

STATE-TELANGANA

Panel proposes 4 zones, 3 cadres

The State will have four zones and three cadres in the government posts, if the recommendations made by the high-level committee constituted to look into the issue are any indication.

- The committee headed by Deputy Chief Minister Kadiyam Srihari , has submitted a detailed report with several recommendations to Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao after holding elaborate discussions with all stakeholders and obtained the legal view on the issue.
- Accordingly, it has suggested certain amendments to the existing Presidential Orders for creating four zones in place of the existing two.
- Currently, there are two zones in existence in the State as per the Presidential Orders.
 - The erstwhile districts of Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal and Khammam are under Zone V
 - Zone VI is comprised of Hyderabad and erstwhile districts of Ranga Reddy, Mahabubnagar, Nizamabad, Medak and Nalgonda.

The committee recommended scrapping the multi-zonal system and pruning the State cadre posts. It has also recommended division of the posts into State, zonal and local cadre.

- The committee has recommended that Secretariat and posts of heads of departments be brought under the Presidential Orders so that equal opportunities are provided to facilitate movement of employees working in zonal and district level posts to the State level and vice versa.

The Chief Minister is expected to review the situation soon and take a call on the recommendations. The file would be sent to the President for his assent once the Chief Minister gives his consent to the recommendations.

NITI Aayog: State slips in health indicators

Telangana slipped one position in the national health rankings given by NITI Aayog.

- The 'Healthy States, Progressive India' report by NITI Aayog, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and World Bank, ranked Telangana number 11 for its performance in health in 2015-16, based on 24 parameters categorised under three heads.
- Alongside Maharashtra and West Bengal, Telangana was termed an "achiever" but with "least improvement".

- Though the State did not register a big improvement in overall performance, nor was it seen as a top performer, the report shows that as far as the five health outcome measures for the states — neonatal mortality, under-five mortality, total fertility rate, proportion of low-birth weight of newborns and sex ratio — the State lagged behind only Kerala and Punjab.
- The health outcomes were also significantly higher than neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, as well as six other states that were awarded higher ranking and boasted of greater overall performance.

However, what seemed to have brought down the overall ranking of the State is its health systems administration and health services delivery mechanisms.

- The State's performance in developing health systems and service delivery, measured just a year after its formation by bifurcation of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, seemed to have let it down.
- The State Health department has maintained the report does not truly represent Telangana's present-day performance.
- Officials of the State Health Department were quick to point out that the State's health administration was taking shape in the first year after bifurcation and the report does not truly reflect the state of health affairs in present-day Telangana. "The base year for measuring performance was 2014-15, when Andhra Pradesh was divided, while the performance was measured in 2015-16, the first year after formation of the new State.

NATIONAL

Kerala, Punjab, T.N. in good health

Kerala, Punjab and Tamil Nadu were the top rankers in NITI Aayog's latest Health Index report- 'Healthy States, Progressive India' has, for the first time, attempted to establish an annual systematic tool to measure and understand the heterogeneity and complexity of the nation's performance in the health sector.

- The document, developed by NITI Aayog with technical assistance from the World Bank and in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, indicates that Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh showed the most improvement in indicators such as Neonatal Mortality Rate, Under-five Mortality Rate, full immunisation coverage, institutional deliveries, and People Living with HIV (PLHIV) on Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART).
- Manipur registered maximum incremental progress in indicators such as PLHIV on ART, first trimester antenatal care registration, grading quality parameters of Community Health Centres, average occupancy of key state-level officers and good reporting on the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP).

- Lakshadweep showed the highest improvement in indicators such as institutional deliveries, TB treatment success rate, and transfer of National Health Mission funds from the state treasury to implementation agency.
- Kerala ranks on top in terms of overall performance but sees the least incremental change as it had already achieved low levels of Neonatal Mortality Rate, Under-five Mortality Rate and replacement level fertility, leaving limited space for any further improvement, noted the report.

Common challenges for most States and Union Territories include the need to focus on addressing vacancies in key staff, establishment of functional district cardiac care units, quality accreditation of public health facilities and institutionalisation of human resources management information system.

- Additionally, all larger States need to focus on improving the Sex Ratio at Birth.

The next report will be released in June this year and district hospitals too would be ranked.

‘Can court sessions be live-streamed?’

The Supreme Court asked for the assistance of the Attorney-General on a plea to live-stream proceedings of the Constitution Bench in nationally important cases, such as those on Aadhaar and decriminalisation of gay sex, in the Supreme Court.

- The court decided to seek K.K. Venugopal’s opinion on a petition filed by senior advocate Indira Jaising in her personal capacity.
- Ms. Jaising said courts around the world allowed their proceedings to be recorded, though they differed in their ways.
- She said some judges in the constitutional court in India had historically been reluctant about the idea of recording court proceedings because it would “capture every sentence” in the banter between judges and lawyers which was merely a way to elicit responses and not a sign of how the judge would finally decide the case.

Ms. Jaising, however, said there were different methods to resolve such reluctance and listed the means adopted by courts globally.

- Some courts allow publication after a gap of 30 minutes,
- some ban recording of proceedings only in trial courts as that would compromise witnesses,
- some give edited versions of the proceedings,
- some record the proceedings but do not air it in public,
- some give out transcripts of proceedings.

The Supreme Court, in a bid to usher in transparency, had earlier allowed the installation of CCTV video recording with audio in trial courts and tribunals.

Ms. Jaising said citizens have the right to information and matters of constitutional and national importance can be live-streamed.

- If live streaming of top court's proceedings is not possible, then alternately the video recording should be allowed the senior lawyer had argued.

SC stays new Tribunal Rules

The Supreme Court stayed the applicability of provisions of the Central Tribunal, Appellate Tribunal and other Authorities (Qualification, experience and other conditions of service of members) Rules, 2017 which gave the government primacy in making key appointments to tribunals, including the National Green Tribunal.

- The court, acting on a petition filed by Congress MP Jairam Ramesh, directed that the terms and conditions of service of members of the National Green Tribunal shall be governed by the provisions of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.

Primarily, the court accepted the formation of an interim search-cum-selection committee in respect of appointment of both judicial and administrative members to CAT.

- The panel includes the Chief Justice of India or his nominee, Chairman of the Central Administrative Tribunal, and two secretaries nominated by the Government of India.

STATE-AP

APPSC signs MoU with universities

- The Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) has signed an MoU with universities in the State on recruitment of Assistant Professors.
- Commission Secretary Y.V.S.T. Sai signed the agreement with Registrars of the respective universities.

- According to the agreement, APPSC will conduct a written test for recruitment to the post of Assistant Professor when a request is received and extend the merit list to the university concerned. Thereafter, the universities will conduct interview for selection.
- The State government has entrusted this additional duty to the APPSC to improve the quality of selection process.

TTD trains Dalit and tribal priests, ushers in social reformation

- With the idea of reviving “Bhakti movement” among the socially-excluded sections, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) and the State Endowments Department jointly conceived a programme to train Dalits and tribal people in priesthood.
- This social reformation has begun with the abode of Lord Venkateswara as the epicentre, which is expected to wipe off the societal inequities witnessed in rural areas.
- Firstly, the local elders of a Dalitwada or tribal hamlet identify their favourite God to be consecrated in the temple proposed to be constructed by the TTD, and unanimously propose the person to be trained in priesthood.
- The proposal is to train 500 such willing youths in priesthood and employ them in as many new temples built in their localities.
- Equipped with “ancillary skills”, the priests have more to offer to the community, by donning the role of Purohit to read zodiac signs from the almanac and become an Ayurvedic practitioner by suggesting herbal remedies
- Titled “Dharmic activist”, the priest is motivated to usher in temple-centric activities such as bhajans, folk art and dance forms.

Funding of infra projects gets govt. guarantee

- The State government provided guarantee to the AP CRDA for taking hybrid annuity-based LPS infrastructure projects in the PPP mode at an estimated ₹10,732 crore and raising funds through domestic and masala bonds up to ₹2,000 crore.
- The government also gave administrative approval for construction of houses for employees at a cost of nearly ₹3,307 crore.
- A financial plan for the capital city consisting of various sources of funds including multilateral and domestic loans and innovative mechanisms like domestic and masala bonds has been prepared by the CRDA with the help of McKinsey & Co, which pegged the capital expenditure at ₹30,000 crore.

Second shipwreck, Goliath grouper fish found near Vizag

- A team of experienced divers and diving instructors discovered a second shipwreck with a critically endangered species of Goliath grouper.
- This could catapult Visakhapatnam into a top scuba diving destination in the world.
- This comes a month after a century-old shipwreck was unearthed in the region.
- The latest find is said to be located at 23 metres below the sea surface and is a much larger one spread over 180 metres.
- But what makes Monday's discovery even more special is the spotting of the extremely rare species of Goliath grouper fish, considered to be the keystone species of an ecosystem.
- This fish is entirely protected from harvest in the U.S. and is recognised as a critically endangered species by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

- Scuba divers and instructors from different parts of the country say that the latest findings are “millions worth of treasure” for the global scuba diving community. According to them, it was the first time they had spotted the Goliath grouper.
- Some of the other interesting aqua life species spotted were large school of barracuda, the trevally and jack fish and a rich bed of corals like the star feather corals, sand corals and whip corals.