

Telangana Endures Cold Snap as Temperatures Plummet

Telangana is currently experiencing a significant cold snap, with minimum temperatures dipping into single digits across the northern and northeastern districts. The Komurambhim Asifabad and Sangareddy districts are particularly affected, with Sirpur(U) in Komurambhim Asifabad recording the lowest temperature in the state at a chilling 8.9 degrees Celsius.

Residents in urban areas such as Wankidi, Kerameri, Jainur, Tiryani, and Asifabad are struggling to cope with the biting cold, exacerbated by intense cold winds sweeping through the region. Medical professionals have raised concerns about the impact of these conditions on vulnerable populations, particularly the elderly and children.

For several weeks, the state has been experiencing temperatures below normal, with the latest weekend figures marking some of the lowest of the season. Meteorologists attribute this chilling trend to cold winds blowing from the west and a decrease in atmospheric humidity.

In addition to the capital city of Hyderabad, various mandals in Adilabad, Rangareddy, and Vikarabad have also reported temperatures ranging from 10.4 to 10.9 degrees Celsius. The cold



weather is particularly challenging for those commuting to work early in the morning or late at night.

Looking ahead, the meteorological

department has warned that the cold will intensify over the next two days, with temperatures predicted to fall by an additional three degrees Celsius below the

current minimums. In light of this worsening cold spell, officials are urging residents to take precautions, such as wearing warm clothing, minimising night travel, and consuming hot beverages.



TG TET Exam Schedule Announced for January 2026

The Telangana State Teacher Eligibility Test (TG TET) examinations for January 2026 are set to take place online from 3rd to 20th January. The exam will span over nine days, divided into 15 sessions due to the high number of candidates. Each day will feature two sessions: Session I from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM and Session II from 2:00 PM to 4:30 PM. Candidates are urged to download their hall tickets in advance and arrive punctually at their designated examination centres. Further details regarding the examinations will be available on the official website.

Jupally credits CM Revanth for panchayat poll victory

Hyderabad: Minister for Tourism and Culture Jupally Krishna Rao said the state government has honoured the trust placed by the people, and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's leadership is steering the administration effectively.

Speaking to the media at Chinnambavi village in Kollapur Assembly constituency on Monday, he criticised the previous BRS government, saying poor management had harmed the economy and left the state burdened with debt.

He emphasised that the current Congress government is working to fulfil its promises and ensure public welfare.



"The government will soon complete its remaining initiatives. The results of the ongoing panchayat elections show that people trust Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and his leadership," Rao said.

Highlighting the strong performance of the Congress in Kollapur, he noted that party-backed candidates won 50 seats, including three independents, while BJP and BRS secured 28 seats.

Rao added that people supported Congress because they believe development will progress faster with the ruling party's backing and were influenced by the wide publicity of government schemes.

Rahul asked to move pvt member bill on BC quota in LS: PCC chief

Hyderabad: The Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud said that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy appealed to Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, to introduce a private member bill for discussion on the Backward Classes (BC) Reservations Bill in the lower house. The TPCC Chief alleged that the Centre has been suppressing the matter by not including it in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

Making it clear that the State government is ready to fight against the Centre and that the day the bill will become law is not far away even if the BJP obstructs it, Mahesh Kumar Goud asserted that the Congress government and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy are committed to BC Reservations. He made it clear that the State government did not set the issue aside even when the Panchayat elections were



taking place. He called upon the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM), and Communist Party of India (CPI) to come forward to wage a fight against the Centre on BC Reservations.

While addressing the BC Maha Dharna held in New Delhi on Monday, the TPCC Chief made it clear that he participated in the programme not merely as TPCC Chief but also as an individual. He said that the Congress party will continue its fight to mount pressure on the Centre for the legal validity of BC Reservations.

Mahesh Kumar Goud stated there is no need to doubt the Congress party's commitment regarding BC Reservations. He said that the Congress party took a decision on BC Reservations in the Kamareddy Declaration. Although the Congress government proceeded with the Panchayat elections due to a court-mandated deadline, the Congress party has been receiving good results, he noted.

Recalling that the Revanth Reddy government itself revealed that the State has 56 per cent BCs while conducting a caste survey, the TPCC Chief said they will wage a fight for BC Reservations by joining hands with BC Unions.

BRS flays Congress government's new urea distribution policy

Hyderabad: BRS leader and former Minister S Niranjan Reddy on Tuesday condemned the Congress government's new app-based urea distribution system, accusing it of punishing genuine farmers and harbouring a grudge against tenant farmers. Reddy described the policy as a thoughtless move that could add to the urea crisis and said it may create a rift among farmers. Hyderabad Local Events Stating that the handling of urea distribution itself was faulty, he questioned

Vamsi Krishna demands semiconductor unit for Peddapalli-Mancherial



Peddapalli MP Gaddam Vamsi Krishna on Monday urged the Centre to establish a semiconductor industry in the Peddapalli-Mancherial region of Telangana, citing strong infrastructure, abundant water availability from the Godavari River, and a skilled workforce supported by established units such as Ramagundam Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited (RFCL), Singareni Collieries, and NTPC.

In his representation submitted to Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Vamsi Krishna criticised the Centre's decision to locate a major semiconductor project in Andhra Pradesh, alleging political favouritism towards the NDA ally, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). He argued that merit and regional capability were overlooked despite Telangana's comprehensive preparedness. He emphasised that establishing a semiconductor unit in Peddapalli-Mancherial would generate large-scale employment, curb regional unemployment, and significantly strengthen the state's industrial base.

"Instead of prioritising merit and regional capability, the Union Government chose to play politics and shifted the semiconductor project to Andhra Pradesh," Vamsi stated, reiterating that Peddapalli-Mancherial's strategic advantages were unjustly ignored.

The appeal follows the Centre's approval in August 2025 of a Rs 468-crore semiconductor unit in Andhra Pradesh under the India Semiconductor Mission. While Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu welcomed the move as a boost to the state's electronics ecosystem, Telangana leaders have consistently alleged discrimination, claiming their state had offered land, incentives, and investor commitments before the project was diverted.

Rahul Gandhi speaks of 'Satya' but practices 'Asatya': Bandi Sanjay

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar launched a sharp attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accusing him of misleading the nation by invoking 'Satya' while practising 'Asatya'.

Taking to social media on Monday, Kumar said on X that Gandhi's arguments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government were built on falsehoods and aimed at creating confusion among the people.

Kumar referred to RSS Sarsanghchalak Dr Mohan Bhagwat's recent remarks, where Bhagwat spoke of Shakti as energy in a civilisational context, drawing from the holy Ramayana. He noted that Bhagwat had clearly stated that truth was on the side of the nation. "Rahul Gandhi chose to misinterpret Shakti as political power, exposing his poor understanding of Bharat's cultural language and even basic science," Kumar remarked.

He further added that Hinduism cannot be understood through "quick briefings" and clarified that Shakti is not synonymous with political authority or gaddi. Quoting Prime Minister Modi, Kumar said, "Those who try to attack Shakti ultimately harm them-



selves."

On Congress's allegations of "vote theft," Kumar challenged the party to vacate power in Telangana and Karnataka if it truly believed elections were stolen. "You cannot celebrate democracy when you win and cry 'vote chori' when you lose," he said. He accused Congress of spreading fear by falsely claiming reservations would be removed and now misleading people with lies that voter verification would lead to loss of Aadhaar, ration cards, or land.

Kumar asserted that Congress has made "Asatya" its political tool, insulting crores of voters, who made independent choices. He recalled how Congress treated democracy as private property during the Emergency and accused its leaders of intimidating independent institutions, like the Election Commission.

Man loses Rs 75 lakh to online betting scam

Hyderabad: A 32-year-old resident of Secunderabad has reported a devastating loss of Rs 75,00,000 in a protracted online betting and casino fraud that spanned from 2021 to 2025.

The victim stated that the ordeal began in 2021 when he received a WhatsApp message from a platform promoting online games such as Cricket, Teen Patti, and Casino, assuring easy profits through a scheme called Fivestar Cricket Aviator Flight Game.

Initially, after depositing Rs 10,000, the victim received a small profit, which rapidly gained his trust. Subsequently, during 2021, he deposited a total of Rs 10,00,000 into various bank accounts provided by the operators. However, he lost the entire amount and initially stopped playing.

In March 2022, the same fraudsters contacted him again and persuaded him to resume playing on a different platform, claiming a lower minimum de-



posit.

Believing their claims, the victim, between 2021 and 2025, deposited a staggering cumulative total of Rs 75,00,000 using multiple methods, including bank accounts, UPI IDs, cash deposit machines, and QR scanners, as directed by the scammers across various betting websites.



Bajrang Dal leader Jivan, hundreds of youth from Cong, BRS join BJP

Hyderabad: In a boost to the BJP youth outreach in Telangana, Bajrang Dal State Vice President Jivan, along with hundreds of young supporters from Congress and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), formally joined the BJP on Monday.

Welcoming the new entrants at the party office, Telangana State unit BJP President N Ramchander Rao declared that the BJP is a "youth party" and emphasised that young leaders have a promising political future if they dedicate themselves with sincerity and hard work. He highlighted the recent appointment of 45-year-old Nitin Nabin as the BJP's national working president as evidence of the party's commitment to empowering youth for nation-building and organisational growth.

Rao urged the youth of Telangana to play a decisive role in unseating what he described as the "corrupt Congress government" in the upcoming assembly elections. He called upon the new members to expose the failures of the ruling party and strengthen the BJP's presence across the state. Stressing the importance of grassroots mobilisation, Rao also appealed to party workers and youth to focus on capturing the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) in the forthcoming civic polls, asserting that "youth is the strength of the party."

Earlier, Jivan was formally welcomed into the BJP fold with the party scarf, symbolising his commitment to the new political journey. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from hundreds of youths who shifted their allegiance from the Congress and BRS, signalling a growing momentum for the BJP among younger demographics.

Prominent leaders, including Medchal Urban district ex-president Kanta Rao, state party chief spokesperson and media in-charge NV Subhash, and other senior functionaries, were present at the gathering, underscoring the importance of the occasion for the party's expansion strategy in Telangana.

Prisons DG Soumya Mishra launches digital reforms at Jail Bhavan

Hyderabad: Telangana Director General of Prisons Soumya Mishra on Monday inaugurated three key citizen-centric initiatives at 'Jail Bhavan', marking a significant step towards transparency, efficiency, and modern governance within the Prisons department.

The initiatives include a Biometric attendance system, the Swagatham visitors portal, and a Visitors' Lounge, all aimed at strengthening administrative discipline and enhancing public convenience. Mishra stated that the biometric system reflects the department's commitment to accountability, punctuality, and improved efficiency through technology-driven governance.

The Swagatham visitors portal offers a structured and transparent digital appointment system for individuals seeking meetings with officials, ensuring organised and respectful interaction. The newly inaugurated Visitors' Lounge provides a comfortable and welcoming environment, further reinforcing the department's citizen-friendly approach.



The DG appreciated the efforts of the officers and staff involved in implementing the initiatives and expressed confidence in their ethical and effective utilisation. The event was attended by senior prison officials, including IGs Y Rajesh and N Murali Babu, DIGs D Srinivas and M Sampath, administrative officer Mohd Yousuf, and other staff.

Women advocates protest at HC demanding 30% quota in Bar Council elections

Hyderabad: Women advocates practising at the Telangana High Court on Monday afternoon at lunch hour staged a protest in front of gate no 6 of the court, demanding implementation of 30% reservation for women in the Bar Council elections scheduled to be held in January 2026. The protest was organised to draw attention of the Bar Council towards what the women advocates termed as continued neglect and discrimination against women in the electoral process. Leading the protest, T Rajitha strongly criticised the Bar Council for what she described as its adamant and biased approach in refusing to extend reservation to women advocates. She pointed out that several State Bar Councils had implemented reservation policies to ensure adequate representation of women, while Telangana continues to lag despite repeated representations. Rajitha alleged that chairman of the Bar Council A Narasimha Reddy has shown a complete lack of interest in addressing the long-pending demand of women advocates. She stated that despite multiple requests, he failed to forward a no-objection or recommendation for women's reservation to the Bar Council of India which is mandatory for implementing the policy in the upcoming elections.

Politics and livelihood issues around a 'half statue' in Karkala

A strange sight greets anyone who enters Bailoor, a small town in Karkala taluk of Udupi district in coastal Karnataka: a statue on a hillock with no torso. This is a portion of what was meant to be an impressive statue of Parashurama, an avatar of Vishnu in the Hindu pantheon whom the devout believe carved out the western coast with his axe. On getting closer, one realises that what was meant to be a theme park around this statue and a great tourism draw is also in disarray. The "half statue" that has been standing at the centre of the village for over eight months now is witness to much political slugfest and hopes of better livelihood of locals being dashed. A 33-year-old woman who sells meat (who did not wish to be named) said her business had improved significantly after the theme park was inaugurated in January 2023, as several hotels started banking on improved tourism. But about nine months later, the situation changed drastically, forcing business establishments to shut down one by one. This was thanks to politics that started brewing around the statue. Only the lower portion of the Parashurama statue in Karkala taluk of Udupi district stands now as the top half has been dismantled for reinforcement. Only the lower portion of the Parashurama statue in Karkala taluk of Udupi district stands now as the top half has been dismantled for reinforcement. | Photo Credit: H.S. MANJUNATH "Everyone here was jumping with joy for Karkala was finally having a major tourism spot attracting many visitors. This led to the mushrooming of shops, hotels, and eateries in the vicinity, thus creating jobs for locals. My business shot up as new restaurants started buying fish and meat and they too had good business," she says. Locals estimate that more than 1,000 people were visiting the park, which had a 33-foot bronze statue of Parashurama, every day. The statue was standing atop a 450-foot-tall rock. People from many parts of the State used to visit the place which also has an amphitheatre with a seating capacity of 1,000, a bhajan mandir, an art gallery, and a film studio. In October 2023, however, the park was closed to the public and it has not opened since then, forcing the shopkeepers to leave the place.

Sunil Wagle, another local resident who had set up a restaurant near the park, said his hopes were high after the commencement of work on the park in 2022. He invested a good amount of money, and when the park opened, many people started visiting his restaurant for refreshments and to purchase water bottles and cold drinks. Wagle said not just him, a few others also set up businesses. Several others had purchased land hoping that the prices would shoot up. He is very upset with politicians for derailing what held promise for many. "Now we do not know when this project will restart, and people are not showing interest in re-establishing their businesses. The aspiration that locals would secure jobs because of tourism has also taken a hit." Before the project, an acre of land around the town would cost about ₹18 lakh to ₹20 lakh and many people



purchased the land. The opening of the park, by the then Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, drove the land price up. The price of roadside parcels of land near the park increased to ₹50 lakh an acre. While some purchased for investment, a few built buildings to lease out or rent. "But the park was closed to repair the statue and the price crashed. Hotel owners and shopkeepers vacating the space also left a deep impact on the business prospects," said Ramesh Kallotte, a daily wage labourer. During weekends, a lot of people used to visit the place and business was good, he said. Design flaw, statue politics Warnings of some trouble were there even as the park was inaugurated in January 2023. The event was attended by BJP as well as Congress leaders. During the inauguration, the then Minister and BJP MLA for Karkala Sunil Kumar announced that although the park was opened, the statue needed a "fix" as the hand that was holding the axe did not have proper support and could break due to strong wind or lightning. The modification for the statue proposed was reinforcing the hand and joining a portion of it to the back of the head. It is anyone's guess why the statue was inaugurated in such a hurry without first fixing the faulty work. The Legislative Assembly elections were months away and the then BJP government wanted to take credit for the project. For about nine months nothing happened, but in October 2023, the chairman of the government agency Nirmiti Kendra — the Deputy Commissioner of Udupi district — permitted the contract agency Krish Art World to repair the statue. The agency had sought permission for reinforcement work by dismantling the upper half portion of the statue. The park was closed to visitors as the work commenced. What snowballed into a controversy was a piece of fibre that fell while the statue was being dismantled. Several local Congress leaders alleged

that the statue was made of fibre and not bronze as was being claimed. Sunil Kumar, however, contended that "fibre patches" were used only to attach the pieces of bronze and that this was a standard practice. He said this was countered not just by him but also by officials of the Nirmiti Kendra. There was a problem with the statue but the public was not kept in the dark about it, he said. He alleged that to score a political point, the Congress had set this narrative and had sought an investigation. "I welcome the probe as I do not have anything to hide. Every procedure was followed during the implementation of the project," he said. Sunil Kumar said the Congress was alleging that the BJP had let down a religious space. This, however, is not a religious space but a theme park, a tourism spot, he said. Meanwhile, as the location is prone to extreme weather conditions, including lightning strikes, the contractor requested the Nirmiti Kendra for scientific reinforcement. After the kendra granted permission to dismantle the statue for reinforcement, the contractor removed the upper half of the structure. But the kendra on December 21, 2023, served a show-cause notice to the company for non-completion of work. The company filed a writ petition in the High Court of Karnataka on April 10, 2024, seeking protection at the site citing a threat. In the petition, it was argued that they could not complete the work as there were extreme weather issues. The High Court disposed of the petition on April 22 as the Nirmiti Kendra and the company came to an agreement. The Nirmiti Kendra agreed to provide security, while the company said it would resume work. The work could not be started then as the model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha elections was in place, and subsequently, in May, the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government ordered a probe into allegations of irregularities. Congress

leader Muniyal Uday Kumar, while admitting that it is a good project for the town, alleged that Sunil Kumar was instrumental in the failure of the project. He said while the lower portion of the statue was made of bronze, the upper portion was made using fibre "to swindle money" that was released to build the statue. He said the total cost of the statue was ₹2.4 crore but the government paid just ₹1 crore to the contractor. The contractor, therefore, executed substandard work, he alleged. Even in the theme park project, which has other infrastructure, there are irregularities and hence the government ordered a probe by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). He said the BJP, which claims to be a pro-Hindutva party, has turned this religious space into a mess. He said though action should have been taken against the wrongdoing by now, it did not happen as at the top level both the Congress and the BJP had "an unwritten understanding". He said for the inaugural event, the previous BJP government had spent a whopping ₹2 crore. The MLA wished to make this a major political event to galvanise voters, he claimed. Set aside politics, say locals But all that the locals now want is the completion of the project as this would become the "pride of Karkala". Lokesh (name changed) said the project is suffering due to politics between the two major parties. Lokesh, who runs a small business in Karkala, said when the roads were asphalted and the park was inaugurated, the people rejoiced. "There is not a single statue of this scale of Parashurama, who we believe created the land of coastal Karnataka. This spot would have attracted lakhs of people if the project was completed as envisaged. As this location is close to the highway, many people would visit," he said. People hope that the CID probe is completed soon and the statue as well as their hopes of a better livelihood takes shape again.

China's 'grey-zone' warfare tactics against Taiwan | Explained

The story so far: Since the new Taiwanese president Lai Ching-te has assumed office, all eyes have been on the rocky start to his tenure. While China's belligerent response to Mr. Lai's "pro-independence" and "secessionist" statements was striking, it has now resorted to a sophisticated ploy to respond to Mr. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This is often referred to as 'grey-zone' warfare, which comprises elements that frustrate Taiwan in a sustained manner.

What has China done?

China's preparedness to invade Taiwan and fight a high-intensity war over the island is a much debated subject. Training drills in the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theater Command (PLA ETC) are targeted precisely at demonstrating China's ability to fight and win. However, a more cognitive tool that Beijing is deploying to demonstrate this ability is simulated audiovisuals. On May 24, for example, the PLA ETC Weibo account released a 3D animation video depicting how in an invasion scenario, land-and warship-based ballistic missile launchers would fire tens of missiles at one go, striking areas in Taipei and Kaohsiung. Moreover, since 2020, the X account of the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defence has turned into a repository of reportage on daily sorties conducted by PLA fighter jets, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), strategic fighters and early warning aircraft. While such sorties do not engage the island's defence forces directly, they exert sustained pressure on them. Further, these UAVs also conduct intelligence work in the areas surrounding the island. The long term presence of such mobilisation induces wear-out within Taiwanese forces, even before there is kinetic combat.

What about ideology?

To build a favourable image for itself, Beijing often deploys narratives within Taiwanese territory that thrust ideological choices upon its citizens. For example, sometime on May 25, just under a week after Mr. Lai assumed office, internet users in Taiwan observed a Youtube video of a Chinese citizen operating a drone to drop cardboard boxes on Kinmen island. When investigated by the Kinmen Defence Command on May 26, the boxes unveiled fliers written in simplified Chinese, stating "Both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China, one Chinese nation. Taiwan independence is a dead end. Lai's Taiwan independence is a dead end." Some other fliers warned, "Don't sacrifice your life for Taiwan independence, do you understand?" The Kinmen Command stated that this was "a typical cognitive warfare tactic" deployed by China, because it initiates public discussions on social media, and garners attention for the Chinese cause.

What are the political tactics China uses?

In its 'carrots and sticks' approach towards Taiwan, Beijing deploys sticks for the DPP and carrots for its primary opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT). Well



known for its relatively pro-mainland views, the KMT continues to engage with Communist Party (CPC) officials, even as any meaningful communication between the DPP and the CPC has stalled since Ms. Tsai became President of Taiwan in 2016. DPP legislators have often described these engagements as KMT's "collusion" with the CPC. In fact, KMT officials have, in the past, been investigated by the Tsai administration under the 'anti-infiltration law' after their visits to China. China's 'sticks' against the

DPP entail coercive economic measures, which leverage the cross-strait trade and business interdependence to seek concessions. One such example is China's unilateral suspension of preferential tax rates for chemical imports from Taiwan, granted under the only trade agreement to exist between the two sides — the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). Beijing announced that such a suspension, applicable to 134 items imported from Taiwan, is retaliation against

Mr. Lai's propagation of "separatist" sentiments in his inaugural speech, as well as Taipei's own restrictions against imports of over 2,000 goods made in China. Mr. Lai's electoral victory revolves around '3Ds' — defence, deterrence and diplomacy. Maintaining the balance between pursuing them and avoiding Chinese provocation will be a tight-rope walk. As 'grey-zone' warfare tactics become a subject of deliberation, Mr. Lai will have much to grapple with during his tenure.

Advertisers, media organisations push back on self-certification rules for ads

Media bodies — such as print, radio and broadcast players — and their ad agencies, have urged the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to defer the implementation deadline for a "self-certification" for all advertising. The requirement was put in place by the I&B Ministry in response to a Supreme Court order on May 7 in the Indian Medical Association's case against Patanjali, where the court found that the ayurvedic conglomerate was endangering people's health by printing misleading claims on evidence-based medicine and its own products.

In representations to the Ministry reviewed by The Hindu, three industry bodies pushed back on the rapid implementation of the Supreme Court's order. The order requires advertisers to reaffirm their ads' compliance with the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994. The rules are currently on track to kick in on June 20. An industry body representing print media asked the Ministry to keep the requirements

in "abeyance" until ambiguities in terms of the scope of advertisements, applicability for digital ads, advertorials, government ads, and other issues are sorted out. The body also requested that the requirements be limited to medical advertising.

A body representing TV broadcasters and some of their streaming services said that the SC only imposed requirements on advertising firms, and not channels, whereas the MIB has sent advisories to channels and other media requiring them to "verify the authenticity" of self-certification furnished by advertisers. "[We] urge that the compliance period be extended by 45 days since the transition would involve practical challenges and would require cooperation by various stakeholders," the letter said.

A grouping of ad agencies, for its part, said that firms they service "may lose revenue due to the inability to launch campaigns on time," and that the Broadcast Seva portal set up for permissions and

clearances may have technical glitches that could hobble ads from being released on time. The scope has also been confounding some media houses — for instance, one source at a broadcast channel wondered, would a channel and its show be considered a product or a service meriting a self-certification? Would viewership claims — based on constantly fluctuating data released by the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), be considered claims?

While the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has lined up meetings on a variety of subjects, there is no clarity on when advertisers and ad agencies will have an opportunity to discuss their reservations with the requirements. While associations had chalked out a plan to approach the Supreme Court to clarify these issues, The Hindu has learnt, they have chosen to wait longer to decide whether or not to file intervention applications before a vacation bench.

Cultivating reform: 12 policy strategies for India's agricultural revival

Farmers' distress in India is a profound socio-economic issue deeply rooted in systemic challenges. Low crop prices, unpredictable weather patterns exacerbated by climate change, and rising input costs contribute to their financial instability. The lack of adequate infrastructure, timely access to credit, and comprehensive insurance schemes further aggravate their plight. The dependence on middlemen for market access often leads to significant economic burdens. This distress manifests in widespread discontent, protests, and farmer suicides, highlighting the urgent need for holistic policy interventions to ensure sustainable livelihoods and socio-economic equity for India's farmers. In the aftermath of the recent elections, the new government finds itself at a pivotal juncture, particularly concerning the growing distress and discontent among farmers in various states. The electoral mandate underscores the urgency for decisive and empathetic policy interventions to address the myriad challenges faced by the agricultural sector. This piece proposes a series of strategic policy tweaks to reduce farmers' ire and foster sustainable growth in the agricultural landscape.

1. Implementing Fair and Transparent Price Mechanisms

The perpetual grievance of inadequate pricing for farm produce remains central to farmer discontent. Establishing fair and transparent price mechanisms is crucial. These measures would provide a more stable and predictable income, mitigating the financial uncertainty that plagues many farming households. Enhancing transparency in pricing can involve integrating digital platforms that provide real-time market prices, effectively reducing the exploitation by middlemen and ensuring that farmers are better informed about the true value of their produce.

2. Prioritising Agricultural Activities in the MGNREGA Scheme

MGNREGA has been a lifeline for rural employment but its potential to support agriculture remains underutilised. By prioritising agricultural activities within the scheme, the government can provide a dual benefit: assured income to farmers and additional support for farming-related tasks. This could include water conservation, soil improvement, and infrastructure development, benefiting agricultural productivity and sustainability. Such integration would ensure that farmers have reliable income streams even during off-seasons, thus stabilising their financial situation and reducing migration to urban areas in search of work.

3. Investing in Rural Infrastructure

Modern and efficient rural infrastructure is a cornerstone of agricultural productivity. Post-harvest losses can be significantly reduced by improving irrigation systems, building storage facilities, and enhancing market linkages. This can ensure that produce remains fresh and valuable when it reaches the market, thereby

maximising farmer profits. Investment in rural infrastructure should also focus on developing transportation networks. Good road connectivity ensures farmers can quickly and easily transport their produce to markets, reducing spoilage and ensuring higher returns.

4. Enhancing Access to Credit and Insurance

Financial security is a major concern for farmers, who often face barriers in accessing credit and insurance. Expanding the reach of institutional credit and crop insurance schemes, particularly for small and marginal farmers, is imperative. Simplifying loan procedures and ensuring the timely disbursement of insurance claims can provide critical support, enabling farmers to invest in quality inputs and innovative farming techniques. Offering targeted financial products, such as low-interest loans and flexible repayment schedules, can also boost the confidence of farmers to take calculated risks and invest in higher-yielding practices.

5. Empowering Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)

FPOs can revolutionise the agricultural landscape by giving farmers collective bargaining power and market access. Strengthening and expanding the reach of FPOs can empower farmers to negotiate better prices, access quality inputs at lower costs, and enhance their overall competitive edge in the market. The government should provide these organisations with technical assistance, capacity-building programs, and financial support. Facilitating partnerships between FPOs and private enterprises can open new avenues for investment, innovation, and market expansion.

6. Developing Pest and Disease-Resistant Crop Varieties

The agricultural sector relies heavily on pesticides, which can be cost-prohibitive and environmentally damaging. The development and dissemination of pest and disease-resistant crop varieties are critical. Investing in agricultural research and development to produce resilient crops can significantly reduce dependency on chemical inputs, lower production costs, and minimise the risk of crop failure. Collaborations with agricultural universities and international research bodies can fast-track the introduction of these varieties, ensuring that farmers have access to the best possible pest and disease management solutions.

7. Facilitating Diversification and Value Addition

Diversification is a powerful tool to enhance farmer resilience and income. Encouraging the cultivation of high-value crops, livestock rearing, and non-farm activities can provide multiple income streams. Supporting value-added products through training, infrastructure, and market linkages can further elevate farmers' earning potential. Promoting cottage indus-



tries and processing units at the village level can ensure that farmers benefit from the entire value chain, from raw produce to final consumer products. This not only increases income but also creates local employment opportunities.

8. Strengthening Extension Services and Knowledge Sharing Knowledge is power, especially in agriculture. Strengthening extension services can empower farmers with the latest agronomic practices, market information, and technological interventions. Training extension workers, establishing digital platforms for real-time information dissemination, and promoting peer-to-peer learning networks can democratise agricultural knowledge, fostering innovation and productivity. Digital platforms providing tutorials, weather updates, market prices, and pest alerts can be revolutionary. Tailored local language content can ensure accessibility and understanding, leading to better on-ground practices.

9. Developing and Distributing Suitable Agricultural Implements

Farm mechanisation tailored to the needs of small farmers can significantly enhance productivity and reduce physical strain. Developing and distributing suitable agricultural implements, such as small-scale tractors, planting tools, and efficient harvesting devices, can transform the farming landscape. Subsidised equipment leasing programs, government grants, and co-operative ownership models can ensure that even the smallest farmers can access modern agricultural tools, increasing efficiency and output.

10. Promoting Agroecology and Sustainable Practices

Sustainable farming practices are essential for long-term agricultural health. Promoting agroecology, which emphasises diversity, resilience, and ecological balance, can improve soil health, reduce input costs, and improve climate resilience. Incentives for organic farming, agroforestry, and integrated pest management can reduce chemical dependency and ensure healthier, more sustainable agricultural systems. Community-based agroecology projects can also educate and

encourage farmers to adopt eco-friendly practices, contributing to environmental conservation and sustainability.

11. Encouraging Vegetable and Horticulture Development

Promoting vegetable and horticulture development, alongside barren land development through initiatives like *Jatropha* plantation, can significantly enhance agricultural diversification. These initiatives provide alternative income sources and fully utilise land resources. Government support for cooperative nurseries and community gardens can further promote these activities, ensuring farmers can access quality seeds, training, and market connections.

12. Enhancing Collaboration Between Research Institutions and Policymakers

Effective collaboration between research institutions and policymakers ensures that innovative agricultural solutions are translated into actionable policies. Bridging the gap between academic research and practical application can lead to more effective and scalable interventions. Establishing farmer-researcher forums, engaging in participatory research, and promoting pilot projects can validate new technologies and approaches, ensuring they meet the needs of farmers and are readily adopted on the ground.

Collaborative Strategies for Revitalising India's Agricultural Sector

Engaging agricultural economists, policy analysts, and farming stakeholders in constructive dialogue will provide nuanced insights into addressing farmer issues in Maharashtra, Punjab, and beyond. By prioritising inclusive, evidence-based policy interventions, the new government can effectively address the farmers' grievances and pave the way for a thriving, sustainable agricultural sector. Through thoughtful and collaborative efforts, India can ensure its farmers survive and flourish in an evolving economic landscape. Harmonising traditional wisdom with contemporary innovations through strategic policy changes can revitalise India's agricultural sector.

A look at the Supreme Court's judgments on water disputes in the country

In the words of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), water is 'the stuff of life and a basic human right'. Thus, water is an essential element for life – including human life – on earth and as a result is a core concern in law. Despite immense reservoirs of water in the country, there are water shortages everywhere often leading to riots, roadblocks and other disturbances and disputes for getting water. In many cities and colonies, people get water for half an hour in a day, and sometimes not even for that long. Recently, a bout of water crisis in New Delhi led to hue and cry across major parts of the city. To meet the requirements, the Delhi government borrowed water from its neighbouring states, which however, did not turn out to be sufficient. Consequently, the Delhi government requested Himachal Pradesh (HP) to release 137 cusecs of surplus water. The matter subsequently reached the Supreme Court, which ordered HP to release water from upstream from where it can reach the Wazirabad barrage in the Capital. As and when Haryana receives the water, it must provide the "right to passage" until the Wazirabad barrage. However, Haryana objected and contended that there is no method to measure whether HP has released additional water or not and that Haryana is also tackling a water crisis. However, the top court bench refuted the objections and emphasised the serious drinking water crisis in Delhi. The major point to witness here is that prima facie, there is no dispute raised on the use of the water either by the HP or Delhi, but by Haryana while giving the passage for the water to reach from upstream to Delhi.

In *Networking of Rivers* (2012), the Court ruled that Section 11 of the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 ("the 1956 Act") uses the expression "use, distribution and control of water in any river" and they are the keywords in determination of the scope of power conferred on a tribunal constituted Under Section 3 of the 1956 Act. If a matter fell outside the scope of these three crucial words, the power of Section 11 of the 1956 Act in ousting the jurisdiction of the courts in respect of any water dispute, which is otherwise to be referred to the tribunal, would not have any manner of application.

'Water dispute' has been defined in Section 2(c) of the Act, 1957 to mean any dispute or difference between two or more State governments in respect to the use, distribution or control of waters of or in any inter-state river or river valley. It was urged that the Krishna River Water Dispute Tribunal award popularly known as the Bachawath award made it clear that the Krishna river, which flows from Maharashtra, through Karnataka and then Andhra Pradesh is an inter-state river and the words "use", "distribution" or "control" are of wide import and would include regulation and development of waters and waters of any inter-state river which can only be regulated through the construction of reservoirs and dams, etc. In the *TN Cauvery Sangam v. Union of India* case, the Supreme Court held that once the Union gov-

ernment finds that the dispute referred to in the request received from the State Government cannot be settled by negotiation, it becomes mandatory for the Union government to constitute a tribunal and refer the dispute to the tribunal for adjudication and in case it fails to do so, a writ of mandamus could be issued to constitute a tribunal. In the *State of Karnataka v. Union of India* case, Justice Bhagwati emphasised that the Supreme Court's original jurisdiction under Article 131 should not be influenced by considerations of "cause of action" typical in suits. The scope of this jurisdiction should be determined solely by the terms of the Article. He also noted that Article 131 aims to provide a forum for resolving disputes between states or between a state and the Union, ensuring final adjudication by the highest court in the land swiftly and efficiently, avoiding prolonged legal proceedings through multiple courts.

In the matter of *Tamil Nadu C.N.V.V.N.U.P Sangam v. Union of India* (1990), *State of Tamil Nadu v. State of Karnataka* (1991), and *Re: Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal* (1993), the writ petition raised a dispute relating to water, therefore, in view of Article 262(2) of the Constitution read with Section 11 of the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956 jurisdiction of the Court is barred. The SC observed that no doubt the writ petition would not be maintainable provided a water dispute as defined in the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956 is raised therein. In the *Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal*, the Inter-State Water Disputes Tribunal constituted under the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956 under Article 262, gave an interim order to Karnataka to release water to Tamil Nadu. In response, Karnataka's Governor issued the Karnataka Cauvery Basin Irrigation Protection Ordinance, 1991, nullifying the Tribunal's order. The Constitution Bench ruled that Article 262 vested all powers in the Tribunal, making its orders binding. The Ordinance interfered with the Tribunal's judicial power and was declared unconstitutional. This decision affirmed the Tribunal's exclusive authority under the Constitution to adjudicate inter-state water disputes.

Thus, it can be seen that there has always been a tussle between the powers of the tribunals as well as the courts and at different stances, the SC pronounced contrary judgments taking into consideration the facts and circumstances of each case. The extension of legal rights to rivers is groundbreaking and unprecedented. In 2017, the Uttarakhand High Court declared the Ganga and Yamuna rivers as legal persons with the rights, duties, and liabilities of a living person. This decision blurred the lines between a living person and a legal person, leading an environmental activist to report the rivers' 'murder' due to pollution. The argument for including water management in Union list

Meanwhile, there is a growing movement to shift water management to the Union or Concurrent list. The Union ministry of water resources is advocating more actively for this change. The Ashok Chawla



committee, focused on rationalising natural resource allocation to reduce corruption, reportedly recommended this shift. Currently, state governments control river water allocation, leading to inevitable disputes as rivers cross state boundaries. According to expert KC Wheare, the Constitution of India is quasi-federal, so 'water' should remain a state matter. Despite numerous laws, few address river water disputes. Minimal Union interference is preferred, except when necessary. Water disputes are inevitable,

necessitating a permanent, non-arbitrary tribunal with clear objectives and transparent outcomes. Recognising water as a finite resource, the Government should urgently push for comprehensive national legislation, evolving a consensus to include water in the concurrent list. This would create a national framework for water management, conservation, development, and equitable distribution, with authority devolved to lower tiers of government. Existing water laws should also be thoroughly reviewed.

Addressing anxiety in young adults: A growing concern

Anxiety is increasingly common among young adults, those transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, typically in their late teens or early twenties. The pressures they face can lead to significant stress and anxiety, especially in an academic setting. Fourteen year old Nishant was gripped with anxiety as he worked on a school composition. His hunched shoulders and tight grip on the pen were signs of his distress, further evidenced by his habit of nervously plucking at his nearly non-existent eyebrow. His teacher had threatened to hold him back if his composition wasn't good enough, escalating his stress.

Our students face numerous challenges that contribute to rising stress levels, leading to anxiety. Some students struggle or fail academically, and it's crucial for parents and teachers to recognise how poor academic performance can result in anxiety. Understanding these challenges is essential for us to provide effective help. Common signs of anxiety in students:

- Physical Symptoms: Headaches, stomach pain, and sleep disturbances can indicate anxiety, further affecting academic performance and overall well-being.
- Decreased Motivation: Anxiety can hinder students' ability to focus on their studies, leading to a downward spiral in performance and increasing stress.
- Social Withdrawal: Students may feel embarrassed or

ashamed of poor performance, leading them to withdraw socially, which aggravates their stress and anxiety. To support students with anxiety issues, consider these strategies:

- Provide Emotional Support: Instead of shaming or scolding, parents, teachers, and peers should offer emotional support and reassurance. Understanding their struggles and giving them a safe, non-judgmental space to express themselves can significantly reduce anxiety.
- Encourage a Growth Mindset: Teach students that failure is a natural part of learning and growth. This mindset shifts the focus from fixed outcomes to the learning process, helping students overcome the fear of failure.
- Teach Coping Strategies: Equip students with coping strategies like time management skills, which can help them manage anxiety and improve their performance.

- Seek Professional Help: For severe anxiety, connecting with a mental health professional, counsellor, or therapist can be beneficial. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) can help students develop healthier thought patterns and reduce anxiety.
- Supportive Environment: Schools should foster an environment that values individual learning differences, offering after-school tutoring and counselling. The importance of understanding anxiety; Anxiety has a profound impact on students who struggle or fail academically.

The Bareilly case and a flawed criminal justice system

A few weeks ago, the case of a woman who had filed a rape case, was sentenced to imprisonment, and fined by a court in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, dominated the headlines. The narrative, echoed by select media users, painted a picture of a woman who had brazenly fabricated rape accusations. This, of course, perpetuated the damaging stereotype that false claims by women are the norm. But, a deeper dive into the trial proceedings reveals a range of systemic shortcomings in our law enforcement machinery and social complexities that demand urgent attention. In 2019, Pooja's (name changed) mother filed a missing person's complaint stating that her 15-year-old daughter was missing and that she suspected Ramesh (name changed) of having kidnapped her. But Pooja appeared a few days later saying that she had been taken to Delhi by Ramesh and raped by both him and several other men, with the knowledge of his mother and sister. She claimed that she ran away from Delhi to her home. No proof of her age was available, but an external medical examination showed her to be 18, and not 15 years old as she claimed to be. A more thorough examination was crucial for the prosecution's case for any evidence of sexual assault, but she refused to undergo this. Another fact is that she is a married woman.

Her statement to a magistrate was recorded, and Ramesh arrested. In her first statement to the court during the trial, she said that she had been kidnapped and raped. In her cross-examination four months later, she said that she had been made to give a false complaint against Ramesh by her mother as there was personal animosity between the mother and Ramesh. She also said that a police officer had coerced her to lie. Based on glaring loopholes in the prosecution's case, such as the contradictions in her statements on her abduction and recovery, the lack of medical evidence due to the negligence of the investigating officer and her refusal to undergo a medical examination, Ramesh was acquitted in 2024. A perjury case was registered against Pooja, for which she was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment and a fine (SC No. 215/2024 before Additional District Judge Bareilly) imposed.

This case is a telling example of the lackadaisical approach to police investigation and where the prosecution did not even attempt to patch together a case. At the time of filing the charge sheet, other than Pooja's statement and her family members supporting the fact that she was missing, there was absolutely no evidence against Ramesh. Of course, the statement of a prosecutrix in a sexual assault is crucial, but this was a case where there were claims of her being taken to another place and where multiple accomplices were allegedly involved. But those angles were not probed. There is no circumstantial evidence placing Ramesh along with Pooja at any point. There is no medical evidence to corroborate the claim of rape. There is a claim of the mother calling Ramesh when Pooja went missing but there is no evidence placed on record to prove this. The

alleged crime scene — a room in Delhi — remained unlocated and unexamined, and the clothes worn by Pooja were not even collected for forensic analysis. Even the rented property where Ramesh was living in was not examined. The site map produced as evidence was a map showing the front door to Pooja's house since her mother said she had been abducted from their house. A vegetable market, from where she was taken, as in Pooja's statement to the magistrate, was not examined. Even though it was alleged that Ramesh's mother and sister witnessed the rape, they were neither charged for abetment nor examined as witnesses. Multiple stakeholders overlooked what has been a notably weak case along the way. Section 173(8) of the CrPC allows a magistrate to direct further investigation in case of a flawed investigation. However, in this case, the magistrate committed the case for trial despite the glaring gaps in the investigation. The magistrate could call for the case diary under Section (172(2) of the CrPC, which may have revealed discrepancies or inadequacies in the investigation. The public prosecutor's endorsement of a patently weak charge sheet shows a lax attitude, and a failure to fulfil their duty, to the court and the public.

Arbitrary and prolonged undertrial detention is, unfortunately, pervasive within India's criminal justice system. In this case, where an individual had to undergo over four years of incarceration, other than the judge noting that there were issues in the investigation, there was a startling absence of accountability directed towards the investigating officers or the prosecution. That there were no repercussions for those responsible for wrongful detentions perpetuates a culture of impunity and undermines public confidence in the integrity of judicial processes. Pooja's version of events in her statement to the magistrate, her initial court statement, and her cross-examination all differed, which suggests coercion.

During the cross-examination, she attributed it to her mother and a police officer. Thereafter, during the sentencing hearing of her perjury case, Pooja's husband claimed that he told her to claim that her mother had coerced her to lie about the kidnapping and the rape so that they would not have to be bothered by the case any more. Even if not a minor, she was clearly a very young person who had been coerced by various adults. This was not taken into consideration by the court that sentenced her. This is not to take away from the fact that Ramesh was a victim of the system. His trial dragged on in a fast-track court in Bareilly amidst the disruptive backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fast-track courts were set up to ensure swift justice for victims of sexual crimes and corruption cases. Although, ideally, these cases are to be finished within a year of filing the charge sheet, this timeframe is rarely adhered to. The trial in this case spanned 1,559 days, in which there were 109 hearings (data from the e-Courts portal). The data also show that most of these hearings just resulted in adjournments, 13 of which were because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The examination of witnesses went on from November 2020 to February 2024. These timelines are shocking because the case itself was not complicated, given that there were only six witnesses and six exhibits. Ramesh remained in jail throughout this time.

The state of fast-track courtsThe functioning of fast-track courts has been far from ideal. New courts with the necessary infrastructure and dedicated judges are not set up for fast-track purposes. Instead, existing courts are typically designated as fast-track courts, requiring judges to manage their regular caseloads in addition to these expedited cases. Without looking into these systemic challenges, the centrally sponsored scheme for Fast Track Special Courts (FTSC) has recently been extended till 2026, with a budgetary allocation of around ₹2,000 crore. This case also raises questions about the issue of bail in India. Ramesh filed a bail application before the sessions court in 2021, but it was rejected

because of the serious nature of the offence. His family did not have the economic means to file an appeal, so he remained in jail till his acquittal. Notwithstanding directives from the Supreme Court of India to decongest prisons during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ramesh was not granted bail even during this period. And, despite the constant discourse in policy realms and constitutional courts in favour of a reduction in undertrial detention, the grim reality within trial courts shows how indifference along with poverty prolong such detention. Ultimately, the notoriety surrounding this case, cited to bolster the stereotype of women lodging false accusations against men, underscores a critical call for reforms within the criminal justice system. Rather than weakening laws safeguarding women, this case highlights the necessity for enhancements in police investigation protocols, prosecutorial autonomy, and judicial supervision to mitigate the risk of wrongful and protracted imprisonments.

Musk asks X users to post long-form articles to promote citizen journalism

New Delhi: Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, on Sunday, encouraged X users to post long-form articles on the platform and create space for citizen journalism. Some users have already started posting full-length articles written by them on X, as Musk tries to compete with traditional media giants. Another user commented: Great idea! Engaging content on X will attract more readers.

Last September, the tech billionaire

visited the US-Mexico border and live-streamed his tour of the region. Musk then encouraged people to do citizen journalism on X. "Please encourage more citizen journalism! You can do live video easily from your phone. More on-the-ground reporting from regular citizens will change the world," he posted. The X owner has invited journalists to publish directly on X and earn more. He has also made X an open-source platform.