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Telangana Today

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In a nutshell

Ola, Uber deny differential pricing

NEW DELHI: Ride-hailing firm Ola on Friday clarified that it follows a "homogenous pricing structure" and does not differentiate pricing based on users' mobile operating systems for identical rides. It said the company has communicated this to the Central Consumer Protection Authority, which had issued a notice to the company. Uber, which was also served a notice, responded similarly. It said: "We do not set prices based on a rider's phone manufacturer." PTI

'Beware of China dam project'

ITANAGAR: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday expressed concern that China's plan to construct the world's largest hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo river will have a devastating effect on the State and Assam. Khandu said the dam would allow China to control the timing and volume of water flowing downstream, which could have devastating effects during periods of low flow or drought. PTI

'Will continue to buy Russian oil'

MUMBAI: Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday said India would continue buying crude oil from Russia if it is available at a discount emphasising that the government is "committed" to buying the most economically-priced crude oil. "We used to buy less than 0.2 per cent from Russia in February 2022. Now, we are buying 30 per cent. If it's available at good discounts, we will buy it. If it is available elsewhere, we will buy," Puri, Petroleum Minister, said. PTI

Indian fisherman dies in Pak custody

NEW DELHI: An Indian fisherman, who was languishing in the Karachi jail even after completion of his sentence, has died, official sources said on Friday. Babu died on Thursday, they said. He is the eighth Indian fisherman who died in Pakistan in last two years, the sources said. "Babu was arrested in 2022. Despite completion of his sentence and confirmation of his Indian nationality, he was not released," a source said. PTI

'Commission culture rampant in Cong govt'

Ex-sarpanches say contractors being charged commission

STATE BUREAU
HYDERABAD

Cutting across sections, complaints are being made over widespread corruption in the Telangana Congress government.

After politicians, building permission applicants and retired employees, now former sarpanches are also complaining that commission was being demanded from contractors to clear their pending bills.

To this effect, Telangana Sarpanchula Sangam Joint Action Committee lodged a complaint with the Anti-Corruption Bureau stating that officials in the State Finance Commission Commissioner's office were demanding commission from contractors. They appealed that stern action should be taken against officials involved in such irregularities.

In a representation submitted to the ACB Director General on Thursday, the Joint Action Committee said contractors were complaining that officials in the finance department were demanding 9-12 per cent commission to clear their pending bills.

Already, a few elected public representatives had complained about similar irregularities. For the last 12 months, our pending bills were also not being cleared. The SDF and Mana Ooru Mana Badi works cheques were prepared but were not being handed over to the agencies.

Considering all these factors, the ACB should conduct a probe and initiate stern action against officials involved, the Joint Action Committee members appealed.

It may be recalled that BJP MP from Malkajgiri Etala Rajender at a press conference on Sunday had charged that the Finance Department was not clearing even petty bills unless the contractors paid 7-10 per cent commission. At the BJP Executive Committee meeting held here in July, the MP had reportedly charged that employees were not getting their retirement benefits without paying bribes. He had also claimed that builders had to shell out Rs 75 per sft as bribe for obtaining building permissions.

The fact that the State Anti-Corruption Bureau had nabbed over 170 persons in anti-bribery drive across Telangana in 2024 substantiates these charges. Among all government departments, officials from revenue, police, panchayat raj and stamps and registration, were in high numbers nabbed by ACB sleuths. Compared to the six cases registered and nine officials trapped in 2023 by ACB sleuths, the cases increased to 12 and 20 officials trapped in 2024.

TELANGANA SARPANCHULA SANGAM JOINT ACTION COMMITTEE LODGES COMPLAINT WITH ACB STATING THAT STATE FINANCE COMMISSION COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE WAS TAKING COMMISSION FOR CLEARING PENDING BILLS

Inspector in ACB net

HYDERABAD: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials caught L Balu Chowhan, Inspector of Shahinayathgunj police station on charges of demanding and accepting bribe on Friday. The bribe amount of Rs 50,000 was seized from him.

Balu Chowhan allegedly initially demanded bribe of Rs 1.5 lakh from the complainant for deleting his name as a suspect in a missing case registered at the Shahinayathgunj PS and not to harass him further.

The complainant had after requests promised to give Rs 50,000 bribe. The ACB officials also raided the police station premises for collecting more details.The arrested person was produced before the special court for ACB cases for remanding in judicial custody.

8 killed in blast at ordnance factory

Explosion at Bhandara in Maha led to fire

Rescue operation under way after the blast at the ordnance factory in Bhandara district on Maharashtra on Friday. — Photo: PTI

BHANDARA

Eight persons were killed after a blast at an ordnance factory in Maharashtra's Bhandara district on Friday morning, union Minister Nitin Gadkari said.

"As per preliminary information, eight persons were killed and seven injured in the blast," Gadkari said. While the Minister put the death toll at eight, District Collector Sanjay Kolte said so far four bodies had been retrieved and five injured persons rescued. Rescue operation was on for four-five persons still trapped under the debris, he said.

The blast took place around 10.30 am at the factory located at Jawahar Nagar, officials said. It led to fire and subsequent building collapse, and a National Disaster Response Force team was deployed immediately for a rescue operation, said an official release. Specialised equipment was being used for the rescue operation and efforts were on to ensure the safety of all involved, said the release issued by the NDRF.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said he was "deeply saddened" by the incident. All efforts were being made to provide assistance to the affected people, he said on X. "Deeply saddened to know about the blast at Ordnance Factory at Bhandara, Maharashtra," he posted on X (formerly Twitter). PTI

Gram sabhas end on disappointing note

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

People, especially women continued to vent their ire against the Congress government at Gram Sabhas across the State charging that eligible persons were not included in the lists, while ineligible persons, particularly those affiliated to the Congress party, were being included in the list.

Mild tension prevailed at a few gram sabhas as villagers argued with officials and damaged tents. At Mogilipenta village under Mallapur mandal of Jagtial, former Sarpanch Nagaraju doused himself with petrol and tried to self-immolate, alleging that eligible persons were missing from the beneficiaries list. But after officials alerted police, they shifted him to police station.

Similarly, at Ramalakshmipuram village under Kodad mandal of Suryapet district, residents damaged the tents and stage set up for gram sabha after learning that ineligible persons were included in the list for ration cards and Indiramma Indlu. Heated arguments took place between the police and the residents. At Ashwaraopeta mandal headquarters in Khammam, Congress leaders entered into arguments with officials. In a viral video, Congress leader Satyanarayana Chowdary is seen arguing with an official as to how can authorities sitting in Hyderabad finalise the list. (SEE PAGE 2)

APOLOGISE TO FARMERS FOR INCOMPLETE CROP LOAN WAIVER: KTR TO REVANTH

HYDERABAD: BRS working president KT Rama Rao lambasted Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for making false claims of implementing complete crop loan waiver in Telangana. He demanded that the Chief Minister should apologise to farmers for deceiving them.

He was responding to Health Minister Damodara Raja Narasimha's admission during a meeting that the crop loan waiver was not fully implemented in a village within his constituency.

"Now, who should be ashamed? Who should resign? Who is lying, and who is telling the truth? It is not us, but your Cabinet colleague who has exposed your lies. Your claims of complete farm loan waiver proved to be a complete farce," Rama Rao said in a post on X. He demanded that Revanth Reddy rub his nose on the ground in Kondareddypalli or Kodangal and apologise to the farmers. He termed the Congress' much-touted Farmers Declaration a hoax and the promise of a complete loan waiver a blatant lie. He called the Congress government a curse on Telangana farmers.

10 oppn MPs suspended from Waqf panel

NEW DELHI

Ten opposition members attending the parliamentary panel meeting on the Waqf Amendment Bill were suspended for a day on Friday amid protests and accusations against Chairman Jagdambika Pal of steam rolling through the proceedings. While opposition members accused Pal of reducing the proceedings to a farce and acting on the government's directions, the Chairman slammed their conduct. He accused Trinamool Congress leader Kalyan Banerjee of hurling abuses at him and said he strove to bring the meeting to order, adjourning it twice but in vain.

BJP member Nishikant Dubey moved the motion for suspending the opposition members which was adopted by the committee. The suspended members are Banerjee and Nadeemul Haque (TMC), Mohammad Jawed, Imran Masood and Syed Naseer Hussain (Congress), A Raja and Mohamed Abdullah (DMK), Asaduddin Owaisi (AIMIM), Mohibullah (SP) and Arvind Sawant (Shiv Sena-UBT). PTI

Inter students to explore AI in English language

YUVRAJ AKULA
Hyderabad

Artificial Intelligence (AI) curriculum, which so far remained confined to science, engineering and technology, will soon foray into arts, humanities and vocational education as well.

Given the increasing importance of AI in almost every aspect of life, the Telangana Board of Intermediate Education (TG BIE) is contemplating on introducing AI as part of the English language in both first and second-year of Intermediate education.

Initially, it intended to introduce the AI concepts as part of the physics curriculum, replacing some topics from the electronics chapter in the second-year Intermediate. As such, the launch will be only restricted to science students, i.e. MPC and BiPC, but the Board is considering AI learning as part of the English language, which is common for all students. The move is aimed at introducing students to the world of AI, its application to the real world and the ethical aspects involved in it.

The Board is mulling on introducing machine learning and robotics as well. The idea is to provide students with fair theory and practical knowledge about the niche and emerging technologies, thereby aiding them make informed career choices for higher education. "The engineering colleges, which introduced AI a couple of years ago, are still struggling to find expertise to teach the subject. The plan is to introduce the basics of AI and its applications and ethical aspects to students in second-year physics. Since such introduction will only be applicable to science students, we are contemplating AI curriculum in English, a common language for all students. We will have clarity by this month-end as the experts committee will meet," a senior official said.

Previously, the Ethics and Human Values paper was integrated into English language from 2023-24.

Vijaysai Reddy quits politics

HYDERABAD

In a setback to the YSR Congress Party, Rajya Sabha MP V Vijayasai Reddy, also the National General Secretary of the party, decided to quit politics on Friday and take up "farming".

The YSRC leader, a close confidant of party president YS Jaganmohan Reddy, said he will tender his resignation as Rajya Sabha MP on Saturday and not join any other political party.

Announcing this on X, he said: "I am quitting politics. I am resigning from the Rajya Sabha membership tomorrow, 25th. I will not join any political party. I will not resign in the hope of another position, benefits, or money. This decision is completely my personal one. There was no pressure." (SEE PAGE 2)