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Harish seeks white paper on interest-free loans to women



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DMK to mobilise parties against delimitation exercise

Stalin assigns key Ministers to visit different States, engage with regional political parties



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Two days of clashes in Syria leave over 1,000 dead

In a nutshell

KCR to chair BRS party meeting

HYDERABAD: The BRS Legislature Party (BRS LP) will meet at Telangana Bhavan on March 11. The meeting will be held from 1 pm with party president and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao chairing the session. He is expected to discuss the party strategies to be adopted in the upcoming Budget session of the State Legislative Assembly.

4 suffocate to death in Maha

MUMBAI: Four labourers died of suffocation on Sunday while cleaning a water tank in an under-construction building in south Mumbai, officials said. They had put the death toll at five earlier. The incident occurred at Bismillah Space building on Dimtinkar Road in Nagpada around 12.30 pm. Five persons entered the tank and fell unconscious. They were rescued by fire brigade personnel and rushed to JJ Hospital.

NATION PAGE 7

V-P Dhankhar admitted to AIIMS

NEW DELHI: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar was admitted to AIIMS on Sunday after complaining of uneasiness and chest pain, sources said. Dhankhar (73) was taken to the hospital around 2 am and was admitted to the critical care unit under Dr Rajiv Narang, head cardiology at AIIMS Delhi. The Vice-President is stable and under observation, a source said, adding that doctors are monitoring his condition. PTI

Normal life hit in Kuki-Zo areas

IMPHAL: Normal life was badly affected in Kuki-Zo areas of Manipur on Sunday due to the indefinite shutdown called by the Kuki-Zo Council, the apex body of the tribals, to protest the resumption of the bus services between state capital Imphal and the hill districts. Ginza Vualzong, spokesman of the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum, claimed that the indefinite shutdown is total and successful in Kangpokpi, Churachandpur, Tengnoupal and Pherzawl. IANS



Shahid, Kareena share stage

Actor says nothing new, they keep running into each other

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Farmland prices crash

Plummeting land value pushes small and marginal farmers into crisis

D CHANDRA BHASKAR RAO
HYDERABAD

Once a symbol of prosperity and financial security, land in Telangana has now become a source of distress for farmers. One-and-a-half year ago, the mantra was clear: 'Sell one acre in Telangana, and you can buy 10 in Andhra Pradesh', a fact that even AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had acknowledged. Prices of agricultural land here had skyrocketed, fetching up to Rs 30 lakh per acre and even up to Rs 2.5 crore for plots of the same size along strategic highways.

Infrastructure development, especially irrigation projects and improved connectivity during the previous BRS regime, fuelled this agricultural boom, boosting farmers' confidence and allowing them to tackle financial adversities with ease. Free power and crop investment support under Rythu Bandhu also made agriculture remunerative. But this golden era has swiftly faded. Over the last one year, land prices have plummeted, leaving farmers grappling with a harsh reality. The once-coveted acres now find no buyers, and a wave of distress sale is sweeping



A drop in land prices has severely affected farmers' credit worthiness, making it difficult to secure loans for agricultural investments or personal expenses.

Farmers are finding it challenging to sell their land at expected prices... There are no buyers

— GOLLA UPENDER, FARMER FROM MAHABUBABAD DISTRICT

through the region. This stark contrast to the vibrant market during the BRS regime has left many farmers in a state of uncertainty and concern.

The decline in land values in Telangana has led to a significant crisis for the State's

small and marginal farmers. Many farmers rely on land as collateral for loans from banks and informal moneylenders. A drop in land prices has severely affected their credit worthiness, making it difficult to secure loans for agricultural invest-

ments or personal expenses. Golla Upender from Mulkalapalli village in Mahabubabad district said farmers were finding it challenging to sell their land at expected prices. Even with four acres of land, each costing around Rs 30 lakh (per acre), the farmers are failing to merit consideration for a fresh agriculture loan of even Rs 1 lakh-Rs 2 lakh from financial institutions. There are no buyers too.

If at all there is one, the price the buyer offers is ultimate. Buyers are offering 30-

40 per cent less than the expected price, forcing farmers to dispose of the land in case of distress to meet urgent needs, such as those requiring funds for a daughter's marriage, a son's education, or a wife's surgery. This is hard to reconcile with for any agriculture family.

The failure of the State government to ensure the promised loan waiver of up to Rs 2 lakh has further worsened the situation. Upender says even the Naidupet branch of a popular public sector bank, which was previously liberal in meeting the credit needs of farmers, was now hesitant to provide advances. This has resulted in reduced borrowing capacity for farmers, affecting their ability to invest in agriculture, purchase seeds, fertilizers, or machinery, and even meet personal expenses.

The decline in land values has forced farmers, in many cases, into distress migration to urban areas in search of work as daily wage labourers. Farmers are also hesitant to make long-term investments in their land, such as creating irrigation facilities or land development, fearing inadequate returns. (SEE PAGE 2)

Hindu temple vandalised in California

India demands action, calls for adequate security

NEW YORK/NEW DELHI

A prominent Hindu temple in the United States was defaced with anti-India graffiti by unknown individuals, prompting a strong condemnation from India and a demand for "stringent action" against those involved in the incident.

Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) said its Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Chino Hills city of San Bernardino County faced desecration. Chino Hills borders Los Angeles County. "In the face of another Mandir desecration, this time in Chino Hills, CA, the Hindu community stands steadfast against hate. Together with the community in Chino Hills and Southern California, we will never let hate take root," the BAPS Public Affairs posted on X.

"Our common humanity and faith will ensure that peace and compassion prevail," it said, without pro-

Shri Swaminarayan Mandir defaced with anti-India graffiti at Chino Hills city of San Bernardino County near LA County

viding details of the incident. India on Sunday strongly condemned the incident and called for adequate security to the places of worship in view of the incident. "We have seen reports regarding the vandalism at a Hindu temple in Chino Hills, California. We condemn such despicable acts in the strongest terms," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal in New Delhi while responding to media queries on the incident.

"We call upon the local law enforcement to take stringent action and also ensure adequate security to places of worship," Jaiswal said. PTI

SLBC tunnel mishap: First body retrieved after 16 days

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

After 16 days of intensive operations involving over a dozen national and state agencies, the body of one of the eight missing workers was retrieved from the Sri-saalam Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel at 6 pm on Sunday.

The body has been identified as Gurpreet Singh, a tunnel boring machine operator deployed by American firm Robbins. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy expressed condolences over the death of the worker. The Chief Minister announced an ex gratia of Rs 25 lakh.

Gurpreet Singh from Punjab was among the eight workers trapped in the tunnel after the roof collapse incident. Singh's mortal remains have been sent to his hometown in Punjab, according to an official statement issued.

Cadaver dogs played a significant role in locating the body, which was unearthed from the same point identified by the dog squad and Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR). One hand of the buried person surfaced late Saturday night as part of the manual excavation of



The body of one of the eight workers being taken out from the site of the collapsed SLBC tunnel in Nagarkurnool on Sunday.

the identified site. The body got buried under seven steel plates of the mangled TBM. Due to the careful handling required for the excavation work, the operation was suspended for eight hours and resumed at 8 am on Sunday.

The wreckage of the TBM parts was removed piece by piece without causing any further mutilation to the body. The body was lifted in the presence of the heads of all the rescue missions involved. It was brought out of the tunnel and shifted to the government hospital in Nagarkurnool for identification and a post-mortem examination.

Excavation work at the second point continued without any break and more

bodies are expected to be unearthed soon. The rescue teams remain committed to their mission, employing advanced technologies to detect human presence and ensure the safe retrieval of the remains.

Earlier in the day, rescue teams discovered traces of human remains in the partially collapsed tunnel. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams, supported by workers from other agencies, working on two spots, identified by the cadaver dogs and seismology studies, made a breakthrough in the operations.

The challenging conditions in the tunnel, including muck, water and heavy debris, made the rescue operation particularly difficult.

Fraudsters take to 'penny drop' phishing

T LALITH SINGH
Hyderabad

Hook, line and sinker — that's how gullible victims are falling to fraudsters' latest trick of penny drop phishing.

The modus operandi is indeed simple. Deposit a rupee, gain trust, catch the target off-guard, create confusion and before the penny drops, sweep out as much money as possible from the victim's account.

Most banks have already started alerting their account holders about the



'Penny drop' is a test transaction done by banks, financial institutions and even individuals to verify a bank account

newest fraud which basically is a twist of a regular banking practice.

Technically, 'penny drop' is a test transaction done by banks, insurance companies, financial institutions, and in several instances,

even individuals to verify a bank account.

When a big amount is to be transferred, those transacting the amount initially deposit a small amount, say Re 1 or Rs 10, and once the payee confirms the receipt,

the total amount is moved. The cyber crooks are now riding on this penny drop verification process and with a twist of deceit, emptying the bank accounts of gullible victims.

The fraud starts as a routine 'business' call from the cheat claiming to be representing a bank, insurance company, telecom agency or some government unit. Not allowing the target much time to grasp and respond intelligently, the fraudster keeps pushing a lot of chatter.

(SEE PAGE 2)



Captain Rohit Sharma and teammates celebrate after defeating New Zealand by four wickets in the ICC Champions Trophy final at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in United Arab Emirates on Sunday. — Photo: AP (REPORT PAGE 10)

MLC polls: BRS, Cong, CPI name candidates

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

The BRS has announced Dasoju Sravan, a senior leader of the party, as its candidate for the upcoming MLC elections under the MLA quota. The announcement was made by party chief K Chan-

drashekhara Rao on Sunday. The BRS president entrusted the responsibility of overseeing the nomination process to party working president KT Rama Rao.

Following Chandrashekhara Rao's directive, Sravan was set to file his nomination on Monday.

Meanwhile, the Congress declared Addanki Dayakar, Kethavath Shankar Naik and actor-turned-politician Vijayashanthi to contest the elections under MLA quota. The Communist Party of India (CPI) State unit announced Nellikanti Satyam as its candidate.

Dasoju Sravan is a prominent leader known for his role as a Telangana activist, former student leader, social worker, educator, researcher, consultant, corporate executive and politician. He serves as a senior leader in the BRS.

(REALTED REPORTS PAGE 5)

Telugu student shot at in US

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

A Telugu youth is in critical condition after being shot at multiple times in East Memphis, Tennessee, US, on Thursday. According to media reports quoting the Memphis Police Department, Mohan Sai Pothugunta was sitting in his friend's car outside an apartment building around 11.30 pm.

Police said a gunman approached him and fired two shots through the front passenger window, hitting



Mohan Sai Pothugunta

Mohan in his shoulder and upper arm. Mohan is said to have drove off immediately and reached a Valero gas station in Highland, from where he dialled 911.

First responders rushed him to hospital where he is in critical condition, media reports said. Meanwhile, responding to a post by Sujana Peram on gofundme.com, financial support is pouring in for Mohan. "I am Sujana Peram, and I'm reaching out with a heavy heart to ask for your support. My beloved brother Mohan Sai Pothugunta has been severely injured in a shooting incident in Memphis, Tennessee. This unexpected and tragic event has left our family devastated," the post read. (SEE PAGE 2)