

NATION | PAGE 07

**Modi tears into Congress over decades of its 'misrule'**



WORLD | PAGE 09

**Gaza takeover temporary: White House official**

Says Trump only wants to displace Palestinians from the region to allow for reconstruction



SPORT | PAGE 10

**Gill anchors India to 4-wicket win over England**

**In a nutshell**

**Another farmer ends life in Mulugu**

**MULUGU:** One more farmer died by suicide in the State. According to reports, Kummari Nageswara Rao, a farmer from Buttayigudem village, consumed pesticide in full public view at the grama sabha recently. This desperate act was driven by frustration after his name was not included in the recently updated Indiramma Housing Scheme list. Rao succumbed while undergoing treatment at a hospital.

STATE PAGE 4

**Hasina's family home demolished**

**NEW DELHI:** Protesters in Bangladesh targeted the houses of several leaders of deposed PM Sheikh Hasina's Awami League and continued Thursday with the demolition of a memorial in Dhaka to the country's founding leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. "They can demolish a building, but not the history... but they must also remember that history takes its revenge," Hasina said in her address while her father's home was being demolished.

WORLD PAGE 9

**Girl run over by school van**

**HYDERABAD:** A kindergarten student was run over by her school van at Peddamberpet on Thursday afternoon. Rithvika, studying LKG at Sri Chaitanya Techno School in Hayathnagar, came home from school in a Mahindra Supro van. The girl got down from the vehicle and was walking towards her house when she was hit by the vehicle. "The girl fell down on the road and the vehicle ran over her," said police officials.

HYDERABAD PAGE 3

**IAF jet crashes in MP, pilots safe**

**GWALIOR:** A Mirage-2000 fighter aircraft of the IAF crashed in an agriculture field in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri on Thursday after encountering a system malfunction, said the IAF. Both pilots ejected safely but suffered minor injuries. The twin-seater trainer aircraft, which was on a routine sortie, caught fire after crashing at around 2.40 pm, said a Central Air Command spokesperson, adding a snag led to the accident.

## Telangana gears up for local body polls

**42% quota for BCs depends on discretion of political parties**

STATE BUREAU  
HYDERABAD

The countdown for local body elections in Telangana has begun with the government expediting preparations to conduct Panchayat Raj polls.

However, the implementation of 42 per cent reservations for the Backward Classes (BCs) will now solely depend on the discretion of the political parties, as it requires constitutional amendment which is a prerogative of the BJP-led Central government.

Official sources indicate that the notification for Mandal Parishad (MPTC) and Zilla Parishad (ZPTC) elections is expected within a week to ten days, followed by Gram Panchayat polls.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, while tabling the Social, Economic, Employment, Education, Political, and Caste Census Survey 2024 report in the Assembly on Tuesday, kept the onus of implementing 42% reservation for BCs in the State on political parties. Further, the Assembly passed a resolution

**Official sources indicate that notification for MPTC and ZPTC elections is expected within a week to ten days, followed by Gram Panchayat polls**

urging the Centre to conduct a nationwide caste census, stopping short of demanding an increase in reservation beyond the SC-mandated 50 per cent cap.

Unless the Centre gives a green light and brings a Constitutional amendment, the 42% quota for BCs remains a far-fetched dream. Much to their dismay, the upcoming local body polls will be held with the old reservations. In light of these developments, political parties might implement the 42% quota for BCs in ticket allocations especially, for the MPTC and ZPTC elections. The same cannot be possible for gram panchayat elections which are contested independently.

According to official sources, the SEC will release the election schedule by mid-February, aiming to complete the process before the Class X board exams

scheduled to begin on March 21. The MPTC and ZPTC elections, which will be held on party symbols, are expected to be wrapped up within two weeks, while Gram Panchayat polls, conducted on a non-party basis, will be spread over two to three phases. Just like in 2018, the elections will be conducted using ballot papers, with tenders already floated for printing. Some districts have completed tenders and are ready for ballot printing. Additionally, ward-wise voter lists have been finalised after corrections, ensuring accuracy.

The SEC has mobilised resources at the field level, with nodal officers appointed to oversee ballot box management, training, transport, expenditure monitoring, media coordination, and grievance redressal. A teleconference led by SEC Secretary Ashok Kumar re-

viewed logistical aspects, including polling station identification, voter count verification, appointment of ROs, and staff training.

The SEC instructed Collectors to dispatch 10 election officers per district for training in Hyderabad, which commenced on Wednesday. These trainers will later train polling staff at the district level.

**Political heat intensifies**

With election dates nearing, Congress and BRS ramped up their political strategies. The Congress is keen to leverage its caste census report to consolidate BC support, while the BRS is expected to counter with its previous governance record and expose the failed promises of the Congress government including its failure to ensure BC reservations.

The elections will serve as a litmus test for both parties in the aftermath of the 2023 Assembly elections. Meanwhile, speculation is rife that municipal elections could also be held soon, adding another layer to the political battleground.

## 'Humiliation' of deportees rocks LS

**EAM says India in talks with US to ensure deportees were not mistreated during flights**

NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Thursday forced repeated adjournments in the Lok Sabha over the deportation of Indians living illegally in the US, even as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar asserted India was engaging the Trump administration to ensure that deportees were not mistreated during flights.

The Lok Sabha was adjourned on four occasions as opposition members trooped into the Well and raised slogans over the handcuffing of deportees from the US for the duration of their flight to India.

A US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed at the Amritsar airport on Wednesday. This was the first batch of Indians to be deported by the Donald Trump administration as part of a crackdown against illegal immigrants. Jais-



EAM S Jaishankar speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Thursday. — Photo:PTI

hankar read a statement in the Lok Sabha amid noisy protests by the opposition. The Lok Sabha was scheduled to take up a discussion on the union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1. Several opposition leaders, including the Congress' Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi, had submitted notices to move an adjournment motion over the mistreatment of deportees.

The Lok Sabha was first adjourned during Question Hour and later at 12 noon when the presiding officer allowed the tabling of parliamentary papers. BJP member Dilip Saikia, who was in the chair, adjourned the proceedings till 2:00 pm.

Similar scenes were witnessed when the House reconvened at 2:00 pm, leading to an adjournment till 3:30 pm.

Amid the sloganeering, Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal informed the Lower House that Jaishankar would make a statement on the deportations at 3:30 pm, raising the expectation that the proceedings would resume after the External Affairs Minister's statement. Jaishankar said US policy on dealing with immigration had provisions to use restraints during deportations and the government would engage with the US to ensure that there was no mistreatment of returning deportees. (SEE PAGES 2, 7)

## UGC guidelines usurp rights of States: BRS

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

A Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) delegation, led by working president KT Rama Rao met Union HRD Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to oppose the University Grants Commission (UGC) draft guidelines, enabling the Centre to take control over the State universities.

The party delegation said the new guidelines would adversely impact the interests of those pursuing education in the regional languages and also affect social justice.

The delegation submitted a six-page representation against the new UGC guidelines which usurp the rights and powers of the State governments, vesting the powers of appointing search committees for the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) in State universities and appointing professors

**Centre is trying to control State in the matter of higher education by empowering the Governors**

— KT RAMA RAO  
BRS WORKING PRESIDENT

of its choice irrespective of teaching experience.

**Higher education**

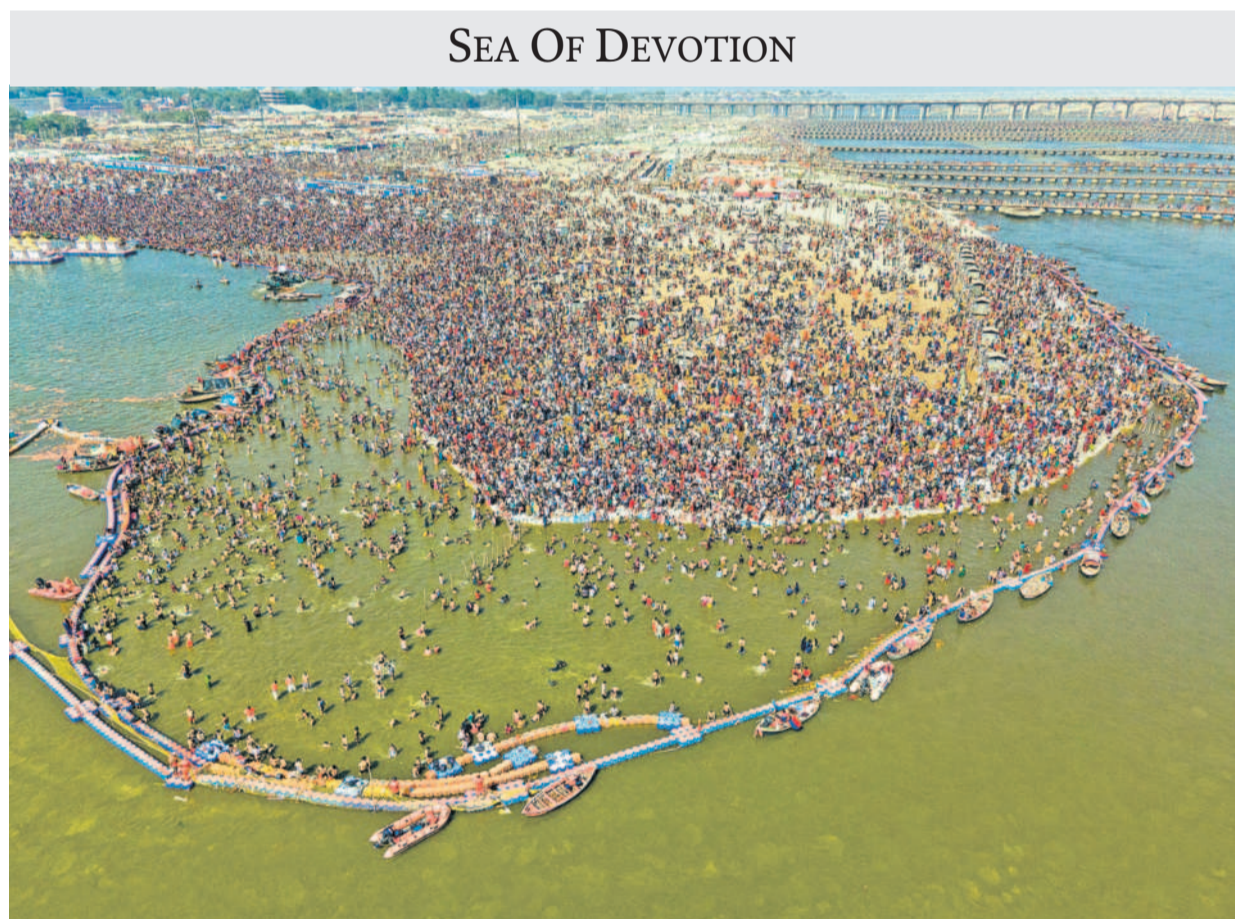
Speaking to the media after meeting the Union Minister in New Delhi on Thursday, Rama Rao said the Centre was trying to control the State in the matter of higher education through the new UGC guidelines by empowering the Governors.

He criticised this move, stating that it strips State governments of their au-

thority over higher education. The party also raised serious concerns over the 'No Suitable Candidate Found' (NSCF) rule, under which it could be misused to deny admissions to reserved category research scholars and postgraduate students (OBC, SC, ST), due to political or personal reasons, and allotting the seats to candidates from other communities. He called this an assault on constitutional rights for reservation, leading to grave injustice to students from marginalised sections.

"Additionally, we also suggested moving away from academic metric-based faculty selection and instead prioritise research-oriented academicians for university faculty positions. The party also uploaded its detailed objections to the University Grants Commission website," he said.

(SEE PAGES 2, 7)



Devotees take a holy dip at the Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh on Thursday. — Photo:PTI

## Chandrayaan-4 launch in 2027

NEW DELHI

India will launch the Chandrayaan-4 mission to bring back samples of moon rocks to the Earth in 2027, Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh said. Chandrayaan-4 will involve at least two separate launches of the heavy-lift LVM-3 rocket that will carry five different components of the mission which will be assembled in orbit.

"The Chandrayaan-4 mission aims to collect samples from the moon's surface and bring them back to the Earth," Singh said. The Minister said the Gaganyaan mission, which involves sending Indian astronauts in a specially designed spacecraft to low-earth orbit and bringing them

back safely, will be launched next year.

In 2026, India will also launch Samudrayaan, which will take three scientists in a submersible up to a depth of 6,000 metres in the deep ocean, to explore the seabed. "This achievement will align with the timelines of India's other landmark missions," Singh said.

Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the Samudrayaan mission in his I-Day speech. The Minister underscored the potential of the Samudrayaan to unlock vast resources, including critical minerals, rare metals, and undiscovered marine biodiversity, all of which are crucial for the country's economic growth and environmental sustainability.

## Rs 10,000 crore deal for Pinaka rocket system

NEW DELHI

The government inked contracts worth more than Rs 10,000 crore with defence entities for procurement of Area Denial Munition Type-1 and high-explosive rockets with enhanced range for Pinaka multiple launch rocket system, seeking to enhance Indian Army's firepower capabilities.

The Defence Ministry in a statement also said a contract for upgrade in Shakti software has also been signed with BEL. The procurement of ADM Type-1 (DPICM) and HEPP Mk-1 (E) rockets will mark a "significant milestone" in the modernisation of the artillery rocket regiments, officials said.

## Serial killer who targeted rail passengers arrested

CITY BUREAU  
Hyderabad

A serial killer, who targeted rail passengers, was arrested by the Government Railway Police (GRP) on Thursday.

The suspect, Rahul alias Bholu, a car driver from Rohak in Haryana, was allegedly involved in a series of murders of rail passengers, including the killing of Ramanamma (46), a native of Bellary, reported in November last year.

According to the police, on the night of November 23, Rahul sneaked into the coach for specially-abled persons on the Belagavi - Manuguru Special Express, where the victim was already seated. When she

**CASES INVOLVED**

**OCTOBER 2024:** Killed a female passenger on the Pune-Kalyankumari train

**OCTOBER 2024:** Killed an elderly passenger on Husnur-Mangalore train by strangling

**OCTOBER 2024:** Killed a girl and raped her at Udware in Gujarat

**NOVEMBER 2024:** Killed an elderly passenger on Kathihar-Howrah train by strangling

**NOVEMBER 2024:** Killed a senior citizen on the Belagavi - Manuguru Special Express

asked him to move out of the coach, Rahul got angry and strangled her to death with a towel on the moving train. Later, he locked the

coach doors and fled with Rs 25,000 cash and gadgets from her bag.

The suspect removed the SIM card from her mobile phone and discarded it from the moving train. He then got down from the train at Yadgir railway station with the stolen money and phone. The next day he reached Vapi railway station, where he was arrested by the Pardi police.

**Confesses to crime**

On interrogation, he confessed his involvement earlier in four murder cases and a rape case on rail passengers. Later, the GRP authorities had arrested him and produced before the court for remanding in judicial custody.

## Somalian youth's penis reconstructed

CITY BUREAU  
Hyderabad

A young patient from Somalia, whose penis became dysfunctional at the age of four due to severe infection following circumcision, has now regained his dignity.

Perhaps for the first time in Telangana State, surgeons at Medicovert Hospitals reconstructed a fully dysfunctional penis, restoring normalcy in the life of the 19-year-old.

After several failed attempts to find a solution in different countries, the patient consulted plastic surgeons at Medicovert Hospitals. Senior urologist and andrologist, Dr AV Ravikumar and plastic surgeon Dr. Dasari Madhu Vinay Kumar, planned and executed a highly complex reconstructive procedure.

The 10-hour-long microvascular surgery involved reconstructing the penis using a radial artery forearm flap, allowing the patient to regain the ability to urinate normally.

Dr AV Ravikumar said the patient is now fully capable of normal urination, while Dr Dasari Madhu Vinay Kumar said the patient has successfully regained penile sensations and has undergone a penile implant, enabling him to lead a normal sexual life. "For years, I lived in emotional distress, feeling incomplete. Today, I have regained my identity, confidence, and a chance to lead a normal life," the patient was quoted as saying.