

STATE

TBGKS will contest Singareni polls, says Kavitha

page 5

NATION

Sanjay Singh's bail plea dismissed

page 8

WORLD

Burglars targeting Indian-Americans in Washington: Cops

page 9



3 found dead near Poonch

NATION | PAGE 07

Niger: France pulls out troops

WORLD | PAGE 09



India leads by 157 runs

SPORT | PAGE 10



WFI row: Bajrang returns Padma Shri

Olympic medallist leaves award on pavement at Kartavya Path

PTI
NEW DELHI
There seems to be no end to controversies in Indian wrestling as Olympic medallist grappler Bajrang Punia on Friday returned his Padma Shri award to the government in protest against the election of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh loyalist Sanjay Singh as the president of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI).

On Thursday, Sanjay Singh was elected as the president of the WFI after the panel led by the close aide of Brij Bhushan won 13 of the 15 posts. The wrestlers had demanded that no close associate of Brij Bhushan should enter the WFI.

Bajrang was conferred with the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian honour in the country, in 2019 after a consistent run on the mat that saw him win laurels at top international events. He posted a letter on X after making an attempt to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Parliament but was stopped at Kartavya Path by



Wrestler Bajrang Punia holds his Padma Shri award near Kartavya Path in New Delhi on Friday. — Photo: PTI

the Delhi Police. The Tokyo Games bronze winner placed the Padma Shri on the letter he had written to the Prime Minister, and put it on the pavement.

"I had received this honour from the government but I feel despite this honour I could not protect the honour of the daughters of this country, so I do not deserve

to keep this award," Bajrang said. "The administration is right in saying that I have not taken prior permission to meet the PM, so I could not meet him. I have kept the Padma Shri here on top of the letter because I can not put it on the floor," he said adding that he will not take it back home.

Asked what his message to the Prime Minister was, Bajrang said, "If the voice of women wrestlers has not yet reached you and if it reaches you in future please help them in getting justice." Later, Bajrang posted his letter on X with a message, "I am returning my Padma Shri award to the Prime Minister. This is just my letter. This is my statement."

The 29-year-old world championship medallist wrote: "Dear PM Ji, hope your health is well. You must be busy in many work but I am writing this to draw your attention to the wrestlers of the country. I too joined their protest. The protest stopped after the government promised strong action." (SEE PAGE 2)

Marginal rise in Hyd crime rate

CITY BUREAU
Hyderabad

Barring an increase in cybercrimes and crimes against women, the crime rate in Hyderabad in 2023 remained nearly identical to last year. A total of 24,821 cases were registered this year compared to 21,795 last year.

Hyderabad Police Commissioner K Sreenivasa Reddy said the increase in cybercrimes was a global phenomenon and due to the rise in usage of the internet, cybercrimes cases were increasing all over. The increase in crimes against women, he said, was because the means of report-



Hyderabad Police Commissioner K Sreenivasa Reddy releasing the annual report in the city on Friday. — Photo: Surya Sridhar

ing such crimes have multiplied. "Instant registration of cases is done. Zero FIR concepts are also being implemented. So there is an increase in the number of cases registered in the city," the Commissioner said. He

said the department had succeeded in the establishment of new police stations to check crime rate in the city. Also, some special teams were formed for crime prevention and detection. (SEE PAGES 2, 3)

Baby tests Covid +ve at Niloufer

CITY BUREAU
Hyderabad

A 14-month-old baby boy from Nampally, admitted to Niloufer Hospital, tested positive for Covid-19.

The child was admitted with typical symptoms of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection including fever, cough, cold and breathlessness. Due to symptoms, the doctors decided to conduct an RTPCR test in which the child tested positive. Meanwhile, 22 cases of Covid sub-variant JN.1 have been detected in the country till Thursday. (SEE PAGE 2)

Shades Of Dusk



GOLDEN HUES: Migratory birds during sunset at the Maguri Motapung Beel lake in Tinsukia district of Assam on Friday. — Photo: AFP

Karnataka lifts ban on hijab

MYSURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said the restrictions on wearing hijab (headscarf) in educational institutions in the State will be lifted from Saturday, saying the choice of dress and food is personal and no one should interfere in it.

Speaking at the inauguration of three police stations in Nanjangud in Mysuru district, the Chief Minister said no one should indulge in vote bank politics.

Lashing out at the BJP, Siddaramaiah said, "They say 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas' but sidelining those wearing caps, burqa and sporting beard. Is this what they mean?" When someone in the crowd asked about restrictions on wearing hijab, the CM said, "No

(restrictions). You can wear Hijab. I have instructed (the officials) that there will be no restriction from tomorrow onwards. You can wear and eat whatever you want. It's up to you." "... your choices are yours and my choices are mine. It's that simple," he said.

"I wear dhoti and kurta, and you wear pant and shirt. It's your choice. What's wrong in this?" he asked. Affirming that the Congress party does not indulge in politics for votes, he said, "Congress government came to power to protect the rights of the poor, BCs, Dalits and minorities. There is no question of compromising on this." Referring to the five guarantees, he said the benefits are available to people irrespective of their caste, religion and even "political ideology." PTI

Six killed in two separate accidents

STATE BUREAU
Hanamkonda

Six people were killed in two separate incidents on Friday. In the first incident, four people were killed and three others injured when the car in which they were travelling in collided head-on with a lorry at Penchikalpet crossroad on the Hanamkonda-Karimnagar National Highway near Elkaturthy on Friday.

The deceased were identified as Manthana Shankar (60), Kantaiah (72), Bharat (29), and Vandana (16). The impact was such that, death was instant for them. Three others, who sustained severe injuries, were rushed to MGM Hospital and later to a local private hospital. The victims, belonging to two families, were on their way to Vemulawada temple when the incident occurred. (SEE PAGE 2)

BRS' white paper to counter Cong

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

Countering the Congress government's white paper on the State's finances and power sector in the Assembly, the BRS is all set to release its white paper titled 'Sweda Patram' (Sweat Paper) on Telangana's nine-and-half years of progress under the K Chandrababoo Naidu government. Party working president KT Rama Rao will release it at the Telangana Bhavan at 11 am on Saturday.

Taking to social media, Rama Rao termed Telangana's progress in the last nine-and-half years as a

golden chapter in the nation's history. The white paper will reflect the real situation prevailing in Telangana with all statistics and facts. "Not just the debts, the white paper will reveal the wealth created for Telangana," he said.

Further, he stated that the party will not tolerate tarnishing the reputation of Telangana, which was built with the sweat and blood of people who worked day and night for the State's development. He reiterated that the party will not remain silent under any circumstances if any attempts are made to insult Telangana or portray it as a failed State.

'Human trafficking': Flight with 303 Indians grounded

PARIS

French officials grounded a flight from the UAE to Nicaragua carrying 303 Indian passengers after receiving a tipoff that it could be carrying victims of human trafficking, prosecutors said. Special investigators are questioning all those aboard and two people are in custody. (SEE PAGE 2)

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