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 City celebrates Shivaratri; devotees flock to temples



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Trump to offer 'gold cards' for \$5 million to investors
 As a path to citizenship, it will raise the price of admission for investors and do away with fraud



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Zadran, Omarzai lead Afg to 8-run win over Eng

In a nutshell

Polling for 3 MLC seats today
HYDERABAD: Polling will be held on Thursday for the keenly-contested election to three constituencies of Telangana Legislative Council. The three seats are Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar Graduates' and Teachers' constituencies and Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda Teachers' constituency. The balloting, to be held in preferential mode of voting, will take place from 8 am to 4 pm. Fifty-six candidates are in the fray for the lone Graduates' constituency. **PTI**

Woman raped inside bus
PUNE: A man with a criminal record allegedly raped a 26-year-old woman inside a stationary state transport bus at the busy Swargate bus stand in the city, police said on Wednesday, adding that multiple teams are looking for the accused who is on the run. The incident which took place on Tuesday morning drew sharp reactions from opposition leaders. Dattatraya Ramdas Gade (36), the suspect, has theft and chain snatching cases against him. **NATION PAGE 8**

Iran ups uranium production
VIENNA: Iran has accelerated its production of near weapons-grade uranium as tensions between Tehran and Washington rise after the election of US President Donald Trump, a report by the United Nations' nuclear watchdog showed. The report by the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency said as of February 8, Iran has 274.8 kg of uranium enriched up to 60 per cent. That's an increase of 92.5 kg since the IAEA's last report in November. **WORLD PAGE 9**



Pushing her limits with yoga
 Actor Kriti Kulkarni showcases flexibility, balance and dedication **12**

Rat miners reach key point of tunnel; no trace of workers

Passage blocked by debris & water, filled with odour, indicates adverse outcome

STATE BUREAU
 HYDERABAD

The rescue operation at the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel has reached the critical end point of the tunnel, but there is no trace of the missing workers.

Expert rathole miners bravely ventured into the tunnel to save the eight trapped workers. They could access the zero point of the tunnel end but could find none of the eight missing workers and engineers. The entire stretch, whose passage is blocked by debris and water-logging, is filled with a foul smell, indicating an adverse and undesired outcome that is in the offing.

Experts involved in the rescue operation suspect that the workers might be trapped beneath the damaged tunnel boring machine (TBM). The rat miners, who succeeded where all other big names with expertise in such rescue missions failed, are barely 25 years old. The 14-member team of rat miners from Uttarakhand, led by Firoz Qureshi, displayed rare skill.



Experts involved in the rescue operation suspect that the workers might be trapped beneath the damaged tunnel boring machine.

Early Wednesday morning, they entered the SLBC tunnel, equipped with only ropes tied to their backs. Clad in simple t-shirts and pants, the team navigated through the critical environment and reached the site of the collapsed 1600-ton TBM

The rat miners cleared the debris, creating a pathway for other rescue teams to follow. Using only small and simple tools, they removed the accumulated mud and water, pushing aside obstacles. They reached the last point of the

tunnel and confirmed that the TBM was completely destroyed. They also identified the source of water flow from the tunnel lining and removed the TBM fragments, making the rescue operation more manageable. **(RELATED REPORTS PAGE 5)**

KTR blasts Revanth for SLBC tunnel tragedy

STATE BUREAU
 Hyderabad

BRS working president KT Rama Rao called out Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for turning a blind eye to the plight of the workers trapped in the SLBC tunnel and also those who were working at the site without salaries for the last three months. He ridiculed the Chief Minister's election campaign and Delhi visit ignoring rescue measures.

"Even after going to Delhi 36 times, he did not bring three rupees for the State," he said. He took to X, criticising Revanth Reddy for his frequent visits to Delhi. He said even as the workers lay trapped and the others struggled without pay for three months, the CM showed little concern. **(SEE PAGE 2)**

Hamas leaders visiting PoK: Israeli envoy

NEW DELHI

Reuven Azar, the Ambassador of Israel to India, on Wednesday expressed concerns over reports of leaders of Palestinian terror outfit Hamas going into a huddle with terrorists of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), earlier this month. "Unfortunately, terrorist organisations work in networks and many times they find ways to support each other in a way that is detrimental for many countries, not just for our region," Azar said.

"The fact that, for example, there was a meeting only a couple of weeks ago in the areas that are under Pakistani control in Kashmir of leaders of Hamas tells you something about how these terrorist organisations are inspiring each other... Apparently, they are cooperating in order to achieve their common goal which is to terrorise us and to terrorise

you. So this is something that we have to take into account," he added.

India on Wednesday marked the sixth anniversary of the "punitive" Balakot airstrike carried out by the Indian Air Force that destroyed the JeM camps in PoK where operatives were trained for suicide missions and deadly terror attacks.

The airstrike was part of India's campaign against cross-border terrorism after the horrific Pulwama terror attack in 2019 and manifested the country's willingness to take decisive action against terror infrastructure in Pakistan. Several leaders have voiced concerns over Pakistan's involvement with terrorist organisations to fuel unrest in the region after Hamas Commander Khaled al-Qaddoumi and other Pakistani terrorists were spotted during a rally in PoK. VHP spokesperson Vinod Bansal had said ISI was playing an important role in this "terror alliance". **IANIS**

HAMAS IN A HUDDLE WITH TERRORISTS OF JAISH-E-MOHAMMED AND LASHKAR-E-TAIBA IN PoK EARLIER THIS MONTH, SAYS REUVEN AZAR

'Delimitation will be curse for TG'

STATE BUREAU
 Hyderabad

BRS working president KT Rama Rao raised serious concerns over the impending injustice to Southern States in the proposed delimitation of constituencies.

He warned that the Centre's decision to redraw constituencies based on population would turn into a curse for Telangana and other Southern States such as Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. He extended support to the apprehensions raised by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on social media regarding this issue, for fair, transparent and equitable approach in the delimitation process.

Questioning the Modi government's intentions, Rama Rao wondered whether the Centre was planning to penalise Southern States for successfully implementing family planning for the nation's welfare. He strongly criticised the move, stating that executing delimitation solely based on population, without considering the efforts of the Southern States in population control, was against the spirit of democracy and federalism.

WON'T OPPOSE HINDI IF YOU DON'T IMPOSE IT, SAY STALIN

CHENNAI: The DMK will not oppose Hindi if it is not "imposed" on Tamil Nadu and forcing the language on Tamils amounts to playing with their self-respect, state Chief Minister and the ruling party's president M K Stalin said on Wednesday.

In a letter to partymen on the issue of alleged Hindi imposition, Stalin said self-respect was Tamils' 'unique' nature. "For those asking why DMK still opposes Hindi, my humble response to them as one among you is—because you still impose it on us." **(SEE PAGE 2)**

The BRS working president affirmed that the contributions of Southern States to nation-building could not be ignored. "In 1951, Southern States accounted for 26.2 per cent of India's population, which has declined to 19.8 per cent by 2022. Meanwhile, the population share of Northern States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan has risen from 39.1 per cent to 43.2 per cent," he said. **(SEE PAGES 2, 5, 7)**

SUN SETS ON 2025 MAHA KUMBH



Devotees take holy dip at the Triveni Sangam on Maha Shivaratri, the final day of the Maha Kumbh Mela, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, on Wednesday. The Maha Kumbh has set an unparalleled record with over 64 crore devotees taking the holy dip in the last 45 days, making it the largest human gathering in history. — Photo: AP **(REPORT PAGE 8)**

Father-son duo drowns in lake

CITY BUREAU
 Hyderabad

In a tragic incident, a father and son duo drowned in the Langer Houz lake in the city on Wednesday afternoon. A GHMC outsourcing worker,

Kareem (42), and his son Sahil (22), both residents of Falaknuma, had gone to clear water hyacinth at the Shah Hatim Talab in Toli-chowki in the morning along with co-workers. After completing the task,

the father and son came to the Langer Houz lake. "Sahil was clearing water hyacinth in the lake when he started to drown. Kareem rushed to his rescue. But both drowned," ACP Golconda Syed Faiz said. **(SEE PAGE 2)**

Disqualification: MLA ridiculed

STATE BUREAU
 Hyderabad

Gadwal MLA Bandla Krishnamohan Reddy found himself at the centre of social media ridicule after posting Maha Shivaratri greetings featuring photographs of Congress leaders, despite his recent attempts to distance himself from the party fearing disqualification.

He is one of the 10 BRS MLAs who defected to the ruling Congress. They now appear to be walking a tightrope, caught between their past affiliations and the current compulsions.

Krishnamohan Reddy, who was elected on a BRS ticket but later defected to the ruling Congress, had lodged a police complaint on February 11, against unknown individuals for using his images on Congress flex

boards without his permission. In his complaint, he insisted that he remained a BRS MLA and claimed a conspiracy was underway to mislead the public about his political affiliation.

However, his Shivaratri greetings post on Wednesday contradicted his own stance. The posters prominently featured Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, A Revanth Reddy and other Congress leaders, while conspicuously omitting BRS chief K Chandrababhan Reddy, working president KT Rama Rao and other senior BRS leaders, with whom he claims to be associated.

The irony did not go unnoticed, as netizens ridiculed the Gadwal MLA, suggesting him to file a case against himself for misrepresenting his political affiliation. **(SEE PAGE 2)**

Pax protest at RGIA over Varanasi flight delay

CITY BUREAU
 Hyderabad

Mild tension prevailed as passengers staged a protest following delay of a flight from Hyderabad to Varanasi at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) on Wednesday.

Maha Shivaratri marked the conclusion of the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 on February 26, with devotees flocking to the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj for the final holy dip. Several passengers from the city, who planned to have a holy dip, booked their



PASSENGERS WHO BOOKED TICKETS FROM SPICEJET AIRLINES, ARRIVED AT THE AIRPORT WELL IN ADVANCE AND GOT THEIR BOARDING PASSES AS WELL. THE AIRCRAFT WAS SCHEDULED TO TAKE OFF AT 10 AM. BUT, JUST A FEW MINUTES BEFORE THE SCHEDULE TIME, A LAST-MINUTE ANNOUNCEMENT OF DELAY WAS MADE

air tickets reportedly shelling high fare amount. As per available information, passengers who booked tickets from Spicejet

airlines, arrived at the airport well in advance and got their boarding passes as well. The aircraft was scheduled to take off at 10 am.

However, just a few minutes before the schedule time, a last minute announcement of a flight delay was made by the airliner

staff, leading to anger in the passengers.

Passengers alleged that the airlines staff did not respond promptly to their queries and were left in lurch for at least three hours. Several passengers said they bought the air tickets at a whopping cost, only to be deceived.

Arguments ensued between agitated passengers and the airliner staff. The CISF personnel intervened and pacified the passengers. The airline staff assured passengers to make alternate arrangements.

Nitish expands Bihar Cabinet

PATNA

With less than a year left for the Assembly polls, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday inducted seven new faces into his Council of Ministers, all from alliance partner BJP. The expansion, which could be the last before the elections are announced, raises the total number of Ministers to 36. Governor Arif Mohammad Khan administered the oath of office to the Ministers who all are part of the Assembly. **(REPORT PAGE 8)**