

**STATE**

Efforts on to increase forest cover in State, says Minister **page 5**

**NATION**

BJP fields Tamilisai from Chennai South **page 7**

**WORLD**

Russia bombards Kyiv with 31 missiles; 13 injured **page 9**

**NATION | PAGE 08**

**K'taka temple tax Bill returned**



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**Bibi for Rafah op**

To evacuate Gazans from battle zones



**SPORT | PAGE 10**

**"Pant's return quite exciting"**



**ENTERTAINMENT PAGE 12**

**#RC16 launch**

Ram Charan, Janhvi Kapoor share screen



**Ramzan Timings**

Iftar Friday 6:33 PM  
 Saher Saturday 4:56 AM

**CHICKEN RATES IN HYDERABAD**

Farm	Rs. 108
Retail live	Rs. 130
With skin	Rs. 189
Skinless	Rs. 215
Egg Rates (12 eggs)	Rs. 57

## SC raps TN Guv for misconduct

Gives him 24 hours to decide on ex-Minister's reinduction

NEW DELHI

Voicing "serious concern" over the conduct of Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi for his refusal to reinduct senior DMK leader K Ponmudi as a Minister in the State Cabinet even after it suspended his conviction, the Supreme Court on Thursday directed him to decide the issue within 24 hours.

The Governor has refused to reinduct Ponmudi, whose conviction and three-year sentence in a disproportionate assets case the apex court stayed recently, despite Chief Minister MK Stalin's recommendation. Observing that Ravi was defying the top court's order, a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud wondered how the Governor can say that Ponmudi's reinduction will be against constitutional morality.

"Mr Attorney General, we are seriously concerned about the conduct of the Governor. We did not want to say it out loud in court but he is defying the Supreme Court of India. Those who have advised him have not advised him properly. Now the Governor has to be informed that when the Supreme Court stays a conviction, it stays a conviction," the Bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, told AG R Venkataramani. "If you do not hear from your person tomorrow (Friday), we will pass an order directing the Governor to act according to the Constitution. We will pass an order," the Bench told the AG.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Tamil Nadu government, said it was unprecedented in the history of independent India that a Governor has refused to act as per the CM's recommendation. (SEE PAGE 2)

## EC publishes fresh data on poll bonds with unique numbers

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Thursday made public a fresh data set of electoral bonds, including their alpha-numeric numbers that can help match their purchasers with the political parties that received the funds.

Two separate lists of the donors and the recipients were published by the poll panel on its website after the details were submitted to it by the State Bank of India earlier in the day as per a Supreme Court order.

The EC said it has uploaded the data on electoral bonds on its website as received from SBI on an "as is where is basis". Earlier, the SBI told the SC it had pro-

Alpha-numeric numbers can help match bond purchasers with political parties that received the funds

vided the EC with all details of electoral bonds, including the unique bond number.

In a compliance affidavit filed ahead of the 5 pm deadline set by the apex court, the SBI chairman said the complete bank account numbers and KYC details of the political parties which redeemed the bonds have not been made public as it may compromise the security of these accounts. The SBI said KYC details of pur-

chasers have also not been made public for security reasons.

It said complete bank account numbers and KYC details were not necessary for "identifying the political parties". The affidavit said SBI has revealed information which will show the name of the purchaser.

In a landmark verdict delivered on February 15, a five-judge Constitution Bench had scrapped the Centre's controversial electoral bonds scheme that allowed anonymous political funding, calling it "unconstitutional", and ordered disclosure by the Election Commission (EC) of the donors, amount donated by them and the recipients by March 13. PTI (REPORT PAGE 8)

## Stays PIB's fact-check unit

NEW DELHI

In a jolt to the Centre, the Supreme Court on Thursday stayed the notification setting up a fact-checking unit under the Press Information Bureau (PIB) to identify fake news about the Central government.

The fact-check unit was notified on March 20 under the Information Technology Rules, 2021, by the Ministry of Electronics and IT, amid concerns voiced by civil society groups and media outlets about the possibility of its misuse for potential censorship.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud set aside the March 11 order of the Bombay High Court which had refused to grant an interim stay on setting up the FCU under the amended IT Rules to identify fake and false content on digital media about the Centre. "We are of the considered view that questions before the HC deal with core questions on Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution," the Bench said, adding that the stay shall operate till the Bombay HC decides the challenge to the IT Amendment Rules, 2023. (SEE PAGE 2)

## ECs selection process questioned

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday questioned the Centre over the procedure adopted for the appointment of Election Commissioners (ECs) and asked how six names were shortlisted from 200 within a few hours. A Bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said the selection committee should have been given more time to apply its mind on the appointment of the ECs.

"For one vacancy, there were five names. For two, you send six names. Why not 10? This is the language of the statute — for one vacancy, five names have to be recommended. This appears from the record," the Bench told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre. The SC said it cannot stay the 2023 legislation on appointment of ECs and CEC or put it under suspension by way of an interim order. Doing so would lead to uncertainty and chaos. It also maintained that it cannot be said that the Election Commission is under the "thumb of executive". The SC questioned the haste with which the Centre went ahead with the appointments. (SEE PAGE 2)

# KEJRIWAL ARRESTED

First sitting CM to ever face such action

PTI  
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in an excise policy-linked money laundering case on Thursday night and took him to the agency's headquarters here.

The arrest, the first of a sitting Chief Minister, came hours after the Delhi High Court refused to grant protection to the AAP national convener from any coercive action by the agency.

The 55-year-old leader's arrest, amid campaign for the Lok Sabha elections, drew angry reactions from his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The party said Kejriwal "will continue as the Chief Minister of Delhi. If need be, he will run the government from jail." The BJP though demanded that Kejriwal step down as Chief Minister on moral grounds.

In a day of fast-paced developments, a 10-member ED team, led by an Additional Director, reached his official residence on Flagstaff Road in Civil Lines in the national capital soon after the High Court order and carried out searches. He was arrested more than two hours after the ED team arrived at his residence, officials said.

The ED also questioned Kejriwal briefly before making the arrest, sources said, adding that some seizures have also been made. The officials said the federal agency brought Kejriwal to its office in central Delhi around 11.25 pm in an SUV. The Chief Minister was seen sitting in the rear seat of the vehicle wearing a white half-shirt. He was escorted by three ED officers.



**"The ED and CBI have become chief instruments of repression in the hands of the BJP. Political opponents are targeted on unsubstantiated grounds..."**

— KT RAMA RAO, BRS working president

This is the 16th arrest in the case by the ED. The officials said the ED would produce the Chief Minister before a court here on Friday and seek his custody for interrogation in the case.

As the ED officials carried out their action inside, additional Delhi Police personnel and Rapid Action Force and CRPF teams were de-

ployed around the Chief Minister's residence. The additional deployment was made as the ED sought extra security measures in anticipation of protests by AAP supporters, sources said. During the day, Kejriwal moved the Supreme Court against the HC order denying him any relief in the matter. (SEE PAGES 2, 8)

## Union Minister Shobha booked

BENGALURU

In the first case of model code violation booked against a key political figure ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission on Thursday filed an FIR against Union Minister and BJP leader Shobha Karandlaje over her recent remarks on the people of Tamil Nadu, officials said.

The move comes a day after the EC directed the Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) to take immediate and appropriate ac-

tion on the DMK's complaint regarding the violation by Karandlaje, who is BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from the Bangalore North constituency.

The poll panel also sought a compliance report on the matter within 48 hours.

DMK, the ruling party in Tamil Nadu, had sought action against Karandlaje for alleging that a person from Tamil Nadu was responsible for the IED blast at the Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru on March 1. PTI

## Dhoni 'stumps' fans as IPL begins



**BIG CHANGE:** CSK's MS Dhoni during a training session ahead of the IPL 2024 match against RCB, at MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday. Dhoni has handed over the CSK captaincy to Ruturaj Gaikwad. — Photo: PTI (REPORTS PAGE 10)

## Supplying water to ryots will be a task: Ponguleti

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

Asserting that the Telangana government would ensure that there was no drinking water scarcity this summer, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, however, said supplying sufficient water to farmers would be a task.

This was due to insufficient rains and low water levels in reservoirs, he said, also accusing the previous government of negligence in maintaining required water levels.

On the other hand, a few media publications were deliberately publishing reports and photographs of damaged crops to defame the Congress government, he said.

Interestingly, though Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had said that the State government would approach Karnataka for water, Ponguleti said this would not be wise.

"At this juncture, we cannot approach Karnataka as they too are facing a water crisis," he said during an informal chat with the media here on Thursday. He also

said the process to extend Rythu Bharosa assistance to farmers holding less than five acres would be completed in a couple of days.

Dismissing reports about him getting involved with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and emerging as the next Chief Minister after the Lok Sabha elections, he said these were mere speculations.

"I am just a sub-junior in the party and it will be too ambitious on my part to aspire to become Chief Minister," Ponguleti, said, adding that only fruit-bearing trees would always get hit.

As a responsible government, the Congress government would approach the Centre seeking funds and projects for the State. Meeting the Prime Minister does not mean our government was colluding with the Centre, he said.

Stating that the Registration wing would be revamped and employees working for over two years in the same position would be relocated, the Minister said a white paper would be released on the Dharani portal. (SEE PAGE 2)

## BRS challenges CM on land encroachment allegation

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

BRS social media convener Manne Krishank on Thursday challenged Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to prove in court that he has no relationship with his brother Anumula Mahananda Reddy, who was allegedly involved in encroachment of land worth Rs 3,000

crore in Chitrapuri Society. He said he was ready to prove Mahananda's involvement in the land encroachment in court.

The Madhapur police registered a case against Krishank on Wednesday after he posted a video on X, which allegedly accused Mahananda of grabbing land in Chitrapuri Society. The police also seized his phone following a complaint by

TPCC working president and MLC Mahesh Goud. Speaking to media persons at Telangana Bhavan here, Krishank said he had evidence to prove that Mahananda, a treasurer of Chitrapuri Society, was involved in the alleged land encroachment.

He said the Chitrapuri Sadhana Samithi had written to former Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan in this regard. (SEE PAGE 2)

## Arunachal Pradesh part of India, says US

WASHINGTON/BEIJING

The US recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory and we strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the LAC."

The statement comes days after the Chinese military reiterated its claim over the State following Prime Minister Modi's visit. China, which claims Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet. (SEE PAGE 2)

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