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Big relief for ex-Navymen on death row

Qatar court commutes their death sentence

PTI
 NEW DELHI

In a huge relief to eight Indian Navy veterans on death row, an appellate court in Qatar has commuted their sentence. "We have noted the verdict of the Court of Appeal of Qatar in the Dahra Global case, in which the sentences have been reduced," the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

The Ministry didn't specify what was the "reduced" punishment and said a detailed judgment was awaited. "Due to the confidential and sensitive nature of proceedings of this case, it would not be appropriate to make any further comment at this juncture," the Ministry said and added that it was in close touch with the legal team as well as the family members to decide on the next steps.

The appellate court verdict is also seen as a big diplomatic win for India as it comes weeks after Prime

"We have stood by them since the beginning of the matter and will continue to extend consular and legal aid"

— MEA

Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the sidelines of the COP28 Summit in Dubai. After the meeting on December 1, Modi said they discussed the well-being of Indians in Qatar.

The Indian nationals, who were working with Doha-based Al Dahra Global Technologies, were taken into custody in August 2022 in an alleged espionage case. While the charges against them were not made public by Qatari authorities, they

were sentenced to death by Qatar's Court of First Instance in October. The private firm provided training and other services to Qatar's armed forces and security agencies. India had moved the Court of Appeal in Qatar against the death sentence last month.

"Our Ambassador to Qatar and other officials were present in the Court of Appeal today, along with the family members. We have stood by them since the beginning of the matter and we will continue to extend all consular and legal assistance. We will also continue to take up the matter with the Qatari authorities," the Ministry said.

The verdict was welcomed by political parties, former diplomats and security experts, among others. Former Navy spokesperson DK Sharma, said, "This is great news but this is the first step, at least the capital punishment has been reduced. The final aim is to bring them home."

Formula E race unlikely in Hyd



Scheduled for February 10, Formula E has raised concerns about its viability following the latest communication from the new TS govt.

CITY BUREAU
 Hyderabad

In a disheartening development for fans eagerly looking forward to the second edition of the Hyderabad E-Prix Formula E race, the event is now at risk of being cancelled.

Scheduled to take place on February 10, Formula E on Thursday has raised concerns about its viability following the latest communication from the recently formed Telangana government. "Following a recent official communication received from the new Government of Telangana, Formula E is seeking urgent

clarification of their contractual commitments under the agreement and how it could impact the Hyderabad race. Based on the content of the letter received, Formula E is concerned the race will not be able to go ahead as planned," the statement from Formula E reportedly read.

Formula E, staged around the world, in cities such as Tokyo, Berlin and London, held its inaugural event in the country with former MA&UD Minister and BRS working president KT Rama Rao playing a pivotal role in bringing the race to the city. It was his vision to place the city in the front and centre

on the electric mobility field globally besides giving the industry a boost nationally.

As part of the then government's unstinted efforts, a 2.37-km street-circuit race track was built at Hussain Sagar with an investment of Rs 100 crore. Apart from hosting Formula E, the track was also intended to be the venue for a series of events — such as the Formula 4 championship and the Formula regional championship.

An agreement to host the race in 2024 was signed in October, just before the recent State elections, which resulted in the Congress assuming power. Formula E's

senior executive team reportedly met with the new leadership of the State government soon after the elections earlier this month. Discussions have been under way since then.

"With the event just a few weeks away and in its final stages of preparation, Formula E, partners and suppliers have already made significant commercial investments in the event," the statement further read.

The Hyderabad E-Prix was the first FIA event in the country since the 2013 Indian GP Formula One race. Drawing over 30,000 people, it returned almost \$84 million to the region.

Surge in housing prices

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Elgar helps SA crush India

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On split with Amrita

Saif opens up on Koffee with Karan



CHICKEN RATES IN HYDERABAD

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Farm | Rs. 85 |
| Retail live | Rs. 107 |
| With skin | Rs. 155 |
| Skinless | Rs. 177 |
| Egg Rates (12 eggs) | Rs. 80 |

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'Plan to launch 50 satellites for intel gathering'

MUMBAI

India aims to launch 50 satellites in the next five years for geo-intelligence gathering, which will include the creation of a layer of satellites in different orbits with a capacity to track the movement of troops and image thousands of kilometers of area, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman S Somanath said here on Thursday.

Speaking at Techfest, an annual science and technology event organised by the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay, he said it is important to improve the ability of satellites to detect changes, bring in more of AI-related and data-driven approach to analyse data, reduce data downloads and get only the necessary information.

Spacecraft are capable of observing a country's borders and neighbouring regions, he noted. (SEE PAGE 2)

No entry for Nitish in NDA, says Giriraj

PATNA

Putting to rest speculations of Nitish Kumar's possible return to the saffron fold, union Minister Giriraj Singh on Thursday said all doors to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) are closed for the Bihar Chief Minister.

The Union Minister claimed that the Janata Dal (United), which is the principal partner in the ruling coalition of Bihar, will soon cease to exist as Nitish has lost social support.

Meanwhile, Nitish and JD(U) national president Lalan Singh attended a meeting of its national office-bearers in New Delhi on Thursday, a day before its national executive and council meetings, amid buzz that Lalan Singh may make way for him to lead the party.

Some party leaders said there have been talks even within the organisation

Says JD(U), the principal partner in the ruling coalition of Bihar, will cease to exist as Nitish has lost support

about Lalan Singh quitting his position in Nitish's favour but made it clear that no such message has been conveyed by either of them so far.

A party leader said the meeting is generally called to ratify any important decision taken by the national executive. While the office-bearers discussed the contents of political agenda which will be approved at the meeting of the party's apex bodies, Lalan Singh reacted contemptuously to reports about his resignation and a rift, which has a history of swinging across the ideological spectrum to change allies. (SEE PAGE 2)

'Captain' Vijayakanth no more

CHENNAI

DMDK founder-leader and popular yesteryear Tamil actor Vijayakanth, who sowed the seeds of hope among his supporters on the possibility of a real alternative to the Dravidian majors, the DMK and AIADMK, died here on Thursday following illness.

Praised as 'Karuppu MGR' (black MGR) by his fans for his generosity, Vijayakanth had been ill and kept a low profile for the past four-five years and his wife Premalatha formally took over the reins of the DMDK on December 14 and was declared the general secretary. Vijayakanth, 71, was popular as 'Captain' after he played an IFS officer in *Captain Prabhakaran*. He is survived by his wife and two sons. PTI

(RELATED PORT PAGE 7)

Praja Palana kicks off across Telangana

STATE BUREAU
 Hyderabad

Praja Palana — to accept applications for the five guarantees to be implemented by the Congress government — commenced across the State on Thursday. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka formally launched the programme at the Ibrahimpatnam constituency.

He said the Congress government was committed to implementing the guarantees. Applications for the identification of eligible beneficiaries in a transparent manner were being accepted through Grama Sabhas across the State.

"This is not a feudal government but a people's government. The opposition parties are hoping that the Congress government fails to implement the six guarantees and this reflects their lack of commitment towards people's welfare," Bhatti Vikramarka said.

In the last nine years, the BRS government did not issue ration cards and houses for the poor. During my People's March from Adilabad to Khammam,



Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka launching the programme at Abdullapurmet in Ibrahimpatnam on Thursday.

many people, especially women, appealed for the sanction of houses and jobs, he recalled, adding that cases were booked against those who questioned the then government for its failures.

As part of the Praja Palana programme, applications are being received for identifying beneficiaries for the five guarantees. For every 100 families, one counter has been set up and officials are receiving applications at every counter. Applications will be accepted till January 6.

(SEE PAGES 2, 3, 4)
 (2.5 LAKH APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN 141 ULBs PAGE 5)

Chaos mars programme

HYDERABAD: People turning up at Praja Palana to file applications were fuming over the non-availability of forms and the consequent collection of exorbitant charges by photocopy centres. There was also utter confusion while applying for ration cards. Photocopy centres, which usually charge Re 1 a copy, charged Rs 2 for documents.

(REPORT PAGE 5)

Two Cyberabad Inspectors suspended

CITY BUREAU
 Hyderabad

Two Inspectors were placed under suspension on charges of dereliction of duty and unprofessional conduct, by Cyberabad Police Commissioner Avinash Mohanty on Thursday.

According to senior officials, RGIA SHO R Srinivas was placed under suspension after an inquiry into unprofessional conduct and his getting involved in a civil dispute. He had allegedly booked a false case against four members of a family from Shamshabad in connec-

RGIA SHO Srinivas placed under suspension for unprofessional conduct; KPHB SHO Venkatesh suspended for dereliction of duty

tion with financial issues without proper inquiry. He also checked the mobile phones of the women members of the family and their social media accounts.

While three persons of the family — a man, his wife and son — were arrested in the case and remanded, the daughter approached the court and obtained anticipatory bail.

She complained to the police higher-ups about the harassment and an enquiry was held, after which the Inspector was placed under suspension. The Inspector also allegedly handcuffed the family members and shared the photographs with a woman on whose behest the case was registered. In the other instance, Kukatpally Hous-

ing Board SHO D Venkatesh was placed under suspension for dereliction of duty. The SHO failed to properly monitor the functioning of his subordinates, who allegedly assaulted a man following a complaint by his wife.

The woman had filed a case against her husband in Guntur a few months ago and the police failed to properly check the facts. Based on an oral complaint by the woman, police brought the victim to the police station and beat him with lathis and rubber belts, following which the man was hospitalised.

Inter exams schedule released

CITY BUREAU
 Hyderabad

The Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TS BIE) on Thursday announced the schedule for the Intermediate Public Examinations, which are starting on February 28.

As per the schedule, the Inter first-year examinations will begin with Second Language Paper-I on February 28 followed by Second

Language Paper-II for second-year students on the next day. The major examinations will conclude on March 14 and minor ones — public administration, bridge course for BiPC students, modern language and geography — will be held till March 19.

The exam dates apply to Inter students pursuing vocational courses as well. But a separate timetable will be issued for vocational

courses, the TS BIE said. Practical examinations for both general and vocational courses will be conducted from February 1-15. The English practical exam for first-year students admitted in 2023-24 is scheduled for February 16.

The ethics and human values exam for students admitted prior to 2023-24 and having backlogs is on Feb 17. The environmental education exam is on Feb 19.