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Katha — a platform for artistic escape



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In a nutshell

Soldier killed in J&K encounter

SRINAGAR: An Indian Army soldier was killed following an overnight encounter with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Sopore area. Sepoy Pangala Kartheek was injured in the exchange of fire with terrorists in a hideout at Zalooru Gujjarpatti in Sopore district and died as he was being evacuated from the scene of the gunbattle, they said. Security forces laid out a cordon on Sunday when they noticed fire while busting a militant hideout. PTI

Another fire breaks out at Kumbh

MAHAKUMBH NAGAR: A fire broke out near the Kinnar Akhara camp in Sector 16 at the Maha Kumbh Mela on Monday. There were no casualties in the incident. This comes a day after a big fire triggered by a cylinder blast engulfed 18 tents in Sector 19. "Around 9.30 am, personnel stationed at the tower noticed smoke rising near the Kinnar Akhara camp and immediately informed the control room," a Fire Department official said. PTI

Two naxals killed in Chhattisgarh

GARIABAND: Two women naxalites were killed and one personnel of the CRPF's elite Commando Battalion for Resolute Action was injured in an encounter between security forces and ultras in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district. The exchange of fire occurred in a forest under Mainpur police station limits along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha border during an anti-Naxal operation by security personnel, Gariaband Superintendent of Police Nikhil Rakhecha said.

Devotee donates Rs 6 cr to TTD

TIRUPATI: A Chennai-based devotee donated Rs 6 crore to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, authorities said. Vardhaman Jain donated Rs 5 crore to Sri Venkateswara Bhakti Channel and Rs 1 crore to Sri Venkateswara Gosamrakshana Trust, they added. "At Rangana-yakula Mandapam in Tirumala temple, he handed over the demand drafts for Rs 5 crore to TTD for SVBC and Rs 1 cr for SV Gosamrakshana Trust," TTD said. PTI

RG Kar case: Sanjay Roy gets life term till death

Kolkata court says crime not 'rarest of the rare'

PTI
KOLKATA

A Kolkata court on Monday sentenced Sanjay Roy to life imprisonment until death after he was convicted of raping and murdering an on-duty doctor at the State-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, rejecting demands for the death penalty saying it was not a "rarest of the rare" crime.

Additional District and Sessions Judge in Sealdah, Anirban Das, had on Saturday found Roy guilty of committing the crime against the postgraduate trainee doctor on August 9 last year. The court also ordered Roy to pay a Rs 50,000 fine and directed the State government to pay compensation of Rs 17 lakh to the family of the deceased doctor.

Judge Das stated that the crime did not fall under the "rarest of the rare" category, which justified the decision to not give the death penalty to the convict. "The CBI prayed for the death penalty. The defence lawyer prayed that a jail term be given instead of the death penalty... This crime does not fall under the rarest of the rare category," the judge said. "I am sentencing you to life imprisonment, meaning



A protestor shouts slogans demanding further investigation as they suspect more people were involved in the crime, in Kolkata on Monday. — Photo: AP

till the last day of your life, for causing injury during the act of committing rape on the victim that led to her death..." he told Roy. Roy, a former civic volunteer with the Kolkata Police, was found guilty under Sections 64 (rape), 66 (punishment for causing death), and 103(1) (murder) of the BNS. The judge stated that under Section 64, life imprisonment is being given, along with a fine of Rs 50,000.

An additional five months of imprisonment will be imposed upon non-payment of the fine, he added. Under

Section 103(1), Roy has been sentenced to life imprisonment with a Rs 50,000 fine, and another five months in jail if the fine remains unpaid. Additionally, under Section 66, he has been sentenced to life imprisonment till death, the judge said. All the sentences will run concurrently, he said. "Since the victim died while on duty in the hospital, her place of work, it is the responsibility of the State to pay compensation to family of the doctor — Rs 10 lakh for the death and Rs 7 lakh for the rape," Das said. (SEE PAGES 2, 7)

I AM BEING FRAMED, SAYS SANJAY ROY

KOLKATA: Sanjay Roy, convicted of the rape and murder of an on-duty doctor, on Monday claimed that he was innocent and had been "wrongly held guilty." Roy was on Saturday held guilty of sexually assaulting the doctor and throttling her to death in August last year. "I am being framed and have not committed any crime. I have not done anything, and still, I have been held guilty," Roy told the court ahead of sentencing in the case. "I was beaten up in prison and was forced to sign papers," he added. (REPORT PAGE 7)

Unable to get crop loan waiver, farmer ends life

STATE BUREAU
Jagitial

A 42-year-old farmer who attempted suicide by consuming pesticide in his agricultural field a week ago died while undergoing treatment in a private hospital in Metpalli on Monday.

According to family members, Pitla Linganna alias Thokala Linganna, took the extreme step as his crop loan was not waived, and he was unable to get financial assistance from the government to take up sowing. Linganna, who borrowed about Rs 15 lakh from banks and private money lenders, was reeling under debt. The non-waiver of his crop loan and lack of financial assistance for sowing added fuel to his troubles. Unable to cope with the sit-

CHILLI RYOT DIES AFTER DEBT DRIVES HIM TO CONSUME PESTICIDE

JOGULAMBA GADWAL: A 32-year-old chilli farmer died, allegedly by suicide, at Manavpadu village on Monday in the district. B Shekhar Reddy was cultivating crops to earn a livelihood and is said to have incurred severe losses since the last few crops. As a result, his debts continued to pile up. Shekhar Reddy, however, did not lose hope and cultivated chilli this season to clear all his debts. However, due to lack of sufficient irrigation and the crop getting infested by pests, he suffered losses yet again. (SEE PAGE 2)

uation, he took the drastic step, relatives said.

A native of Yellapelli of Nirmal district, Linganna migrated to his in-laws' home in Ibrahimpatnam after his marriage 15 years ago. Linganna, who owned 34 guntas of land, obtained Rs 80,000 as a crop loan from Telangana Grammeena Bank. He also got another Rs 1.50 lakh loan from the same bank in the name of his wife

Lakshmi, who owns two acres. As the total loan amount of the family crossed Rs 2 lakh, their loans were not waived. However, his father-in-law Narsiah's Rs 1 lakh loan was waived. Narsiah's Rs 80,000 crop loan was waived earlier by the BRS government. Linganna was survived by his wife Lakshmi, son Harshvardhan and daughter Nainika.

'BRS lost power, not fighting spirit'

Will fight for rights of unorganised sector: KTR

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

BRS working president KT Rama Rao emphasised the need to build strategic pressure on the Congress government to deliver its pending promises to workers in unorganised sectors, including auto-rickshaw drivers and gig workers, among others. He vowed to fight for the rights of workers in all sectors, especially the unorganised sector.

"The BRS may have lost power, but not its fighting spirit," he declared while releasing the BRS Karmika Vibhagam (BRKV) calendar at the Telangana Bhavan on Monday.

Addressing the gathering, Rama Rao declared that the BRS would not rest until the Congress delivered on its 420 promises over the next four years. He urged the BRKV to spearhead campaigns highlighting the plight of auto-rickshaw drivers, gig workers, and others. He called for regular programmes every 15 days leading up to Labour Day on May 1, to raise awareness and demand justice for workers.



BRS working president KT Rama Rao interacts with the gathering at the Telangana Bhavan in Hyderabad on Monday.

The BRS working president criticised the Congress for failing to include welfare measures for workers in the State Budget. "The welfare

boards and programmes for workers must be assured in the upcoming State Budget," he said, urging auto drivers, gig workers, hamalis and other workers in unorganised and organised sectors to unite in building pressure on the government.

He reminded about former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's initiatives for worker welfare, including tripling Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) workers' salaries, supporting migrant labourers during the Covid-19 pandemic, and increasing Anganwadi teachers' salaries to Rs 13,500.

He contrasted this with the Congress government's alleged inaction, pointing to

TRUMP ERA BEGINS



Donald Trump takes oath as the President of the United States of America at the Capitol in Washington on Monday. Calling January 20 as 'liberation day', Trump, in his inaugural address, said the 'golden age of America has begun'. — Photo: AP (REPORTS PAGE 9)

Hyderabad genetic detectives help unravel wildlife crime

M SAI GOPAL
Hyderabad

The forensic genetic detectives of Hyderabad uncovered a wildlife crime involving the mystery of the occult and how the gullible can be taken for a ride by poachers. The DNA investigators in Hyderabad received small pieces of plant material for analysis. It turned out that the plant materials were, in reality, the gonads of the male Bengal monitor lizard, which was killed by poachers in Tamil Nadu.



DNA analysis, helped investigators from Tamil Nadu to unravel the mystery and prosecute the poachers.

The poachers harvested the forked penises of monitor lizards and fraudulently sold them to individuals as the roots of a very rare plant *Martynia annua*, which are used in occult practices by believers. The poachers modified the penises of monitor lizards to resemble the plant roots, (which look like folded hands), and

made it even more complex for investigators to make an accurate identification.

The CCMB researchers said that forensic genetic evidence is a powerful tool to secure convictions in wildlife crimes. "The bifurcated hemipenes (gonads) of any of the four species of Monitor lizards found in India are illegally traded under the name 'Hatha Jodi' (a plant root from *Martynia annua*). A rare plant root is misrepresented as a powerful charm capable of bringing property and good fortune to its possessor. As a result, there is a suspected large-scale poaching of monitors in India to fuel the trade of 'Hatha Jodi,'" the CCMB researchers in the paper said. (SEE PAGE 2)

Tension over mining exploration

STATE BUREAU
Nagarkurnool

Tension prevailed in Mylaram village under Balmoor mandal after farmers and villagers launched a relay hunger strike against the mining exploration in the vicinities and with police arresting the residents.

The otherwise serene ambience in the village reverberated with screams of women and arguments between the police, farmers and villagers. It is learnt that a woman lost consciousness in the melee between the police personnel and the villagers. A woman also tried to end her life by consuming pesticide. However, she was stopped by the villagers, according to reports.

Police arrest protestors as farmers, villagers of Mylaram launch relay hunger strike against mining exploration

The residents even fenced roads leading to the village. Since the last few months, residents have been opposing the mining exploration in the locality, citing an adverse impact on nature, their lives and livelihood. Amidst stiff opposition, a few persons under the influence of a few local elected public representatives were trying to explore mining in the area. (SEE PAGE 2)

'India at forefront of age defined by tech evolution'

DAVOS

In an era defined by technological evolution, India stands at the forefront as one of the world's fastest-growing economies and a global hub for startups and digital innovation, the World Economic Forum said. The Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) India, liaison office of World Economic Forum (WEF) in India, launches its 6-year impact journey report on the inaugural day of the WEF Annual meeting 2025 here. Over the past four decades, this relationship has developed into a strong, multifaceted and meaningful collaboration with the national, State governments. (SEE PAGE 2)

Hyd student shot dead in US

CITY BUREAU
Hyderabad

A 26-year-old student from the city was reportedly shot dead by unidentified assailants in Washington, United States. The victim, identified as K Ravi Teja, sustained grievous bullet injuries and died on the spot. The circumstances of the incident are yet to emerge fully.



Ravi Teja, a native of RK Puram at Green Hills Colony in Chaitanyapuri in Hyderabad, had gone to pursue Masters in 2022. He completed his education and was on job trials. Meanwhile, reacting to the incident, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal blamed the

BJP-led Central government for the death of the student and claimed that the poor education system and "lack of opportunities" in the country are forcing youths to go abroad.

Describing it a "matter of great concern", Kejriwal demanded the Centre pay immediate attention to the incident. "This news is very saddening. In the past few months, several incidents have come to light where our country's youth have been killed abroad. This is a matter of great concern. The poor education system and lack of opportunities are forcing our youths to go abroad," he wrote in Hindi on X.