs from June 15 and would resume production by the end of July, officials informed. Till then the Genco has to procure power through various sources to meet the power demand.

## VNRVJIET receives ISO 21001:2018 certification

Hyderabad: City-based VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering and Technology (VNRVJIET) is now ISO 21001:2018 certified. The quality management system (QMS) of 21001 of 2018 from International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) is applicable to educational organisations management systems (EOMS) and the certification is to confirm that the educational institution is "assessed and found to be in accordance with the requirements" for the standards, a press release said. The QMS intends to help educational institutions

implement best practice where a learner-centric approach is valued and the curriculum is relevant to learners. Principal, Prof C. D. Naidu, said that the certification is a well-deserved recognition for all the efforts put in by various stakeholders with particular efforts from the members of administration at the Institute. D Suresh Babu Daggubati, president, Vignana Jyothi which runs the Institute, said that the certification shall now serve as a constant motivation for the Institute's journey towards becoming one of the excellent educational institutions of the region.



# The Supreme Court of India spells the way in Himalaya's development

It is a well-established fact that the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) is both India's water tower and also the critical provider of invaluable ecosystem goods and services. Despite this understanding, there has always been dissonance between the special development needs and the development model being pursued in the IHR. As the economy of the region is dependent on the health and the well-being of its natural resources, plundering the same in the name of development will inevitably and surely lead the IHR towards its economic ruin. In view of some of the recent judgments of the Supreme Court of India, we seem to be headed towards a more robust rights-based regime where sustainable development would be a fundamental right. The tone and tenor of the Court's judgments highlighting the competing rights of people and nature are a clear sign of the direction in which the development versus environment debate in India is headed. In *State of Telangana and Others vs Mohd. Abdul Qasim (Died) Per Lrs*, the Court had said that the need of the hour is to adopt an ecocentric view of the environment, where nature is at the core. The Court said, "Man being an enlightened species, is expected to act as a trustee of the Earth... The time has come for mankind to live sustainably and respect the rights of rivers, lakes, beaches, estuaries, ridges, trees, mountains, seas and air.... Man is bound by nature's law." A model of destruction

According to this approach, nature is not an object of protection but a subject with fundamental rights, such as the right to exist, to survive, and to persist and regenerate vital cycles. The current development model being pursued in the IHR is in total contravention of this approach. We are witnessing a 'bumper crop' of hydro-electric power stations on the rivers and streams in the IHR, without any care for the rights of these rivers and streams. There is a reckless widening of existing hill roads to four lanes in the name of development — in any case, these roads are getting washed away in many places in the IHR every time a river is in spate. A post-disaster need assessment report by the National Disaster Management Authority on the floods in 2023 in Himachal Pradesh identified, unsurprisingly, rampant construction in violation of norms, regulations (and even court orders in many cases) right on river beds and flood plains, on the steep slopes, in seismic zones, in landslide-prone areas and the loss of green cover as the reasons for the disaster. The Teesta dam breach in Sikkim and the monsoon floods and landslides in Himachal Pradesh — both events in 2023 — are a stark reminder of the havoc our development model is causing to the environment, ecology and communities, especially in the mountains. The mountains, climate, forests, rivers, air and land all are



crying for their right to survive in the IHR. In whatever approach we choose to adopt, whether ecocentric or anthropocentric, there is a need to align aspirations for growth and development in the IHR with the science and the rights of both people and nature. Intersectionality of rights

In another matter of public interest litigation (PIL) titled *Ashok Kumar Raghav vs Union of India and Ors.*, the Supreme Court asked the central government and the petitioner to suggest a way forward so as to enable the Court to pass directions on the carrying capacity of the Himalayan States and towns. In the case of the *Great Indian Bustard*, the Court has recognised the right of the people of this country to be free from the adverse impacts of climate change. Unfortunately the Court's verdict in the *Great Indian Bustard* case is being interpreted in a very narrow sense — as if the Court has given a clean chit to all renewable energy projects over and above the concerns for biodiversity or any other right that might get compromised. The Court is not only cognisant but also committed to the conservation of species and has underscored the importance of taking proactive measures "not reactive" to protect the *Great Indian Bustard*. The Court modified the previous order where a blanket ban was imposed on a very large area despite the report of the Wildlife Institute of India, which had identified 13,663 square kilometres as the "priority area", and the rest as "potential areas" and as "additional important areas" for the *Great Indian Bustard*. The Court has explained in the judgement the non-viability of underground power transmission lines. In fact, the Court has explained in detail, with examples of many international and national obliga-

tions, to explain the intersectionality between the fundamental rights enshrined in Articles 14 and 21, specifically, and human rights which include the right to development and the newly minted right to be able to adapt to climate change. The top court went on to say: "without a clean environment which is stable and unimpacted by the vagaries of climate change, the right to life is not fully realised... The inability of underserved communities to adapt to climate change or cope with its effects violates the right to life as well as the right to equality. The right to equality under Article 14 and the right to life under Article 21 must be appreciated in the context of the decisions of this Court, the actions and commitments of the state on the national and international level, and scientific consensus on climate change and its adverse effects". It is a given that unless infrastructure is sustainable and dependable, it cannot become the foundation for people's pursuit of their developmental goals. Sustainability of infrastructure necessarily means that it is resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change and consequent disasters. This is essential to ensure equality, equity and equal access to people, to various opportunities all across the country — as is the mandate of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. Disasters are also known to amplify social inequality as the poor are the worst hit and the most inadequately equipped to deal with the consequences. To pursue a path of sustainable development can also be said to be a fundamental right, as a natural corollary or an integral part or a sub-set of the right to be free from the adverse impacts of climate change. The state must honour this. Hopefully, the Court's judgment is a much-

needed nudge and serves as the basis for a legal framework for necessary course correction for development in general and in the IHR in particular. Development and disaster resilience While there is no denying that as we are a lower-middle income country with a large and young population, rapid development is India's destiny. The interconnection between disasters and unregulated development has become increasingly pronounced and visible. The only way forward is for disaster management to be incorporated in development planning, both from a perspective of prevention and resilience. Our actions in the name of development, in total disregard of nature in most cases, is to be blamed for these unnatural disasters resulting from natural hazards. The development plans, policies and laws that underpin them too play a pivotal role in the making of these disasters. There is an urgent need for planning stage convergence of different authorities so that when there is a plan for any development, all concerns about disaster and climate resilience are also factored in, and the project reaches implementation stage only after the green signal in these areas. We need both development and disaster resilience. We also need science, policy and action to be in conformity with each other, in an integrated approach with the involvement of all including policymakers, planners, the scientific fraternity and communities. In view of these judgments of the Supreme Court and also the new fundamental right to be free from the adverse impacts of climate change, it is now a fundamental right for people in general and of IHR in particular to have a development model that is sustainable and in sync with the carrying capacity of the IHR.



# Teach for India invites applications for the 2025 Fellowship program An exceptional opportunity to Lead With Love in classrooms and communities



Teach For India, an organisation working towards educational equity for children has invited applications for its 2025 Fellowship. The deadline for applying is 1st September, 2024. The Teach For India Fellowship is a two-year, full-time paid Fellowship program that empowers passionate individuals to become leaders and

changemakers in the education sector. Over 640 fellows have joined the 2024 Cohort, making it a strong proof point for the program's growing influence and impact in the ed-equity movement. The Fellowship application process is highly selective and receives applications from India's brightest and most promising indi-

viduals. The selected Fellows go through a rigorous training program where they are motivated and challenged to comprehend the education system from its grassroots level. The unique aspect about the Teach For India Fellowship is the opportunity to bring about a transformative change in the existing education paradigm. It also gives

them insights into various aspects of leadership, problem solving and facing real life challenges that can be a game changer in their overall professional growth. To know more about the Teach For India Fellowship and the selection process please visit the links below: Apply For the Teach For India Fellowship 2025 | How To Be a Fellow

## Vizag Warriors Announces Official Title Sponsorship with Fun88 News

The Vizag Warriors team proudly announced their sponsorship agreement with Fun88 News as their official title sponsor for the ongoing season of the Andhra Premier League (APL) 2024. This announcement, made by Dr. Narendra Ram, co-owner of the Vizag Warriors team, marks a significant milestone for the team as they gear up for the 3rd Season of APL. Vizag Warriors is one of the top competitive teams in the APL, Recognized by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the APL has been instrumental in promoting cricket

in Andhra Pradesh since its inception in 2022 by the Andhra Cricket Association. The league aims to nurture young talent, providing a platform for players to showcase their skills with the potential to advance to the Indian Premier League (IPL) or the national team. The APL emphasizes team spirit and brand value while uniting fans through the spirit of cricket.

With extensive media coverage, including telecasts on Star Sports and substantial social media reach, the APL offers significant exposure to its sponsors. Fun88

News, known for its diverse gaming products and strong presence in the online gaming industry, will benefit from wide-ranging brand visibility through this partnership. Dr. Narendra Ram, an ardent sportsperson with a background in management, public relations, and law, has been a driving force behind the Vizag Warriors. His passion for sports and preventive healthcare reflects in his leadership and vision for the team. Fun88 News, a leading online gaming company, brings its expertise and credibility to the partnership, promising an exciting and mutually beneficial collaboration.



**VIZAG  
WARRIORS**

**FUN88  
NEWS**





SBI Hyderabad Circle celebrated 69th State Bank Day across branches and offices in Telangana State with lot of fervor and festivity. The bank took up several Corporate Social Responsibility activities including tree plantation and awarded the winners of the competition held on the occasion of Bank Day. CGM complemented the staff for their unwavering commitment, tireless efforts & dedication which has been instrumental in Bank's success.

A special cultural evening was organized and Bank also honored retired Senior Executives in recognition of their contributions to the growth of the Bank in the state. SBI LHO Hyderabad also celebrated Doctor's day by felicitating Bank's doctors.

On this special day, Chief General Manager Shri Rajesh Kumar administered the State Bank Day pledge "committing to make -SBI - the bank of first choice of everybody and make every interaction with customers & colleagues, a pleasant and enjoyable experience leading to customer delight". The CGM urged all employees to take personal responsibility for sustaining SBI's position as a leader in financial services.

Further, speaking on this occasion, Shri Rajesh Kumar, said that State Bank of India has more than 2 crore of customer base in the State. The bank has risen to greater heights with the support of esteemed customers. The bank has presence across the State with its 1321 offices and is the lead bank in the State.

Hyderabad Circle continues to be at the forefront in digital banking domain with a steady stream of technology-driven innovations. The circle offers multi-channel delivery model, providing its customers a wide range of choices to carry out the transactions, at any time, any place. The Circle

has increased its offerings across various channels - Mobile, ATM, Internet and Branches. YONO is the flagship banking and lifestyle app—a one-stop shop offering which provides not only all the financial services but also a gamut of investment, insurance, and lifestyle solutions.

Shri Rajesh Kumar exhorted the employees to focus on increasing the digital business operations and remain constantly updated with the appropriate security measures, including cyber security processes to ensure mitigation of various risks.

SBI is driven by the motive of giving back to community for its progress. It looks beyond customer-bank relationship and strives for more empathetic measures to build trust in the society. Bank's focus is to carry out impactful philanthropic activities for the upliftment of the economically, physically, and socially challenged communities. The bank during the FY 2023 - 2024 had doubled CSR spends with focus on health care, education, environment, sanitation, empowerment of women and senior citizens, war veterans' welfare, and livelihood.

On the occasion of Bank day Sri. Rajesh Kumar, CGM, SBI Hyderabad Circle donated five vehicles amounting to around 1 50 lakhs to 5 NGOs- **Sahrudaya Old Age Home, Heavens Home society, Vivekananda Seva Sangam, Satya Harishchandra Foundation and Cherish Foundation.**

Also, bank donated Vivekananda Seva Sangham 20 KW solar rooftop solar system, for generation of renewable Solar Power as Sustainable Development goal. Bank donated Fowler Cots and Mattresses to Satya Harishchandra Foundation as support to the Senior Citizens home run by them at Nadergul, Hyderabad. Sri Rajesh Kumar reiterated Bank's commitment for



continued CSR spends on improving the Social capital, steering social partnerships.

On the occasion of Doctor's Day Shri Rajesh Kumar appreciated our daily heroes—the doctors for their tireless efforts, selflessness & dedication and thank them for their unwavering service to the humanity in building up a healthy and happy society. During the course of the day, Shri Rajesh Kumar virtually inaugurated new branches at Gandipet, Indresham (Patancheru). Also inaugurated renovated / new premises of ACB Narayanpet, ACB Sadashivpet and High Court Branches.

The Bank Day celebrations provides

a platform for identifying the inherent talents of the staff in different areas of art and culture. SBI Ladies club Hyderabad, headed by President Smt. Rashmi Sinha conducted competitions in Painting & Rangoli. The winners of the competitions were felicitated by Smt. Rashmi Sinha & Sri Rajesh Kumar. All the staff were enthralled by the scintillating performance by Shri. L. V. Revanth Kumar, Indian Idol winner during the 69th State Bank Day celebrations hosted by SBI Local Head Office, Hyderabad. Shri Rajesh Kumar conveyed Bank Day greetings & thanked all its customers for their "valuable support & trust".

## The FSIB, responsible for appointing senior executives to public sector financial institutions, has recommended Shri. Challa Sreenivasulu Setty as the next Chairman of State Bank of India (SBI).

The recommendation of FSIB for appointing Shri. Challa Sreenivasulu Setty as Chairman of SBI is a proud moment for the state of Telangana as he hails from this State.

Shri Challa Sreenivasulu Setty has a vast experience of 36 years with SBI. He joined the Board of SBI as Managing Director in January 2020 and is currently heading International Banking, Global Markets & Technology verticals of the Bank. Prior to the current assignment, Shri Setty headed Retail & Digital Banking vertical. He has also been heading various task forces/committees formed by the Government of India. A Bachelor of Science graduate in Agriculture and a Certified Associate of Indian Institute of Bankers, he started his career with State Bank of India in 1988 as a Probationary Officer. Across a career spanning over three decades, he has rich experience in Corporate credit, Retail, Digital and International banking, and banking in developed markets.

Shri Setty has held key assignments in State Bank of India including Deputy Managing Director - Stressed Assets Resolution Group, Chief General Manager and General Manager in Corporate Accounts Group, Deputy General Manager in Mid Corporate group and VP & Head (Syndi-



cations) in SBI, New York Branch. The new chairman will take up the assignment on the same day of the retirement of present chairman. The current Chairman's term will end in August 2024.



# Touch a Life Foundation Celebrates 10th Anniversary with Sparsa, Empowering Underprivileged Girls through Education



The Touch a Life Foundation, a registered non-profit trust, celebrated its 10th year of existence with the grand annual event, Sparsa, held T-Hub in Hyderabad. The event brought together underprivileged girls, their families, dedicated volunteers, the core team, generous donors, esteemed partners, and distinguished dignitaries, showcasing the remarkable impact of the foundation's efforts in promoting girls' education. Sparsa, the highly anticipated annual event organized by the Touch a Life Foundation, served as a platform to connect with donors and dignitaries, while also providing an opportunity for the underprivileged girls to share their innovative ideas and foster an entrepreneurial mindset.

Reflecting on the milestone, the Founders of Touch a Life Foundation, Ms. Vibuthi Jain and Mrs. Rina Hindocha, said, "Sparsa is not just an event; it's a testament to the transformative power of education. By empowering underprivileged girls with quality education, we are igniting a spark that will create a brighter future, not just for these girls but for entire communities." 75 underprivileged girls studying under Touch a Life Scholarship, they added.

During the event, the foundation presented a comprehensive project report, showcasing the diverse range of activities undertaken, including a thought-provoking documentary that vividly depicted the life-changing impact of its initiatives. The event further featured powerful and emotional

testimonials from students, sharing their personal stories and experiences, which served as a testament to the foundation's transformative impact. The event was graced by distinguished guests, including Ms. Srilakshmi Reddy, Founder & Director of Keystone School; Mr. Srinivas Rao Mahankali, CEO of T-Hub; Dr. M. Yuvaraju, Chairman & Managing Director of Myron Homes; Ms. Ashrita Vemuganti Nanduri,

Bahubali movie fame actress and classical dancer; Mr. Sreenivas Tirdhala, CMO & Co-Founder of iSprout Inspiring Workspaces; Mr. Mohd. Khaleequr Rahman, National Coordinator of the All-India Congress Committee - Kisan Congress; and Mr. Jyoti Chandra, Income Tax Officer. Established in 2014, the Touch a Life Foundation is committed to uplifting the underprivileged in the city, with a firm

belief that quality education can equip young girls with the necessary tools to tackle societal challenges and establish successful social innovation startups. Sparsa continues to be a shining beacon, casting a spotlight on the paramount importance of girls' education, and the Touch a Life Foundation remains dedicated to its mission of creating a better world through education.

## JSW MG Motor India Achieves Record Monthly ZS EV Retail Sales in June 2024

JSW MG Motor India announces retail sales of 4644 units in June 2024.

The company announced that its flagship SUV- ZS EV achieved highest-ever monthly sales in June 2024.

With over 40% of sales, at 1861 units, registered during this period, the company's NEV (New Energy Vehicles) continue to contribute a significant share to the overall sales of the company.





# Julian Assange's guilty plea signals the end of a years-long legal saga

Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, is set to plead guilty to one count of conspiring to unlawfully obtain and disseminate classified national security information under the US Espionage Act, ending his years-long battle with the United States that had implications for press freedom, media reports said on Tuesday. Assange was released from Belmarsh prison, where he had been lodged since 2019 in a separate case, on Monday after being granted bail from the UK High Court. A chartered plane, believed to be carrying Assange, landed early on Tuesday at Don Mueang International Airport, near Thailand's capital of Bangkok.

"Julian Assange is free. He left Belmarsh maximum security prison on the morning of June 24, after having spent 1,901 days there. He was granted bail by the High Court in London and was released at Stansted airport during the afternoon, where he boarded a plane and departed the UK," WikiLeaks said in a post on X. It was not immediately clear how he would get to the US territory of the Northern Mariana Islands, where he is scheduled to appear in court on Wednesday.

Who is Julian Assange?

Australian editor, publisher and computer specialist Assange and his WikiLeaks were thrust into prominence - and notoriety - in 2010 after releasing nearly half a million documents related to the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan - the largest security breaches of its kind in US military history. Press freedom advocates hailed the 52-year-old for exposing US military misconduct in foreign countries. But the American prosecutors alleged that Assange was nothing more than a hacker and had conspired with an Army private - identified as intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning - to obtain and publish sensitive government records. After a trial, Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison, the longest sentence in a leak-related case in the US. However, her sentence was later commuted by former president Barack Obama.

But, in 2010, Assange's reputation took a further hit from sexual assault allegations in Sweden, which he denied. To avoid arrest, Assange took shelter at the London embassy of Ecuador, which granted him political asylum based on his claim of political persecution. In the seven years he spent at the embassy, Swedish prosecutors dropped the investigation. But, in 2019, Assange was eventually arrested in that case for violating his bail conditions after Ecuador revoked his asylum. He was sentenced to 50 weeks in jail and continued to fight his extradition to the US from Belmarsh prison where he was lodged. What is the case against him?

In April 2019, the US justice department filed an 18-count indictment alleging that Assange damaged national security by publishing confidential documents that harmed the US and its allies while helping its adversaries. "Julian Assange is no journalist," said US assistant attorney general John Demers, the department's top national security official at the time. "No responsible actor, journalist or otherwise, would purposely publish the names of in-

dividuals he or she knew to be confidential human sources in war zones, exposing them to the gravest of dangers." Assange's lawyer, Barry Pollack, said the "unprecedented charges" imperil "all journalists in their endeavour to inform the public about actions that have been taken by the US government". US prosecutors worked to differentiate between Assange and the work done by journalists.

What's next?

In a letter to district Judge Ramona Manglona, US justice department official Matthew McKenzie said Assange will appear in court in Saipan, the capital of the Northern Mariana Islands, at 9 am (local time) on Wednesday to plead guilty to the "charge in the information of conspiring to unlawfully obtain and disseminate classified information relating to the national defence of the United States, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 793(g), and be sentenced by the Court for that offence." Reports say he will be sentenced on the same day to 62 months in prison - which he has already



served at Belmarsh. If all goes well, Assange will walk free soon. The sentencing in the Northern Mariana Islands is significant in light of Assange's fraught legal battle against extradition to the "continen-

tal" US. The Islands, in the western Pacific, are also close to his home country of Australia. The extradition request is expected to be dropped and he will not face any other charges, reports said. The US government has yet to officially confirm the deal.

## Contradictory messages between Hyderabad police, govt officials over shop closing timing spark public outrage



Hyderabad: Conflicting statements from officials regarding shop closing times have left Hyderabad residents and business owners confused and frustrated. On Monday, the Hyderabad police clarified that social media posts suggesting mandatory shop closures by 10:30 or 11:00 pm were misleading. However, a tweet from Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy on Tuesday reignited the chaos by posting similar rules.

Reddy's tweet on his official X (for-

merly Twitter) handle listed a new set of rules for the state police, echoing the same message previously tweeted (now deleted) by the official handle of Telangana Congress. This post, tweeted at 11:27 am on Tuesday, has now been deleted after causing significant confusion. The contradictory messages between the city police and government officials have sparked public outrage.

Citizens have taken to social media

to express their frustration. One user commented, "When a clown moves into a palace, he doesn't become a king. Instead, the palace becomes a circus? Chronology: First: Telangana Congress handle tweets that all shops in the city must be closed by 10:30-11:00 PM. Then: Hyderabad Police handle states this is fake news and totally misleading. Now: Minister of I&PR's official handle tweets that all shops must be closed by 10:30-11:00 PM. This is nothing but a mockery of the system. I



# How Cape Town averted 'Day Zero': A lesson for Delhi

After three years of severe drought, dams in the city were left with only a fifth of their capacity, and the city began a 90-day countdown, after which they announced that residents would only be allowed to collect a limited amount of water from designated spots across the South African metropolis. Six years later, the city has recovered from the drought, and there are no limits on consumption. But the episode has left a lasting impact with overall consumption standing today below the pre-drought levels, even though the population has grown significantly.

The City of Cape Town's experience and the decisions of its administrators could hold significant lessons for Delhi, where the past few weeks of summer have triggered an acute water shortage, triggering protests and political battles. For Gareth Morgan, the City of Cape Town's executive director for future planning and resilience, the "core to the crisis' resolution" was bridging a trust deficit between the government and residents. "By demonstrating what the city was doing on its side, and by providing them with the tools and knowledge, residents were motivated to play their part," Morgan told HT in an email interview. The demand-supply issue

Any comparisons between the two cities need an important caveat: Delhi has roughly four times the population of the City of Cape Town. But the two face a similar predicament on a crucial aspect, that makes the lessons in South Africa relevant to India's Capital: they both depend on their neighbours for daily water. "96% of the water supplied to the inhabitants of the City of Cape Town comes from a regional, integrated surface water system (Western Cape Water Supply System, which is a water supply system comprising an inter-linked system of six main dams, pipelines, tunnels and distribution networks, and a number of minor dams)," Morgan explained. Groundwater within the city accounts only for the remaining 4%. India's national capital, meanwhile, depends on Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to meet around 86.5% of its drinking water supply. The Yamuna, the carrier lined channel (CLC) Munak, and the Delhi sub-branch (DSB) canals from Haryana, and the Upper Ganga Canal via Muradnagar from UP, send water to nine water treatment plants around the city. The remaining 13.5% is from internal sources, primarily tube wells and Ranney wells. In peak summer months, especially this year, the supply drops as reservoirs upstream dry up, much like what happened in the South African city in 2018. The utility of alarm. The crisis in 2018 had in fact been brewing since 2016, which was the second year of a serious drought. That year, some consumption limits were placed, and it would not be until 2017 when the first mention of "Day Zero" emerged. The idea behind Day Zero was simple public messaging: it represented a point in time when the city and its roughly four million people would run out of water in the municipal supply. In that eventuality, nothing short of a hard limit would come into effect, and people would only be al-



lowed 25-litre per person per day. "Backed by a programme of public engagement, engineering interventions and communication, the City's primary aim was to reduce demand through water restrictions, pricing strategies and behavioural change," said Morgan. The single most important action, when faced with a crisis of this level, Morgan said is "demand management and associated reduction in consumption". "There are other measures one can take too, including pressure management and small augmentation of additional water. [But it is] important to drive down consumption by using both tariffs to price water higher for excessive consumption by households and to set targets per household."

The Day Zero restrictions did not have to be slapped, but some tough measures were taken. A limit of 50-litre pp/day (per person per day) was imposed (for context a five-minute shower uses up to around 75-90 litres of water) and installation of water management devices was made mandatory. Differential, surge pricing for heavy users was introduced, and bans were imposed on irrigation, use of swimming pools, washing cars, and operating water fountains. Water pressure too was lowered in a bid to reduce consumption and decrease leakage. Communication was key. "Cape Town put considerable effort into communications. It was important that we needed to explain the extent of the risk, to indicate what the City government was doing and what we needed residents to do," he said.

The communications programme focused on educating people and normalising water-saving in day-to-day activities. These included novel methods like a daily water-use calculator to monitor usage; popularising two-minute shower songs to reduce average bath times; the

coining of the slogan "If it's yellow, let it mellow" to reduce toilet flushing; and collection and reuse of grey water from showers and washing machines for secondary applications. Some supply augmentation initiatives included fast-tracking the use of treated water for aquifer recharge, construction of three temporary desalination plants, and 165 new boreholes to ensure supply to critical infrastructure. These measures, Morgan said, needed cooperation from the public. "At the start many residents were resistant, but by late 2017 almost every Capetonian was playing their part. This, together with the return of some rain, enabled Cape Town to avoid Day Zero."

What next? Crediting the residents for "saving Cape Town", Morgan said, "The combined impact of the 2017-18 measures was a 40% reduction in water usage on pre-crisis levels, equivalent to 32 billion litres. That is a remarkable achievement." Behavioural change, Morgan said, was ultimately accomplished after shared responsibility was established. "Collecting, analysing and publicly com-

municating data helped mobilise residential and business users, and create a shared responsibility," he said. "Residents of Cape Town now care about water, and our population is very water literate." Looking ahead, the City of Cape Town is working towards diversifying its water sources. Under the 2019 Water Strategy to 2040, the city is aiming for "75% surface water, 11% desalination, 7% groundwater and 7% reuse" by 2040. A crucial big picture to keep in mind, the town planner said, was knowing when to act on a seismic campaign that requires behavioural change at a mass level. "Knowing when to pull the trigger on an advanced programmatic response is difficult. Droughts are usual experiences in all areas of the world. But how does one know early enough that this particular drought is worse than usual? I would advise that other cities start taking action earlier [rather] than later." Tannu Jain, HT's deputy chief content producer, picks a piece of climate news from around the globe and analyses its impact using connected reports, research and expert speak

## BCI bars these law colleges from taking admissions, two colleges in Andhra Pradesh

Hyderabad: The Bar Council of India (BCI) has recently notified a list of law colleges that have been prohibited from taking admissions to law degree courses for the academic year 2024-25 and subsequent years until further notice. Among seven that law colleges that have been barred from taking admissions, two colleges are in Andhra Pradesh. However, no law college from the State figured in the list

issued by BCI secretary Srimanto Sen. Here is the list:— Master Somnath Law College, Agra Road, Uttar Pradesh— Shri Krishna College of Law, Baghpat-Meerut Road, Uttar Pradesh— Sri Eshwar Reddy College of Law, Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh— Sri Shirdi Sai Vidya Parishad, Sri Shirdi Sai Law College, Anakapalli, Andhra Pradesh— SS College of Law, Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh— Teju Singh Memorial Law College, Uttar Pradesh



# The Post Office Act, 2023 and concerns about privacy infringement

This transformative legislation can potentially revamp the functioning of India Post, the state-owned postal service, but at the same time raises concerns related to the violation of individual privacy. The present Act repealed the 125-year-old Indian Post Office Act, 1898 ("1898 Act"), which was introduced during the colonial period. The provisions and concerns

Section 9 of the Act, 2023 allows the Union government to, by notification, empower any officer to "intercept, open or detain any item" in the interest of state security, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, emergency, public safety, or contravention of other laws. This provision gives unbridled powers to government authorities, leading to concerns about potential misuse and infringement of individual privacy. The change from "public emergency" to just "emergency" in the present Act compared to the 1898 Act might seem like a minor difference but it has significant legal implications. In the 1898 Act, the term has a higher legal threshold as it implies a more serious situation that threatens national security or public safety on a large scale. However, in the new act, the term is much broader and less defined: It could be interpreted to encompass a wider range of situations, potentially including less serious events. The Supreme Court in the *Hukam Chand vs Union of India* (1976) observed that the term 'public emergency' is not explicitly defined in the statute but its scope is inferred from the context of the section. The phrase 'occurrence of any public emergency' is connected with 'public safety,' wherein, these two phrases appear to take colour from each other and concern issues like the sovereignty and integrity of India, state security, foreign relations, public order, and preventing incitement to offences. The authority must form an opinion on the occurrence of a 'public emergency' considering these factors to take appropriate action.

The Supreme Court in *The Communist Party of India (Marxist), Maharashtra Unit and Another vs Commissioner Of Police, Greater Bombay and Another* (1994), while relying on the above-mentioned judicial pronouncement, held that the above decision of the top court would squarely apply to the interpretation of Section 26 of the 1878 Act. Similarly, the expression "in the interest of public safety or tranquillity" will take its colour from the expression "occurrence of public emergency." The resort can also be had to the doctrine of 'necitur a sociis' (knowing with the association), which says that when two or more words which are susceptible of analogous meaning are coupled together, they are understood to be used in their cognate sense. Under this doctrine, the meaning of questionable or doubtful words may be ascertained by reference to the other words or phrases associated with it. In another case, the Supreme Court in *PUCI vs Union of India* (1996) observed that a just and fair procedure must exist to regulate the power of interception. In the absence of any procedure, it would not be possible to safeguard the citizen's rights enshrined under Article 19(1)(a) as well as Article 21 of the Constitution of India.



Not only this, but Section 10 of the new act exempts the Post Office and its officer from "any liability by reason of any loss, misdelivery, delay, or damage in course of any service provided by the Post Office," except such liability as may be prescribed. This section further limits the accountability of the postal service, leaving citizens with limited recourse in case of grievances. In the case of *Dr Ravi Agarwal v. Speed Post, Rajasthan University*, (2019), the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) observed that the person who sent a speed post is a consumer under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 as he had paid the charges for the same. Section 6 of the Act, 1898 will not give immunity to the department or the employee if an employee is found delinquent in his duty if an inquiry is done, whereas in the present case, the department has not conducted any inquiry though it was possible to conduct such an inquiry as the complaint was received when the records were not weeded out. Also, Section 6 of the 1898 Act specifies that its exemption does not apply when the Central Government has explicitly undertaken liability. In the case of speed post, the government assumes responsibility for timely delivery and refunds if items are not delivered, misdelivered, or delayed. Therefore, this section does not apply to issues related to the deficiency in the delivery of speed post articles. As per Section 7(2) of the Act, 2023, "If any person refuses or neglects to pay the charges referred to in subsection (1), such amount shall be recoverable as if it were an arrear of land revenue due from him." Despite the government's claims of improving citizen-centric services, the present Act appears to grant the Post Office broad powers to recover dues from users, even when the quality of service remains questionable.

India Post's challenges are not lim-

ited to the draconian provisions of the Act, but also the lack of a clear regulatory framework to ensure fair competition, consumer protection, and data privacy in the evolving postal and courier services industry (Janakiraman, 2006). The Supreme Court in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) & Anr. vs Union of India & Ors.* (2017) observed that the right to communication is a part of the right to privacy and thus, it is protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. As highlighted by Bhandari and Sane in a paper titled "Towards a Privacy Framework for India in the Age of the Internet" (2016): "Concerns of privacy also exist in the private sector, with the advent of big data rendering obsolete many of the traditional methods of de-identification. These concerns assume an increased importance in light of the outsourcing industry in India, which makes it all the more important for

companies to adopt privacy policies that focus on the security of the personal data." In conclusion, while the present Act aims to modernise India Post, the absence of robust safeguards and the retention of draconian provisions from the colonial era raise significant concerns. The lack of safeguards in the new Act could enable the government to conduct mass surveillance of citizens and undermine the right to privacy. The lack of specific criteria for invoking powers allows for subjective interpretations by authorities, potentially leading to misuse. Consequently, citizens may be discouraged from using the postal system for fear of their communications being intercepted. Further, the Act does not specify procedures for interception or notification to the sender if their item is detained and lacks clear mechanisms to hold authorities accountable for misuse of these powers.

## Leopard scare continues in Shamshabad

Hyderabad: Three days after locals first suspected that a leopard was on the premises of the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport last month, began on Sunday when a few dogs and a calf were attacked by a wild animal. Villagers presumed it to be a leopard attack but Forest officials said it could be a hyena or a large dog breed. With the villagers expressing

their concerns, Forest officials had increased patrolling, especially during night in the area. Yet, there was no sign of any pug mark and scat of a leopard. Apart from intensifying patrolling, the Forest officials have now set up two cages and installed camera traps at different locations in the area.

It has been two days but no images were captured in the cameras so far, a forest official said, adding that patrolling would continue in the area for the next few days. Earlier, people in the Shamshabad area were living in fear after a leopard strayed into the International airport premises.