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State braces for summer 'power' test

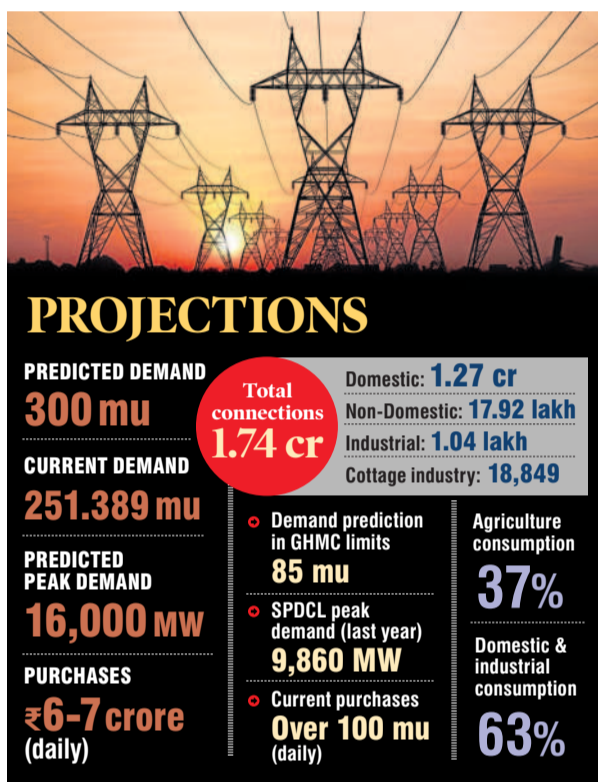
Anticipates further surge in consumption

STATE BUREAU
 HYDERABAD

As the summer approaches, Telangana is anticipating a surge in power consumption, presenting a significant test for the newly-elected Congress government led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy.

The administration is grappling with a financial predicament in the power sector while endeavouring to fulfil its commitment to provide up to 200 units of free electricity to domestic consumers through the Gruha Jyothi scheme, a key pledge among the Six Guarantees made by the party during Assembly elections. Sources say the power utility agencies are able to meet 50 per cent of the demand through Central Generating Stations (CGS) and open access markets. It is said that, daily, the agencies are spending Rs 6 crore to Rs 7 crore to buy power from open access.

Every year during the summer, Vanakalam and Yasangi, the power demand goes up and the government purchases power from CGS and open access markets. Already, the power utilities have started purchasing from CGS and open access sources and in the last one week, they have been purchasing over 100 mu every day. Last year, the power utilities spent over Rs 1,000



crore on purchasing additional power in August. Of the total power demand, around 37% was used by agriculture consumers, while the remaining 63% was used by industrial and domestic consumers.

According to official figures, there are 1.74 crore power connections in State of which, 1.27 crore are domestic, 17.92 lakh non-domestic, 1.04 lakh industrial and 18,849 cottage industry

connections. Meanwhile, the Energy Department has started taking measures to tackle the power demand situation and asked the Discoms to ensure uninterrupted power supply to all the categories of consumers. They are expecting that the power demand would cross over 300 million units and peak power demand to touch 16,000 MW during the summer. (SEE PAGE 2)

Frozen Fountain



WINTER WONDERLAND: People stand near the tall icicles formed after leaks in water pipelines at Tangmarg in north Kashmir on Friday. — Photo: PTI

AP kicks off caste census

AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh government on Friday kicked off its comprehensive caste census to enumerate all communities in the State.

Information and Public Relations Minister C Srinivasa Venugopala Krishna said the census is scheduled for 10 days from January 19. "The comprehensive caste census is scheduled for 10 days in one phase and, if needed, it will be extended by four or five days," Krishna said. He noted that volunteers will visit every home to collect the caste details, which will be relayed to the village secretariat system. Andhra Pradesh becomes the second State after Bihar to take up the caste census. (SEE PAGE 2)

Centre forms panel to protect interests of SCs

Committee to ensure fair allocation of benefits

NEW DELHI

A high-level panel has been formed to examine the administrative steps that can be taken to safeguard the interests of Scheduled Caste communities like the Madigas, sources said on Friday. The panel will seek to ensure fair allocation of benefits to the most disadvantaged communities within the Scheduled Castes, which have been overshadowed by comparatively affluent and influential groups.

"On the directions of the Prime Minister, a committee of secretaries has been constituted under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary," a source privy to the matter said. "It will examine the administrative steps that can be taken to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Caste communities, like the Madigas and other such groups, who have represented that they are not evenly getting their due

It will examine the administrative steps that can be taken to safeguard the interests of SC communities, like the Madigas and other such groups, say sources

share of benefits," he said. The committee will comprise secretaries of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Department of Personnel and Training, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Department of Legal Affairs and the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. The first meeting of the committee of secretaries will take place on Tuesday, they said.

The government has been in receipt of representations from State governments, including Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka for the sub-categorisation of SCs, which includes the Madiga community, on the grounds that the benefits of reservation and welfare/developmental schemes are not percolating evenly among them. **Secretarial support** The matter has been placed before various courts of law and is at present under consideration of a seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court. A committee of secretaries has been constituted under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary to examine the administrative steps that can be taken to safeguard the interests of the Madiga and other similarly placed communities. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment will provide necessary secretarial support to the committee. PTI

BJP hand-in-glove with Congress: KTR

STATE BUREAU
 Hyderabad

BRS working president KT Rama Rao asked the party leaders to expose the false promises made by Congress ahead of the Telangana Assembly elections. He accused both BJP and Congress of having a clandestine understanding and hence, not holding each other accountable for their mistakes. Addressing the Lok Sabha elections preparatory meet-

Adani, who did not set foot in Telangana as long as KCR was the Chief Minister, entered into an agreement with the Congress government to invest in Telangana

— KT RAMA RAO, BRS working president

ing on Medak Parliamentary constituency at Telangana Bhavan on Friday, Rama Rao questioned the sudden cooperation by Chief Minister A

Revanth Reddy with Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani. He pointed out that even as Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused both

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Adani as the same, Revanth Reddy is entering into business agreements with the latter at Davos. "The true colours of the Congress and BJP are getting exposed after the elections. Otherwise, Adani, who did not set foot in Telangana as long as K Chandrashekar Rao was the Chief Minister, entered into an agreement with the Congress government to invest in Telangana?" he questioned. (SEE PAGE 2)

IIL launches Hepatitis A vaccine

CITY BUREAU
 Hyderabad

In a major boost to public health response in preventing hepatitis, the Hyderabad-based Indian Immunologicals Ltd (IIL) on Friday launched the first indigenously developed Hepatitis A vaccine 'Havisure'. The vaccine, is the result of extensive research and development efforts by IIL's team of scientists and researchers.

The vaccine has undergone extensive clinical trials in 8 centres and has proven to be safe and efficacious. It is expected to play a crucial role in preventing Hepatitis A, a highly contagious liver infection that poses a significant public health challenge, IIL said. Dr K Anand Kumar, MD, IIL, who launched the vaccine, said: "Currently, Hepatitis A vaccines are imported into our country. We have tirelessly put in efforts and developed the country's first vaccine for Hepatitis A." (SEE PAGE 2)

Hyd's Sreeja bags maiden int'l title

SPORTS BUREAU
 Hyderabad

Hyderabad girl and two-time national champion paddler Akula Sreeja clinched the women's singles title at the WTT Feeder Corpus Christi in Texas, US, her maiden international trophy, to start the new season on a high.

She defeated World No. 46 Lily Zhang of the USA 3-0 (11-6, 18-16, 11-5) in the final, which was a one-sided affair, on Thursday night. After winning the extended second game on the sixth game point against Zhang, Sreeja finished things up quite easily to take the top spot on the podium.

Elated "I am immensely pleased, and my efforts got me where I wanted to be. It's my maiden international title, and I have earned it after two close calls in the quarterfinals and semifinals of the tournament. Both (Amy and Lily) were



Akula Sreeja defeated World No. 46 Lily Zhang of the USA.

higher-ranked players and I played well against them," she said after the final. En route to the final, the 25-year-old had shocked top-seed Amy Wang of USA 3-2 (11-9, 9-11, 11-1, 6-11, 11-9) in an evenly-contested quarterfinal. Ranked No 85 in the world, Sreeja led 2-1 before allowing Amy to crawl back and level the score. Nevertheless, the Indian bagged the final points in the decider.

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N Korea tests nuke drone

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Sabalenka cruises ahead

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Software firm CEO dies in freak mishap

CITY BUREAU
 Hyderabad

In a tragic incident, Sanjay Shah (56), the founder and CEO of Vestex Asia, a global software company, died when an alleged aerial act went terribly wrong during the company's silver jubilee celebrations at Ramoji Film City on the city outskirts on Thursday night.

According to the police, the company had scheduled a two-day event at the film city to mark its successful 25 years in the industry. On Thursday evening, at around 7:40 pm, nearly 700 people came together at Lime Light Garden to wit-



Sanjay Shah

ness an aerial act, billed as the event's highlight. "A specially designed stage made of wood was elevated 20-ft above the concrete stage using a crane. The act involved a 6 mm iron wire with two layers on both sides. (SEE PAGE 2)

First look of Ram Lalla revealed



The Ram Lalla idol at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir.

AYODHYA

The first image of the Ram Lalla idol became public on Friday, three days before the Pran Pratishtha ceremony here on January 22. The statue carved in black stone has its eyes covered with a yellow cloth and is adorned with a garland of roses, Sharad Sharma, an office-bearer of the Vishva Hindu Parishad said. In the picture released by VHP, Ram Lalla is in a standing posture. On Thursday afternoon, the new idol of Lord Ram was placed in the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, ahead of the consecration ceremony.

The 51-inch idol of Lord Ram as a child, sculpted by Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj, was brought to the temple on Wednesday night. This was done amid the chanting of prayers, according to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust. PTI

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