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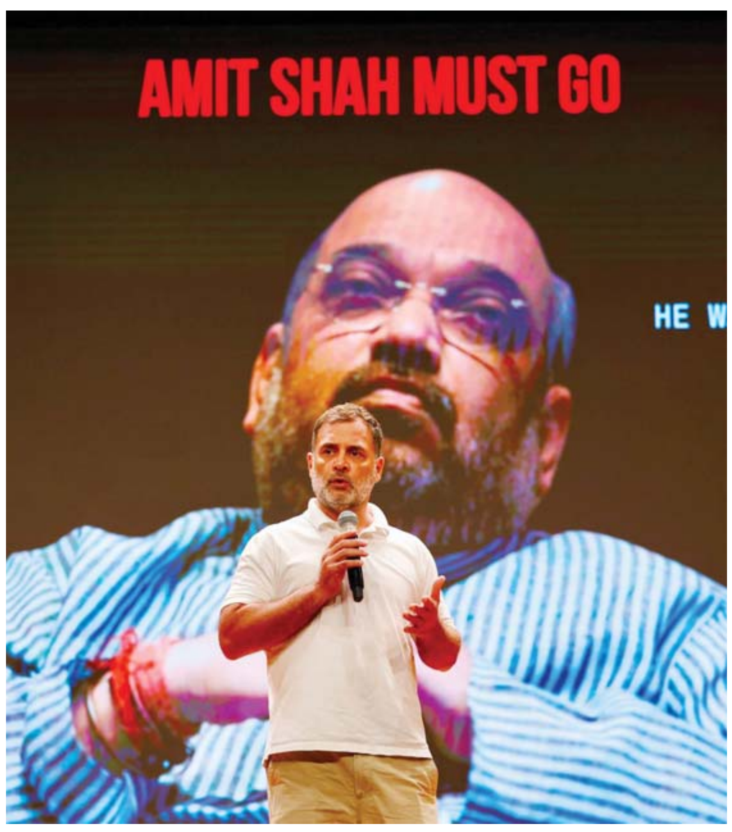
Rahul targets Amit Shah over protest crackdown



New Delhi, July 29 (GNS): Carrying on his attack on Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the alleged police excesses against agitators during the Parliament march on July 20, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said that he should have issued a clarification over the matter. As the row over Gandhi's remarks made in the Parliament intensified, the INDIA bloc MPs came in support of the Congress MP.

Speaking to reporters within the Parliament premises, Gandhi said: "I have only said that there can be only two possibilities. One possibility is that the Home Minister gave the order. The second possibility is that the Home Minister did not know. In the first case, he is culpable. In the second case, he is incompetent. It can only be one of the two; there cannot be a third possibility." "He (Shah) didn't come to the Parliament…supposedly brave Home Minister, why is he not in the House? If he has not done anything, then he should issue a clarification that he had not passed any order," he said.

Backing LoP Gandhi, Trinamool Congress MP Kirti Azad said: "We had demanded that a discussion should have taken place over the lathicharge (on protesters)."

He questioned why, when remarks made against late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru "are not expunged from House records, then why does it affect when statements are made against the Prime Minister or the Home Minister?" Congress MP Tariq Anwar said: "The whole country wants to know who ordered the police action against the students. Parliament has the right to know.

Rahul Gandhi did not use any unparliamentary language…" RJD MP Manoj Kumar Jha was against Rahul Gandhi issuing any apology for his remarks. "What should he apologise for? For stating the truth? Were pellet guns not used? Were lathis not used? Was there no extreme brutality? Under whose control is the Delhi Police? Do we need to search the heavens for the answer to that?" Jha told . Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Iqra Hasan said: "When the House was not functioning, it was decided that we would present our views on atrocities and everyone would be given sufficient time. Today, all of you saw that when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking, he was not allowed to speak… subsequently, the time allotted to other parties was also deducted."

"I don't know what Amit Shah ji is scared of that he is not coming into the House. The Opposition wants to know who ordered the brutal action against the protesters?" she added.

Lok Sabha Passes Anti-Paper Leak Amendment Bill

New Delhi, July 29 (UNI): The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, through a voice vote. This Bill, passed after a stormy debate spanning several hours over two days, seeks to amend the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024.

The proposed amendment aims to enhance transparency and integrity in the examination system through stricter legal provisions while ensuring that the future of students remains fully protected. Among the key features are stringent penalties, including imprisonment of up to 10 years, a fine of up to Rs 10 crore, confiscation of assets of those found guilty, and the establishment of a mechanism to ensure verdicts are delivered within three months.

The move follows the Union Cabinet's approval of the Bill and related provisions, designed to establish fast-track courts and provide harsher punishment in cases involving paper leaks and examination fraud.

The initiative comes shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that a comprehensive Bill containing provisions for strong action against paper leaks would be introduced in the Parliament.

As per the proposal, the fast-track courts will be mandated to complete trials and deliver judgments within three months, ensuring swift justice in examination-related offences. This also comes in the wake of the large-scale 'Sansad Chalo' protest held in New Delhi on July 20, where hundreds of students participated in a demonstration organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) against the NEET paper leaks and other examination-related irregularities.

The demonstration later turned violent, following which security personnel resorted to the use of force to disperse the crowd. During the clashes, several protesters as well as police personnel sustained serious injuries. The protesters had also demanded the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan from the post of Union Education Minister. Pradhan subsequently tendered his resignation on July 25.

Replying to the debate, the government said the amendment is intended to strengthen the credibility of public examinations by introducing stricter accountability for organised cheating networks and paper leak rackets, while safeguarding the interests of genuine students.

It asserted that the legislation would act as a strong deterrent against examination fraud and help restore public confidence in the country's recruitment and entrance examination system.

RS clears bill to protect Vande Mataram

New Delhi, July 29 (UNI): The Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Parliament, on Wednesday passed the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026. The legislation makes the intentional insult of the national song 'Vande Mataram' or deliberate obstruction of its rendition a punishable offence.

With this amendment, 'Vande Mataram' now receives the same legal protection already extended to the National Flag, the Constitution and the National Anthem under the 1971 Act. The Bill was cleared amid protests and a walkout by the Opposition. Under the provisions of the Bill, obstructing or insulting the rendition of 'Vande Mataram' will attract a prison term of up to three years, a fine, or both. The legislation also emphasises the singing of all six stanzas of the national song.

This development follows a recent Home Ministry directive requiring states to play or sing the national song at official events, particularly those where the national anthem is performed. The order specifies that "when the national song and the national anthem are sung or played, the national song will be sung or played first," and that it must be rendered while standing at attention. The govt has described the move as a step to safeguard national symbols and uphold the dignity associated with the song that played a pivotal role in India's freedom struggle.

PM Modi salutes efforts to protect tigers

New Delhi, July 29 (UNI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended greetings to wildlife enthusiasts on Global Tiger Day, while reaffirming the government's commitment to protect tigers through science-based conservation and community participation.

Global Tiger Day, also known as International Tiger Day, is an annual event held on July 29 to raise awareness about tiger conservation, protect natural habitats, and address declining wild populations. It was established in 2010 at the Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit.

In a post on X, PM Modi said, "Greetings to all wildlife enthusiasts on Global Tiger Day. The people of India are proud of the fact that we are home to almost 70 per cent of the global tiger population." He said that India's tiger conservation efforts are inspired by "our centuries-old culture of living in harmony with nature and powered by the collective will of our people".

"We also reaffirm our commitment to science-based conservation, community participation and sustainable development that strengthens tiger conservation," the Prime Minister added. He also hailed the forest officials and scientists for their role in safeguarding tigers. "The efforts and dedication of our forest personnel, scientists and conservationists have also played a key role in tiger protection.

SC frees two IM module accused on bail

New Delhi, July 29 (UNI): The Supreme Court has granted bail to two alleged members of the Indian Mujahideen's Rajasthan module in a terror case investigated by the Delhi Police's Special Cell, holding that their continued incarceration of nearly 12 years, coupled with the extremely slow progress of the trial, amounted to a gross violation of their fundamental right to personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta directed the release of Mohd. Saquib Ansari and Waqar Azhar on bail in connection with an FIR registered at the Special Cell, New Delhi, subject to such terms and conditions as may be imposed by the trial court and provided they are not required in any other case. The petitioners, facing charges under various provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), the Indian Penal Code, the Explosive Substances Act, the Arms Act and the Passports Act, have been in custody since 2014.

The prosecution alleged that the case stemmed from the arrest of Pakistani national Mohd. Qateel Siddiqui in Nov 2011, who allegedly disclosed the existence of a Rajasthan module of the Indian Mujahideen tasked with carrying out terrorist activities in and around Delhi. Based on the disclosures, the investigating agencies claimed to have recovered explosives and materials allegedly used for manufacturing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from the accused persons, leading to the registration of two separate cases by the Rajasthan ATS/SOG.

Donald Trump-Netanyahu Hold 'Productive' White House Talks

Washington, Jul 29 (UNI) US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a "productive" 90-minute meeting in the Oval Office, seeking to project unity over the Iran war despite tensions that have strained their relationship in recent weeks.

The closed-door talks came after Trump had publicly expressed frustration with Netanyahu's approach to the conflict several times, including shortly before the Israeli leader arrived at the White House. The meeting's positive tone was seen as a boost for Netanyahu, who has faced pressure over the course of the war. An account from the Israeli government said the two leaders remain closely coordinated on Iran and that there is "no daylight" between them.

"There is no truth in the claim that Israel is pushing the US in a certain direction on the Iran issue," Netanyahu's communications director Tzipi Hotovely told reporters. Tzipi also dismissed the perception widely accepted that Netanyahu has been guiding Trump in the war, he said, "The Prime Minister is not telling the US President what to do and is not pushing him in any direction. Both sides want to prevent Iran from having nuclear weapons. There are many ways to achieve this goal."

AP pushes electronics, semiconductor growth with Taiwan tie-up

Amaravati, July 29 (UNI) Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday said that his government's commitment is to provide policy stability, speedy clearances and proactive support to investors. He held discussions with a high-level delegation of leading Taiwanese companies and industry representatives to strengthen cooperation in investment, advanced manufacturing, electronics, semiconductors and technology.

During the discussions, Andhra Pradesh showcased its investor-friendly policies, world-class infrastructure, strong logistics network and rapidly expanding manufacturing ecosystem. The Chief Minister highlighted the State's focus on electronics, semiconductors, IT, advanced manufacturing and export-oriented industries.

According to an official release, the delegation included representatives from leading global companies and institutions.

The Taiwanese industry representatives shared their investment experiences in India and explored opportunities to expand their presence in Andhra Pradesh. Both sides agreed to strengthen institutional engagement and facilitate greater collaboration in manufacturing, technology and industrial development.

Arab youth and the promise of the creative economy

Arnab Neil Sengupta

For decades, the Arab world's economic narrative was dominated by hydrocarbons, with oil and gas shaping everything from cultural vision to foreign relations. More recently, the promise of artificial intelligence and digital transformation has captured the imagination of policymakers. But there is a quieter revolution underway that could prove just as pivotal for the region's future: the rise of the creative economy, driven by the energy and imagination of the Arab youth.

The creative economy — encompassing art, music, dance, photography, film and entertainment — has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, generating annual revenues of $2.25 trillion and employing 30 million people, according to UNESCO. For a region where nearly two-thirds of the population is under the age of 30, the creative industries potentially offer not just jobs but a sense of purpose and identity. They can nurture talent, spur innovation and provide a promising path to economic diversification as the world accelerates its transition to a low-carbon future.

At the heart of this potential transformation are the Arab world's young people — tech-savvy, globally connected and eager for change. They are not content to be mere consumers of culture, they want to be its creators and curators. The explosion of local music scenes in Egypt, Lebanon and the Gulf, the rise of Arab rappers and DJs blending traditional sounds with global genres, and the growing popularity of regional film and photography festivals all point to an emerging creative renaissance.

Initiatives like the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, which provides grants to musicians, producers and cultural organizations across the Arab world, demonstrate the appetite for creative expression and the potential for regional collaboration. Since its inception, the fund has supported a wide range of projects, from music and cinema to visual and performing arts, helping to break down barriers and amplify Arab voices on the global stage. However, realizing the full potential of this youth dividend requires more than just funding. It calls for a mindset that values creativity as much as technical skills and that sees culture as a driver of innovation and economic growth. Policymakers must prioritize arts education, protect intellectual property rights and create platforms for young talent to showcase their work. They must also address challenges ranging from weak infrastructure to limited access to funding that hold back the sector's growth. Some Arab countries have already begun to recognize the strategic importance of the creative sector. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Gulf states, whose governments have spent billions of dollars on developing cultural infrastructure in the form of museums, opera houses, exhibition spaces and music venues, hosting international festivals, and supporting homegrown artists.

Saudi Arabia has pulled out all the stops to position itself as a global entertainment hub, opening its doors to both international and local talent. The Kingdom's support for music, film and live events has created a vibrant cultural scene, attracting global players who are now investing in discovering and promoting Arab artists. This influx of capital and expertise is not only creating jobs but also elevating the region's cultural output to international standards.

The UAE has committed more than 30 billion dirhams ($8.1 billion) to a decade-long strategy to boost its creative industries. The establishment of the Creative Media Authority is just one part of this vision, aiming to unify various creative sectors into a vibrant ecosystem and nurture emerging fields like gaming and e-sports.

Meanwhile, Qatar has established itself as a regional leader in the creative economy, with its cultural and creative industries contributing 20 billion riyals ($5.4 billion) in 2021 — about 2 percent of its gross domestic product — and more than a third of university graduates specializing in creative fields.

These three Gulf governments are using a mix of world-class infrastructure, robust policy support and targeted incentives to build an environment where young talent in art, music and entertainment can thrive and contribute substantially to economic growth.

The Gulf region's approach offers valuable lessons for other Arab countries, many of which remain heavily reliant on hydrocarbons or are betting exclusively on AI and tech. While digital transformation is essential, it need not come at the expense of human creativity, a resource as renewable as it is underutilized. By investing in the creative economy, Middle Eastern and North African countries can diversify their revenue streams, promote social cohesion and project a positive image of the region to the world.

Diplomatic spotlight falls on Global South ahead of G20 meeting

Andrew Hammond

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa is making final preparations to attend the big BRICS summit on Sunday and Monday in Brazil. However, his mind may well be some 5,000 miles away in his home nation, which is facing the growing challenges of hosting another major global diplomatic event — the G20 meeting.

South Africa's hosting of this year's G20 should be a victory lap for Ramaphosa and his country. It is the first time the African continent has chaired the global forum, yet the process has been beset with problems, largely emanating from the US. A few weeks ago, Ramaphosa visited the White House to try to course correct relations with the Trump team. However, the meeting proved tense, with US President Donald Trump repeatedly accusing South Africa of "white genocide," and it is still not clear whether the US president will attend November's leadership summit, despite the fact that Washington takes over as the next G20 host.

Before his meeting with Ramaphosa, Trump declared that "South Africa is confiscating land and treating certain classes of people very badly. The United States won't stand for it, we will act. Also, I will be cutting off all future funding to South Africa until a full investigation of the situation has been completed."

Moreover, Trump signed an executive order on Feb. 7 which claimed that an expropriation law, passed in December, enables "the government of South Africa to seize ethnic minority Afrikaners' agricultural property without compensation. This act follows countless government policies designed to dismantle equal opportunity in employment, education, and business, and hateful rhetoric and government actions fueling disproportionate violence against racially disfavored landowners." Washington donated about $440 million in aid to South Africa in 2023, most of which was for healthcare programs. It is not just Trump who has berated Ramaphosa. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who declined an invitation to attend a G20 foreign ministers meeting earlier this year, has declared that "South Africa is doing very bad things. Expropriating private property. Using G20 to promote solidarity, equality, & sustainability. In other words: DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) and climate change. My job is to advance America's national interests, not waste taxpayer money or coddle anti-Americanism."

What Trump and Rubio refer to in their denunciation is the 2024 South Africa Expropriation Act, which aims to resolve ownership inequality issues created by the pre-1994 apartheid system of white minority rule. The controversial law has drawn criticism for potentially disregarding private property rights, particularly those of the white minority, as it potentially permits state land seizures without compensation. To date, no land has been expropriated. The hostility of the Trump team to South Africa is making it much harder for Ramaphosa to host the G20, yet this is only the latest example of growing geopolitical divisions affecting the club in recent years. Tensions have long been high, too, between China and the West, and recent summits have seen significant disagreements over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, which have caused diplomatic fireworks.

In 2022, 2023, and 2024, G20 ministers frequently clashed diplomatically, with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov walking out of some meetings. Moreover, the customary group pictures of the so-called "G20 family" have become rarer.

In this context, there are significant challenges to constructive discussion taking place at the G20 this year — this despite the strong support that South Africa has received from other powers, including the EU. For instance, European Council President Antonio Costa has highlighted with Ramaphosa "the EU's commitment to deepen ties with South Africa, as a reliable and predictable partner." He added that the EU offers "full support to South Africa's leadership of G20 and its ambition to strengthen multilateral cooperation and the Pact for the Future to address the most pressing global issues." The backing of Brussels for Pretoria reflects not just its partnership with the country and the wider continent, but also the concern that Washington's absence from the G20 will only benefit Moscow and China.

Yet, even if some governments, like the Trump team, have disagreements with parts of Ramaphosa's G20 agenda to address climate change and fairer finance for poorer nations, there are other items for constructive engagement. Take the example of the future of the energy agenda in Africa in which US firms have a huge stake. The danger if the US does not engage on these agendas is that it will lose a critical mass of its economic foothold in South Africa and much of the rest of the continent. All of this highlights why 2025 will be perhaps the most unpredictable G20 year ever. Amid the uncertainty, however, what is at stake is more than the future of the multilateral forum. At play are much wider questions about US international leadership in the new era.

Mistaking Jappi for Diplomatic Gains

"In diplomacy, the hug is free. The handshake is history. But the fine print is what decides the future." (Attributed to Henry Kissinger)

Had Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his foreign policy advisors heeded this pragmatic counsel, the steep tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on Indian exports might not have come as such a surprise.

The public bonhomie between Modi and Trump-visible not only during Modi's visit to the U.S., but also during Trump's grand reception in Ahmedabad-was widely celebrated in the Indian media as a symbol of strengthened ties. There were hugs, handshakes, long walks, and grand spectacles. As is often the case, large sections of the media amplified the optics with breathless enthusiasm, mistaking performance for policy and pageantry for progress.

In 2019, before a packed stadium of over 50,000 Indian-Americans at the "Howdy, Modi!" event in Houston, the Prime Minister famously declared, "Ab ki baar, Trump sarkar"-a slogan widely interpreted as an implicit endorsement of Donald Trump's re-election. It was an extraordinary moment: a foreign leader seemingly backing a sitting US president in the middle of a heated electoral cycle-a move that would raise eyebrows in most diplomatic circles.

This bonhomie blanked out the naked truth that, in diplomacy, charm can be the enemy of clarity, often mistaking warmth for commitment.

No wonder, when it came to policy, Trump remained unflinchingly transactional. His administration imposed higher tariffs on Indian steel and aluminum, revoked India's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) trade benefits, and repeatedly raised concerns over market access and trade imbalances. Personal warmth, it turned out, did not temper America's hard-nosed approach to economic interests. One might take refuge in the counter argument that Trump was unpredictable, mercurial, a deal-maker. But what about other world leaders with whom we believed Modi had struck a personal rapport-Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an of Turkey, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, and others? We were treated to images of hugs and warm handshakes between Modi and these leaders. And yet, none of them stood by India during Operation Sindhoor. On the contrary, Turkey openly supported and aided the Pakistan Army.

The truth is: charm often clouds clarity.

In the Arthashastra, Kautilya (Chanakya) lays down the principles of statecraft with cold precision. He warns rulers not to be swayed by displays of affection or flattery from other kings. In modern times, a hug is just a hug-it is not a treaty. Let me add that Modi is not the only world leader to fall into the trap of believing that personal chemistry can influence the strategic direction of another nation's foreign policy. Let us examine this paradox through historical and contemporary examples.

During World War II, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt went to great lengths to cultivate a personal rapport with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, hoping it would shape the post-war peace. The meetings in Tehran and Yalta involved many gestures of goodwill and flattery.

But Stalin's vision was grounded in power politics. Within months of WWII ending, the Iron Curtain descended, and the Cold War began. Roosevelt's personal outreach could not prevent the Soviet annexation of Eastern Europe or the arms race that followed. The summit between Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush in 2001 is even more telling. After meeting Putin, Bush famously said: "I looked the man in the eye. I found him to be very straightforward and trustworthy. I was able to get a sense of his soul."

But by the end of Bush's presidency, Putin had invaded Georgia (2008), crushed internal dissent, and actively worked to undermine U.S. influence in Eastern Europe. Bush's initial warmth proved irrelevant in the face of Russia's strategic assertiveness. Back home, in the 1950s, Indian Prime Minister Nehru and Chinese Premier Chou Enlai exchanged visits and promoted the slogan "Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai."But in 1962, China invaded India, dealing a humiliating blow to Nehru. The personal rapport between Nehru and Chou Enlai-bolstered by shared anti-colonial ideals and grand conferences like Bandung-meant little in the face of geopolitical calculations over Tibet, Aksai Chin, and border strategy.In February 1999, Prime Minister Vajpayee undertook a historic bus journey to Lahore to meet his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif. The two leaders signed the Lahore Declaration, committing to respect each other's territorial integrity and resolve issues (including Kashmir) through peaceful bilateral means.It was widely seen as a courageous and visionary step by Vajpayee, who reached out to Pakistan despite internal political risks.

Barely three months later, Indian Army patrols discovered Pakistani soldiers and militants had infiltrated Indian positions across the Line of Control (LoC) in the Kargil sector of Jammu & Kashmir. The operation was codenamed "Operation Badr" by the Pakistani military-resulting in a bloody conflict. In Vajpayee's own words (in Parliament): "We went to Lahore with a hand of friendship, and we got Kargil in return." All these are not isolated misjudgments; they are reminders that in international relations, the head must guide the heart.

History shows, time and again, that while warm gestures, shared photographs, and joint declarations make for compelling headlines, they rarely translate into loyalty when it matters most. A poignant example of the limits of personal diplomacy lies in the tragic fate of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's charismatic prime minister and later president.In 1974, Bhutto orchestrated one of the most ambitious diplomatic achievements in modern Muslim history: he hosted the Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore, bringing together a remarkable constellation of leaders – from King Faisal and Muammar Gaddafi to Yasser Arafat and many others. Bhutto basked in the admiration of the Islamic world. He struck emotional chords and cultivated personal friendships with leaders across the ideological spectrum – monarchs, revolutionaries, secularists, and Islamists alike. But the illusion shattered just five years later. In 1979, following his ouster by General Zia-ul-Haq and a highly controversial trial, Bhutto was sentenced to death. One might have expected those same leaders – who had toasted his leadership and stood shoulder to shoulder with him in Lahore- to rise in protest, to rally, to pressure Zia's regime with consequences.

Instead, they chose silence.

A few sent private appeals. Some expressed symbolic regret. But no summit was called, no ambassadors were withdrawn, no oil leverage used, no meaningful threat issued to stop what many believed was a judicial execution cloaked in legal process.

The same leaders who once cheered Bhutto's vision quietly recalibrated their positions. Their national interests, domestic calculations, and geopolitical alignments outweighed the memory of personal warmth or ideological kinship.

Herein lies the lesson: While optics can open doors and create an atmosphere of goodwill, it is strategic depth, preparation, and clarity of purpose that sustain meaningful outcomes. The Modi-Trump chapter is a sobering reminder that while leaders may share stages, slogans, and handshakes, governments ultimately negotiate from positions of interest-not emotion.

In an age of populism and spectacle, diplomacy must guard against the seduction of performance. Personal chemistry may soften the tone, but it is only thoughtful policy and institutional engagement that shape the actual terms of engagement.

Modern leaders would do well to recall an ancient wisdom: "Do not confuse sentiment with strategy. The embrace may be warm, but the heart may still be cold with calculation."

Perhaps, Modi might take note of Xi Jinping, whose impassive demeanour reflects a distinct Chinese diplomatic style-never revealing too much, never giving away the game. For China, symbolism is theatre; substance is strategy.

What is seen publicly is performance; what is plotted privately is policy? A hug may be offered, but the hand behind the back might still be tightening the screws-through tariffs, sanctions, or covert sabotage.

RBI deputy governor bats for financial literacy alongside banking access

New Delhi, July 29 (GNS): Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor Swaminathan Janakiraman on Saturday highlighted that true financial inclusion goes beyond expanding banking access, stressing the need to empower citizens through financial literacy. Speaking at the Indian Bank-hosted 'Financial Inclusion Saturation' programme, Janakiraman said programmes like Re-KYC camps help people enhance their quality of life and support the nation's economic development in addition to making banking services more accessible.

Customers can update their Know Your Customer (KYC) information through the Re-KYC drive without physically visiting bank branches, which the RBI official said is especially helpful for underserved and rural communities.

Indian Bank, which hosted the camp, said the outreach focused on updating KYC for Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana account holders, while also promoting enrolment under two flagship social security schemes -- the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, a renewable term life insurance plan, and the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, offering personal accident cover against death or disability.

Applauding the bank's efforts, Janakiraman said such proactive measures bring essential services closer to citizens, reducing the burden on customers and boosting participation in the formal financial system. Indian Bank Managing Director and CEO, Binod Kumar, reaffirmed the lender's goal of "bringing banking to the doorstep of every citizen" and enabling broader participation in India's growth story.

More than 2,000 members of the local community participated in Tiruvallur's Financial Inclusion Saturation program, which received a positive response. A wide range of individuals, including farmers, self-help group members, students, and senior citizens, attended the event, demonstrating the initiative's broad appeal and pertinence. Nearly 350 clients successfully finished their Re-KYC updates during the event, removing the need for them to visit bank branches and highlighting the camp's contribution to improving accessibility and convenience.

The Financial Inclusion Saturation programme reflects the continued efforts of banks and regulatory institutions to ensure that every section of society has access to formal financial services. Officials highlighted that improving awareness about banking products, digital payments, insurance schemes, and government-backed financial initiatives is essential for strengthening financial security among citizens.

The RBI has been emphasizing the importance of responsible banking practices, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas where many citizens are opening bank accounts for the first time. Financial literacy initiatives aim to help customers understand savings, credit facilities, insurance benefits, pension schemes, and safe digital banking practices.

During the programme, banking officials also interacted with beneficiaries to address their queries related to account services, government schemes, and digital transactions. They encouraged customers to actively use banking facilities and take advantage of various welfare-oriented financial products available through formal channels.

Govt Urges ICoAS Officers to Harness Tech for Financial Management

New Delhi, July 29 (GNS):V. Vualnam, Secretary, Department of Expenditure (DoE), Ministry of Finance, on Saturday urged the Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS) officers to embrace technology and innovation to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of public financial management.

Presiding over the Foundation Day of the Indian Cost Accounts Service here, he also appreciated the weekly training programme towards capacity building introduced by the ICoAS cadre and encouraged ICoAS officers to actively participate in it.

Vualnam underscored the role of iGoT Karmayogi in enriching the knowledge of the officers towards professional competency and also suggested officers to associate themselves with the iGoT Portal by developing small capsule courses based on their experience and knowledge explaining the roles of ICoAS officers in different Ministries and Departments.

In his keynote address, he appreciated the dedication, expertise and commitment of ICoAS officers in shaping the economic landscape of India and emphasised on the critical role of ICoAS officers in achieving the goal of Viksit Bharat. Vualnam also felicitated three young ICoAS officers who have been exemplary in their contributions by conferring them with 'Sarvottam', 'Ati Uttam' and 'Uttam' appreciation certificates. The inaugural session was followed by three technical sessions, in the presence of Secretary Expenditure and Chief Adviser (Cost).

Pawan Kumar, Chief Adviser (Cost) and head of ICoAS, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the notable developments in the ICoAS over the past year. In the second session, Anurag Goyal, Senior Adviser at NITI Aayog, discussed the appraisal of infrastructure proposals, underlining the importance of robust evaluation frameworks for efficient planning and execution. The third session, led by cybersecurity expert Gautam Kapoor, focused on the critical role of digital security in governance, offering strategies to strengthen cyber resilience across government systems. The 'ICoAS Day 2025' celebration served as a platform for capacity building, knowledge sharing and strategic dialogue, reinforcing the service's unwavering commitment to building a stronger, more resilient and economically empowered India.

The Indian Cost Accounts Service plays a crucial role in strengthening cost management practices across various government departments and public sector organisations. Through professional expertise in cost analysis, financial advisory, and resource optimisation, ICoAS officers contribute to improving transparency and efficiency in public expenditure.

During the event, officials highlighted the growing importance of data-driven decision-making in government financial management. They noted that the adoption of advanced technologies, analytics, and digital platforms would further enhance monitoring of expenditure, evaluation of projects, and effective utilisation of public resources.

The discussions also focused on the need for continuous learning and skill enhancement among officers to keep pace with evolving economic and technological challenges.

Indian startups raise $205 mn last week; early-stage startups lead funding

Mumbai, July 29 (GNS): Indian startups raised $205.31 million across 30 deals last week between August 4 and 9 -- a 57 per cent increase from the previous week's $130.49 million. As many as six growth-stage deals, 22 early-stage deals, and 2 undisclosed deals accounted for $205.31 million worth of funding. In comparison, the previous week saw 21 startups across early and growth stages secure around $130.49 million, according to an Entrackr report.

The funding activity during the latest week was concentrated in e-commerce, fintech, gaming, and AI sectors. Growth-stage startups collectively raised $139.28 million, accounting for nearly 68 per cent of the total weekly funding.

Growth-stage deals involve startups that are scaling operations and expanding market presence. These companies have established products, a proven revenue model, and a significant customer base. Early-stage deals involve startups that are developing products, validating business models, or acquiring early customers. Durin the week, The Sleep Company raised the highest amount of funds, approximately $56 million (Rs 480 crore) collectively through primary and secondary market. Beauty brand Renee Cosmetics secured second position with $30 million in a funding round led by Playbook. Fibe's lending arm secured $26.5 million (Rs 250 crore) in debt. Notable growth-stage fundraises included gaming startup Super Gaming, digital lending platform Zype, and digital textile company True Colours.

The funding pattern shows a preference for AI-driven solutions with practical applications and long-term revenue potential rather than high unicorn valuations.

US agri, dairy firms with financial muscles aim to control global markets, India stands firm

New Delhi, July 29 (GNS): As US President Donald Trump slaps hefty tariffs on several countries including India, American agriculture and dairy companies with deep pockets and financial muscles are taking over free-wheeling global markets and aim to do the same with India, according to a new report. New Delhi has categorically said it does not make trade deals under any pressure or deadlines, and there is no chance to compromise on farmers, dairy and agriculture interests.

"There is absolutely no chance of compromising on farmers, dairy and MSMEs, and no chance of allowing import of genetically-modified crops either," said government officials. There's are some major US agriculture and daily companies which have presence in India. According to a report by SBI Research, Cargill Inc is the world's largest grain trader and largest privately held company in the US by revenue, involved in the production, trade, purchase and distribution of grain, palm oil livestock feed, starch, glucose syrup, and other agricultural commodities. "Cargill, with a global presence across 70+ nations, having 60 odd subsidiaries and employing 1,55,000 personnel, is operating in India since 1987, in the fields of food, ingredients, agricultural solutions, and industrial products, with revenues of Rs 13,850 crores during FY24," the report informed.

Archer-Daniels-Midland Company (ADM) is an American food processing and commodities trading company which operates more than 270 plants and 420 crop procurement facilities across the globe.

ADM processes oilseeds, corn, wheat, cocoa and other agricultural commodities, operating through segments like Agri Services and Oilseeds, Carbohydrate Solutions, Nutrition and animal feed. ADM also provides agricultural storage and transportation services. "With 25 processing plants and 59 procurement centres in Asia-Pacific region, its presence in India since 2011 is primarily in oilseeds, food and beverage ingredients and animal nutrition.

The report noted that several US-based agricultural corporations have expanded their footprint in India through partnerships, processing units, supply chain operations, and food ingredient businesses. Their growing presence reflects the increasing integration of global agricultural markets and the rising demand for processed food and value-added agricultural products.

However, Indian policymakers have maintained that any trade engagement must safeguard the interests of domestic farmers, dairy producers, and small businesses.

SBI's Rs 1.2 crore bet on NSDL now worth Rs 7,800 crore in just 3 days

Mumbai, July 29 (GNS): State Bank of India has hit a historic jackpot with its early investment in National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) as what began as a modest Rs 1.20 crore stake has ballooned into Rs 7,801.80 crore in just three trading sessions -- delivering an unbelievable return of over 6,50,000 per cent. The company made its stock market debut on August 8 at Rs 880 per share, a 10 per cent premium to its IPO price of Rs 800.

Since then, its shares have surged to Rs 1,300.30 -- marking a 62.5 per cent jump over the issue price in just 72 hours. State Bank of India (SBI) emerged as the biggest gainer. The bank had bought 6 million shares -- a 3 per cent stake -- at just Rs 2 each, spending only Rs 1.20 crore.

Today, that stake is valued at Rs 7,801.80 crore, giving SBI an unreal paper profit of Rs 7,800.60 crore and a return of 6,50,050 per cent. IDBI Bank matched SBI's performance with its 29.98 million shares (14.99 per cent stake) bought at Rs 2 each for Rs 5.996 crore.

This holding is now worth Rs 3,898.80 crore, bringing a profit of Rs 3,892.80 crore.

The Specified Undertaking of the Unit Trust of India (SUUTI) also joined the 650-bagger club. It purchased 10.245 million shares (5.12 per cent stake) for just Rs 2.049 crore.

That investment is now valued at Rs 1,332.68 crore, yielding a Rs 1,330.63 crore profit. Even those who paid more have made extraordinary gains.

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) bought its remaining 29.999 million shares (15 per cent stake) at Rs 12.28 each, spending Rs 36.84 crore. Those shares are now worth Rs 3,900.90 crore -- a 105-fold increase.

HDFC Bank bought 13.8995 million shares (6.95 per cent stake) at Rs 108.29, turning its Rs 150.54 crore investment into Rs 1,657.54 crore, an 11-bagger with Rs 1,507 crore in profit.

Union Bank of India's 5.125 million shares (2.56 per cent stake) bought at Rs 5.20 have grown from Rs 2.665 crore to Rs 666.90 crore, a 249-bagger with Rs 664.23 crore in gains.

The strong market response to NSDL's listing highlights investor confidence in India's growing financial market infrastructure and the increasing importance of digital securities management. As one of the country's key depositories, NSDL plays a crucial role in facilitating electronic holding and transfer of securities for investors.

Market analysts noted that the long-term value creation from such strategic investments demonstrates the benefits of early participation in institutions that become critical pillars of the financial ecosystem.

Public sector institu-

CII calls for urgent land reforms to boost India's manufacturing ambitions

New Delhi, July 29 (GNS): The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on Sunday called for urgent and comprehensive land reforms to help India achieve its goal of becoming a leading global manufacturing and investment hub by 2047. It said that while India has made significant progress in many areas of reform, the land sector still faces challenges that are slowing industrial growth and discouraging investors.

In a statement, CII said India's strong policy framework, industrial capabilities, large domestic market, and young workforce make it an attractive investment destination, especially at a time when global trade and investment patterns are changing. However, to fully tap into these opportunities, India needs a forward-looking competitiveness agenda with land reforms as a key priority. CII stressed that improving access, reducing costs, and simplifying regulations for businesses is essential. It suggested forming a GST-like council to coordinate land policy between the Centre and states, given that land governance lies mostly under state jurisdiction.

The industry body also pointed out that the current India Industrial Land Bank is mostly an information tool and should be upgraded into a national platform that not only provides data but also allows for direct allotment of land through a single digital interface. Highlighting the inefficiencies in the current system, CII noted that registering property in India involves nine procedures, takes 58 days, and costs nearly 8 per cent of the property's value.

In comparison, countries like New Zealand complete the process in just 3.5 days at a fraction of the cost. To address this, it recommended setting up Integrated Land Authorities in each state to handle allotments, conversions, dispute resolution, and zoning in one place.

CII also called for digitising land use conversion processes, rationalising stamp duty rates to a uniform 3–5 per cent across states, and shifting from presumptive to conclusive land titling to reduce disputes.

It said that land disputes account for two-thirds of civil litigation in India, creating uncertainty for investors. The industry body further urged states to publish data on land disputes, adopt flexible zoning norms that encourage mixed-use development, integrate environmental sustainability into industrial planning, and connect large rural land parcels to industrial corridors through better infrastructure. According to CII, these reforms would not only make India more competitive but also boost rural development.

India-Oman free trade pact to open new economic gateway with Gulf

New Delhi, July 29 (GNS): India and Oman are poised to sign a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) covering goods, services, investments, and labour mobility with a formal announcement expected this month.

The India-Oman CEPA is more than a tariff deal as it will open up a strategic economic bridge between South Asia and the Gulf. It offers India tariff-free access to a receptive market, secures energy and labour interests, attracts Gulf investment, and deepens geopolitical engagement in a region critical to global trade and security, according to an article in India Narrative. The free trade agreement (FTA) will reduce or remove customs duties on a wide range of products traded between India and Oman.

The 5 per cent customs duty on Indian exports such as iron and steel, electronics, textiles, plastics, automotive components, and machinery will be reduced to zero which will make these commodities more competitive. These sectors align closely with Make in India goals, offering scale expansion opportunities and job creation at home.

For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), tariff-free access can open lucrative Gulf markets without the pricing disadvantage they previously faced.

The CEPA is also expected to encourage Omani and broader Gulf capital inflows into Indian strategic infrastructure projects - ports, industrial corridors, and logistics hubs. India, in turn, can participate in Omani ventures such as the Duqm Port, enhancing maritime connectivity.

A sensitive point in talks was Oman's "Omanisation" policy, which mandates private companies to hire a minimum quota of Omani nationals. India pushed for explicit carve-outs to safeguard its large expatriate workforce - over 480,000 Indians - ensuring they are not disproportionately affected by future policy shifts. Oman is a reliable supplier of crude oil, LNG, and fertilisers. Tariff reductions on these imports will lower input costs for Indian refiners, power producers, and farmers. This adds stability to India's energy security strategy, reducing exposure to price shocks and supply disruptions.

Oman's location near the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 per cent of global oil shipments transit, is of immense global strategic importance. Stronger trade and investment ties deepen trust and open doors for defence cooperation, maritime security initiatives, and coordinated infrastructure projects. India's CEPA with Oman would strengthen the country's position.

144 Vande Bharat train services now operational across India's rail network

New Delhi, July 29 (GNS): The Indian Railways has expanded its modern train fleet, with 144 Vande Bharat services now running across the country's broad gauge electrified network. Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw shared the update in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha recently -- highlighting the government's push to modernise the nation's rail infrastructure.

Vande Bharat trains are semi-high-speed services designed and developed by Indian Railways to offer passengers a faster, safer, and more comfortable travel experience. These trains feature quick acceleration, the Kavach collision avoidance system, fully sealed gangways, automatic plug doors, and enhanced ride comfort. Onboard facilities include mini pantries with hot cases, bottle coolers, deep freezers, and hot water boilers. Passengers also enjoy reclining ergonomic seats, revolving seats in the executive class, mobile charging sockets at every seat, special lavatories for Divyangjan passengers, and CCTV surveillance for improved security.

The minister said these services are aimed at easing congestion on high-demand routes while keeping travel safe and affordable.

He also noted that the trains have become increasingly popular among travellers. In 2024-25, nearly 3 crore passengers used the Vande Bharat Express, while another 93 lakh people travelled on them between April and June 2025.

The rapid expansion of Vande Bharat services marks a significant step towards transforming passenger travel in India, combining speed, comfort, and safety on some of the busiest rail routes in the country.

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SIR process only for error-free voter list: CEO

Hyderabad, July 29 (GNS) Telangana Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) C Sudarshan Reddy on Wednesday clarified that the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has no connection with any government welfare schemes and is being conducted solely to prepare an error-free voter list.

Reviewing the progress of the SIR process with District Election Officers and Collectors, the CEO directed officials to complete 100 per cent digitisation of enumeration forms by August 3, with only five days left for submissions. He said 76 per cent of digitisation has been completed across the state and 90 per cent in rural areas, while praising Khanapur, Balkonda, Yellareddy, Huzurnagar, Narsampet, Wardhannapet, Parkal and Bodh constituencies for achieving 100 per cent digitisation.

Sudarshan Reddy instructed officials to speed up digitisation in urban constituencies, including Serilingampally, Ranga Reddy, Medchal, GHMC limits, Nizamabad, Warangal and Khammam. He also warned of disciplinary action against BLOs and supervisors for negligence and directed EROs and AEROs to ensure error-free uploading of voter data. The CEO also asked officials to expedite polling station rationalisation as per Election Commission guidelines, ensure family members are mapped to the same polling station wherever possible, obtain BLA signatures while preparing lists of deceased, shifted and absent voters, videograph meetings with political parties, and identify VIP and VVIP voters.

Additional CEO Vasam Venkateswarlu, GHMC Commissioner R.V. Karnan and other election officials attended the review meeting, according to an official statement.

TG Plans Sugarcane Expansion, Sugar Industry Revival

Hyderabad, July 29 (GNS) State Chief Secretary Mr. Sanjay Jaju has directed officials to formulate a comprehensive action plan aimed at significantly increasing the sugarcane cultivation area in the state, reviving sugar industries, and enhancing their production capacity. A meeting of the committee—constituted under G.O. No. 86 to oversee the revival of sugar industries and the expansion of sugarcane cultivation—was held on Thursday at the Secretariat, chaired by the Chief Secretary. Agriculture Secretary Mr. Surendra Mohan, Special Secretary (Industries) Mr. Krishna Aditya, representatives of sugarcane farmers, and agricultural scientists participated in the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Secretary noted that while there are a total of 12 sugar factories in the state, only seven are currently operational. He explained that for the existing factories to operate at full capacity, approximately 50 lakh metric tonnes of sugarcane are required annually, whereas the state currently produces only 20 lakh metric tonnes.

He pointed out that sugarcane cultivation requires less water compared to paddy and noted that adopting modern farming techniques, such as drip irrigation, would not only boost yields but also reduce cultivation costs. He further stated that for the 2026–27 agricultural season, 19,000 farmers across the state are cultivating sugarcane over an area of 26,000 hectares. The Chief Secretary directed officials to immediately submit a report after comprehensively studying the incentives and policies implemented in other states to expand sugarcane cultivation and improve the availability of raw sugarcane for the sugar industry. Speaking at the meeting, farmer representatives requested an incentive of 500 per tonne for sugarcane farmers, similar to the support provided to paddy farmers. They explained that high cultivation costs and a shortage of farm labor have become major challenges for sugarcane farmers. Noting that sugarcane can be used to produce ethanol and electricity in addition to sugar, they urged for greater support for this sector.

S.A. Aleem named Telangana Rakshana Sena constituency in-charge

Falaknuma News Correspondent M.A.Samad

Hyderabad July 29: In a significant organizational move aimed at strengthening the party across Telangana, Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) President Kalvakuntla Kavitha has appointed senior leader S.A. Aleem as the Parliament Constituency In-Charge. The appointment is seen as a recognition of his unwavering commitment, dedication, and years of service to the party.

According to party sources, the leadership has entrusted S.A. Aleem with the responsibility of expanding the party's organizational structure, coordinating with district and mandal-level leaders, strengthening the cadre, and ensuring effective implementation of the party's programmes across the Parliament Constituency. He will also play a crucial role in mobilizing public support and enhancing the party's outreach among youth, women, minorities, farmers, and other sections of society.

Expressing his gratitude, S.A. Aleem thanked Telangana Rakshana Sena President Kalvakuntla Kavitha for placing confidence in him and assigning him such an important responsibility. He described the appointment as both an honour and a responsibility, assuring the party leadership that he would discharge his duties with complete sincerity, discipline, and dedication.

He stated that his primary objective would be to strengthen the party from the grassroots level by working closely with local leaders, elected representatives, and party workers. He also pledged to take the party's ideology, welfare initiatives, and public-oriented programmes to every village, mandal, and urban locality within the Parliament Constituency while encouraging greater participation of people in the party's activities.

S.A. Aleem further emphasized that under the guidance of Kalvakuntla Kavitha, he would strive to build a strong and united organizational network capable of addressing public issues and effectively representing the aspirations of the people. He called upon party workers to work collectively with dedication and unity to achieve the party's objectives. The appointment has been widely welcomed by party leaders and workers, who expressed confidence that S.A. Aleem's experience, leadership qualities, and close rapport with the cadre would provide fresh momentum to the Telangana Rakshana Sena and further strengthen its presence across the Parliament Constituency.

Free medical camp held at government high school Darulshifa to promote student health

Falaknuma News Correspondent M.A.Samad

Hyderabad July 29: Emphasising that healthy students are the foundation of a bright and progressive nation, a Free Medical Camp was organised at Government High School, Darulshifa, Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad, in collaboration with the Department of Health.

The camp was conducted under the supervision of Headmaster Molana Mufti Dr. Hafiz Mohammed Saber Pasha Quadri, while the medical team from the Department of Health was led by Dr. Mohammed Shafiq. The initiative aimed to promote preventive healthcare and ensure the overall well-being of students through timely medical screening and health awareness.

During the camp, comprehensive health examinations were conducted for both boys and girls. The students received medical consultations, screening for common health issues, and guidance on personal hygiene, balanced nutrition, physical fitness and preventive healthcare. The services rendered by the doctors and medical staff were widely appreciated by the school community.

Addressing the gathering, Molana Mufti Dr. Hafiz Mohammed Saber Pasha Quadri thanked the Department of Health, particularly Dr. Mohammed Shafiq and his team, for conducting the camp. He said that regular health check-ups in schools play a vital role in ensuring the physical, mental and emotional well-being of students. He noted that healthy children perform better academically and grow into responsible citizens who contribute to the nation's development. Dr. Mohammed Shafiq highlighted the importance of periodic health screening, nutritious food, personal hygiene and a clean environment in safeguarding children's health. He stressed that the combined efforts of parents, teachers and healthcare professionals are essential for the holistic development of every child.

The Headmaster expressed hope that with continued support from the Government and the Health Department, more such medical camps and welfare initiatives would be organised in schools, enabling students to lead healthier, more confident and successful lives. Among those present were Mohammed Amjad Hussain Aqil, Mohammed Zaheeruddin, Vijay Kumar Reddy, members of the teaching faculty and women teachers of Government High School, Darulshifa.

MLA Dhanpal Urges CDMA to Expedite Funds for Nizamabad Civic Development

Falaknuma News Correspondent M.A.Samad

Hyderabad July 29:

Seeking accelerated urban development for Nizamabad, Urban MLA Dhanpal Suryanarayana Gupta met Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration (CDMA) Sridevi at her office in Hyderabad and urged her to prioritise the city's developmental needs. During the meeting, the MLA highlighted the importance of extending financial support through the Urban Challenge Fund to facilitate infrastructure development and improve civic amenities across the Municipal Corporation limits. He stressed that timely allocation of funds would help speed up several public welfare and development projects. Dhanpal also requested the immediate release of the General Fund due to the Nizamabad Municipal Corporation and sought administrative approval for various pending civic works. He said that adequate financial assistance is essential for undertaking road improvements, strengthening civic infrastructure and ensuring better municipal services for the people. The MLA expressed hope that the Municipal Administration Department would respond positively to the requests and extend all necessary support to promote the planned development of Nizamabad city.

Minister Konda Surekha Urges Public Support for Tiger Conservation

Hyderabad, July 29 (GNS) Minister for Forests and Environment Konda Surekha called upon all sections of society to act responsibly regarding tiger conservation. She urged everyone to step forward with a sense of responsibility to protect nature, recognizing that the Earth is not merely a habitat for humans but a shared home for all living beings. The Minister participated as the chief guest at a program held at the Telangana State Forest Academy in Dulapally, Medchal-Malkajgiri district, to mark International Tiger Day. She viewed a photo exhibition organized for the occasion and watched a short film on tiger conservation.

The event was attended by Head of Forest Force Vinay Kumar, Konda Laxman Telangana State Horticultural University Vice-Chancellor Danda Raji Reddy, PCCF (Development) Ratnakar Jauhari, CCF and TGSFA Director Priyanka Varghese, CCF N. Kshitija, Tiger Cell Research Scientist Ayan Sadhu, Amrabad Field Director Prasad, Kawal Tiger Reserve Field Director Shantaram, and various other forest department officials.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Konda Surekha noted that International Tiger Day is observed annually on July 29. She noted that this initiative, launched in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2010 to raise global awareness about the importance of tiger conservation, has today become a significant platform for nature conservation. She described the tiger as a symbol of forest wealth, stating that protecting the tiger means safeguarding forests, the environment, biodiversity, and the future of generations to come. Minister Surekha expressed concern over the drastic decline in tiger populations due to factors such as poaching, deforestation, and illegal trafficking. She explained that to address this situation, the Congress government led by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi implemented robust measures nationwide, including the enactment of the Wildlife Protection Act in 1972 and the launch of "Project Tiger" in 1973.

IICA Shillong Hosts Corporate Mitra Awareness Webinar

Hyderabad, July 29 (GNS) The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Shillong, under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, successfully organised a webinar on recently, for awareness and sensitization of the Corporate Mitra Scheme among the youth, students, MSMEs, professionals and enterprises of Arunachal Pradesh.

The webinar was conducted as part of the Corporate Mitra Scheme Awareness Campaign for the Northeast Region (NER), in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU)-Arunachal Pradesh and support of The Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICMAI) - as the lead co-host and the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI), the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) – as the support co-host. The Scheme aims to empower MSMEs, primarily in the Tier-3 & 2 cities, by supporting them in playing their part in the larger vision of a Viksit Bharat @ 2047. The scheme embodies the vision of a formalized, financially sustainable, and a thriving MSME sector by creating a strong support ecosystem for the MSMEs, through facilitating access to a pool of qualified, accredited and trusted para professionals "Corporate Mitras".

The Corporate Mitras are envisaged to provide accessible, affordable, and quality compliance and business support services to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), while creating a pool of trained para-professionals by equipping young graduates with industry-relevant knowledge and practical skills. The initiative is expected to strengthen the MSME ecosystem and enhance employment opportunities, particularly across the North Eastern Region. The accredited Corporate Mitra(s) are expected to provide affordable and accessible professional assistance to the local enterprises, for the non-core aspects of their business operation i.e. regulatory, compliance, financial, taxation, accounting, and governance-related needs, thereby ensuring that MSMEs can focus on innovation, expansion and growth, while meeting regulatory requirements with ease.

The scheme implementation is planned with an initial pan India target of 2000 participants, including 200 exclusively from the North East Region (NER), with a 50% fee concession being available for the NER candidates.

For Scheme's rollout and implementation for the Northeast region, Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) Shillong, under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has been designated as the nodal agency for coordination and liaison with State Governments and other stakeholders (universities/associations/industry bodies/institutes etc.), for promotion, and awareness of the Scheme.

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