



**HYDERABAD**

City police draw up plans to curb cyber fraud **page 3**

**BUSINESS**

Musk makes over \$400,000 an hour! **page 8**

**WORLD**

Israel storms key Gaza hospital; one patient killed, 6 wounded **page 9**



## SC scraps electoral bonds ahead of polls

**Says it violates right to freedom of speech & expression, RTI**

PTI  
NEW DELHI

In a landmark verdict delivered within spitting distance of the Lok Sabha polls, the Supreme Court on Thursday scrapped the Modi government's electoral bonds scheme of anonymous political funding, terming it "unconstitutional" and ordering disclosure of the names of the purchasers, value of the bonds and their recipients.

Holding that the 2018 scheme was "violative" of the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression and right to information, a five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud did not agree with the Centre's contention that it was meant to bring about transparency and curb black money in political funding.

Ordering the closure of the scheme forthwith, the top court also directed the State Bank of India (SBI), the authorised financial institution under the scheme, to submit by March 6 the details of electoral bonds pur-

### Landmark judgement

THE SC CONSTITUTION BENCH HEADED BY CJI DY CHANDRACHUD DID NOT AGREE WITH THE CENTRE'S CONTENTION THAT IT WAS MEANT TO BRING ABOUT TRANSPARENCY, CURB BLACK MONEY IN POLITICAL FUNDING. HERE'S A LOOK AT THE VERDICT

**SC ORDERS**

- SBI to share details of date of purchase of each electoral bond, name of purchaser of bond, denomination of bond purchased
- To submit by **March 6** details of electoral bonds purchased since **April 12, 2019, to EC**
- EC to publish information on its official website by March 13
- Uncashed electoral bonds, which are within validity period of 15 days, shall be returned by political party/purchaser to issuing bank which will refund amount to purchaser's account

**SC OBSERVES**

- Ruling parties can coerce people, entities to contribute
- Deletion of a provision in Companies Act permitting unlimited corporate contributions to political parties "arbitrary and violative" of Article 14 (right to equality) of Constitution
- Information about funding to political party essential for voter to exercise freedom to vote effectively
- Electoral bond scheme not the only means to curb black money in electoral finance. There are other alternatives
- Financial contributions to political parties usually made for 2 reasons — expression of support to party or contribution may be based on a 'quid pro quo'
- Huge contributions made by corporations/companies should not be allowed to conceal reason for contributions made by another section of population: student, daily wage worker, artist or teacher
- To not grant umbrella of informational privacy to political contributions only because portion of contributions is made for other reasons would be impermissible

**“ SUPREME COURT**  
The close association of money and politics... needs to be recounted. Money is not only essential for electoral outcomes and for influencing policies, it is also necessary for true democratic participation

Rejects as "erroneous" Centre's argument that it protects confidentiality of contributor which is akin to the system of secret ballot

chased since April 12, 2019, till date to the Election Commission (EC), which will publish the information on its official website by March 13. Under the electoral bonds scheme, ruling parties can coerce people and entities to contribute, the apex court said and rejected

as "erroneous" the Centre's argument that it protects confidentiality of the contributor which is akin to the system of secret ballot. "The electoral bond scheme and the impugned provisions to the extent that they infringe upon the right to information of the voter by

anonymising contributions through electoral bonds are violative of Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression) of the Constitution," said the Bench, also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, in its verdict. (SEE PAGES 2, 7)

## Farmers to step up 'Chalo Delhi' protest

**Haryana govt extends ban on mobile internet**

NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Amid the ongoing farmers' protest, Gurnam Singh Charuni, head of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), announced on Thursday that they will not pay toll in Haryana for three hours on Friday, which will be followed by a tractor parade in every tehsil the next day and a joint meeting of all farmers' and labour organisations on Saturday.

The decision was taken at a meeting of office-bearers of the BKU called by Charuni earlier in the day. "Three decisions were taken: first is that we will keep Haryana toll-free for 3 hours tomorrow (Friday), from 12 pm to 3 pm; the day after tomorrow, there will be a tractor parade in every tehsil, from 12 pm; on February 18, there will be a joint meeting of all farmers' and labour organisations," Charuni said. "Further decisions will be taken in the meeting," he added.

Charuni has a considerable influence in Haryana; however, he is not a part of the ongoing protests but the farmers' leader was a part of the protests back in 2020-21.



Farmers block railway tracks on the third day of the 'Delhi Chalo' protest march, in Amritsar. — Photo: ANI (REPORTS PAGE 7)

Meanwhile, three Union Ministers began their third round of talks with the leaders of farmer unions in Chandigarh in the evening, amid a standoff between the protesters and security personnel at two points on the Punjab-Haryana border. Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann also joined the meeting at the Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration in Sector 26. The talks were under way when reports last came in.

As the 'Delhi Chalo' march of the farmers from

Punjab against the Centre entered its third day, the Haryana government extended the ban on mobile internet and bulk SMS services in seven districts by two days till February 17 in view of the 'Delhi Chalo' agitation. These districts are Ambala, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind, Hisar, Fatehabad and Sirsa, the government said in an order. On February 13, it extended the suspension of these services for two days. On Tuesday, farmers from Punjab faced tear gas shells. AGENCIES

AI tech for better healthcare

HYDERABAD | PAGE 02

Zardari likely to become Pak Prez

WORLD | PAGE 09



Indian men go down fighting

SPORT | PAGE 11



ENTERTAINMENT PAGE 12

Yodha poster out

Sidharth Malhotra film to hit screens on March 15



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## No new taxes, says Bhatti

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

Assuring that the Telangana government would not impose any taxes on the people, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said emphasis would be on generating alternative revenue resources for the effective implementation of guarantees, besides taking up other welfare and development programmes.

Consultants would be roped in to suggest measures on generating alternative revenue resources, he said in the Assembly on Thursday. The Finance Minister accused the past government of focusing on presenting an inflated Budget annually. There was a difference of nearly 20 per cent in the Budget estimates and actual expenditure every year, he said. "Unlike

the previous government, the Congress government presented a realistic Budget. All measures will be taken to ensure the difference in the Budget estimates and expenditure is about five-eight per cent," Bhatti Vikramarka said.

When the Finance Minister said Telangana was ranked second from the bottom after Punjab in Budget expenditure, BRS working president KT Rama Rao raised objection and urged him to also speak about Telangana's per capita income and other indexes. Bhatti Vikramarka also said gross borrowings of Rs 60,000 crore would be raised as per GSDP from open markets. Considering the loans raised by the past government, a majority of them would be used to pay principle and interest, he said. (SEE PAGES 2, 4)

## Crucial partnership



**UBER PERFORMANCE:** Skipper Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja scored centuries on the first day of the third Test match between India and England in Rajkot on Thursday. India reached 326 for five. — Photo: AP (REPORTS PAGE 10)

## PM holds talks with Qatari Emir

DOHA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday thanked Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani for the release of eight Indians, previously on death row, even as the two leaders held extensive talks that set the stage for taking the bilateral ties to a higher level, especially in the spheres of investment, energy and new technology.

After the talks at the majestic Amiri Palace here, Modi described his meeting with the Emir as "wonderful" and said the bilateral ties are growing "stronger and stronger" and that both nations are looking forward to collaborating in futuristic sectors that will benefit the planet.

Modi arrived here on Wednesday night from the UAE. (REPORTS PAGE 7)

## NIN app helps monitor eating habits

CITY BUREAU  
Hyderabad

In a groundbreaking initiative aimed at guiding people in their journey to achieving healthy and sustainable nutrition, researchers at the Hyderabad-based National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) have collaborated with their German counterparts to develop a mobile app, NutriAIDE, which was launched on Thursday.

The app does more than just count calories. According to the teams of developers, led by Prof Markus Keck, chair, Urban Climate Resilience, Augsburg University, Germany; and NIN principal investigator Dr Subba Rao M Gavaravarapu, the app is a tool that helps users reflect on their eating

NutriAIDE does more than just count calories; it helps users reflect on eating habits and enables them to transform personal behaviour, food environment

habits and enables them to transform their personal behaviour and food environment.

"It involves an AI-based photo recognition tool to identify the likely foods one is consuming by just clicking a picture of the food for intake assessment. In addition, the app enables to keep track of micro and macronutrient content and dynamically calculates the carbon footprint of food choices of an individual," the researchers said.

The app, an outcome of an ongoing collaborative research project titled

'NutriAIDE — Building smart food environments for improved nutrition', provides users with information based in three unique functions, i.e., Maps, Move and Mind.

**3 key functions**

The Map function enables users to locate and tag food vendors with an intention to provide other users adequate food information about the types of food items being sold in their immediate food environment. The Move function helps connect with other existing users, apart from keeping a count of

steps. It also allows users to manually enter their water intake and sleep cycle to keep a track of it. The Mind function gives users an overview of the nutrient intake and integrates it with CO2 values.

**Sample size of 720**

In the initial phase, the app has been piloted on a sample of 720 in Hyderabad city. "It seeks to provide an engaging experience with an opportunity to 'Mind' what they eat, 'Move' to ensure adequate physical activity and 'Map' their food environments and rate them," Dr Hemalatha R, director of ICMR-NIN and co-ordinator of the project on the Indian side, said after unveiling the app.

For more details about the mobile app, visit: nutriaide.org.

## Punia wants suspension on WFI reimposed

NEW DELHI

Olympic medallist Bajrang Punia on Thursday urged world governing body UWW to reimpose the suspension on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), saying reinstating the Sanjay Singh-led body has again put wrestlers under "threat and harassment".

The United World Wrestling (UWW) had lifted the provisional suspension imposed on WFI but with a condition: it must provide written guarantees ensuring no discriminatory action against Punia, Sakshi Malik, and Vinesh Phogat. "This decision has again put Indian wrestlers under threat and harassment by WFI members," Punia wrote on X. PTI

## Autos, cabs to go off the road today

CITY BUREAU  
Hyderabad

Auto-rickshaws and cab services across Hyderabad are set to grind to a halt on Friday as drivers will protest against the increase in hit-and-run cases under the new Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita, 2023.

Additionally, they are also opposing the Mahalaxmi scheme, a free bus travel initiative for women. The strike is expected to affect various transportation services, including those provided by Ola, Uber, Rapido and porter cabs.

Shaik Salauddin, the founder and State president of the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers union (TGPWU), has expressed solidarity with the striking

workers and their unions. He highlighted the need for comprehensive measures to protect the rights and welfare of gig and platform workers. "Gig workers may also participate in the strike for at least an hour, amplifying our collective voice for justice and fair treatment," he said.

The demands include the implementation of laws safeguarding the interests of gig and platform workers, the creation of welfare boards and the provision of social security benefits such as ESI, PF, maternity and pension benefits.

Additionally, they have called for fair wages and the withdrawal of the hit-and-run law, which mandates stringent penalties for fleeing an accident scene without reporting it to police.