

Rain dance



● Venerable songstress Asha Bhonsle couldn't have chosen a better day than Ganesh Chaturthi to launch the song *Dhakku Makum* of her Hindi film debut, *Mai*. Bhonsle, 79, plays the title

role in the film and the song features her dancing in the rain on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi. Only this time, Bhonsle doesn't do the actual singing. Her granddaughter Zanaï does the honours while grandmom does the singing in the rain routine. *Mai*, directed by Mahesh Kodiyal, is the story of a mother-daughter relationship, with Bhonsle playing the mother and yesteryear star Padmini Kolhapure in the role of the daughter. But it's Bhonsle the actress we shall keep our eyes peeled for.

Dirty politics

● The wages of flirting with politics can be strange indeed. Kannada actress Pooja Gandhi found that out to her grief after she starred in *Dandupalya*, a film based on the true story of a gang of serial killers. Before she knew it, Gandhi, who is a member of the Janata Dal (S) party, was dubbed "Queen of Dandupalya" (be-

cause she had played the role of a gang member) by Karnataka BJP Rajya Sabha MP A. Manjunath. The insinuation was that she was a sort of gangsta moll reigning over the JD(S). And guess what? Instead of dismissing the malicious talk, state JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy asked Gandhi to quit the party! The actress has probably vowed never to tread the political turf again.

Thriller man

● Ashwin Sanghi, the Mumbai-based thriller writer, is a big hit with Bollywood. First, UTV bought the film rights of his book *Chanakya's Chant*. And now producers are lining up to buy the rights of his recent novel, *The Krishna Key*. The latter, his



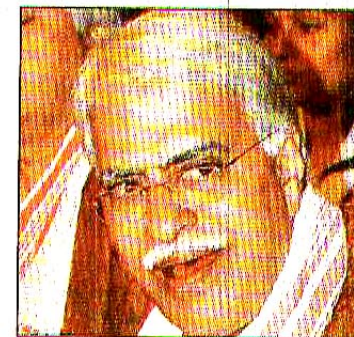
third, is about a serial killer who believes he is Lord Krishna's avatar. "I have several offers from Bollywood for my new book," admits the soft-spoken Sanghi who is a businessman by

day. However, once he sells the rights, the author would rather not interfere with the screenplay. "I don't want people to blame me if anything goes wrong," he says. Clearly, Sanghi believes in playing to his strengths. And churning out bestsellers.

limelight

Ardent acolyte

● Newbie south Indian actress Priya Anand is on a high. She can't stop enthusing about how she bagged the role of her idol Sridevi's niece in the latter's comeback film *English Vinglish*. It seems Anand went straight from a photo shoot for a magazine — attired in a blue chiffon saree like the one worn by Sexy Sri in *Mr India* — to audition for the part. And of course she landed the role right away. "It seemed so right that I should get the role. I was crazy about her (Sridevi) since I was a child..." gushes Anand, who has also bagged a plum project with director Priyadarshan in the Hindi remake of a Tamil film. "I feel I am one of the luckiest girls going around," she says. Well, let's hope the luck speaks at the box office.



Music missed

● *Khayal* exponent Rajan Mishra (of the Rajan-Sajan duo) is miffed with the Centre's apathetic attitude towards promoting classical music. The Padma Bhushan awardee is part of a non-profit organisation called All India Musicians Group supported, among others, by Pandit Ravi Shankar, Birju Maharaj and Lata Mangeshkar. Last December, the 12-member group gave a slew of recommendations to promote classical music to the Indian ministry of culture. They even met the Prime Minister. But, Mishra says, the government is yet to act on any of the suggestions. "He (Manmohan Singh) even instructed the then culture secretary to do what is required, but nothing came out of all that," he exclaims. Now, surely the "compulsions of coalition politics" can't be cited as an excuse for inaction on this front!