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**Banu Mushtaq bags Booker Prize for 'Heart Lamp'**



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**Vladimir Putin visits Russia's Kursk region**

Russia reclaimed the region from Ukrainian forces last month



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**Suryakumar's blistering 73 puts MI in playoffs**

## In a nutshell

### Another Pak official expelled

**NEW DELHI:** India on Wednesday evening declared a Pakistani official, working at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, as "persona non grata" for indulging in activities not in keeping with his official status in the country. The official has been asked to leave India within 24 hours, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) revealed. "Charge d'Affaires, Pakistan High Commission, was issued a demarche to this effect," read a statement issued by the MEA. PTI

### Professor gets interim bail

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted interim bail to Ashoka University professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad, arrested for his contentious social media posts on Operation Sindoor, but refused to stay the investigation against him. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotisar Singh directed the Haryana DGP to constitute a three-member special investigation team (SIT) headed by an IG rank officer to probe the case. (SEE PAGE 7)

### Indian teams begin outreach

**New Delhi:** India on Wednesday mounted a spirited campaign to highlight its views on terrorism emanating from Pakistan as multi-party delegations started reaching out to world capitals. Delegations led by JD(U) MP Sanjay Jha and Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde left for Japan and the UAE, respectively, to highlight Pakistan's policies of patronising terror outfits over past few decades. "Zero tolerance against terrorism," the MEA said in social media post.

### Flight makes emergency landing

**Srinagar:** A Srinagar-bound IndiGo flight from Delhi with more than 220 people on board experienced turbulence on Wednesday due to inclement weather, prompting the pilot to report the "emergency" to air traffic control at Srinagar. The aircraft later landed safely here and has been grounded. Videos of turbulence have emerged on social media in which panic-stricken passengers could be heard making religious supplications as the plane swayed.

## Toddler dies of asphyxiation

STATE BUREAU  
Nirmal

A toddler died due to asphyxiation when her alcoholic father allegedly slept on her at Subhashnagar in Khanapur on Tuesday. The father was booked and arrested on Wednesday. Khanapur Sub-Inspector Rahul Gaikwad said that an unnamed 28-day-old baby girl, wrapped in a cloth, died as she was unable to breathe after her father, who was in an inebriated condition, rolled sideways and slept on her on Monday night. The accused person, Allakunta Shekhar realized that the baby died when she did not cry nor move after

BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Wednesday came down heavily on the Congress and BJP for colluding to portray the Kaleshwaram project as a failed initiative by targeting former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao. He called the notices issued to Chandrashekhara Rao part of a political conspiracy to deflect public attention from failures to implement poll promises.

"The Congress government, unable to govern and deliver on its poll promises, has been playing dramas to deflect attention. Notices to Chandrashekhara Rao in the name of the Kaleshwaram Commission are part of this larger script. No matter how many notices are issued, they will be reduced to mere

### Calls out Revanth's failure on SLBC tragedy

**HYDERABAD:** BRS working president KT Rama Rao called out Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy over Congress' failure to retrieve the bodies of workers trapped in the SLBC tunnel since it collapsed on February 22. Calling it a tragic reminder of the incompetence of the Congress, he blamed the government for "doing next to zilch" despite big statements and questionable deadlines. "In a fully functional government under a competent leader, you could have brought back humans from Mars in three months."



(SEE PAGE 2)

paper. Truth and justice will prevail," he asserted.

Speaking to mediapersons after attending a wedding in Nalgonda on Wednesday, Rama Rao said the entire administration had collapsed under the Congress government's 17-month rule, marked by inaction, false promises and brazen cor-

ruption. He pointed to contractors protesting at the Deputy Chief Minister's chamber inside the Secretariat as evidence of administrative collapse.

"The promised Praja Palana in Telangana has turned into a 'Percentage Palana'. Even Congress MLAs and Ministers are ad-

mitting that no file moves without paying 20-30 per cent commissions," he said.

The BRS working president also lashed out at the Congress for its inaction following multiple infrastructure failures including the SLBC tunnel collapse, which left bodies unrecovered even after three months. He questioned the lack of action over the Sunkishala retaining wall collapse, the Vattampump house submerision and repeated breaches in the Peddavagu project.

"Thousands of crores in public funds have gone down the drain, and not a single inquiry has been launched. What is stopping them from acting?" he asked.

Rama Rao warned that delaying the implementation of the six guarantees under the pretext of inquiries would not be tolerated. (SEE PAGE 2)

### Pak extends airspace ban for Indian flights

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has decided to extend the closure of its airspace for Indian flights by another month, a media report said on Wednesday.

Pakistan banned its airspace for India last month after steps taken by New Delhi in the wake of the Pahalgaon attack on April 22. The ban was imposed for a month until May 23, as under ICAO rules, curbs cannot be imposed for more than one month. PTI

## Top Maoist among 27 naxals gunned down

**Killing of CPI-Maoist general secretary Nambala Keshav Rao a big setback for naxals**

RAIPUR

In a significant victory against left-wing extremism, security forces killed 27 naxalites, including Nambala Keshav Rao, alias Basavaraju, the general secretary of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist), in an encounter in Chhattisgarh on Wednesday.

The operation, conducted in the dense forests of Abujhmad, marks a historic milestone in the ongoing battle against naxal insurgency. The decisive encounter took place on Wednesday, following intelligence inputs regarding the presence of Basavaraju and other senior Maoist cadres in the region, police officials confirmed.

Tragically, one DRG team member was martyred while bravely confronting the insurgents. His mortal remains are being transported to the District Headquarters in Narayanpur. Several other personnel sustained injuries during the encounter but have received immediate medical attention and are reported to be out of danger. Joint teams of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) from Narayanpur, Dantewada, Bijapur, and Kondagaon were deployed for the mission.

As the forces advanced through the rugged terrain, Maoist insurgents opened indiscriminate fire, prompting a fierce retaliation from the security personnel, they said. After an intense exchange of gunfire, the forces successfully eliminated 27 Maoists, including



**Proud of our forces for this remarkable success. Our Government is committed to eliminating the menace of Maoism and ensuring a life of peace and progress for our people**

— NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER



**A landmark achievement in the battle to eliminate Naxalism. Our security forces have neutralised 27 dreaded Maoists, including Basavaraju, the backbone of the Naxal movement**

— AMIT SHAH, UNION HOME MINISTER

Basavaraju. A substantial cache of weapons, including AK-47 rifles, SLRs, INSAS rifles, carbines, and other arms and ammunition, was recovered from the site.

Preliminary inspections suggest that several other senior Maoist leaders were either killed or seriously injured during the operation. Basavaraju, aged approximately 70, was a resident of Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh, said the police officials.

He held multiple key positions within the CPI (Maoist), serving as General

Secretary, Chief of the Central Military Commission, Polit Bureau Member, and Central Committee Member. His leadership played a crucial role in orchestrating Maoist activities across various regions, the official said.

Despite the challenging geographical conditions, security forces remain committed to eradicating the Naxal menace. Search operations continue in the surrounding jungle areas to locate any injured or absconding Maoist cadres. (SEE PAGES 2, 7)

## Three youths killed in head-on collision

CITY BUREAU  
Hyderabad

Three youths died and another was injured in a head-on collision between a car and a truck at Kuntloor village in Hayathnagar on the city outskirts on Wednesday morning.

The victims were identified as P Chandrasena Reddy (24), Chunchu Trinadh Reddy (24) and Chunchu Varshith Reddy (23), all students of a private college. The injured person is A Pawan Kalyan Reddy (24). All residents of Kunt-

loor. As per available information, the incident occurred at 6am, when the youths who were proceeding in a car from Pasumamla village towards Kuntloor and the truck was proceeding from Kuntloor towards Pasumamla.

On reaching near Narayana College in Kuntloor, the car driver missed to notice a curve and negotiate and collided head-on with the truck which was coming in the opposite direction. The three suffered grievous injuries and died on the spot. (SEE PAGE 2)

### Lufthansa flight escapes mishap, lands at RGIA

CITY BUREAU  
Hyderabad

An aircraft narrowly escaped a mishap after the pilot, who noticed a malfunction shortly after take-off, made an emergency landing at RGIA on Wednesday. A Lufthansa Airlines flight bound for Frankfurt, Germany, departed from RGIA in the morning with about 160 passengers on board. However, shortly after the aircraft took off, the pilot detected a technical issue with the landing gear.

The pilot then immediately alerted the ATC. A clearance was given and the flight was rerouted back to the airport.



BSF personnel during the retreat ceremony at the Attari-Wagah border near Amritsar on Wednesday. The retreat ceremony resumes about two weeks after it was stopped following Operation Sindoor. — Photo: PTI

## Waqf concept not essential to Islam: Centre

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday defended the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 in the Supreme Court and said though waqf was an Islamic concept, it was not an essential part of Islam.

Arguing before Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said, "Waqf is an Islamic concept. But it is not an essential part of Islam. Waqf is nothing but just

charity in Islam." "Charity is recognised in every religion, and it cannot be regarded as an essential tenet of any religion," he said. Earlier in the day, Mehta asserted nobody could claim right over public land by using waqf by user principle which was a statutory right and the law could take it away.

"Waqf by user" refers to a concept where a property is recognised as waqf based on its long-term use for religious or charitable purposes, even without formal

**Charity is recognised in every religion, and it cannot be regarded as an essential tenet of any religion, says Solicitor General**

documentation.

Responding to the challenge against the validity of the 2025 law, Mehta argued the amended law dealt with the secular aspects of waqf

and activities that were non-essential to Islam.

Mehta said the "waqf by user" concept did not permit "wholesale takeover of waqf properties" by the state as alleged. "Waqf by user is not a fundamental right, it is a creature of statute, and what the legislature creates, it can also take away," he said.

**Purpose of law**

Any stay of the provision on abolition of unregistered "waqf by user" properties would defeat the pur-

pose of the law which has been enacted to remedy the mischief like usurpation of government land, Mehta added.

"The Centre is the custodian of properties on behalf of 14 crore citizens," he said, "and nobody has the right over government land." Mehta said, "There is a Supreme Court judgment which says the government can save the property if it belongs to the government and has been declared as waqf." PTI