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Allahabad lawyers protest transfer of Justice Varma



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Ukraine war: No breakthrough yet

A series of meetings of interlocutors enter into third day



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Punjabi Tadka too hot for Gujarat Giants to handle

In a nutshell

**Palestinian director freed**

**Hebron:** Israeli authorities released an Oscar-winning Palestinian director who was detained by the army after being attacked by Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank, who his wife said beat him in front of his home while filming the assault. Hamdan Ballal and the other directors of “No Other Land,” which looks at the struggles of living under Israeli occupation, had mounted the stage at the 97th Academy Awards in Los Angeles earlier this month when it won the award for best documentary film. Ballal had bruises on his face and blood on his clothes.

**India, China hold talks**

**New Delhi:** India and China on Tuesday held a fresh edition of diplomatic dialogue in Beijing, focusing on ensuring effective border management and early resumption of cross-border cooperation and exchanges including on trans-border rivers and Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra. In the meeting of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination, the two sides explored various measures and proposals to give effect to the decisions taken during talks between NSA Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Special Representatives dialogue in December.

**New I-T Bill in monsoon session**

**New Delhi:** The new Income Tax Bill will be taken up for discussion in the monsoon session of Parliament, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday. Replying to the discussions on the Finance Bill 2025 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said the new income tax bill, which was introduced in the House on February 13, is currently being vetted by the Select Committee. The Select Committee has been mandated to submit its report by the first day of the next session of Parliament. “...we will take it (new income tax bill) up in the monsoon session,” Sitharaman said.

**Ramzan Timings**

**Iftar**

Wednesday 6:34 PM

**Saher**

Thursday 4:54 AM

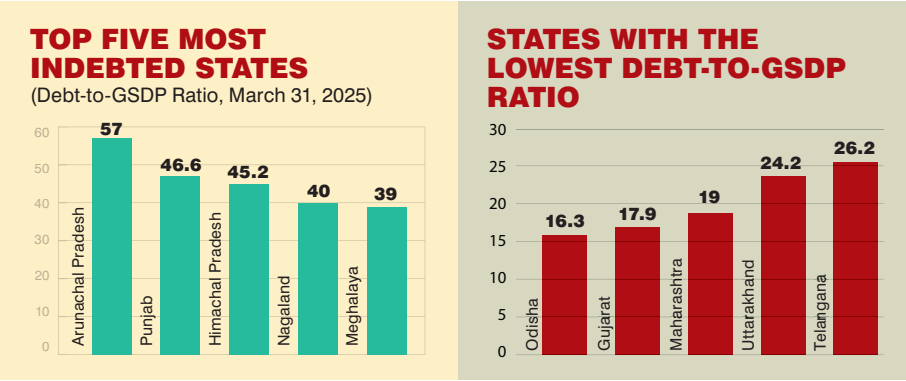
## Centre lays bare Cong claims on debts

**BRS left debt of Rs 3.64 lakh crore not Rs 7 lakh crore: MoS**

STATE BUREAU  
HYDERABAD

Debunking the claims of the Congress government on Telangana’s debt burden under the previous BRS regime, the Central government on Tuesday made it clear that Telangana’s total outstanding debt stood at Rs 4.42 lakh crore as of March 31, 2025. The State is ranked among the least indebted States in India.

Telangana’s debt-to-Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) ratio is only 26.2 per cent, making it the fifth lowest in the country. The State ranks 24th out of 28 States in terms of debt burden. The data, presented in the Lok Sabha by union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary in response to a question by Congress MP Manish Tewari, also exposes the false propaganda from the ruling Congress in Telangana. Chaudhary gave the answers quoting the Reserve Bank of India’s ‘State Finances: A Study of Budgets’ and other



information provided by the RBI. This directly contradicts the claims made by both the Congress and the BJP, which had accused the former BRS government of pushing the State’s debt to around Rs.7 lakh crore. As admitted by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy in the Assembly itself, the Congress government has obtained loans to the tune of a staggering Rs.158 lakh crore loan in just 15 months. Even if the off-budget borrowings of around Rs 78,000 crore during the Congress regime are excluded, the outstanding

debt of Telangana when BRS demitted office was around Rs 3.64 lakh crore, which is what the BRS has been stating all along.

Further, the Centre puts Telangana in a favourable financial position compared to States like Arunachal Pradesh (57 per cent), Punjab (46.6 per cent), and Himachal Pradesh (45.2 per cent), which have highest debt-to-GSDP ratios. Even larger States like Tamil Nadu (30.3 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (31.8 per cent) have a heavier debt burden than Telangana, thus prov-

ing the Congress claims of BRS leaving the State in a debt-trap are false.

Incidentally, two other Congress-ruled States - Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka (26.5 per cent) are ranked above Telangana in terms of debt-to-GSDP ratio.

In terms of outstanding liabilities, Tamil Nadu tops the list with Rs 9,55,691 crore, followed by Uttar Pradesh (Rs 8,57,844 crore) and Maharashtra (Rs 8,12,068 crore). Telangana ranks 12th with outstanding liabilities amounting to Rs 4,42,298 crore.

## MLAs case: Speaker’s delay irks apex court

**Says don’t practice delaying tactics**

STATE BUREAU  
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday took a stern view of the Telangana Assembly Speaker’s delay in deciding disqualification petitions against 10 MLAs who defected from the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) to the ruling Congress. The matter has been adjourned to next Wednesday.

A Bench comprising Justices BR Gavai and AG Masih questioned the prolonged inaction.

“As on today, how much time has passed since the first application? It appears to be an year. Why has not the Speaker’s office set a deadline for deciding these petitions?” Justice Gavai asked.

Senior Advocate Aryama Sundaram, representing BRS MLA P Kaushik Reddy, argued that despite a High Court order in September 2024 directing the Speaker to fix a hearing schedule within four weeks, no notice was issued until January this year.

He stated that one of the



The Supreme Court took up the disqualification petitions against 10 MLAs who defected from the BRS to Congress, on Tuesday.

defected MLAs even contested the Lok Sabha polls on a Congress ticket and lost but continues to hold his MLA position under BRS. Senior Advocate D Seshadri Naidu also argued on behalf of the petitioners.

“Only after the Supreme Court’s earlier observations did the Speaker issue notices on February 13, giving the defected MLAs three weeks to respond. However, even after the deadline passed, there is no clarity on

the status of disqualification petitions,” he said.

On time being sought on the respondents’ side to respond, Justice Gavai cautioned, “Don’t practice delaying tactics in this court.” The Bench also questioned whether a constitutional court could direct a Speaker to act within a specific timeline, to which Sundaram asserted, “The Constitution stands above all of us. It is the Court’s duty to ensure its mandate is followed.”

## Cabinet expansion: Some Ministers under scanner

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

After a year-long dilly-dallying, the Congress high command has finally approved expansion of the Telangana Cabinet.

In the initial phase, four new Ministers will be inducted, with two additional positions to be filled later. The posts of Deputy Speaker and Chief Whip are also set to be assigned. The new Ministers are likely to be inducted in the first week of April, according to party sources.

The Cabinet reshuffle accompanying the expansion has sparked discussions, with concerns raised about the performance of certain senior Ministers. Some Ministers may lose portfolios linked to departments with poor results, particularly those affecting State finances. The focus is on assigning key responsibilities to dedicated Ministers to improve governance.

Chief Minister A Revanth

**The exercise in April will see four new Ministers inducted; posts of Dy Speaker and Chief Whip are also to be assigned**

Reddy is reportedly willing to relinquish the Home portfolio but is keen on retaining the Municipal Administration and Urban Development portfolio.

Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy is reportedly seeking to shed the Irrigation portfolio, while D Sridhar Babu is said to be interested in Education. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka is said to be against any changes to his current responsibilities. Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy may have to pass on two of the three departments- Revenue, Housing and Information and Public Relations, the sources hinted. (SEE PAGE 2)

## Another Sircilla weaver ends life

STATE BUREAU  
Rajanna-Sircilla

Unable to overcome a deepening financial crisis, a powerloom weaver Parikipelli Raju (55) died by suicide in Sircilla on Monday.

A resident of Indiramma Colony, Raju consumed a bathroom cleaning acid in his home on Monday. Family members shifted him to the Sircilla government hospital where he breathed his last while undergoing treatment on Tuesday. He was survived by his wife Padma, son Rakesh and two daughters.

According to the neighbours, Raju, who used to run the family by working on powerlooms, had performed the marriages of both daughters and son, but in the process, incurred debts of about Rs.6 lakh. However, Raju was left without work during the last few months. Unable to run the family and clear his debts, he got addicted to liquor consumption and was depressed.

(SEE PAGE 2)

### FROM THE WILD



Deer gather on a glade in a forest of the Taunus region near Frankfurt, Germany on Tuesday. — Photo: AP

## Top naxal among 3 killed in encounter

DANTEWADA

A Naxalite carrying a reward of Rs 25 lakh on his head was among three ultras killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh’s Dantewada district on Tuesday, police said. The gunfight took place at

around 8 am in a forest along the border of Dantewada and Bijapur districts when a team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai said.

Personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Bastar Fighters,

both units of the state police, were involved in the operation launched on the basis of inputs about the presence of Maoists in forests of Girsapara, Nelgoda, Bodga and Ikeli villages under Geedam police station limits, he said. After the exchange of fire stopped, bodies of three

male Naxalites were recovered from the site. Prima facie, one of the three Naxalites killed in the gunfight, identified as Sudhir alias Sudhakar alias Murli, resident of Warangal, was active as a member of Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee. PTI

## WhatsApp accounts blocked

NEW DELHI

The “Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre” (I4C) set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs has identified and blocked more than 83,668 WhatsApp accounts and 3,962 Skype IDs used for Digital Arrest, the Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

Apart from this, over 7.81 lakh SIM cards and 2,08,469 IMEIs have been blocked by the Government after receiving police complaints, union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said in a written reply.

## Online betting claims another life

CITY BUREAU  
Hyderabad

A 25-year-old man died by suicide on the railway tracks after allegedly losing money on online betting games at Gowdavally, Medchal on Tuesday.

Identified as Somesh, a resident of Gundlapochampally, developed an addiction to online games and gradually started using online betting apps. Driven by his addiction, he borrowed huge money from his friends, which he failed to

pay back. “He kept borrowing money to clear the debts taken to cover losses from online betting games but was unable to repay it. As a result, he was under pressure mentally,” police officials said.

For the past several days, Somesh was visibly upset. Despite his family’s intervention and efforts to ease his mental pressure, the young man jumped in front of a running train at Gowdavally. The Government Railway Police booked a case and are investigating.

## Man beaten-up, wife gang-raped

STATE BUREAU  
Sangareddy

Unidentified persons allegedly thrashed a man and raped his wife at Mamidipally cross road in Kandi mandal in the early hours of Tuesday.

The woman and her husband had got down from an auto-rickshaw on NH-65 at 4 am near Tilottam Gardens. While they were proceeding towards Mamidipally village, some unidentified persons stopped them. When the husband tried to protect his wife, they thrashed him and raped her.

## SLBC tragedy: Second body recovered

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

Rescue operations at the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel were overshadowed by sorrow on Tuesday as one more body was unearthed from debris, bringing the total recovered to two. The body was found approximately 50 metres from the conveyor belt during excavation efforts carried out with the help of a mini excavator. Over a month has passed since the tunnel’s roof collapsed, trapping eight workers inside on February 22.

Rescue teams acted swiftly to retrieve the body and transported it to the Nagarkurnool Government Hospital for further procedures, including a post-mortem. Officials later iden-



Rescue personnel recovered one more body from the Srisailem Left Bank Canal tunnel collapse site, on Tuesday.

tified the deceased as Manoj Kumar (51), an engineer employed by Jaiprakash Associates. Manoj’s body will now be sent to his native village, Bangar Mau in Unnao district of Uttar Pradesh. District Collector Santosh

Badavat announced that a three-member team, comprising a revenue officer, a police officer, and a Health Department officer, would accompany the body to ensure its safe handover to the family. As directed by Chief

Minister A Revanth Reddy, an ex-gratia of Rs 25 lakh will be provided to Manoj Kumar’s family as a measure of support.

Officials said the rescue efforts would remain focused on locating the six workers still missing in the collapsed 14-kilometre tunnel. Authorities have deployed four excavators to hasten the removal of debris. Central and State government agencies are collaborating closely, with the pace of operations being stepped up. Efforts are underway to meet the tentative April 10 deadline for completing the rescue operations.

On February 22, the SLBC tunnel collapse initially trapped eight workers while approximately 50 others managed to escape.