



**NATION | PAGE 07**  
**Bus services between K'taka-Maha suspended**



**WORLD | PAGE 09**  
**Israeli forces ramp up West Bank offensive**  
Defence Minister says troops will remain in some areas for a year



**SPORT | PAGE 11**  
**India look to tame England in Men's FIH Pro League**

**In a nutshell**

**4 more deportees arrive in Punjab**  
**AMRITSAR:** Four more deportees, hailing from Punjab, arrived here on Sunday. It is learnt that the four were among the 12 illegal Indian immigrants brought back from the US on a flight via Panama that landed in Delhi earlier in the day. Confirming their arrival, Amritsar Deputy Commissioner Sakshi Sawhney said they hailed from Gurdaspur, Patiala and Jalandhar districts. They arrived at the Sri Guru Ramdas Ji International Airport here from Delhi via a commercial flight. PTI

**Survey begins for cancer centres**  
**NEW DELHI:** The government has started a survey to identify gaps and review infrastructure in all district hospitals in order to implement the Budget announcement of setting up day care cancer centres in these health facilities. In her Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government will facilitate setting up day care cancer centres in all district hospitals over the next three years and 200 of these will be established in 2025-26. PTI

**Modi to release PM KISAN aid**  
**PATNA:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi is all set to release the 19th instalment of PM-KISAN on February 24. An amount accounting for Rs 22,000 crore will be transferred directly to 9.8 crore farmers' accounts via the DBT scheme. This time, a special awareness program is being organised to impress upon the farmers various innovations and new-age emerging techniques in agriculture and also facilitate their direct interaction with the Prime Minister. IANS

**Pope's condition remains critical**  
**ROME:** Pope Francis was conscious but still receiving high flows of supplemental oxygen on Sunday following a respiratory crisis and blood transfusions, as he remains in critical condition with a complex lung infection, the Vatican said. The brief statement early Sunday didn't mention if Francis was out of bed or eating breakfast, which it had on previous days. "The night passed quietly, pope rested," it said. A more detailed medical update was expected later Sunday. AP



**Samantha's favourite heroines**

Actor bonds with fans through her 'Ask Me Anything' session

## Hopes fade as rescue efforts continue

**Situation at SLBC tunnel far from optimistic, says Jupally**

STATE BUREAU  
HYDERABAD

The ongoing operations to rescue the eight persons trapped inside the SLBC Tunnel project have taken a sombre turn with Minister Jupally Krishna Rao, after an on-ground assessment of the conditions inside the tunnel, revealed that the situation inside remained dire and far from optimistic. The severity of the incident has left officials and rescue teams grappling with diminishing hope and growing despair. In the last 36 hours, despite exhaustive efforts to reach the trapped workers and engineers, rescue teams have been unable to establish contact with any of the eight members lost deep within the tunnel, approximately 400 metres beneath the hill range. Rescuers have called out the names of the missing workers using speakers, only to hear their own voices echoing back in the corridors. Senior officials on site have continued the rescue exercise with unwavering intensity, visiting the accident spot for stock-taking



Rescue operations on at the SLBC tunnel project site in Nagarkurnool on Sunday. — Photo:PTI

from time to time. However, the mood among the rescue teams that are yet to make significant headway towards the spot where the workers are trapped, is gloomy. Minister Krishna Rao, accompanied by teams from the NDRF, SDRF, and the military, ventured up to a point that was believed to

be hardly 100 metres away from the spot to assess the situation firsthand. Since 1 pm on Sunday, he has been overseeing the rescue efforts. He said the water pressure had severely impacted the tunnel boring machine, further complicating the operations. The distance from the tunnel entry

to the accident site is approximately 13.5 km and the arduous travel involved to the spot has added to the complexity of the rescue mission. The critical 200-metre stretch of the tunnel remained filled with water and debris, making it inaccessible. (SEE PAGES 2, 5)

## Congress struggles to plug revenue deficit

**Poor revenue collections, rising debt force govt to make last-ditch efforts to stay afloat**

PS DILEEP  
Hyderabad

Reeling under financial mismanagement, the Congress government in Telangana is scrambling to cover up its mounting revenue deficit. Poor revenue collections and rising debt have forced the State to resort to last-ditch efforts to stay afloat. In the last three financial years, Telangana realised average revenue receipts of 77 per cent by March-end. The State Own Tax Revenue (SOTR) collections stood at an average of 97.26 per cent during the same period. With less than two months left in the fiscal year, shortfalls are evident across multiple sectors even as officials are making frantic efforts to continue to maintain the previous years' tax collections. To boost revenues, the government announced a 25 per cent discount on the LRS fee for those paying before March 31. It is aggressively pursuing pending tax collections, including GST, commercial and sales taxes. Property tax, traffic challans, electricity and water

### GRIM SCENARIO

In last 3 Financial Years, State realised average revenue receipts of 77% by March-end

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- To boost revenue, govt announced **25%** discount on LRS fee for those paying before **March 31**
- Govt aggressively pursuing pending tax collections, including GST, commercial and sales taxes
- Property tax, traffic challans, electricity and water bills, licence fee and other such revenues being targeted
- One-time settlement scheme now being considered to clear outstanding dues and generate immediate liquidity
- Congress regime looking at excise hikes to extract more revenue from liquor sales

bills, licence fee and other such revenues are being targeted, with a one-time settlement scheme now being considered to clear outstanding dues and generate immediate liquidity. Further burdening citizens, the Congress regime is looking at excise hikes to extract more revenue from liquor sales. The increase in beer prices alone is expected to bring in an addi-

tional Rs 300 crore per month, albeit at the cost of higher consumer spending. Though efforts were being made to collect long-overdue arrears from the Centre, there has been poor response. Meanwhile, the government has informally instructed finance and other key departments to clear only emergency bills. (SEE PAGE 2)

## Centre shielding Revanth govt, says KTR

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Sunday attacked the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, questioning its inaction on multiple allegations against the Congress government in Telangana. He said the BJP was acting as a protective shield for Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, suggesting that the saffron party was intentionally overlooking a series of corruption cases and scams under the Congress government in Telangana. In a statement, Rama Rao pointed to numerous instances of high-profile corruption under Congress governance. Specifically mentioning the AMRUT tenders scam, where Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's brother-in-law was awarded a Rs 1,137 crore contract despite lacking qualification, he questioned the BJP for protecting the corrupt practices of the Congress government in the State for political convenience. "Proof has been submitted, yet zero action from the NDA government," he said.

**BJP is intentionally overlooking a series of corruption cases and scams under Congress govt in Telangana**  
— KT RAMA RAO  
BRS WORKING PRESIDENT

Rama Rao reminded that the BJP government did not act against the Civil Supplies Scam, in which the Central government funds were misused, and the involvement of Revanth Reddy's family. Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself accusing the Revanth Reddy government of collecting Rs 150 per sqft as RR Tax (Rahul Gandhi and Revanth Reddy tax), the BJP failed to take any action. Rama Rao also recalled media reports of a massive cash haul during raids conducted by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy's properties, yet 150 days later, no action was taken. (SEE PAGE 2)



Virat Kohli celebrates his century after scoring the winning runs against Pakistan at Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday. — Photo:PTI (REPORT PAGE 10)

## 'USAID gave \$18 mn for polls in India'

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has claimed that the Biden administration allocated \$18 million in funding to India to help with its elections, arguing that the country doesn't need this money. His remarks during a speech at the Conservative

Political Action Conference (CPAC) after he repeatedly attacked the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for allocating \$21 million in funding to India for "voter turnout". In his speech, Trump also accused India of taking advantage of the US. "18 mil-

lion dollars for helping India with its elections. Why the hell? Why don't we just go to old paper ballots, and let them help us with their elections, right? Voter ID. Wouldn't that be nice? We're giving money to India for elections. They don't need money," he said. "They take advantage of

us pretty good. One of the highest tariff nations in the world...We have a 200 per cent (tariffs) there and then we're giving them a lot of money to help them with their election," Trump said. Trump also criticised the USAID for giving \$29 million to Bangladesh. (SEE PAGES 2, 8)

## CCMB team pioneers rare disease diagnosis

M SAI GOPAL  
Hyderabad

In a first, genetic researchers from Hyderabad have evolved a new and more efficient way to diagnose rare diseases. Instead of traditional gene mapping, they are utilising Optical Genome Mapping (OGM), a technique which captures the entire DNA structure and gives a complete map (or picture) of the genome, thus helping researchers to identify structural varia-

**Instead of traditional gene mapping, scientists are using Optical Genome Mapping, which captures entire DNA structure, gives complete map of genome**

tions in the genome and exactly pin-point the cause of the rare disease. The research team from the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), whose study was published in the European Journal of Human Genetics of Nature Science

Journal (December 9, 2024), showcased their research by taking up OGM study on two children with rare diseases including severe haemophilia and autism. Senior research fellow and science communicator from CCMB, Aditya Undru, in a report (India Bioscience

of Department of Biotechnology), aptly described the cutting-edge research on Optical Genome Mapping as "It is like enabling an explorer in an island, who is searching for buried treasure, with a complete treasure map and a bird's-eye view. In a dense forest, fragments of a treasure map become useless. The explorer needs a complete map and a bird's eye view." The CCMB researchers pointed out that their study has the potential to reshape

the way genetic disorders are studied and understood, thus opening a new era of genetic diagnostics and research. The study will play a vital role in resolving clinical questions over rare diseases. The approach of utilising optical genome mapping helps fill certain gaps in the field, particularly around structural variations that have been challenging to fully capture with older sequencing technologies, the researchers in the Indian Bioscience report, said.

## Will give up Prez post for peace: Zelenskyy

KYIV

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that he would be ready to give up the presidency if it brought peace and NATO membership. Speaking at a forum of government officials in Kyiv marking the three-year anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Zelenskyy said he would step down if doing so

would achieve a lasting peace for his country under the security umbrella of the NATO military alliance. "If to achieve peace, you really need me to give up my post, I'm ready," Zelenskyy said. His comment appeared to be aimed at suggestions by US President Donald Trump and Russian President Putin that elections should be held in Ukraine despite legislation prohibiting them during martial law. (SEE PAGE 2)