



NATION | PAGE 07

### Will protect Waqf properties, says Mamata



BUSINESS | PAGE 08

### India to procure 26 Rafale jets from France for Navy

To be deployed on board aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, cost around Rs 64,000 crore



SPORT | PAGE 10

### Sai's scintillating 82 takes Gujarat Titans home

#### In a nutshell

#### Putin invites Modi for victory rally

**MOSCOW:** Russia has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the May 9 celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of victory over Germany in World War II, Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko has said. Moscow is expecting the Indian Prime Minister at the May 9 parade. The invitation has already been sent and the visit is being worked out, Rudenko was quoted as saying by the state-run Tass news agency. "It's being worked out..."

#### Germany to get new government

**BERLIN:** German election winner Friedrich Merz sealed a deal on Wednesday to form a new government that aims to spur economic growth, ramp up defence spending, take a tougher approach to migration and catch up on long-neglected modernisation. The agreement paves the way for new leadership in the 27-nation European Union's most populous member, which has Europe's biggest economy. It follows months of negotiations.

#### AICC meet: Rahul slams Waqf Act

**AHMEDABAD:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday termed the Waqf (Amendment) Act as "anti-Constitution" and an attack on the freedom of religion, warning that the BJP-RSS will soon go after the rights of other minorities like Sikhs and Christians. Addressing the AICC session on the banks of Sabarmati river here, he also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his "silence" on imposition of tariffs by the US and asked where he was hiding.

#### Manipur: Curfew in some areas

**IMPHAL:** Curfew has been imposed in parts of Churachandpur district of Manipur in view of tension over hoisting community flags in a "disputed area" between two villages inhabited by different tribes, a notification said. Tension erupted between Zomi and Hmar tribes on Tuesday after community flags were raised in the "disputed area" between V Munhoih and Rengkai villages in the Churachandpur sub-division. Curfew was imposed in the two villages and in entire Kangvai.

# 'Deemed forest' tag for KGF can be crucial

Such a move could radically alter the legal and ecological landscape of Hyderabad's most hotly contested land

PS DILEEP  
HYDERABAD

As members of the Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) prepare to visit Kancharla Gachibowli on Thursday, a critical question looms large.

Is this 400-acre green patch a 'forest' in the eyes of the law? If yes, it could radically alter the legal and ecological landscape of Hyderabad's current most hotly contested land.

The CEC, comprising Chandraprakash Goyal (former IG of Forests) and Sunil Limaye (former Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra), are scheduled to visit the site on Thursday and hold meetings with the State officials. Their report, due by April 16, will be central to the Supreme Court's final decision on the ongoing deforestation and development activities at the site.

#### What is a forest — legally and scientifically?

In India, the definition of 'forest' is not confined to officially notified reserved or protected forests. As per the Supreme Court's judgment in the TN Godavarman Thirumulpad vs union of India (1996) among others, reaffirmed multiple times since — any land recorded as forest in any government record, or appearing to be forest by characteristics, irrespective of ownership, is to be treated as deemed forest and falls under the purview of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Separately, the Government of India is a signatory of the 9-Kyoto Protocol at



Kancharla Gachibowli is home to over 72 tree species, including rare ones such as Marking Nut Tree, over 230 species of birds and 32 reptiles. — Photo: Raghu Ghanapuram

## Violation of environmental, wildlife laws

HYDERABAD

In its hurry to clear the green cover, the Congress government appears to have violated multiple laws. Under the Telangana Forest Act, 1967, tree felling without permission can attract imprisonment (three months to one year) and fines.

The Kancharla Gachibowli land is an abode for 27 species, including birds and reptiles, under Sched-

ule-1 of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972, that receive the highest level of legal protection in India. Any violation of the law, including hunting and habitat destruction, would attract imprisonment of three-seven years and a fine of Rs 25,000-Rs 50,000 or both.

Shockingly, the tree felling was carried out by the Congress government in a haste, in utter violation of the GO 23 (2017). The

orders issued by the then K Chandrashekhara Rao government mandates prior tree enumeration and permission under TS-iPASS and WALTA. According to the GO, those intending to fell trees on government or private land for establishing new industries or to convert the land use for industrial purposes, must apply under TS-iPASS for necessary approvals.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests

and Head of Forest Force will get the trees enumerated falling in the Industrial Local Authority (ILA) based on the report received from the Industry department (TGIIC). If the proposed area for felling of trees is more than 2 hectares, it will be categorised as High Risk Category. Forest officials should carry out the test check of 10 per cent of the trees in the Enumeration List. (SEE PAGE 2)

Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Any non-forestry use of this land would require prior approval from the union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Further, violations could attract criminal and civil liabilities on the implementing agencies.

#### What is at stake for the Congress government?

The TGIIC had mortgaged the land to raise Rs 10,000 crore through off-budget borrowing, intending to auction it for Rs 30,000 crore. If declared a forest, the land can no longer be auctioned — triggering a fiscal crisis for the Congress government. However, it would come as a welcoming relief for the UoH students, environmentalists and also the people of Hyderabad. The SC final ruling, expected after April 16, may well redefine the future of urban ecology in Telangana.

## Spotted deer mauled to death on UoH campus

CITY BUREAU  
Hyderabad

A spotted deer was reportedly found mauled to death on the UoH campus on Wednesday. This is the third such death of a deer reported on the campus within a span of one week happening after the State government cleared some part of the Kancharla Gachibowli land, adjoining the UoH campus, which has a large number of spotted deer and other animals and birds. "It is shameful that the Congress party claims there are no deer and animals in Kancharla Gachibowli, and all information is AI generated," said ABVP HCU president K Balakrishna. (SEE PAGE 2)

## Young India Police School fee comes as a shocker

YUVRAJ AKULA  
Hyderabad

Several parents, who are keen on joining their wards in the Young India Police School, slated for launch by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy here on Thursday, for an affordable and holistic education, have expressed their shock and concerns over the exorbitant fee structure.

As per the information shared by the parents, the school, a State government initiative, has set a staggering Rs 20,000 as admission fee for students joining under the non-police category, and SPs and higher ranks (uniform personnel category 4) for Classes I-V for the 2025-26 academic

**Rs 1.6 lakh as tuition fee for Classes I-III, Rs 1.75 lakh for Classes IV and V fixed for students under non-police category**

year.

While the uniformed personnel — SIs, Inspectors, DSPs and Additional SPs — will be charged Rs 10,000 towards admission fee, the children of martyrs (uniform personnel category-1) have an admission fee of Rs 2,000. This has left several parents aghast.

The parents have pointed out that this admission fee comes in stark contrast to

the rules laid down in the GO MS 91, which stipulates that application and registration fee should not exceed Rs 100 and Rs 500, respectively.

The order that governs private schools states that refundable non-interest bearing caution deposit should not go beyond Rs 5,000. It also states that no other fee by any name should be charged as a one-time measure.

Questioning rationale behind fixing the high admission fee by the Young India Police Educational Society, the parents have pointed out that the welfare educational institutions societies — Social, Tribal and BC Welfare — extend free education to children. (SEE PAGE 2)

## NIA to take custody of Tahawwur Rana

NEW DELHI

After the US Supreme Court rejected Tahawwur Rana's petition to stop his extradition to India, he is slated to land in the country on Wednesday, and the NIA is taking his custody.

Sources said the National Investigation Agency (NIA) will bring the 26/11 mastermind, Tahawwur Rana, to India. It was unclear whether he would be brought to Delhi or Mumbai. However, sources said he is likely to land in Mumbai, where the 26/11 plan was executed. They also said he would spend the initial few weeks in NIA custody. He is being brought to India to face legal consequences for his role in the 2008 attacks. IANS

## China hits back with 84% tariff on US

### Launches additional suit at WTO, places further curbs on trade with Chinese firms

BANGKOK

China again vowed to "fight to the end" on Wednesday in an escalating trade war with the US as it announced it would raise tariffs on American goods to 84 per cent from Thursday. Beijing also added an array of counter-measures after US President Donald Trump raised the total tariff on imports from China to 104 per cent. Beijing said it was launching an additional suit against the US at the World Trade Organization and placed further restrictions on US companies' trade with Chinese companies.

"If the US insists on further escalating its economic and trade restrictions, China has the firm will and abundant means to take necessary counter-measures and fight to the end," the Ministry of Commerce wrote in a statement introducing its white paper on trade with the US.

The government declined to say whether it would negotiate with the White House, as many other countries have started doing. On Friday, China announced a 34 per cent tariff on all goods imported from the US, export controls on rare earth minerals, and a slew of other measures in response to Trump's Liberation Day tariffs. (SEE PAGES 2, 8)



## 'World leaders dying to make trade deals'

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump claimed world leaders were "dying to make a deal" with the US and would do anything to secure a pact on tariffs. "I am telling you, these countries are calling us up, kissing my a\*\*," he said during a speech at the National Republican Congressional Committee dinner. "They are dying to make a deal. 'Please, please sir, make a deal. I'll do anything sir'." "We're going to tariff our pharmaceuticals and once we do that they're going to come rushing back into our country because we're the big market," he said. "We're going to be announcing a major tariff on pharmaceuticals....," he said. PTI

### EU imposes new tariffs on US

**BRUSSELS:** European Union-member States have voted to approve retaliatory tariffs on \$23 billion in goods in response to US President Donald Trump's 25 per cent tariffs on imported steel and aluminum. The EU Executive Commission didn't immediately provide a list of the goods on Wednesday. Members of the 27-country bloc repeated their preference for a negotiated deal to settle trade issues: "The EU considers US tariffs unjustified and damaging, causing economic harm to both sides." AP

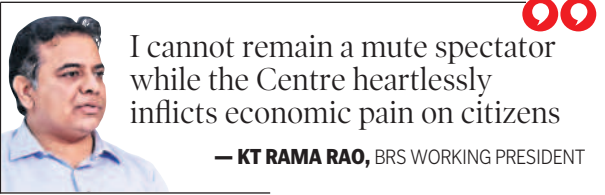
## KTR demands rollback of fuel, LPG price hike

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

Strongly opposing the Centre's decision to hike the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG cylinder, BRS working president KT Rama Rao demanded an immediate rollback of the price hikes, calling them a cruel assault on the common man and betrayal of public trust.

He stated that the Centre was forcing crores of Indians to suffer in silence and bleeding their pockets dry.

He also placed four other demands — reduction of Central excise duties and removal of cesses, transparent



I cannot remain a mute spectator while the Centre heartlessly inflicts economic pain on citizens

— KT RAMA RAO, BRS WORKING PRESIDENT

fuel pricing linked to global crude rates, white paper on fuel taxation and revenue sharing, and return to genuine cooperative federalism. "As the BRS working president and a representative of the people of Telangana, I cannot remain a mute spectator while the Union government heartlessly inflicts economic pain

on the citizens of this nation," he said.

In a strongly worded letter to Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Rama Rao said the Centre's fuel pricing policies were exploitative and fiscally unjust. He said India stands as one of the most expensive countries in the world for fuel. (SEE PAGE 3)

## Home, auto loans to get cheaper

MUMBAI

Home, auto and other loans are likely to cost less as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut interest rates on Wednesday for a second consecutive time and signalled more easing to come as it sought to bolster the economy that is facing further pressure from damaging US tariffs.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), consisting of three central bank members and an equal number of external members, voted unanimously to cut the repurchase or repo rate by 25 basis points to 6 per

cent. It had reduced rates by an equal measure in February — the first cut since May 2020. The repo rate is the rate at which the RBI lends money to banks to meet their short-term funding needs. With a 25 bps cut in the repo rate, all external benchmark lending rates (EBLR) linked to it will come down. And if the banks fully pass on this to the borrowers, equated monthly instalments (EMIs) on home, auto and personal loans will decline by 25 bps. The move lowers borrowing costs to the lowest level since November 2022. (REPORT PAGE 8)