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Modi cites Budget, seeks votes for BJP in Delhi



WORLD | PAGE 09
US-Russia talks sans Ukraine dangerous, says Zelenskyy
 Calls for discussions between Kyiv and Washington to develop truce plan



SPORT | PAGE 10
India lift U-19 women's T20 World Cup again!

In a nutshell

Local body poll notification soon
KHAMMAM: Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said the notification for the panchayat elections would be issued before February 15. The reservations issue would also be addressed at the earliest as the caste census report would be submitted to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and a decision would be taken accordingly, he said. He said all eligible persons would be extended benefits under schemes.

Weed worth Rs 50 cr seized
MUMBAI: Hydroponic weed, gold and diamonds worth over Rs 50 crore were seized, and eight persons were arrested at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. The seizures were made during a special drive between January 28 and January 31. Officials seized 50.11 kg of hydroponic weed worth Rs 50.116 crore, diamonds worth Rs 93.8 lakh and 2.073 kg of gold worth Rs 1.5 crore. PTI

Bibi heads to US to meet Trump
TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he will discuss "victory over Hamas", countering Iran and expanding diplomatic relations with Arab countries in his meeting with US President Donald Trump. Tuesday's meeting will be Trump's first with a foreign leader since returning to office. It comes as US and Arab mediators begin to broker the next phase of a ceasefire. **WORLD PAGE 9**

Army Captain dies at Jammu camp
JAMMU: An Army Captain died due to "medical reasons" inside a camp, officials said. Captain Rudra Pratap Singh, a resident of UP, collapsed at the Akhnoor military garrison late on Saturday and was rushed to a hospital, they said. The officer breathed his last during treatment. General Officer Commanding of Jammu-based White Knight Corps Lt Gen Navin Sachdeva led troops to extend condolences. PTI

CHICKEN RATES IN HYDERABAD

Farm.....	Rs. 103
Retail live.....	Rs. 125
With skin.....	Rs. 181
Skinless.....	Rs. 206
Egg Rates (12 eggs).....	Rs. 66

Crisis in Congress over MLAs 'secret meeting'

Open dissent against Ministers; TPCC calls in senior leaders

S SANDEEP KUMAR
 HYDERABAD

Even as the Congress is trying to sweep under the carpet the furor triggered by a 'secret meeting' of around 10 of its MLAs, the issue now appears to be snowballing into a major crisis, with open dissent against senior Ministers and leaders exposing the unsavoury happenings within the party, apart from raising serious concerns about rampant irregularities in administrative affairs.

Even as senior leaders are desperately trying damage control by labelling the MLAs' meeting as a regular 'dinner' meeting, the episode has also revealed a widening gap between MLAs, Ministers and MPs as well.

Jadcherla MLA J Anirudh Reddy, responding to questions from the media, has openly challenged senior leader and Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and MP Mallu Ravi, after the latter also commented on the 'secret meeting'. Admitting that the MLAs had indeed met, Anirudh Reddy, however, said he would not tolerate any sort of character assassina-

Rumblings in party's Karnataka wing too

KALABURAGI: Aland Congress MLA B R Patil, who resigned as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's political advisor, alleged on Sunday that, like other MLAs, he was not receiving grants due to the pre-poll guarantee schemes. Patil resigned from the post on Saturday, a position he had held since December 29, 2023. The Congress government had earmarked Rs 52,000 crore in the 2024-25 Budget for the five guarantees. However, party sources

said that spending on these guarantees had far exceeded the budgetary allocation by November itself. "There are problems. I did not resign mindlessly. If the Chief Minister invites me, I will meet him and explain," Patil said. He said he had written to Siddaramaiah twice. "But he too is under pressure due to the MUDA scam and State Budget preparation, but I told him that I will be with him like an intimate friend," he said. PTI

Teenmaar Mallanna challenges MLC pick

WARANGAL: In open defiance of the Congress high command's decision of announcing Narender Reddy as its candidate for the Karimnagar-Nizamabad-Adilabad MLC constituency, party MLC Teenmaar Mallanna challenged the Reddy community leaders to make Narender Reddy win without seeking BC community votes. Addressing the BC Rajakeeya Yudhabheri public meeting here on Sunday, the Congress MLC said as promised to the BC community, the Congress should implement 42 per cent reservation. The Congress MLC also demanded that EWS reservation should be cancelled.

Trump imposes stiff tariffs on Canada, Mexico, China

North American allies announce retaliatory tariffs on US imports as trade war erupts

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Saturday signed an order to impose stiff tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada and China, drawing swift retaliation and an undeniable sense of betrayal from the country's North American neighbours as a trade war erupted among the longtime allies.

The Republican President posted on social media that the tariffs were necessary "to protect Americans," pressing the three nations to do more to curb the manufacture and export of illicit fentanyl and for Canada and Mexico to reduce illegal immigration into the US.

The tariffs, if sustained, could cause inflation to significantly worsen, threatening the trust that many voters placed in Trump to lower the prices of groceries, gasoline, housing, autos and other goods as he promised. They also risked throwing the global economy and Trump's political mandate into turmoil just two weeks into his second term. Trump declared an economic emergency in

Will there be some pain? yes, maybe (and maybe not!)... but we will make America great again, and it will all be worth the price that must be paid

— DONALD TRUMP, US President

The actions taken by the White House split us apart instead of bringing us together... We were always there standing with you, grieving with you, the American people

— JUSTIN TRUDEAU, Canadian Prime Minister

We categorically reject the White House's slander that the Mexican government has alliances with criminal organisations, as well as any intention of meddling in our territory

— CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM, Mexican President

order to place duties of 10 per cent on all imports from China and 25 per cent on imports from Mexico and Canada. Energy imported from Canada, including oil, natural gas and electricity, would be taxed at 10 per cent.

Trump's order includes a mechanism to escalate the rates charged by the US against retaliation by the other countries, raising the specter of an even more severe economic disruption. "The actions taken today by the White House split us apart instead of bringing us together," Canadian Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau said in a sombre tone as he announced that his country would put matching 25 per cent tariffs on up to \$155 billion in US imports, including alcohol and fruit. He channelled the betrayal that many Canadians are feeling, reminding Americans that Canadian troops fought alongside them in Afghanistan and helped respond to myriad crises from wildfires in California to Hurricane Katrina. "We were always there standing with you, grieving with you, the American people," he said. **(SEE PAGE 2)**

Cong blamed for farmer suicides

STATE BUREAU
 Hyderabad

Holding the Congress party responsible for the surge in suicide cases and the deteriorating state of affairs in Telangana, BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Sunday expressed concern over the State's fall from a prosperous "Annapurna" to once again a land plagued by starvation deaths and suicides.

In a post on X, Rama Rao recalled that under the leadership of K Chandrashekhara Rao, Telangana had emerged as a significant agricultural hub, regarded as the "Annapurna" of the nation. His administration was credited with boosting the agricultural sector and instilling confidence among farmers.

But the shift in governance to the Congress party has led to severe challenges. The State, once known for its agricultural prosperity, is now facing a lack of irrigation water, electricity shortages and an absence of

Budget by the people, for the people, says Nirmala

NEW DELHI

Under KCR's leadership, TG emerged as a significant agri hub, regarded as 'Annapurna' of the nation

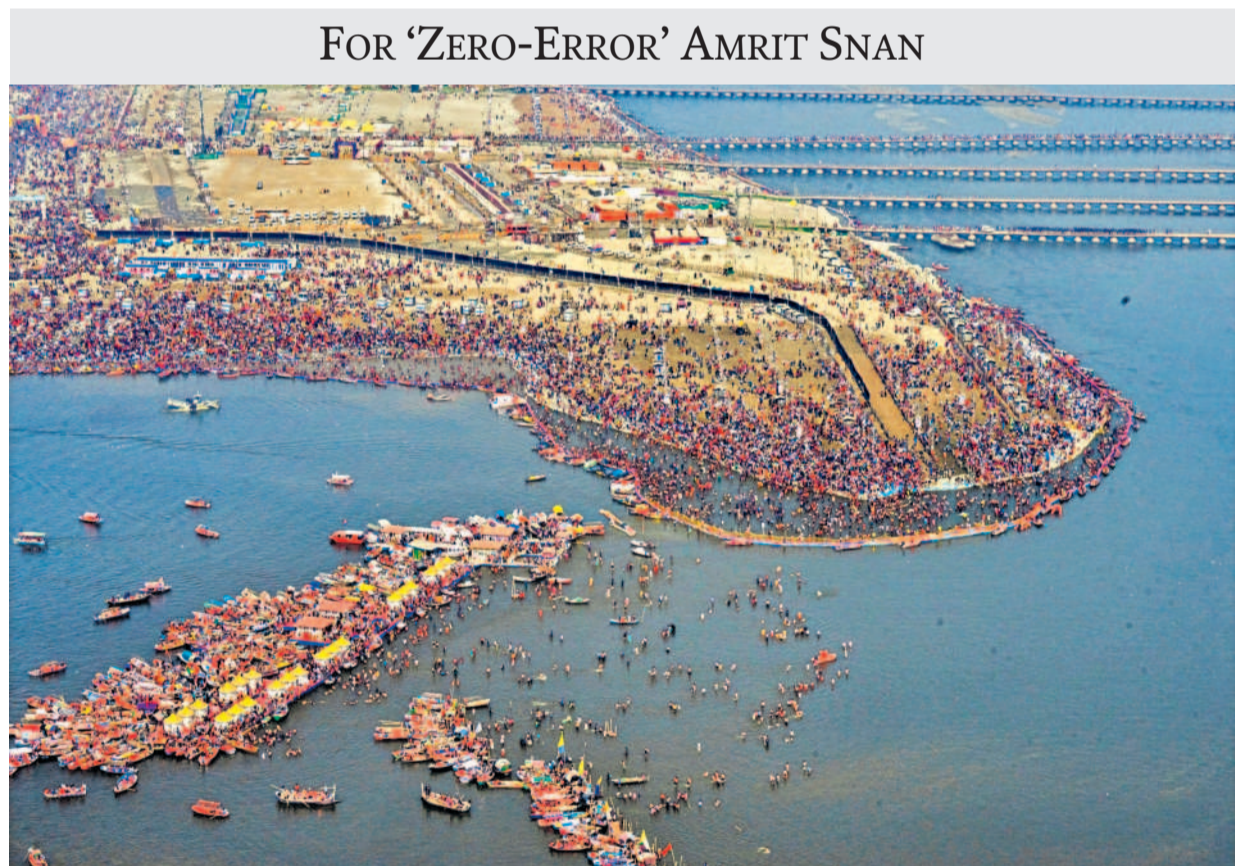
— KT RAMA RAO, BRS

support for farmers. These issues have contributed to a surge in farmer suicides. Other projects like the cleaning of the Musi River have reportedly disrupted the real estate sector, causing financial strain on aspiring entrepreneurs.

Rama Rao criticised the current administration, led by A Revanth Reddy, for its inability to provide essential services and support to farmers. The lack of crop procurement, failure to deliver on promises of farmer support and unfulfilled loan waivers have left farmers in despair, he said.

Paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday described the union Budget as "by the people, for the people, of the people", and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was fully behind the idea to cut taxes for the middle class but it took time to convince the bureaucrats. "We have heard the voice of the middle class" who had been complaining about their aspirations not being met despite being honest taxpayers, she said in an interview.

With the honest and proud taxpayers wanting the government to do more to limit the impact of factors like inflation, the PM was quick to task Sitharaman to look at ways to give relief. While Modi was quick to agree to tax relief, it took a bit of convincing to get on board the officials in the Finance Ministry and CBDT. PTI **(REPORTS PAGE 8)**



An aerial view of the Sangam on the eve of Basant Panchami Amrit Snan during the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, on Sunday. Ahead of Monday's Amrit Snan, top officials stress the compliance of 'zero error'. — Photo: PTI **(REPORT PAGE 7)**

Secret codes to arrest SSC question papers leakage

YUVRAJ AKULA
 Hyderabad

Having learnt the lesson the hard way, the Education Department initiated robust measures to prevent Class X exams question paper leak this year.

For the first time, unique secret security codes will be printed on the question papers of the SSC Public Exams commencing March 21. If a question paper is leaked, photographed or photocopied and posted on the messaging applications and social media platforms, the security code will aid in tracing the source besides identifying the centre and hall from which the paper has been leaked. The unique code will be printed on all

Unique codes will help trace centre, hall from where question paper is leaked, photographed or photocopied

question papers. "This measure is aimed at preventing question paper leak. If the question paper is leaked, the individuals behind the leak can be caught within no time," said a senior official.

In 2023, two back to back incidents of SSC exams question paper leakage triggered a massive uproar, forcing officials to suspend invigilators and centre su-

perintendents. In the first case, within a few minutes of the commencement of the first Class X exam, an invigilator at an exam centre in Tandur allegedly photographed the first language question paper (Telugu) and circulated it in WhatsApp. Following day, the second language Hindi question paper was leaked on WhatsApp.

This time, around 5.1 lakh students registered for the exams, which will be conducted from March 21 to April 4. Meanwhile, commencing this academic year, in place of the existing multiple answer sheets system, the department introduced a single 24-page answer booklet for all the Class X exams. **(SEE PAGE 2)**

46.25% of State's population BCs, reveals caste survey report

STATE BUREAU
 Hyderabad

Backward Classes other than Muslim minorities at 46.25 per cent form the largest chunk of the total 3.70 crore population of Telangana, according to the caste survey conducted in the State.

The population of BCs is followed by the Scheduled Castes (17.43 per cent), Scheduled Tribes (10.45%), Backward Classes among Muslims (10.08%) and Other Castes (13.31%), OCs among Muslims (2.48%).

The State Planning Department submitted its report to the Cabinet Subcommittee. **(FULL REPORT PAGE 5)**

Farmers hit as tomato prices crash



Farmer Chatri Srikant shows ready-to-harvest tomato crop in Siddipet district on Sunday.

T KARNAKAR REDDY
 Sangareddy

Tomato farmers are facing a major crisis in Telangana as they are hardly getting Rs 5 per kg, and in some places, a shocking Rs 2.5 per kg for their crop, one of the most essential ingredients in the menu in almost every home.

After spending so much time and money on the crop for the last two to three months, the farmers were not even getting the labour wages spent on harvesting them. While the vegetable is being sold at Rs 10 a kg to Rs 15 a kg in the retail market, farmers are getting just Rs 5 per kg. In Siddipet, some farmers even abandoned

their crop after some traders offered them just Rs 2.5 a kg!

Farmers in erstwhile Medak district cultivated the crop in about 2,000 acres but the slump in prices for the last two months has pushed them into a serious crisis. It has once again exposed a lack of guidance from the Horticulture Department on how to cultivate the crop and to what extent, apart from exposing the lack of support from the State government.

Farmer Vadithya Lachiram Nayak from Shivampet mandal came all the way carrying a couple of quintals of tomato to the Sangareddy Sunday market hoping to

get a good price. However, he could hardly get Rs 15 per kg. Nayak said he had to sell the vegetables at Rs 10 per kg by evening since he could not take them back.

He had sold the rest of the harvest to traders at Rs 5 kg at his farm. Since there were no cold storage or processing units in the erstwhile Medak district, tomato farmers are now in deep financial trouble.

Another farmer, Ravi Goud, who was in the news for setting his crop on fire a month ago, said the Horticulture Department must guide them on when to cultivate the crop and when they should not. **(SEE PAGE 2)**