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Kharge Takes oath as RS member, vows accountability

New Delhi, June 29 (GNS): Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday took oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha after being re-elected to the Upper House from Karnataka.

The oath was administered by Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan in his chamber in Parliament. Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were present during the oath-taking ceremony. Several senior leaders were also present on the occasion, including Health Minister and Leader of the House J.P. Nadda, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, and Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh.

On June 11, three Congress candidates, including Kharge, along with one BJP nominee, were declared elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Karnataka. The elections were held to fill four Rajya Sabha seats from the state following the completion of the terms of sitting members Iranna Kadadi and Narayana Koragappa of the BJP, Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge and former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda of the JD(S), whose tenure ended on June 25.

Kharge had sought re-election to the Upper House from Karnataka after the expiry of his previous term.

Taking to X after taking the oath, the Congress president said, "It is a matter of immense pride and responsibility to continue serving this august Upper House as the Leader of the Opposition." He also expressed gratitude to Rajya Sabha Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan and Deputy Chairman Harivansh for their continued support.

Kharge thanked Sonia Gandhi and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, Congress MPs, and party workers and supporters, whose unwavering faith and encouragement, he said, have "sustained me throughout my long journey in public life and Parliamentary service."

"I am equally grateful to the Floor Leaders of all political parties, especially our colleagues in the INDIA bloc, and the wider Opposition, for their cooperation and camaraderie. I look forward to even stronger coordination during the forthcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament so that, together, we can make the government of the day more accountable," he added.

Ram Temple Donation Row: SC refuses urgent listing of PIL seeking court-monitored probe

New Delhi, June 29 (GNS): The Supreme Court on Monday declined an urgent hearing on a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking a court-monitored probe and forensic audit into the handling of donations and offerings received by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust over alleged financial irregularities linked to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

When the matter was mentioned before a Bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and Sheel Nagu, the PIL litigant pressed for an urgent listing, saying the allegations raised in the plea were "very serious" and expressing apprehensions over the manner in which the state government was dealing with the matter. Questioning the urgency, the Justice Sundresh-led Bench asked, "What's the urgency?" before directing that the plea be listed immediately after the court reopens post-summer vacation.

The writ petition, filed by advocate Narendra Kumar Goswami in his personal capacity, seeks directions for the preservation of records and evidence relating to donations made at the Ram Janmabhoomi temple and greater transparency in the administration of temple offerings. According to the plea, offerings made to a deity in a public temple constitute "sacred trust property" vesting in the deity as a juristic person, and persons handling such offerings are fiduciaries bound by duties of transparency, accountability and preservation.

The petition has sought immediate preservation of "all evidence, records, CCTV footage, and digital logs relating to donations and offerings at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir, Ayodhya". The PIL has also urged the apex court to direct the formulation of minimum constitutional safeguards for the transparent handling of public temple donations and offerings in temples of national importance. Referring to recent developments, the plea said the cause of action arose in June 2026 when public reports and the constitution of an SIT by the Uttar Pradesh government revealed allegations of irregularities, misappropriation and mishandling of donations and offerings at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir.

The petition clarified that it was confined to the secular administration of donations and did not seek interference in religious rituals, customs or denominational matters. Meanwhile, in the ongoing criminal investigation, police on Sunday recovered jewellery and documents from the house of one of the accused after conducting searches at the residences of all eight persons arrested in connection with the alleged misappropriation of donations and offerings at the Ram Mandir.

India's external debt touches $762.8 billion

Mumbai, June 29 (GNS): India's external debt stood at $762.8 billion at end-March 2026, an increase of $26.3 billion over its level at end-March 2025, according to data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday. The external debt to GDP ratio increased to 20.8 per cent at end-March 2026 from 19.8 per cent at end-March 2025.

Outstanding debt of the government decreased, while non-government debt increased at end-March 2026 over the level a year ago, according to an RBI statement. Debt service, comprising principal repayments and interest payments, declined to 5.8 per cent of current receipts at end-March 2026 from 6.6 per cent at end-March 2025.

Valuation effect due to the appreciation of the US dollar vis-a-vis the Indian rupee and other major currencies amounted to $24.6 billion. Excluding the valuation effect, external debt would have increased by $51.0 billion instead of $ 26.3 billion at end-March 2026 over end-March 2025, the statement said. At end-March 2026, long-term debt (with original maturity of above one year) was placed at $613.5 billion, recording an increase of $11.6 billion over its level at end-March 2025. The share of short-term debt (with original maturity of up to one year) in total external debt increased to 19.6 per cent at end-March 2026 from 18.3 per cent at end-March 2025

Haryana, Rajasthan Sign Yamuna Water Pact After 32 Years

New Delhi, June 29 (GNS): After 32 years, an agreement was signed between Haryana and Rajasthan on Monday regarding the Yamuna Water Project under the chairmanship of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil, Haryana Chief Minister Saini and his Rajasthan counterpart Bhajanlal Sharma were present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, CM Saini said that a series of meetings had been held between Haryana and Rajasthan under the chairmanship of the Union Jal Shakti Minister regarding the project.

Under the MoU, Rajasthan will utilize the surplus rainwater available in Haryana between July and October through a dedicated pipeline for drinking water purposes. "The agreement marks a significant step forward in the implementation of the project," he said and added that a pipeline will be laid from the Hathnikund Barrage to Rajasthan to facilitate the use of surplus water. CM Saini said, "It is a matter of great satisfaction, as ensuring the supply of water to those in need is a shared responsibility."

He assured full cooperation from Haryana and stated that no obstacle would be allowed to hinder the implementation of the project.

The Chief Minister further said that prior to the signing of the MoU, various aspects of the project had been discussed in detail under the leadership of the Union Jal Shakti Minister.

The agreement was finalised after extensive deliberations on all related issues.

CM Saini expressed his gratitude to HM Shah, Patil, and Sharma for facilitating the agreement. The Rajasthan Chief Minister called it a historic day. He said the agreement "marks a major step towards supplying the Yamuna water to the three districts of Shekhawati region and will end a wait of several decades". The first agreement to supply the Yamuna water to Shekhawati was signed between Rajasthan and Haryana in 1994. However, the project remained on paper because both states could not reach a consensus.

India maintained energy security, economic stability despite west asia tensions: Union Minister

Vadodara, June 29 (GNS): India has maintained both its energy security and economic stability despite recent geopolitical developments in West Asia, Union Minister of Power and Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar said on Monday, attributing the country's resilience to long-term planning, power sector reforms and investments in urban infrastructure. Addressing the inaugural session of the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference (VGRC) for Central Gujarat in Vadodara, the minister said a reliable energy system, modern cities and responsive governance together form the foundation of sustainable industrial growth and investor confidence.

Referring to recent international developments, Manohar Lal said India's preparedness had helped the country withstand global uncertainty. "Despite recent global geopolitical developments, particularly the events in West Asia, we have maintained and strengthened our energy security. Our economic stability has also remained intact. While many countries experienced uncertainty and fluctuations, India has maintained stability with confidence," he said.

The minister said reforms in the electricity distribution sector had strengthened the financial health of distribution companies while improving consumer services.

"We have implemented significant distribution reforms. As a result, distribution companies, which had long been running at losses, have seen improvements in their financial position. Consumers are receiving better services, and the sector has become more financially sustainable, creating greater opportunities for future investment," he said.

Manohar Lal said strong infrastructure extends well beyond industrial estates and factories, with investors increasingly evaluating the quality of urban services before deciding where to establish businesses.

"When an investor chooses a state, they do not look only at incentive schemes. They also consider whether adequate housing is available for the workforce, how efficient mobility and public transport systems are, the quality of water supply and sewerage systems, the effectiveness of digital governance, standards of cleanliness and the overall ease of living," he said.

He said the Centre had therefore integrated urban development with economic development, describing cities as engines of growth, innovation and employment rather than merely centres of population.

Highlighting flagship schemes, the minister said the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) and PMAY 2.0 had together been approved for the construction of 1.27 crore houses nationwide, of which 98.65 lakh had already been completed and handed over to beneficiaries.

Indigenous GAGAN Powers India's First Satellite-Guided Commercial Jet Landing

New Delhi, June 29 (GNS): In a landmark achievement for Indian aviation, an IndiGo Airbus A320 has successfully completed a satellite-guided landing using India's homegrown GAGAN navigation system. The demonstration flight, conducted on June 27 under the supervision of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), marks the first time a commercial jet in the country has landed using this technology.

Unlike the traditional Instrument Landing System (ILS), which depends on ground-based radio equipment installed at airports, the Airbus A320 used a Satellite-Based Landing System (SLS) approach. Although IndiGo had previously tested the technology on its ATR turboprop aircraft, this is the first successful demonstration involving a commercial jetliner. Passengers onboard would not have noticed any visible difference, as the aircraft was guided by satellite-based navigation rather than airport-based transmitters. The aircraft carried out a Localiser Performance with Vertical Guidance (LPV) approach. This procedure provides pilots with both horizontal and vertical guidance during landing, say experts.

Go beyond quick fix to fight deepfakes

Dinesh C Sharma

THE Central government has published draft rules for the regulation of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated digital content. The draft extends the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules issued in 2021 to cover 'synthetically generated information'. Such information or content has been defined as something which is artificially or algorithmically created, generated, modified or altered using a computer resource to make it reasonably appear as authentic or true.

The rules have been framed specifically to address the menace of deepfake videos, audio and synthetic media, which have flooded social platforms in recent months and demonstrated the potential of generative AI to create convincing falsehoods. Such content depicts individuals in acts or statements they never made, such as a recording of a purported telephonic conversation between US President Trump and India's Prime Minister Modi or a fake clip of the popular show Kaun Banega Crorepati, hosted by Amitabh Bachchan.

AI-generated deepfakes are often used to spread misinformation, damage someone's reputation or commit financial fraud. Political parties can use them to influence voters during elections. The response of government agencies so far has been to issue advisories to social media platforms and 'significant social media intermediaries' (SSMIs) against what it feels is 'objectionable' content. The SSMIs are supposed to have a compliance system to deal with complaints and regulatory requirements.

The new set of rules seeks to provide a legal basis for labelling, traceability and accountability related to synthetically generated information. This will be done by making it binding for all AI-generated content to be labelled through metadata embedding so that synthetically generated or modified information can be distinguished from authentic content. Social media intermediaries will be accountable for verifying and flagging synthetic information.

The proposed measures thus cover not only social media platforms and intermediaries but also AI companies and tools that offer technologies for enabling the creation or modification of synthetically generated information. AI tool companies will have to ensure that such information is labelled or embedded with a permanent, unique metadata or identifier.

Like the statutory health warning on tobacco products, the label on synthetic content will have to be displayed prominently, covering at least 10 per cent of the surface area of a visual display or the initial 10 per cent of the duration in the case of audio content. Social media platforms will be required to ask users to declare if the information they are uploading is synthetically generated, and the platform will have to deploy 'reasonable and proportionate' technical measures to verify such declarations. If online platforms remove or block access to AI-generated or other problematic content in good faith, they will not lose legal protection granted under the Information Technology Act.

Regulating any kind of AI is proving to be a nightmare for regulators and governments around the world because of the very nature and organisation of this technology. The AI content food chain is complex and multi-layered. It is not just AI tools like ChatGPT, Gemini or Dall-E but also several intermediaries and platforms that enable, permit or facilitate the creation or sharing of AI-generated content like AI art generators, voice-cloning tools, deepfake apps; embedded tools in social media or video platforms where users upload AI-generated material; chatbots or content creation tools that produce AI text or visuals. Except for major social media players like Facebook, Instagram, X and LinkedIn, which have a physical presence in India, most players in the AI food chain are based elsewhere and it may be hard to subject them to Indian regulations.

The rules on deepfakes appear to have been drafted in a hurry. They look more of a knee-jerk reaction to the recent spate of deepfake videos involving political leaders rather than a well-thought-out regulatory step to protect the online rights of citizens. The focus of the rules is entirely on 'taking down' of deepfakes considered objectionable, and holding social media platforms responsible for such content. Instead, the regulation must be designed to protect everyone's right to their physical features as well as their voice. Film stars in India are specifically seeking this right to prevent unauthorised AI representation of their faces and voices.

Indo-Afghan strategic renewal

Prof. D. Mukherjee

The Taliban's return to power in August 2021, after the U.S. withdrawal under the Doha Accord, transformed South Asia's strategic and emotional landscape. For Mother India, this demanded careful recalibration of Afghan policy, balancing security with historic ties. India-Afghanistan relations transcend politics, rooted in civilizational continuity and cultural affinity, exemplified by Tagore's Kabuliwala. Yet, Pakistan's interventions since 1947 have exploited Afghan territory to harm India through terror and subversion. The Taliban's resurgence brings both risk and opportunity. With some leaders tied to Pakistan, Bharat Mata must engage cautiously, guided by prudence and 'VasudhaivaKutumbakam', acting as a guardian to foster regional stability. This discourse arises from India's reflection, balancing history and strategy with wisdom. Its aim is to reassess policy toward Taliban-ruled Afghanistan while reaffirming her civilizational duty. Having faced Pakistan's manipulations and Afghan fighters' misuse, India seeks a path that safeguards her children and preserves ties with Afghans. Drawing lessons from the past and interpreting Kabul's intentions, her engagement must blend realism with moral conviction-compassionate yet vigilant, principled yet strategic-ensuring regional stability, global harmony, and the welfare of humanity remain central.

India's engagement with Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s left enduring scars. Under the guise of Islamic solidarity, Pakistan's ISI turned the Mujahideen into instruments of cross-border terror, many later targeting India, particularly in the Kashmir Valley, causing loss of life and uprooting communities. The tragedies of victims like Sarla Bhat reflect this betrayal. For Mother India, the lesson is clear: trust must be earned through deeds, not words. Pakistan has long exploited Afghan instability to undermine India. Yet, India's post-2001 development efforts-roads, schools, hospitals, and dams-built genuine goodwill among Afghans. As the Taliban seeks legitimacy, India must ensure her compassion is guided by prudence, keeping strategic engagement insulated from Pakistan's deceptive influence.

The October 2025 visit of Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to India, approved by the UN on medical grounds, has significant diplomatic weight. His meetings with Deobandi scholars and madrasa representatives raise questions: is this genuine outreach to Bharat Mata or Pakistan's influence? Facing economic isolation and internal divisions, the Taliban sees India as opportunity and necessity. Mother India must respond with cautious optimism-opening humanitarian and cultural channels while conditioning formal recognition on Kabul's commitment to peace, inclusivity, and preventing terrorism. Diplomacy must remain calm, firm, and discerning.The October 17, 2025 Pakistani airstrike in Afghanistan, reportedly guided by Sirajuddin Haqqani, highlights growing Islamabad-Kabul tensions. Civilian casualties reflect Taliban defiance of Pakistan. For India, it shows deceitful alliances fail and offers a chance to engage Kabul independently. Yet instability risks refugee flows, arms smuggling, and renewed extremist activity along western borders. Bharat Mata must act with empathy and vigilance, using platforms like the UN and SCO to support Afghan sovereignty, condemn Pakistan, and reinforce her strategic and moral stabilizing role.

To counter Pakistan's disruptive ambitions, Mother India envisions the AII Axis linking Afghanistan, India, and Iran-a corridor of trade, energy, and cooperation bypassing Pakistan. The Chabahar Port, co-developed by India and Iran, offers Afghanistan reconstruction opportunities and India access to Central Asia. With Tehran seeking revival and Taliban striving for legitimacy, Bharat Mata finds strategic partners. Her diplomacy, rooted in non-alignment and respect, can make this alliance a model of pragmatic peace, weaving history, commerce, and culture to stabilize the region and curb extremism. India's diplomatic strength lies in balancing faith with freedom. Across the Muslim world, she champions democracy, tolerance, and respect, exposing Pakistan's misuse of religion. The Indonesian President's UN call for coexistence and rejection of extremism aligns with India's vision. By strengthening ties with Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other progressive nations, Bharat Mata counters Pakistan's duplicity. Simultaneously, she engages the United States strategically.

India's battle for accountability, safety and integrity

India, celebrated for its relentless growth, its rising GDP, and its swelling demographic dividend of over 140 crore people, offers an impressive feat of numbers and optimism, served with some inconvenient truths. A country as diverse, managing with wealth inequality, yet working hard on lifting its poor with targeted welfare schemes and giving them a chance at dignity. But if there is one adversary we consistently fail to conquer, it is corruption, so deeply rooted in governance that our attempts at change are stuck in a loop, returning only familiar disappointment. Take the Lokpal, our designated guardian against corruption. What makes headlines? Not convictions, but an open tender inviting bids for BMWs worth `70 lakh each for their seven-member body that was formed to bring more accountability and to uphold justice. An RTI by Ajoy Bose reveals, between inception and March 2023, the Lokpal received over 6,200 complaints, disposed of most, but didn't secure a single conviction.

No surprise then, the one time the institution grabbed national attention was when parliamentarian Mahua Moitra was accused and "investigated." Recently, front-page news recounted the tragic deaths of 24 infants in Madhya Pradesh, victims of contaminated cough syrup, their organs failing before their lives had a chance to unfold. The tragedy faded and, as always, we moved on from headlines and turned away from accountability for the corrupt system. India's spirit of moving on from one tragedy to another deserves an acknowledgement of its own.

Our officials, meanwhile, offer indifference; a Chief Minister, when asked a question by a local journalist, said he had already spoken on the issue a day prior, so he didn't feel it was important enough to be answered again. The state Government has shielded the Health Minister from taking any responsibility, drug controllers remain comfortably protected in their posts, and any blame is deflected to doctors and junior staff, as if those at the bottom bear the weight for crimes rooted above. We also saw politics play out with the state blaming Tamil Nadu for the deaths, but no one will ask the question as to how these syrups passed the drug quality test. But this pattern isn't new.

Three years ago, in Gambia, 70 children under the age of three fell to the same fate after consuming a contaminated cough syrup from an Indian manufacturer. The contaminant in question is diethylene glycol, or DEG, an industrial solvent commonly used in antifreeze, paints, brake fluids, and plastics. While cough syrups need solvents too, the preferred choice lies with glycerine, a safer and approved solvent for pharmaceutical use. With DEG being cheaper over pharma-grade glycerine, these companies, to make money and keep the drug authorities' nexus well-greased, make the hazardous choice over the lives of humans. The adulteration isn't some inadvertent result of negligence or poor hygiene. This is a deliberate malpractice to cut costs. The want of Indians for the best bargain or cheap price knows no bounds, even venturing into bargaining with the lives of infants. Why aren't we angrier back home? Corruption permeates every junction: A 2023 accusation outlined how a state drug controller was paid INR 5 crore to "switch samples," leading to unsafe medicines passing into the hands of the vulnerable. Marion Pharmaceuticals made the WHO's medical alerts, yet its products kept streaming into overseas markets unhindered.

When 18 Uzbek children died from the same adulterated syrup, only Uzbek courts delivered strong sentencing. In India, regulatory action is fleeting; licences suspended, then quietly restored, as headlines pile atop each other, burying accountability deeper each month. This is where anger should ignite, but more often, resignation sets in. We are a country used to calamity followed by distraction, tragedy followed by routine.

The desire for cheapness, the indifference to systemic rot — these habits have consequences counted in graves, not rupees. Yet the rhetoric remains unchanged: someone else's problem, someone else's fault. The Indian Government is truly quite adept, that is, burying accountability under a pile of rubble disguised as news. What is the answer, then? It's in demanding more — from our regulators, our ministers, and ourselves. Will we continue to allow apathy and privilege to outlast outrage and justice? Or will we finally refuse to let infant deaths, corrupt deals, and broken promises become yesterday's forgotten news? The problem, sadly, is not confined to pharmaceuticals alone. Sometimes, what's at stake is simply honesty in the labelling of lifesaving products, a battle fought for years by a Hyderabad doctor who, after a decade of painstaking advocacy, was brought to tears when the FSSAI finally banned misleading "ORS" labels on spurious drinks. For ten long years, this one doctor persisted, refusing to let companies play fast and loose with public trust and the health of children suffering from dehydration. Her victory, when it came, was bittersweet; FSSAI's action felt like justice not just for her, but for every parent tricked by clever packaging and corporate obfuscation. But in India, no win is ever absolute.

Almost as quickly as the ban arrived, the respite was snatched away by a swift order from the Delhi High Court, granting a stay that let the misleading labels creep back onto shelves once again. Is it any wonder that those who fight for public health in India are haunted by exhaustion and frustration just as much as by tragedy? How long can a single whistle-blower persist when the rules keep changing and when victories remain so fragile? India's real strength should come from not just surviving its contradictions but resolving them. It's time the country asks itself whether progress means more than the sum of GDP digits and the churn of new schemes. Dignity and safety, especially for the youngest and weakest, must not be negotiable, nor should truth be buried beneath convenience. In the end, the choice is collective —another cycle of silence, or a new demand for consequence and care. Will we allow tragedy to simply "pass"? The answer, once we, as a country, care enough to know, would probably change the entire story itself. India's journey of development is often measured through economic milestones, infrastructure growth and global recognition. The country's achievements are undeniable, but true progress cannot be defined only by numbers. The strength of a nation is also reflected in how effectively it protects its citizens, especially the most vulnerable, and how seriously it addresses failures within its systems. A strong regulatory framework is the foundation of public trust. Whether it is healthcare, food safety, education or public administration, institutions must work with transparency and accountability. When mistakes cost human lives, responsibility cannot disappear into bureaucratic delays or political explanations. Citizens deserve answers, and systems must be designed to prevent such tragedies from repeating. The fight against corruption is not only about punishing individuals after wrongdoing occurs; it is about creating mechanisms where misuse of power becomes difficult in the first place. Strong monitoring, independent institutions and timely action can help restore confidence among people who often feel powerless against large systems. India's progress has always been driven by the resilience of its people. Across the country, activists, doctors, journalists and ordinary citizens continue to raise their voices against injustice. Their efforts remind us that change often begins with individuals who refuse to accept silence as the solution.

'Work towards direct procurement from farmers and minimizing middlemen' – Shivraj Singh Chouhan

New Delhi, June 29 (GNS): Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, today held a meeting in New Delhi and approved the procurement of Moong and Urad in Madhya Pradesh, and Urad in Uttar Pradesh under the Price Support Scheme (PSS). He also discussed procurement logistics with the respective state agriculture ministers and issued necessary instructions to NAFED, NCCF and state officials. Following a proposal received from the Madhya Pradesh government and subsequent deliberation by the ministry, Union minister Shri Shivraj Singh granted approval for the procurement of summer lentils Moong and Urad under the PSS in the state.

Similarly, approval has been granted for the procurement of Urad under the PSS in Uttar Pradesh.

During the meeting, Shri Shivraj Singh stated that although the decision to procure Moong and Urad would place a significant financial burden on the central government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the government is committed to ensuring farmers receive the intended benefits. He emphasized that it is crucial for the procurement process to be carried out properly. Direct procurement from farmers will reduce the influence of middlemen and ensure that the actual benefit reaches the farmers.

Issuing directions to officials, he called for the use of the latest and most effective technologies for proper registration of farmers. He advised increasing the number of procurement centers if necessary and ensuring the entire process is carried out in a fair and transparent manner. Expressing concern over complaints of irregularities in storage, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan urged the ministers and officials to take concrete steps to address the issue. He assured Uttar Pradesh's agriculture minister that the central government will make every possible effort in the best interests of farmers. The meeting was attended by Madhya Pradesh Minister for Farmers' Welfare and Agriculture Development Shri Aidal Singh Kansana, Uttar Pradesh Agriculture Minister Shri Surya Pratap Shahi, Union Agriculture Secretary Shri Devesh Chaturvedi, and other senior officials.

Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Rural Development, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, chaired a high-level review meeting on the 'Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan' at ICAR Pusa Campus, New Delhi today. The meeting focused on outcomes of the campaign conducted from May 29 to June 12, and deliberated on the strategic roadmap ahead. Over 2,170 nodal officers both in-person and virtually presented key findings, field experiences, and actionable insights from the campaign. Shri Chouhan described the campaign as a historic movement in independent India, inspired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's 'Lab to Land' vision, which connected scientists with over 60,000 villages. The Minister emphasized that the initiative would continue with renewed focus on income enhancement, food security, and positioning India as a global food basket. He stressed the development and integration of biofortified crops, sustainable practices, and mechanization,

Government is Focused on Seva, Sushasan and Navachar: Piyush Goyal

Mumbai, June 29 (GNS): India's GDP is projected to grow at 6.2 per cent in FY26, with CPI inflation around an average 4.0 per cent, a report showed on Friday, adding that it does not expect any further rate cuts from the RBI "unless downside risks to growth materialise".

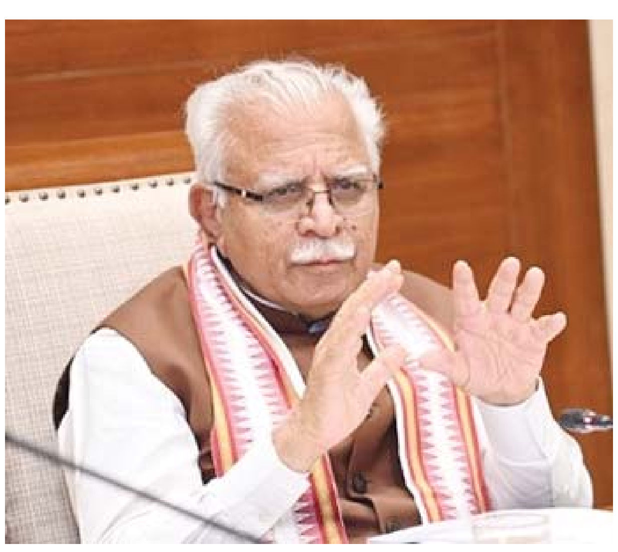
The Current Account Deficit or CAD (as per cent of GDP) is projected at 1.0 per cent in FY25 and 0.9 per cent in FY26, while the fiscal deficit is estimated at 4.4 per cent, according to a CareEdge Ratings report.

"The 10-year G-Sec yield is expected to range between 6.0 per cent–6.2 per cent by the end of FY26, and the USD-INR exchange rate is projected to trade between 85 and 87 by the end of FY26," the report mentioned. In the recent MPC, RBI signalled prioritising growth amid easing inflation concerns. In a significant liquidity measure, the RBI also announced a phased 100 bps CRR cut starting September, which is expected to inject approximately Rs 2.5 lakh crore of durable liquidity into the system by December 2025. For FY26, the RBI retained its GDP growth forecast at 6.5 per cent, while lowering the CPI inflation projection to 3.7 per cent from 4.0 per cent.

Meanwhile, crude oil prices surged sharply in June amid heightened Middle East tensions, touching around $79 per barrel — the highest since January 2025 — before easing by 14 per cent as tensions subsided. CareEdge Ratings expects Brent to average $65–70 per barrel in FY26, assuming no further escalation in tensions. These levels do not warrant changes to their FY26 forecasts for India's growth, inflation, fiscal deficit, CAD or the rupee. "Nonetheless, the conflict in the Middle East remains a key monitorable, especially as the Strait of Hormuz accounts for over a quarter of global seaborne oil trade," said the report.

India's diversified crude oil import basket also provides some buffer. Based on quantity imported, Iran's share in India's POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants) imports fell to just 0.1 per cent in FY25 (from 5.2 per cent in FY15). While the Middle East remains a major supplier, its share has declined to 50 per cent from 60 per cent over the past decade. In contrast, imports from other countries like Russia surged to 28.5 per cent in FY25 from just 0.2 per cent in FY15.

States to reduce distribution losses as it increases cost of power for consumers : Manohar Lal



New Delhi, June 29 (GNS): The Regional Conference for the Eastern Region States/ UTs was held on 24th June at Patna under the Chairmanship of Shri Manohar Lal, Union Minister of Power and Housing & Urban Affairs.

The meeting was attended by Shripad Yesso Naik, Hon'ble Minister of State for Power and Renewable Energy, Shri Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Odisha, Shri Bijendra Prasad Yadav, Hon'ble Energy Minister, Bihar, Shri Sudivya Kumar, Hon'ble Urban Development and Housing Minister, Jharkhand. The meeting was also attended by the Union Power Secretary, Secretaries (Power/ Energy) of participating States/ UTs, CMD/ MDs of Central and State Power Sector Entities, and senior officers from the Ministry of Power.

Union Minister Shri Manohar Lal , in his address, mentioned that India's power system has evolved into a unified national grid, fulfilling the vision of 'One Nation-One Grid' and underlined the importance of a future-ready, modern, and financially viable power sector to fuel the country's growth. He noted that India successfully met a peak power demand of 250 GW in May 2024 and 242 GW thus far in 2025. The peak demand is projected to rise further, reaching approximately 270 GW later this year. This reflects India's transformation from a power-deficit to a power-sufficient nation. He outlined the importance of continuous cooperation and coordination between Central and the State Governments in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Hon'ble Minister laid emphasis on ensuring Resource Adequacy and necessary power generation capacity tie-ups. While formulating their Resource Adequacy Plans, States should also ensure a balanced and diversified power generation mix. This should include the addition of nuclear generation capacity, with an aim to establish at least one nuclear power project in each State. India's peak electricity demand is projected to reach 446 GW by 2034–35 and meeting this sustainably requires proactive planning and continued coordination between the Centre, States, and other stakeholders.

Hon'ble Minister emphasized that the States should work towards resolving the issues faced in development of Intra-State transmission projects, including RoW issues. States should explore diverse options for financing, including listing of transmission utilities and from multilateral institutions. Hon'ble Minister informed that in the Union Budget 2025-26, allocation of 1.5 lakh crore in 50-year interest-free loans to support states' capital expenditures has been done, which can aid in strengthening the transmission infrastructure.

Union Minister remarked that States should promote renewable energy coupled with energy storage systems in order to ensure reliability of supply of power.

Application Portal Goes Live under Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India

New Delhi, June 29 (GNS): The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) is pleased to announce the portal launch of the application process under the Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India (SPMEPCI).

The scheme was notified vide notification dated 15th March 2024, and the detailed Scheme Guidelines were subsequently issued through Notification No. S.O. 2450(E) dated 02.06.2025. Both the Notification and the Guidelines are available on the Ministry's official website:https://heavyindustries.gov.in/scheme-promote-manufacturing-electric-passenger-cars-india-0

In this context, Applications are invited from eligible applicants under the scheme and applicants can apply through the application module at spmepci.heavyindustries.gov.in. The application portal would be open for applications from 24th June 2025 10.30 a.m. and will remain open until 21st October 2025 till 6:00 p.m.

The Government of India, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved a forward-looking scheme to promote the domestic manufacture of passenger cars, with a special focus on electric vehicles (EVs). It is designed to firmly establish India as a premier global destination for automotive manufacturing and innovation.

During the launch of the portal, Union Minister Shri H.D. Kumaraswamy said: "Guided by the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, this initiative marks a defining moment in India's journey towards clean, self-reliant, and future-ready mobility. The launch of this portal under the SPMEPCI scheme opens new avenues for global electric vehicle manufacturers to invest in India's rapidly evolving automotive landscape. This scheme not only supports our national commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2070, but also reinforces our resolve to build a sustainable, innovation-driven economy.It strengthens the pillars of 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', and positions India as a trusted global hub for next-generation automotive manufacturing and technology leadership."

The Scheme shall help to attract investments from global EV manufacturers and promote India as a manufacturing destination for e-vehicles. The Scheme will also help put India on the global map for manufacturing of EVs, generate

Minister Lauds Fast-Tracked Infra Projects, Stakeholder Coordination

New Delhi,June 29 (GNS): Union Jal Shakti Minister Shri C.R. Patil chaired the 15th meeting of the Empowered Task Force (ETF) on Ganga conservation, reaffirming the government's commitment to making the river cleaner and more sustainable through an integrated, time-bound, and technology-driven approach. Union Minister reviewed key activities and progress made by NMCG. Shri Patil appreciated the accelerated pace of implementation of infrastructure projects and the outcomes achieved through enhanced coordination among stakeholders. Notably, 10 projects were inaugurated or had foundation stones laid in Bihar during this period.

Enhanced Effectiveness of Financial Management in NMCG: Union Minister of Jal Shakti was apprised of significant improvements made in the area of financial management of NMCG. Significant reduction in pendency of Utilization Certificates, resolution of long pending taxation issues and effective implementation of Treasury Single Accounts system has led to marked improvement in financial administration of NMCG. Further, adoption of insurance surety bonds as a valid alternative to traditional bank guarantees for Bid Security, Performance Security, and Mobilization Advance would help in ease financial pressure on contractors, promote broader industry participation, and fast-track project execution. He underlined the government's commitment to reducing procedural bottlenecks and fostering an enabling environment for infrastructure delivery.

Sustaining River Rejuvenation Efforts: To address challenges posed by urban expansion and the emergence of new drains, NMCG has drafted two protocols—one to sustain zero untreated sewage discharge and another for maintenance of I&D structures. The Union Minister welcomed this forward-looking initiative and directed that District Ganga Committees be actively involved in the implementation and monitoring of these protocols. He stressed the importance of continuous vigilance to preserve the gains made under the Namami Gange Programme.

Safety Audit and Evaluation of STPs: Union Minister emphasized the need for occupational and safety audit of STPs and evaluation by third party agencies for ensuring effectiveness in STP operation.

Hooghly CSL Secures Order for Landmark Luxury Cruise Vessels from Heritage River Journeys Private Limited

Kochi, June 29 (GNS): Heritage River Journeys Private Limited, operating under the Brand name Antara River Cruises, India's premier Luxury River Cruise operator, has entered into a construction contract with Hooghly Cochin Shipyard Limited (Hooghly CSL) a wholly owned subsidiary of Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) for the construction of two Luxury River Cruise vessels to be operated on the Brahmaputra River.

Antara River Cruises, renowned for its immersive voyages along the Ganga, Padma, and Brahmaputra river systems, currently operates a fleet of bespoke luxury cruise vessels that sail South Asia's most iconic rivers. Its flagship vessel, Ganga Vilas, offers the longest, most picturesque river cruise in the world. This epic journey, famously showcased by the Limca Book of Records, covers over 3,200 kilometres across 27 rivers, and traverses diverse regions including the Gangetic plains, the Sundarbans, and the Brahmaputra Valley.

The Agreement for construction of the first vessel and a Letter of Intent (LOI) for the second were signed by Shri Sanil Peter, CEO, Hooghly CSL, and Shri Raj Singh, Founder and Chairman, Antara River Cruises, in the presence of Madhu S. Nair, Chairman and Managing Director, Cochin Shipyard Limited, along with senior officials from CSL and Antara. Once these vessels are put into operation, India - with its large network of rivers and waterways - will secure a prominent position on the global river cruise map, opening a gateway for the country to generate significant revenue from the largely untapped river cruise market.

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HYDERABAD, TELANGANA

Musi rejuvenation project will transform Hyderabad, ensure humane rehabilitation: Ponguleti

Hyderabad, June 29 (GNS) Telangana Revenue, Housing and Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy on Monday said the ambitious Musi Rejuvenation Project, envisioned by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, would transform Hyderabad into a world-class city while laying a strong foundation for Telangana's future development.

Reviewing land acquisition, rehabilitation and other project-related issues with senior officials at the Dr B R Ambedkar Telangana Secretariat, the Minister said the project aims to rejuvenate the polluted Musi River, improve environmental sustainability, enhance flood management and create tourism, employment and economic opportunities. He said the government was committed to balancing development with humanitarian concerns and reiterated that the project was not against anyone. Stressing that no injustice would be done in the name of development, he directed officials to adopt a people-centric approach during land acquisition and ensure statutory compensation and proper rehabilitation for all affected families. Ponguleti instructed officials to prepare and immediately implement an action plan to provide double-bedroom houses to families displaced by the project. He said the Musi riverfront would be developed with water purification measures, greenery, roads, parks, walkways and recreational facilities, while protecting the interests of the poor and improving the quality of life for future generations.

CM Revanth to Release Rythu Bharosa Aid to 70 Lakh Farmers

Hyderabad, June 29 (GNS) Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy will release Rythu Bharosa financial assistance of 6,000 per acre to over 70 lakh farmers for the ongoing kharif season here on Tuesday. The government shifted the venue from Khammam after incessant rain rendered the originally planned public meeting site unsuitable.

Following a meeting with ministers and senior officials on Monday, Revanth Reddy decided to postpone the Khammam public meeting and directed officials to organise the launch event here instead.

The Chief Minister instructed officials to make arrangements at all Rythu Vedikas in the districts so that farmers could participate virtually through a video conference. The government has also drawn up a plan to transfer nearly 9,000 crore into the bank accounts of more farmers within a week.

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, who inspected the arrangements at the Khammam venue on Monday along with agriculture minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, said the decision to postpone the public meeting was taken purely in the interest of farmers and the general public.

He said persistent rainfall over several days had left the venue waterlogged and muddy, making it impossible to safely host such a massive gathering. Bhatti explained that the government had planned a grand inaugural event with the participation of the Chief Minister, his Cabinet colleagues and lakhs of farmers from across Telangana.

He clarified that the event, originally conceived as the launch function, would be organised as a grand concluding celebration under the title 'Rythu Aashirvada Sabha' after the completion of the Rythu Bharosa distribution process. The Chief Minister and the Cabinet will take a final decision on the revised schedule after assessing weather conditions and reports from the Meteorological Department once the rains subside. If conditions improve, the government is planning to organise the massive farmers' gathering between July 6 and July 8.

Telangana minister Uttam unveils KCP Nutri Poshan, First Fortified Rice Brand in Telugu States

Hyderabad, June 29 (GNS) Telangana Irrigation, Food and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Monday unveiled KCP Nutri Poshan, a fortified rice range enriched with eight essential micronutrients, the first such product to be launched in the Telugu States. Launching the product at a workshop titled "Unlocking Market Potential: Advancing Fortified Rice in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh," organised by Millers for Nutrition, powered by TechnoServe, in collaboration with KCP Nutrritious Pvt. Ltd., the Minister said Telangana has emerged as the leading state in the country in both rice production and rice procurement.

Describing KCP Nutri Poshan as the first fortified multi-micronutrient rice product in the Telugu States, he said the initiative could help address micronutrient deficiencies without requiring consumers to change their food habits or cooking practices. The fortified rice contains eight essential micronutrients—Vitamins A, B1, B3, B6, B9 and B12, Iron and Zinc—and is available in Kolam, HMT and Sona Masoori varieties.

Uttam Reddy said the State Government was preparing a dedicated policy to promote rice exports and help rice millers access national and international markets. He said Telangana produces nearly 300 lakh metric tonnes of rice annually during the Kharif and Rabi seasons, while the state's annual consumption is only around 36 lakh metric tonnes.

"Telangana consumes barely one-tenth of the rice it produces. Exports, therefore, offer the next major growth opportunity for the state's rice industry. The government is formulating a dedicated export policy to support rice millers in expanding into domestic and international markets," he said. The Minister said Telangana had already begun exporting rice to countries such as the Philippines and assured continued government support to the rice milling industry.

Speaking on the occasion, Monojit Indra, Senior Practice Leader at TechnoServe and Programme Leader for Millers for Nutrition Asia, said food fortification was one of the most practical and scalable approaches to improving nutrition through staple foods consumed daily.

He said the Millers for Nutrition initiative was working with industry stakeholders to strengthen fortification practices, improve product quality and expand consumer access to fortified staple foods.

BRS left Telangana burdened with Rs 8 lakh cr debt, Indiramma Govt focused on welfare & development: Bhatti

Khammam, June 29 (GNS) Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on Monday alleged that the previous BRS government had pushed the state into financial distress by leaving behind a debt burden of nearly Rs 8 lakh crore, while asserting that the Congress-led Indiramma government was committed to public welfare and to making Telangana the number one state in the country.

After offering special prayers at the Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Jamalapuram of Errupalem mandal, where he participated in the Dhwajasthambha Prana Pratishtha and Maha Kumbhabhishekam ceremonies, Bhatti said the present government was guided by the principle of "Madhava Seva–Manava Seva" (Service to God is Service to Humanity).

Launching a scathing attack on the previous BRS regime, he alleged that it governed the state for the benefit of a few individuals, looted Telangana's wealth and later used the money to run media outlets and social media campaigns to spread misinformation against the present government. He also accused the previous government of resorting to phone tapping and suppressing democratic freedoms.

Highlighting the Congress government's welfare initiatives, Bhatti said 4.5 lakh Indiramma houses worth Rs 22,500 crore had been sanctioned, fine rice was being distributed free to 1.06 crore families, free electricity up to 200 units was benefiting 53 lakh households, and free power was being supplied to 30 lakh agricultural pump sets.

He said the government had reimbursed 10,600 crore to RTC under the free bus travel scheme for women, enhanced Aarogyasri health coverage from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh, increased diet and cosmetic charges in government educational institutions, introduced a free breakfast scheme for 27 lakh students, and strengthened women's self-help groups through bank-linked loans.

The Deputy Chief Minister said the government had allocated Rs 2,216 crore for temple development, issued appointment orders to nearly 76,000 youth after reforming the TSPSC, sanctioned road projects worth Rs 90,000 crore, and was implementing the Musi River Rejuvenation Project, Regional Ring Road, industrial clusters and the proposed Future City to accelerate Telangana's development.

Reaffirming the govt's commitment to simultaneous welfare and development, Bhatti said the Congress government under Chief Minister Revanth Reddy was working to transform Telangana into the country's leading state.

TG opposes proposed VB-G RAM G Act, seeks continuation of MGNREGS in present form

New Delhi/Hyderabad, June 29 (GNS) Telangana Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka on Monday strongly opposed the proposed VB-G RAM G Act, urging the Centre to retain the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) as a rights-based programme and withdraw the proposed legislation.

Participating in a meeting of State Rural Development Ministers chaired by union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Seethakka submitted a memorandum outlining Telangana's objections to the proposed law.

Later, speaking to the media, she said the new legislation would impose a heavy financial burden on states by requiring them to bear 40 per cent of the scheme's cost under the proposed 60:40 funding pattern. She said Telangana's annual financial commitment would increase to nearly Rs 2,000 crore, compared to a few hundred crore under the existing system, where the Centre bears the entire wage component and 75 per cent of the material cost.

The Minister said a Cabinet sub-committee headed by Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy had already examined the issue twice, and the State Cabinet would take a final decision on July 2 before formally communicating Telangana's stand to the Centre.

Seethakka alleged that the proposed Act weakens the rural poor's right to work, curtails the powers of Gram Panchayats, reduces the role of states and centralises planning, fund allocation, implementation and monitoring, which she said was against the spirit of cooperative federalism.

She urged the Centre to allocate funds based on actual employment demand at the Gram Panchayat level instead of solely on the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission, sought withdrawal of the proposed mandatory 60-day employment break, and demanded a 90:10 Centre-State funding ratio for Fifth Schedule tribal areas in Telangana.

The Minister also requested early sanction of pending houses under the PM Awas Yojana, release of pending funds for completed rural development projects and speedy forest and wildlife clearances for road projects under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in districts such as Adilabad, Bhadradri Kothagudem, Mulugu and Nallamala.

She said the Telangana government had also proposed expanding the list of permissible works under the scheme to include Indiramma housing, land development, post-flood restoration, nutrition gardens, bamboo plantations, fodder development and other activities based on local needs.

Rotary Club inaugurates 40-Lakh Food Science Innovation Lab at VCI Women's University

Hyderabad, June 29 (GNS) The Rotary Club of Hyderabad East (RCHE) on Monday inaugurated a 40-lakh Food Science Innovation Laboratory at Veeranari Chakali Ilamma Women's University (VCIWU), aiming to strengthen skill-based education and research in food science. The laboratory was inaugurated by VCI Women's University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Surya Dhananjay, Rotary International District 3150 Governor Dr. S.V. Ram Prasad and District Rotary Foundation Chair K. Prabhakar. The project was implemented by the Rotary Club of Hyderabad East with support from The Rotary Foundation Global Grant and international partners, including the Rotary Club of Canton (USA), Rotary International District 6400 and Rotary International District 5810. The NABL-accredited laboratory has been equipped to support advanced food testing, product development, research, quality assurance and skill development.

It comprises four specialised units- Food Testing and Quality Assurance, Product Development and Innovation, Research and Analysis, and Training and Skill Development.

The facility will enable students and researchers to gain hands-on experience with advanced analytical instruments, undertake research, develop innovative food products and acquire industry-relevant skills.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Surya Dhananjay said Rotary had consistently supported the university through initiatives benefiting students, including sanitary pad distribution, safe drinking water facilities and now the establishment of the Food Science Innovation Laboratory. She said the laboratory fulfilled a long-standing requirement of the university's Food Science programme and would significantly enhance practical learning and research opportunities. Rotary Club of Hyderabad East President Govind Putta said vocational training and skill development had been the club's key focus during the year. He said the laboratory, established through Rotary Foundation funding, is expected to benefit nearly 5,000 students over the next seven years by equipping them with industry-ready skills while promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.

Expressing gratitude to the Rotary Club and its international partners, the Vice-Chancellor said the laboratory would empower generations of women students with practical knowledge and improve their career prospects. The university said the facility is expected to emerge as a centre of excellence in food science education and research, promoting academic advancement, industry collaboration and innovation.

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