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Congress anti-women, says Nirmala Sitharaman



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I wanted to keep fighting, says Bashar Assad
Comments are the first by former Syrian President since he was overthrown



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Zakir Hussain: World of music loses a gem

In a nutshell
Indians among 9 killed in UAE
DUBAI: Nine people were killed and 73 injured in a bus crash in the Khor Fakkan area of Sharjah in UAE on Sunday evening, police said on Monday. The Sharjah Police said the bus, which was carrying 83 construction workers, overturned after its brakes failed. Emergency crews, including teams from the Sharjah Police, civil defence and emergency medical services, were sent to the crash site. All nine were labourers.

Inter exam schedule released
HYDERABAD: The Intermediate Public Examinations (IPE) will be held from March 6 and March 25 for second-year Intermediate students and from March 5-24 for first-year students, according to the tentative schedule of the IPE examinations released by the Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education on Monday. The dates are applicable to Intermediate vocational courses examinations.

Seven killed in SUV-truck collision
BALOD: Seven persons were killed and six others injured when the sports utility vehicle (SUV) they were travelling in collided with a truck in Chhattisgarh's Balod district, police said on Monday. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has expressed grief over the incident and instructed the district administration to provide the best medical assistance to the injured. The accident occurred under the Daundi police station late on Sunday.

Vruksha Maate Tulsi Gowda dead
KARWAR: Padma Shri awardee Tulsi Gowda, known as the Vruksha Maate (Mother of Trees), died on Monday at her residence in Karnataka's Honnali village in Karwar district. She was 86. Gowda had been suffering from age-related ailments. Hailing from the Halakki tribal community, she was renowned for planting and nurturing lakhs of trees in her vicinity, effectively creating her own forest.

CHICKEN RATES IN HYDERABAD
Farm..... Rs. 101
Retail live..... Rs. 123
With skin..... Rs. 178
Skinless..... Rs. 203
Egg Rates (12 eggs)..... Rs. 85

SSA staff strike hits 1.25 lakh KGBV students

Teaching at 479 schools comes to a halt over last 5 days

STATE BUREAU
SANGAREDDY

A strike by employees under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Telangana from December 11 is affecting a staggering 1.25 lakh students in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) across the State. This is after Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy failed to keep the promise he made to them before the elections.

The teaching process at 479 KGBVs in 31 districts of Telangana, excluding Hyderabad and Medchal-Malkajigiri, all of which together have 1.25 lakh girl students enrolled, has come to a halt with the strike for the last five working days. While one lakh students were enrolled up to Class X, 25,000 were enrolled in Intermediate courses. Of the 479 institutes, 283 were upgraded to Intermediate level by the State government.

The KGBVs have played a vital role in offering free residential education to orphaned, semi-orphaned and poor girl students over the years. During the last week, there has been no classroom



Apart from the KGBV employees, other staff inducted under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan into the Education Department, too, have gone on strike.

teaching happening in these KGBVs. While some District Education Officers made alternative arrangements to ensure classes for Class X students, who face crucial examinations in less than three months, the rest of the students are left in the lurch. The KGBVs function under the SSA. Apart from the KGBV staff, other staff

inducted under the SSA into the Education Department, too, have gone on strike. Interestingly, Revanth Reddy, before coming to power, had promised to fulfil all demands of the SSA once the Congress came to power. However, the staff allege that he did not consider even a single one of their demands so far, even a year

after assuming charge as Chief Minister. Marvelli Dattu, the Sangareddy district president of the SSA employees association said they had urged the government to regularise their employment besides providing a life insurance cover of Rs 10 lakh and a health insurance cover of Rs 10 lakh.

(SEE PAGE 2)

ONOE Bill likely to be tabled today

May be referred to a joint committee of two Houses

NEW DELHI

A constitutional amendment Bill for holding Lok Sabha and Assembly elections simultaneously is likely to be introduced in Parliament on Tuesday and could be referred to a joint committee of the two Houses.

A top government functionary said the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, popularly being referred to as the Bill on 'one nation, one election', was expected to be introduced by union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal. After its introduction, Meghwal will request Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to refer the Bill to a Joint Committee of Parliament for wider consultations.

The joint panel will be constituted on a pro-rata basis, based on the strength of MPs of various parties. As the largest party, the BJP will get chairmanship of the committee, besides several

KEY PROVISION OF BILL

NEW DELHI: The Bill which seeks to put in place a mechanism to hold simultaneous elections in the country has a provision for situations when election to an Assembly cannot be held with those of Parliament. The constitution amendment Bill said the President can issue an order that polls of an Assembly which cannot go to elections with the Lok Sabha can go for the democratic exercise later. According to Section 2 sub-clause 5 of the Constitution (129th) Amendment Bill, "If the Election Commission is of the opinion that the elections to any Legislative Assembly cannot be conducted along with the general election to the House of the People, it may make a recommendation to the President, to declare by an order, that the election to that Legislative Assembly may be conducted at a later date." The Bill seeks to insert a new article in the Constitution and amend three articles to put in place the mechanism to hold simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies. PTI

members, the functionary said. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who was a member of the high-level committee led by former president Ram Nath Kovind that recommended holding Lok Sabha, State Assembly and local body elections simultaneously in a phased manner, is likely to be present in the Lower House at the time of Bill's introduction, the functionary said.

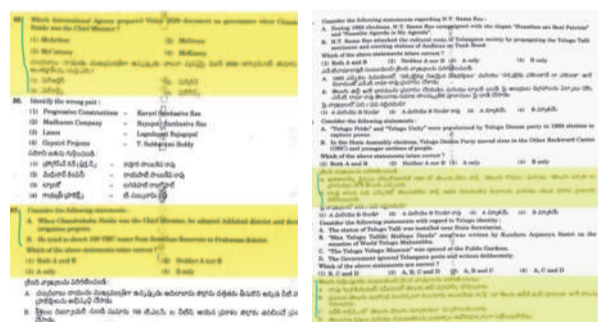
The union Cabinet last week decided to hold simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies but opted to leave "as of now" how local body polls are held. Meghwal may tell the Lower House that since the Bill will need wider consultations with lawmakers and the public, it should be sent to a joint committee.

The Speaker will seek the names of members for the proposed panel from the parties on the same day. If the parties do not inform the speaker about the members they wish to send on the panel, according to rules, they may lose membership. The Speaker will announce the committee's composition by the evening on the day the Bill is introduced, the functionary said. Initially, the tenure of the proposed committee will be for 90 days but it may be extended later.

The Union Cabinet has approved two Bills to hold the parliamentary and Assembly polls concurrently. Kovind had said that 32 parties supported the idea while 15 did not. PTI

(VIEWPOINT PAGE 6)

Group-II paper kicks up storm



JAMES EDWIN
Khammam

The Telangana Public Service Commission's Group-II examination question paper on Monday has kicked up a storm, with several questions apparently having political connotations.

The paper, many aspirants have alleged, was aimed at tarnishing the previous BRS government and, more perplexingly, focusing more on former Andhra Pradesh Chief Ministers NT Rama Rao and N Chandrababu Naidu and the Telugu Desam Party, when the entire paper was actually supposed to be on the Telangana Statehood movement. The fourth question paper on 'Telangana Move-

ment and State Formation' consisted of several questions that are apparently aimed to show the previous BRS regime in bad light. For instance, there were some questions on Page 19 asking candidates to pick multiple choices on whether they were correct or not.

Starting with 'Consider the following statements with regard to Telugu identity', it goes to state 'The statue of Telugu Thalli was installed near the Secretariat' asking the candidate to select the correct statements. Another one was 'The government ignored Telangana poets and writers deliberately' — a common and unfounded allegation made against the BRS by Congress. (SEE PAGES 2, 5)

BRS for privilege motion against Bhatti

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

The BRS Legislative Party on Monday requested Speaker Gaddam Prasad to allow a privilege motion against Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka for presenting misleading data on Telangana's debt.

The party also moved an adjournment motion demanding for a discussion on the arrest of farmers who opposed the acquisition of their farmland for the Pharma Village at Lagacherla, which was rejected, amid protests from the opposition benches.

The BRS legislators charged the Congress government with inflating debt figures to Rs 7 lakh crore, contrary to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) report citing the outstanding liabilities as Rs 3.89 lakh crore. "The Finance Minister misled the Assembly and people of Telangana, with inflated statements," BRS working president KT Rama Rao said, citing the RBI Handbook of Statistics on Indian States.

Speaking to mediapersons, Rama Rao demanded that the government present



BRS leaders KT Rama Rao, Harish Rao, Sabitha Indra Reddy and others addressing media persons outside the Assembly on Monday.

accurate debt figures in the Assembly or allow the privilege motion for debate. He pointed out a past precedent when a similar motion was permitted under Speaker Nandendla Manohar against the then Chief Minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, and em-

phasised the need to uphold legislative traditions.

"The Chief Minister, Ministers and other Congress leaders are making irresponsible statements to blame us for their incompetence to run the government," the BRS working president stated on the day.

(SEE PAGE 2)

PARTY TO HOLD STATE-WIDE PROTEST FOR LAGACHERLA RYOTS

HYDERABAD: The BRS will hold Statewide protests at 11 am on Tuesday against the Congress government's tyrannical, inhuman and oppressive treatment of Lagacherla farmers. The party charged the Congress government with filing illegal cases, applying third-degree methods, detaining farmers and even handcuffing them despite one of them suffering a heart stroke. The party demanded the immediate withdrawal of cases and release of detained farmers. As part of the protest, petitions will be submitted at Dr BR Ambedkar statues in all constituencies, highlighting the alleged injustice and demanding for accountability from the Congress government.

(REPORT PAGE 5)

Telangana under grip of cold wave

CITY BUREAU
Hyderabad

Hyderabad and others parts of Telangana are under the grip of intense cold wave with season's lowest of 6.0 degrees C recorded at Bheempoor and 6.3 degrees C in Bela, Adilabad, early Monday morning.

Hyderabad recorded the lowest temperature in the last five years when mercury fell to 7.1 degrees C at the University of Hyderabad campus, Serilingampally mandal, while at Moulali (Uppal mandal) the minimum recorded was 7.2 degrees C. Meanwhile, the IMD-Hyderabad has

HYD OUTSKIRTS COLDER THAN CORE AREAS

HYDERABAD: Areas in Hyderabad with abundant vegetative cover are experiencing colder weather conditions this winter as compared to the regions that are dominated by concrete and asphalt. Likewise, the core areas of the city with a lot of human activity and surrounded by concrete jungle are retaining heat and are relatively warmer, when compared to the outskirts that are blessed with greenery. (SEE PAGE 2)



said cold wave conditions are very likely in Adilabad, Kumram Bheem Asifabad, Mancherla, Nirmal, Vikarabad and Sangareddy districts till Tuesday. "Dry

weather very likely to prevail over the entire State. Mist/Hazy conditions very likely to prevail during morning hours at isolated pockets in few districts of

Telangana. Minimum temperatures are very likely to be below normal (2-4 degree Celsius) at isolated pockets in next two days," the IMD-H forecast said. (SEE PAGE 2)

Farmer leader Dallewal's health condition worsens

CHANDIGARH

Doctors checking on Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, whose hunger strike entered its 21st day on Monday, have recommended immediate hospitalisation due to his deteriorating health. But he has refused to receive any medical treatment.

Dr Avtar Singh said, "As per test reports, the creatinine level is increasing and GFR (glomerular filtration rate) is dropping. Ketones are also on a higher side which means his condition is quite bad." PTI

12 Indians found dead at Georgia mountain resort

TBILISI

Twelve Indian nationals were found dead at a restaurant in Georgia's mountain resort of Gudauri, according to the Indian mission here.

Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs said no signs of injuries or signs of violence were detected in an initial inspection. All victims died from carbon monoxide poisoning, local media reported, citing police.

The Indian mission in Tbilisi said all 12 victims were Indian nationals. However, Georgia's Internal Af-

fairs Ministry said 11 were foreigners while one victim was its citizen. It added that the bodies of all victims, employees in the same Indian restaurant, were found in bedrooms on the second floor of the facility.

"Mission has just learned about the death of 12 Indian nationals in Gudauri, Georgia. Deepest condolences to the bereaved families. Mission is in touch with the local authorities to get details of the Indian nationals who lost their lives. All possible assistance will be given," the Indian mission

said. The police started an investigation under Article 116 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, which implies negligent manslaughter. According to the preliminary investigation, a power generator was placed in an indoor area, a closed space near the bedrooms, which was turned on, probably after the power supply was turned off on Friday night.

A forensic medical examination has also been appointed to determine the "exact cause of death". Investigative actions are "actively" being carried out. PTI