



**HYDERABAD | PAGE 03**  
**Land acquisition for Old City Metro on fast track**



**WORLD | PAGE 09**  
**Israeli forces step up attack on Syria**  
 Targets military facilities, conducts 24 air raids near Damascus



**SPORT | PAGE 10**  
**Australia in command as Head, Smith slam hundreds**

**In a nutshell**

**End fast, farmer leader urged**

**CHANDIGARH:** The Punjab Police chief along with a senior officer in the Union Home Ministry met farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been staging an indefinite hunger strike since last month, and enquired about his health. Punjab DGP Gaurav Yadav and Director in MHA Mayank Mishra met Dallewal at Khanauri border point and heard his demands.

NATION PAGE 7

**Fadnavis expands Maha Cabinet**

**NAGPUR:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis expanded his Cabinet with the induction of 39 Ministers from the BJP, Shiv Sena and the NCP at a simple ceremony held here. Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan administered the oath of office and secrecy to the Ministers — 19 from the BJP; 11 of Shiv Sena and nine from the NCP.

NATION PAGE 8

**Delhi polls: AAP releases final list**

**NEW DELHI:** The AAP on Sunday released its final list of 38 candidates for the Delhi Assembly polls, with party supremo Arvind Kejriwal to contest from the New Delhi constituency and Chief Minister Atishi fielded again from Kalkaji. In its bid for a third consecutive term in power, the AAP nominated its senior leaders from their own constituencies.

NATION PAGE 7

**Justice Shekhar to face SC Collegium**

**NEW DELHI:** Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, who purportedly made controversial statements at a VHP function, is likely to appear before the Supreme Court Collegium soon to explain his stand. The SC on December 10 took note of news reports over the statements and sought a report from the Allahabad High Court. As per norms, he will be given a chance to put forth his version before the SC. PTI

**CHICKEN RATES IN HYDERABAD**

Farm.....	Rs. 101
Retail live.....	Rs. 123
With skin.....	Rs. 178
Skinless.....	Rs. 203
Egg Rates (12 eggs).....	Rs. 85

# Fiscal pressure mounts on TG

**Pension and retirement benefits strain State exchequer**

PS DILEEP  
 HYDERABAD

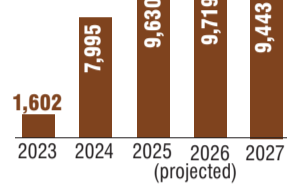
The Telangana government grapples with a burgeoning financial crisis, as escalating pension and retirement benefit liabilities cast a shadow over the State's fiscal stability. With pensions already straining the exchequer, projections suggest the situation will only worsen over the next five years, requiring an annual allocation of Rs 15,000 crore to meet these obligations.

**Grim picture**

ESCALATING PENSION, RETIREMENT BENEFIT LIABILITIES CAST SHADOW OVER STATE'S FISCAL STABILITY

- Projections suggest situation will only worsen over next five years
- Require annual allocation of **Rs 15,000 cr to Rs 16,000 cr** to meet these obligations

**NUMBER OF RETIREES**



**PENSION EXPENDITURE**



- Mounting costs come at a time when State struggling to meet even its current financial commitments
- Govt owes around **Rs 2,000 cr** to retirees during this fiscal
- To clear dues, govt sought to mortgage TGIIC lands and raise **Rs 10,000 crore**
- Of the total, **Rs 2,000 cr** to be earmarked for payment of retirement benefits alone

thin. The pension expenditure, tied closely to salary hikes implemented by the previous BRS government, has been on an upward trajectory over the past decade. Starting at Rs 4,210 crore in 2014-15, the pension Budget doubled to Rs 8,217 crore by 2015-16. Since then, it has grown steadily, peaking at Rs 13,024 crore in 2023-24. However, it was reduced to Rs 11,641.38 crore in the Budget for 2024-25 and al-

ready Rs 10,069.45 crore has been disbursed till October this year, which indicates the requirement of fresh allocations for the next three months. The mounting costs come at a time when the State is struggling to meet even its current financial commitments, including the timely disbursement of pensions and retirement benefits. While no government pensioner received their retirement ben-

efits over the last one year, the State government owes around Rs 2,000 crore to the retirees during this fiscal. To clear the dues, the State government recently sought to mortgage TGIIC lands and raise Rs 10,000 crore, of which Rs 2,000 crore will be earmarked for payment of retirement benefits alone. In fact, the clearance of arrears and retirement benefits was one of the top de-

mands from the employees union representatives during their recent meeting with Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bharti Vikramarka. The retirement benefits range from Rs 25 lakh to Rs 1 crore for the government employees based on their cadre and experience. At present, the pensions and retirement benefits alone account for nearly 13 per cent of the revenue receipts. With fiscal pressures mounting, economic experts questioned the sustainability of the government's policies, particularly its failure to address long-term financial planning. They warn that unless the Telangana government adopts stringent fiscal reforms, including exploring alternative revenue sources and rationalising expenditures, the rising pension liabilities could trigger a deeper economic crisis.

## Give up arms, Shah warns naxals

JAGDALPUR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday appealed to naxals to give up arms and join the mainstream, or else they will have to face the strong action of security forces. He said the rehabilitation of the surrendered naxals is the responsibility of the government. Addressing a sporting event — 'Bastar Olympics' — in Chhattisgarh's Jagdalpur, Shah also said the country would be free of Maoists by March 2026. "I appeal to naxals, please come forward. Give up arms, surrender and join the mainstream. Your rehabilitation is our responsibility," he said. He said if the naxals do not listen to the appeal of surrender, they will be crushed by the security forces. "Chhattisgarh Police is committed to fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve to make India Naxal-free by March 31, 2026," he said. The union Home Minister said the Chhattisgarh government's rehabilitation policy is the best in the country. "If you surrender and join the mainstream, you will contribute to the development of Chhattis-



If the naxals do not listen to the appeal of surrender, they will be crushed by the security forces.

— AMIT SHAH  
 UNION HOME MINISTER

garh and India," he said. Shah said when the Congress was in power in Chhattisgarh before the BJP assumed charge a year ago, the action against the Maoists became slow. "But after our government came to power in Chhattisgarh, action against the extremists speeded up resulting in killings of 287 naxals in last one year, arrest of 992 naxals and surrender of 836 others," he said.

(SEE PAGE 2)

## 'TG regressive under Cong'

STATE BUREAU  
 Hyderabad

BRS working president KT Rama Rao criticised the Congress government in Telangana for State's economic downturn, attributing it to "inexperience, incompetence, and corruption." He stated that Telangana, which thrived during K Chandrashekar Rao's decade-long rule, is now regressing in multiple sectors.

Citing the Transport Department's revenue as a key economic indicator, he said Telangana is the only State in south India to record a decline in it. While neighbouring States recorded growth between 8% and 32% in vehicle registrations and revenue, he said Telangana's numbers have dropped. "Declining registrations of heavy vehicles show shrinking people's purchasing power and dete-

riorating economic conditions," he said. Between April and November, Telangana recorded revenue of Rs 4,392 crore in 2023-24 against Rs 4,389 crore in 2024-25. He said the Congress regime is prioritising political vendettas over governance. He urged the government to focus on restoring economic stability and maintaining the progressive momentum achieved during the BRS regime.

## State under grip of severe cold wave

CITY BUREAU  
 Hyderabad

The severe cold wave that gripped the northern parts of Telangana State will continue till Tuesday, according to the IMD-Hyderabad forecast on Sunday. Chilly weather conditions are also expected to continue in Hyderabad and its outskirts, with minimum temperatures likely to drop below 10 degrees Celsius at different locations.

By the early hours of Sunday, the minimum temperature at several locations in Adilabad and Kumram Bheem Asifabad districts anywhere hovered between 6.3 degrees Celsius and 7 degrees Celsius. Hyderabad and its neighbouring districts were also under the grip of intense chilly weather conditions, with the BHEL area in Sangareddy district recording single-digit temperature at 9.6 degrees Celsius. The lowest minimum temperature of 6.3 degrees Celsius was recorded at



A train makes its way amid dense fog in Alampur of Jogulamba Gadwal district on Sunday morning.

Bheempur in Adilabad, followed by 6.4 degrees Celsius at Jainad and 6.6 degrees Celsius in Pochara, Bhoraj and Tandra, all mandals in Adilabad. The IMD-Hyderabad, in its forecast on Sunday, said, "Dry weather is very likely to prevail over the State. Mist/Hazy conditions are very likely to prevail during morning hours at isolated pockets in a few districts of Telangana. Minimum temperatures are very likely to be below normal (2 degrees C to 4 degrees Celsius) at isolated pockets over Telangana during the next 2 days." In Hyderabad, apart from 9.6 degrees Cel-

sius in the BHEL area, the University of Hyderabad, Serilingampally mandal, recorded a minimum temperature of 9.7 degrees Celsius on Sunday morning.

(SEE PAGE 2)

## Tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain dies of heart-related issues

MUMBAI

Renowned tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain (73) succumbed to heart-related issues on Sunday. Hussain's manager, Nirmala Bachani, said in a statement that the maestro was battling blood pressure-related problems. Earlier, it was learned that Hussain had been admitted to a hospital in San Francisco after experiencing heart-related problems.



Ustaad Zakir Hussain, the renowned tabla maestro, was born on March 9, 1951, in Mumbai. As the eldest son of illustrious tabla player Allah Rakha, he was naturally drawn towards music from a young age. He completed his primary education from St Michael's High School in Mahim, Mumbai, and later gradu-

ated from St Xavier's College and further solidified his foundation in music and academics. Hussain married Antonia Minnecola, a Kathak dancer and teacher. They have two daughters Anisa Qureshi and Isabella Qureshi. Industrialist Harsh Goenka conveyed his con-

dolence over Hussain's passing on social media, saying: "The world falls silent as the tabla loses its maestro. Ustad Zakir Hussain, a rhythmic genius who brought the soul of India to global stages, has left us. I feel privileged to have known him through his connection with HMV and to have witnessed his incredible performance at our home. His beats will echo eternally."

Col Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore wrote: "Ustad Zakir Hussain's extraordinary mastery of the tabla has created a timeless legacy in the world of music. My deepest condolences to his family, friends, and the countless admirers whose lives he touched with his artistry. His rhythms will echo in our hearts forever." IANS

## Oscar question stumps Gr-II aspirants

YUVRAJ AKULA  
 Hyderabad

Several aspirants who appeared for the Group-II services examination were taken aback seeing the names of Cillian Murphy, Emma Stone, and Christopher Nolan in one of the first ten questions. The examination conducted for recruitment to posts, including Municipal Commissioner, Assistant Commercial Tax Officer and Naib Tahsildar, tested the candidate's Oscar knowl-



A candidate at an examination centre in Hyderabad on Sunday.

edge as part of Paper-I. Giving out statements related to the Oscar Awards 2024, the candidates were asked to se-

lect the true ones. The statements — Cillian Murphy won the Best Supporting Actor award for the movie

'Oppenheimer', Emma Stone won the Best Actress for the movie 'Poor Things', Christopher Nolan won the Best Actor award and 'The Last Repair Shop' won the Best Documentary Short-film Award. This question caught students, even the most prepared ones off guard, as it was an unexpected one. "Generally, questions on Nobel prize winners are asked in the Group exams," says Sharath, a candidate who appeared for the examination in Peddapalli. (SEE PAGES 2, 3)

## Over 22L visited Sabari in 29 days

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Over 22 lakh Ayyappa devotees visited Sabarimala in 29 days till December 14, an increase of 4.51 lakh pilgrims from the corresponding period last year, Travancore Devaswom Board president P S Prashanth said on Sunday. He said the total revenue at the temple had increased by Rs 22.76 crore from the same period last year. A total of 22,67,956 devotees visited Sabarimala in 29 days till December 14. PTI