

**STATE**

**Water level in Srisailem project dips to alarming low** **page 5**

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**NET scores to be used for PhD admissions from 2024-25** **page 8**

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**France for ban on hair discrimination** **page 9**



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**'Crypto king' gets 25-yr jail**



**WORLD | PAGE 09**

**Rafah offensive**

Israel to launch final operation in the region

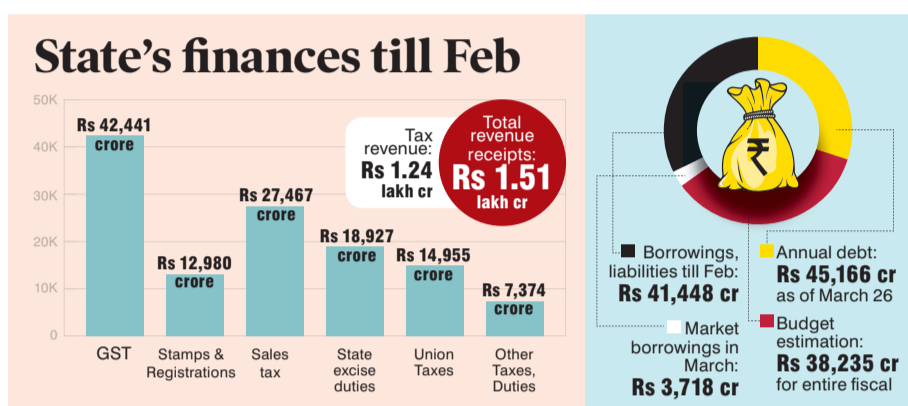


## Rs 18,118 crore debt burden in 114 days

**State's annual debt stands at estimated Rs 45,166 cr this fiscal**

**PS DILEEP**  
HYDERABAD

In barely 114 days after assuming power, the new Congress government in Telangana mounted a debt of Rs 18,118 crore. The annual debt of Telangana stands at an estimated Rs 45,166 crore as of March 26 this fiscal, which is against the Budget estimation of Rs 38,235 crore for the entire financial year.



According to recent reports submitted by State authorities to the Comptroller and Auditor General, Telangana's total market borrowings and liabilities have gone up to Rs 41,448 crore as of February this year. Alarmingly, an additional Rs 3,718 crore was procured within this month, until March 26 to be precise, pushing the overall borrowings to a daunting Rs 45,166 crore. This spike persists even after the repayment of Rs 1,615 crore debt in the first week of December. The annual borrowings stood at Rs 32,119 crore for the previous financial year in 2022-23.

On the positive side, contrary to expectations, the fiscal witnessed an escalation in revenue, particularly noticeable in February, with projections hinting at further growth by the end of March. Surpassing the Budget estimate of Rs 2,59,861 crore, Telangana raked in revenue receipts amounting to Rs 1,93,428 crore by February, constituting approximately 74.43 per cent of the Budget estimation for the fiscal. This figure also surpasses the total revenue receipts amassed during the entire

2022-23 financial year by Rs 1,331 crore. Authorities anticipate an additional increase of Rs 15,000-20,000 crore by the end of the fiscal.

**Budget estimate**  
Further, Telangana's revenue receipts stood at Rs 1.51 lakh crore until February, falling short of the annual Budget estimate of Rs 2.16 lakh crore. Notably, the State's own tax revenue accounted for a significant portion, totalling Rs 1.24 lakh crore, including Rs 42,441 crore through GST, Rs 12,980 crore through Stamps

and Registrations, Rs 27,467 crore through Sales Tax, Rs 18,927 crore through State Excise Duties, Rs 14,955 crore towards State's Share of Union Taxes and another Rs 7,374 crore from other taxes and duties.

February marked the pinnacle of tax revenue for the current financial year, amounting to Rs 13,703.92 crore, followed closely by Rs 12,729.5 crore in August and Rs 12,609.37 crore in December. Additionally, the State amassed a non-tax revenue of Rs 20,845 crore for the fiscal. (SEE PAGE 2)

## 'Vested interest group trying to defame courts'

**Over 600 lawyers across country write to CJI**

**NEW DELHI**

More than 600 lawyers, including senior advocate Harish Salve and Bar Council chairperson Manan Kumar Mishra, have written to the Chief Justice of India, alleging that a "vested interest group" is trying to put pressure on the judiciary and defame courts, especially in cases of corruption involving politicians.

"These tactics are damaging to our courts and threaten our democratic fabric," the lawyers drawn from across the country said in the letter dated March 26. CJI Chandrachud's leadership is crucial in these "tough times" and the apex court should stand strong, they said, adding it is not the time to maintain a dignified silence. The letter, shared by official sources, targeted a section of lawyers without naming them and alleged that they defend politicians by day and then try to influence judges through the media at night.

This interest group creates false narratives of a supposed better past and golden period of courts, contrasting it with the hap-

**PM calls it 'vintage Cong culture'**

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said it is a "vintage Congress culture" to browbeat and bully others, remarks that came in reaction to more than 600 lawyers writing to the Chief Justice of India. "To browbeat and bully others is vintage Congress culture. 5 decades ago itself they had called for a "committed judiciary" - they shamelessly want commitment from others for their selfish interests but desist from any commitment towards the nation," Modi said on X. "No wonder 140 crore Indians are rejecting them," the Prime Minister said and tagged a post that carried the letter written by the lawyers. PTI

penings in the present, the letter said. It claimed that their comments are aimed at influencing courts and embarrassing them for political gains. Adish Aggarwala, Chetan Mittal, Pinky Anand, Hitesh Jain, Ujjwala Pawar, Uday Holla and Swarupama Chaturvedi are among the signatories to the letter titled "Judiciary Under Threat-Safeguarding Judiciary from Political and Professional Pressure."

Though the lawyers behind the letter have mentioned no specific cases, the development comes at a time when courts are dealing with several high-profile criminal cases of corruption

involving opposition leaders. Opposition parties have accused the Central government of targeting their leaders due to its political vendetta, a charge refuted by the ruling BJP.

These parties, whose ranks include some noted lawyers, have joined hands against the recent arrest of Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case. Targeting the critics, the signatories to the letter accused them of suggesting that courts in the past were easier to influence. (SEE PAGE 2)

**SPORT | PAGE 11**

**Madrid Masters: Sindhu in quarters**



**ENTERTAINMENT PAGE 12**

**Triptii on Animal**

Actor decodes what worked in her favour



**Ramzan Timings**

**Iftar** Friday 6:34 PM  
**Saheer** Saturday 4:50 AM

**CHICKEN RATES IN HYDERABAD**

Farm	Rs. 122
Retail live	Rs. 144
With skin	Rs. 209
Skinless	Rs. 238
Egg Rates (12 eggs)	Rs. 51

## Keshava Rao to join Congress

**STATE BUREAU**  
Hyderabad

BRS secretary general and Parliamentary party leader K Keshava Rao, along with his daughter and Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, are poised to return to the Congress fold on March 30.

Keshava Rao joined the BRS (then TRS) in June 2013 and served as the party secretary general. He was nominated to the Rajya Sabha for two terms and led the BRS Parliamentary party.

Sources said Keshava Rao called on BRS chief K Chandrashekhara Rao at the latter's Erravelli residence on Thursday where the duo are learnt to have discussed the party's internal affairs and political scenario in the State as well as at the na-

tional level. Later, Keshava Rao expressed his desire to rejoin Congress, where he began his political career.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Keshava Rao said Chandrashekhara Rao and himself shared a mutual respect. Similarly, the party leaders and cadre also extended their support. He termed BRS MLC K Kavitha's arrest illegal and politically motivated. He also appreciated the decision of his son Viplav Kumar to continue in the BRS.

Earlier, in a statement, Viplav Kumar declared that he did not share the idea of his father and sister joining the Congress. He asserted that he would continue to serve in the BRS as he has immense faith in the leadership of Chandrashekhara Rao.

## Vibrant urban life



**FAST-PACED:** Multiple long exposures show an urban highway after sunset, with the Notre-Dame cathedral in the background, in Strasbourg, eastern France, on Thursday. —Photo: AFP

## Skyroot test fires stage-2 of Vikram-1 rocket

**CITY BUREAU**  
Hyderabad

Skyroot Aerospace, the space technology company based in Hyderabad, successfully test-fired Stage-2 of the Vikram-1 space launch vehicle, known as Kalam-250, at ISRO's propulsion testbed in Sriharikota on Thursday.

This test marks a significant step towards India's first private orbital rocket launch, following Skyroot's suborbital space launch of the Vikram-S in November 2022.

The 85-second test recorded a peak sea-level thrust of 186 kilonewtons (kN), expected to translate to around 235kN in flight. Kalam-250 features a high-strength carbon composite rocket motor using solid fuel and an Ethylene-Propylene-Diene terpolymer (EPDM) thermal protection system (TPS). It



Called Kalam-250, the high-strength carbon composite motor will carry rocket from atmospheric phase to deep vacuum of outer space.

includes a carbon ablative flex nozzle and electro-mechanical actuators for thrust vector control, crucial for achieving the desired trajectory during the rocket's ascent.

The test also involved the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), contributing its proprietary head-

mounted safe arm (HMSA) for safe rocket stage operation. The solid propellant for Kalam-250 was processed by Solar Industries at their Nagpur facility. Skyroot previously successfully tested Kalam-100, the third stage of Vikram-1, in June 2021. Pawan Chandra, co-founder and CEO

of Skyroot, stressed the significance of this milestone for the Indian space industry, highlighting it as the largest propulsion system designed and manufactured by the Indian private sector and the first carbon-composite-built motor tested at ISRO. "All test parameters are within expected bounds and this achievement takes us another step closer to the upcoming orbital launch of the Vikram-1 rocket," he added.

Naga Bharath Daka, co-founder and COO of Skyroot, noted the validation of the flex nozzle control system during firing as a crucial achievement in their journey towards the maiden orbital launch of Vikram-1 in 2024. "We have a few more milestones to cross and are focused on achieving them in the coming months to reach our maiden orbital launch of Vikram-1 in 2024," he said.

## Double tragedy hits marriage party

**STATE BUREAU**  
Medak

In a tragic incident that left the entire Bacharam village in shock, relatives performed final rites for four persons the same day. The four were to attend the marriage of Songa Ramesh on Thursday, were they alive. While three of them died in an accident on Wednesday, forcing relatives to put off the wedding, Ramesh's grandfather could not take the shock and died, allegedly by hanging.

Things were entirely different on Wednesday, when the entire village, where most residents are close relatives, were preparing to celebrate the wedding on Thursday morning. Women from Bacharam had boarded a trolley-tractor to visit bride Mamtha's resi-

**While three women died in a road accident on Wednesday, groom's grandfather ended his life**

dence to accompany her back to Bacharam to perform the marriage ritual.

However, tragedy struck the marriage party as the tractor turned turtle at Masanpally in Andole mandal of Sangareddy, leaving all 33 on board seriously injured. Three of them — Agamma (42), Budhemma (52) and Jittegari Sangamma (45) — died while undergoing treatment at the Area Hospital Jogipet hours later. The 30 persons who were injured were undergoing treatment. (SEE PAGE 2)

## Kejriwal's ED custody extended till April 1

**NEW DELHI**

A court here on Thursday extended the Enforcement Directorate custody of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal till April 1 in the excise policy case. The agency sought seven-day custody of the AAP chief, but the court said he has to be produced before it on April 1 at 11 am. The ED had produced him before Rouse Avenue court Special Judge Kaveri Baweja as his current six-day custody was ending on Thursday.

The ED said in its fresh remand plea that during Kejriwal's custodial interrogation, his statements were recorded over five days but he was "giving evasive replies." It said statements of three other persons relevant to the case have also been recorded during the remand period. It said that during the ED custody, Kejriwal was confronted with C Arvind, the then personal secretary to deputy CM Manish Sisodia who was handed over the draft Group of Ministers (GoM) report for the 2021-22 excise policy at the residence of the Chief Minister.

It said the statement of one of the AAP candidates in the 2022 Goa elections was also recorded during Kejriwal's ED custody. It revealed that the candidate did not have any money and his election expenditure was "taken care of by the AAP Office Delhi only through their associates." The plea said that during the custody, data from the mobile phone of the Chief Minister's wife have been extracted and were being analysed. "However, data from other four digital devices seized during the search at Kejriwal's premises on March 21 (belonging to Kejriwal) are yet to be extracted," it said. (SEE PAGES 2, 7)