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Volume : 1 No. 143

VISAKHAPATNAM

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Editor: GANTYADA APPARAO

Pages : 4 Rs: 5-00

"Chief Minister Barging In During Raids..."

Top Court In Mamata Banerjee I-PAC Case

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's presence at the I-PAC offices during the raid by the Enforcement Directorate was not a "happy situation", the Supreme Court said today, questioning if the Central agency can be left without a remedy in such "unusual" events. "What if tomorrow some other Chief Minister barges into such a raid? Can the ED be left without remedy?" said the bench comprising Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and NV Anjaria, which was hearing a petition by the Enforcement Directorate. The agency, which has knocked at the doors of the top court, has called Banerjee's move -- allegedly walking out with a laptop, phone and multiple documents from the house of Pratik Jain, the chief of election consultant I-PAC and their offices -- a "gross abuse of power". It has also demanded that a police case be filed against the Chief Minister and officials who had accompanied her. Represent-



ing the state, senior Advocate Shyam Divan contended that allowing a department of the Central Government to file a petition against a state government will be "dangerous to the federal structure". Probe agencies like the CBI, Narcotics Control Bureau, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, and Serious Fraud Investigation Office do not have the right to sue a state government, he added.

"UNFORTUNATE" Gaurav Gogoi On MP Pradyut Bordoloi Joining BJP

Dispur: Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gaurav Gogoi, on Wednesday, called the resignation of senior Congress leader and Nagaon Lok Sabha MP Pradyut Bordoloi "unfortunate" while making clear that the party's mission to unseat Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma from power remains firmly on track. Bordoloi, a sitting Member of Parliament from the Nagaon constituency, formally joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday, a day after tendering his resigna-

tion from the Indian National Congress. Gogoi, who arrived at Dibrugarh Airport from Delhi, addressed reporters upon landing, striking a tone of both restraint and defiance. "Just two years ago, the Congress party offered him the opportunity to contest the Lok Sabha ticket from Nagaon. He is a sitting Member of Parliament; the people of Nagaon voted for him. And in this present election, the Congress party offered an opportunity to a member of his family to contest the Vidhan Sabha elections. If our cur-



rent Nagaon Lok Sabha Member of Parliament wants Himanta Biswa Sarma to continue as the Chief Minister, well, that is his decision, which is rather unfortunate," Gogoi said. Gogoi, however, was

emphatic that the exit of one leader would not derail Congress's momentum. "This election is much more important than one person. This election is about freeing Assam from the clutches of Himanta Biswa Sarma, freeing Assam from his politics of fear and intimidation, from the mafia raj that has crept in during his tenure," he said. Dismissing the defection as a routine internal difference rather than a structural blow to the party, Gogoi said intra-party disagreements were a natural feature of political life. "I don't think one difference of opinion over one seat is the reason to leave a party and join the rival," he said.

Russia Oil Tanker Bound For China Makes U-Turn. Now, Heading To India

Moscow / New Delhi: A Russian oil-laden tanker that was bound for China has U-turned in the South China Sea, and is now hurrying to India after New Delhi began doubling down on imports from Moscow. The Aqua Titan is set to arrive in New Mangalore on March 21 with its Urals

cargo that it loaded from a Baltic Sea port in late January, according to ship-tracking data. The Aframax vessel originally signaled the Chinese port of Rizhao as its destination before making an about-face in Southeast Asian waters in mid-March, days after the US gave the green light for In-

dia to temporarily increase Russian purchases. Indian refiners snapped up a whopping 30 million barrels of Russian oil in the week that followed the concession, a move aimed to help the nation cope with lost Middle Eastern supplies due to the war in Iran. Since then, more countries have



been allowed to resume purchases from Russia.

Ugadi celebrations in every BJP office: PVN Madhav's directive



From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, March, 18:

On the occasion of the Ugadi festival, BJP state president PVN Madhav issued directions to party cadres. Speaking to leaders and workers through a teleconference, he called for grand Ugadi celebrations in all BJP offices across the state. He instructed that priests should be invited to each office to conduct rituals, and that Panchanga Sravanam should be conducted without fail. He also advised party leaders to visit important village deities in every district. He said that offerings (traditionally known as "Saare") should be presented to the village deities on behalf of the party. He directed that processions with traditional drum performances be organized and that celebrations should be held together with local people. PVN Madhav emphasized that party workers should actively engage with the public while conducting these programs during the New Moonday and Ugadi festival.

CM Chandrababu launches 'Divyang Shakti' scheme



From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, March, 18: Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday launched the "Divyang Shakti" scheme in the state. Through this scheme, free travel in RTC buses has been made available to persons with disabilities across the state.

From Mangalagiri bus stand, the Chief Minister, along with Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan and Minister Nara Lokesh, traveled in a bus along with differently-abled individuals. The leaders continued their journey for about 11 kilometers from Mangalagiri to Penumaka along with them. On this oc-

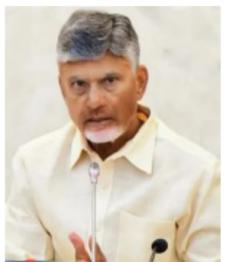
casation, the leaders interacted informally with the differently-abled passengers. They inquired about their well-being and the welfare schemes they are receiving. The leaders also greeted people standing along both sides of the road during the journey. They traveled via Don Bosco School, Dolas Nagar, Prakash Nagar,

Nulakapeta, and Undavalli Center before reaching Penumaka bus stand. A large number of people, party workers, and beneficiaries gathered for the scheme's launch. As a Ugadi festival gift from the government, around 12.76 lakh beneficiaries are expected to benefit from this scheme.

Justice for the displaced before Polavaram inauguration: CM

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, March, 18: Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu held a meeting on Wednesday with people displaced from the villages submerged due to the Polavaram project. As part of the third phase of the rehabilitation compensation package, the CM handed over a cheque of Rs.226 crore to the displaced families. Speaking on the occasion, the CM said that the Polavaram project is the lifeline of the state and that linking rivers would bring benefits across the state. He criticized previous governments for neglecting the displaced people and leaving them helpless even during floods. The CM stated that people sacrificed their homes and lands for the project. He recalled that Rs.800 crore was paid as the first installment during

Sankranti and Rs.916 crore as the second installment during Diwali. Over 21 months, a total of Rs.1,943.53 crore has been paid to 26,149 displaced persons. He said the project is being constructed in two phases, with 38,068 displaced persons identified in the first phase. Each displaced family is being given Rs.3.5 lakh for house construction, and the assistance for house sites has been increased to Rs.2 lakh. Although it is a central project, the state government is carrying out the works with commitment. The CM stated that the diaphragm wall was damaged due to the negligence of previous governments. He said that the wall, built earlier at a cost of Rs.440 crore, was washed away, and now reconstruction is being undertaken at a cost of Rs.1,000



crore. He criticized past rulers for delaying the project by 6-7 years due to their indifferent attitude. He added that the diaphragm wall would be completed within a week and that work on the project is progressing rapidly. He assured that the project would be completed and dedicated to the nation before the next Godavari Pushkaralu. Another Rs.5,000 crore is required to complete the project, and a bridge will also be constructed.

Minister Atchannaidu's interesting remarks on the 'Divyang Shakti' scheme

From Our Staff Reporter Srikakulam, March 18: State Agriculture Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaidu stated that the coalition government is giving top priority to the welfare of persons with disabilities in the state. He said that through the recently launched 'Divyang Shakti' scheme, disabled individuals are greatly benefiting by traveling free on RTC buses. He recalled that whenever progress was made for the disabled in history, it happened under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. **Speaking on the occasion, Minister Atchannaidu said:** "The government's goal is to



bring special respect to persons with disabilities in society. As promised in the election manifesto, the 'Stree Shakti' scheme launched on August 15 has been a tremendous success. Following the same path, the 'Divyang

Shakti' scheme is now becoming a super hit. So far, nearly 15 crore (150 million) women have traveled free on RTC buses, which shows how successful the scheme has been. In the state, there are about 12.7 lakh (1.27 million) persons with disabilities, but currently only 2 lakh (200,000) have passes. In Srikakulam district alone, there are around 42,000 disabled persons. We will take steps to ensure that all of them receive passes. For this, special drives will be conducted at bus stations, and the process will be simplified to ensure that 100% of eligible persons are issued passes," he said.

Visakhapatnam Railway Zone operations to begin soon: Ashwini Vaishnaw

From Our Staff Reporter New Delhi, March, 18: Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw clarified that operations of the Visakhapatnam Railway Zone will begin soon. He spoke in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. He mentioned that the Andhra Pradesh government handed over 52.2 acres of land at Mudasarlova in Visakhapatnam to the Railways in August 2024. He revealed that ₹106.89 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of the headquarters building of the South Coast Railway Zone. He stated

that the foundation stone for the zone was laid in January 2025 and that the foundation works for the headquarters building have now been completed. He added that the VMRDA building "The Deck" is ready to begin operations and that administrative activities will soon be conducted from there. The minister said that appointments for the General Manager and other senior officials for the railway zone will be completed soon. He noted that while the average allocation between 2009-2014 was ₹886 crore, a

record ₹9,417 crore has been allocated to Andhra Pradesh for 2025-26. He explained



that the pace of railway track construction has doubled compared to the past, with an average of 143 km of new tracks being laid each year. He also

stated that ₹2,047 crore has been sanctioned for the Errupalem-Amaravati-Namburu new railway line (57 km), and that land acquisition has already begun. Currently, 39 railway projects (including new lines and doubling works) worth ₹70,232 crore are underway in Andhra Pradesh. He added that works on the Vijayawada-Gudur third railway line and the Guntakal-Guntur doubling project are progressing rapidly.

EDITORIAL

Fuel is the source of everything

The world is reeling under the energy crisis caused by the war in the Middle East. The only exceptions are a few countries like Russia and Venezuela, which have abundant resources of crude oil and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Due to the latest situation, India, which is one of the largest importers of crude oil in the world, is facing an energy crisis. Sea routes are crucial for oil transportation around the world. Eighty percent of oil is supplied to various countries through waterways. If there is any disruption to these routes, many countries will suffer from oil shortages.

That is what is happening now. As a result of the US and Israel's collective aggression against Iran, Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz, through which oil ships from the Gulf countries pass. As a result, oil transport from Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and other countries has almost come to a standstill. Due to the lack of gas cylinders, the kitchens of the middle class and the poor are not getting a cat in the stove. Even the canteens in messes, hotels, hostels, and hospitals are running at a snail's pace without gas. The central government is imposing restrictions on the sale of commercial cylinders, claiming that there is no shortage of gas cylinders, and is taking steps to ensure the smooth supply of cylinders used for domestic use. The implementation of the Essential Commodities Act to prevent problems in the supply of oil and natural gas shows how complex the situation is. The attachment an average Indian woman has to a gas stove is indescribable. With the introduction of gas cylinders in the country seven or eight years after independence, women have also been freed from the hardships of cooking.

They have been freed from the suffering of not being able to cook with firewood and charcoal, and from the suffocation from smoke. The latest crisis is something they have never experienced before. The average Indian woman is struggling to cope with this unexpected disaster. Although there are devices like solar cookers, hybrid solar stoves, and induction stoves that run on solar energy, their use is limited due to their unaffordable prices. India is the third largest importer of crude oil after the US and China. It is estimated that our oil needs will skyrocket by 2040. In such a situation, if geopolitical conflicts arise or there are disruptions in the supply chain, the countries concerned will inevitably face a crisis due to lack of oil. The latest incident is an example of this. Due to transportation problems, crude oil and LPG fuel reserves have accumulated in Iraq and Kuwait.

As a result, the respective countries have reduced production. On the other hand, the US and Israel are targeting oil facilities in Iran. Already, Aramco's largest oil refinery, Ras Tanura, in Saudi Arabia, has been closed. In this context, even if the war is over, it is not possible to think that we will escape the oil shortage at this time. Therefore, the nation will not forgive us if we do not learn lessons from the latest incident. In the context of oil imports degrading our economy, the rulers should focus on alternative energy sources. It is true that the use of solar energy has increased in the country over the past decade.

However, it is not an exaggeration to say that it is still not available to the common man. Through schemes like PM-Kusum, Pradhan Mantri Suryagarh, Muft Bijli Yojana, the middle class is now leaning towards the use of solar energy. In this context, there is a need for the rulers to take up a movement to increase the use of natural gas and solar energy. At the same time, domestic crude oil extraction should be stepped up. Currently, oil is being produced only in Barmer district of Rajasthan, Gulf of Khambhat in Gujarat, Mumbai High, Godavari-Krishna Basin, and Assam. In addition, in the context of the discovery of huge oil and natural gas reserves in Kutch and Cauvery basins in Gujarat, Mahanadi basin in Odisha, and Hooghly basin in Bengal, it is urgent to take action to extract resources there.

Debt Trap To Youth Exodus, The 10 Big Crises Ailing Kerala

As Kerala moves quickly towards the 2026 Assembly elections - more quickly than anyone expected, since the Election Commission startled the state by announcing polls at three weeks' notice - it has become apparent that this is a 'do or die' moment for the future of Kerala. Today, Kerala needs change. And it is not an option but a necessity if the State is to survive as a viable economy. The current administration has failed the people of Kerala across the board. One can identify ten crises under which the state is reeling:

1. A Crippling Financial Crisis

The government has pushed Kerala into a massive debt trap, borrowing money before the end of the year just to pay routine salaries and pensions. Today, our state spends more money on servicing its debt than on actual development projects. The state is currently trying to run the economy by relying solely on liquor taxes, lotteries, and remittances.

2. The Exodus of Our Youth

We have created a highly educated young population, but we have failed to build an economy that can employ them. Because there are no jobs available, our brightest young minds are voting with their feet and fleeing abroad.

3. The Cost of Living Crisis

The daily life of the aam aadmi has become unbearable. Instead of expanding the economy, the government burdens the public (which already pays the highest property taxes, stamp duties and other local levies in the country) with extra taxes and cesses, trapping us in a cycle where stability is maintained at the cost of affordability and progress is abandoned in the effort to make ends meet.

4. Agricultural Distress

Our farmers are in distress. Despite Kerala being one of the world's hottest hotspots of biodiversity, our agricultural backbone is ignored, spices

linguish, fruit and vegetable farmers can barely make ends meet and procurement payments are delayed for months.

5. A Hostile Environment for Investors

Our state is plagued by ideological politicians, rent-seeking officials, and militant trade unions that thwart progress. We have failed to completely abolish extortion-based practices like nokkukooli (by which union members extort payment for standing and watching your own labour) or ban the coercive practice of hartals.

6. The Collapsing State of Public Healthcare

While Kerala has an enviable reputation nationwide for its public health system, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed our deep vulnerabilities. Today, our public healthcare system is faltering thanks to under-funding and neglect, failing to provide resilient systems that protect the most vulnerable.

7. Betrayal in the Cooperative Sector

The cooperative banking sector was built on the deep trust of ordinary people. Recent scams have wiped out the life savings of poor families, breaking the backbone of our rural economy.

8. Decline in Higher Education

Our universities are failing to prepare students for the 21st century. Merit is ignored in the blatant promotion of political interests, and our education system lacks the critical thinking and technological innovation needed for the 21st-century world.

9. Failing Civic Infrastructure and Everyday Crises

We face urgent, everyday crises that the government ignores. Our fragile ecology is threatened by unchecked quarrying and sand mining, as well as reckless, unplanned construction. We are also facing a severe drug crisis among our youth and deadly fatalities from an unchecked stray dog menace.

10. Neglect of Social Wel-



fare

A welfare-only model cannot survive without wealth creation. Because the state has no money, welfare pensions are delayed for months, forcing our most vulnerable to beg for what is rightfully theirs (and which is not enough to begin with). The list is daunting, but the imminent state election means that an alternative is at hand. Though I am not a candidate myself, I have agreed to take on the co-chairmanship of the Congress Campaign Committee - not just to point out problems but to present a vision for 'Kerala 2.0' that will inspire the jaded electorate, and particularly younger voters, to vote for change. For too long, we have unwisely compared ourselves to massive industrial states like Tamil Nadu or Maharashtra and lamented our inability to emulate them. Our future does not lie in competing for heavy smokstack industries. We must look across the seas and learn from small, successful states like Singapore, the Netherlands, and Costa Rica - countries with similar challenges of size and population density that have found creative solutions to their own development challenges and become models of success.

The UDF manifesto is yet to be finalised, but here are five possible responses to the ten crises outlined above:

1. Building an Innovation and Weightless Economy: We must transform our remittance economy into an innovation economy. Because we lack large tracts of land, our prosperity lies in the 'Weightless Economy'-sectors requiring high intellect but a low physical footprint. We will support startup ventures in Artificial Intelligence, biotechnology, and space tech.

2. Wealth Creation through Open Investment: We will end the culture of over-regulation. We will slash stifling regulations and duplicative bureaucratic procedures and introduce a single-window 'One Kerala Permit' system. Most importantly, we will introduce an Investor Protection Act to assure investors that they will not lose their money to political or bureaucratic harassment.

3. Global Benchmarks in Agriculture and Logistics: We will adopt the Dutch model of glass-house farming and focus on high-value crops to maximise our revenue per inch of land; convert our coastline into a catalyst of port-led development;

and adopt other world-class innovations in our depleted and neglected sectors.

4. Depoliticising Education and Upgrading Healthcare: We will establish a Higher Education Commission to align our college degrees with real-world employment needs and ensure internships are available during the academic year. In healthcare, we will fix the issues of our healthcare sector and move from basic care to precision medicine.

5. Solving Immediate Crises: We will immediately launch a mission to protect our environment, turning ecological dangers into opportunities. We will tackle the drug crisis with multi-pronged de-addiction centres, and handle the stray dog issue through a vigorous, humane Animal Birth Control program.

Above all, we realise that we must change our mindset. We must move away from a model that only knows how to spend borrowed money and become a beacon of how to create wealth. We must build a Kerala that is fiscally prudent, ecologically resilient, and socially just. Kerala has historically been a bridge between the East and the West. It is time we stopped being just a bridge and started being the destination.

Behind Trump's Iran War Is A Saudi 'Equation' Few Can See

Saudi Arabia is increasingly an enigma wrapped in a mantle of white. This is the most evident in recent days, as the war in Iran brings the whole region under threat. It seemed that what was apparently a triangular confrontation between Israel, the US and Tehran, in fact was not. It had an additional actor. Riyadh was in it, from the beginning, reportedly pushing Trump into exactly the kind of war he had sworn never to get Americans into. Yet he did. What's more, the public stance in Riyadh is for diplomacy and an end to war, even as it ships out its oil through a little-known pipeline that entirely bypasses the Straits of Hormuz. Iran has now attacked the nearby port of Fujairah, which belongs to Abu Dhabi. The Saudi pipeline, however, remains safe. That needs some explaining.

The Saudi Influence

Everyone knows that Israel has a huge lobby in the US. It is the Saudi influence that is less evident. Astonishingly, a former Wall Street bond trader who was Nixon's Treasury Secretary, and earlier heading the Energy office, was critical to making a deal with the Saudis way back in 1974, which remains unwritten, due to Saudi King Faisal's demand for total secrecy. It essentially involved the US buying Saudi oil, providing military equipment - and with it an unwritten protection clause - in return for which Riyadh would send its dollars back to the US (the famous 'petrodollar' issue, eventually funding as much as USD 117 billion in debt in 2016. That in itself seems to have been just

the tip of the iceberg. A Bloomberg investigation at the time showed that actual figures were probably double, hidden in Treasuries held in offshore accounts, and, eventually, as other Gulf Countries joined in, masked over with data from these sources. That trend seems to continue. Treasury figures for the Saudis put them well below others like Sweden, even as the Cayman Islands tops the list. But the Saudis have promised Washington an additional USD 12 billion in investment in bonds, adding to their already rising portfolio.

The Clout Comes To Town

All this is fine and dandy. But The Washington Post reports how this clout was used. The Saudis were apparently alarmed at Iran's rising capabilities and saw the whole as a 'now-or-never' issue, attacking Iran before it strengthened itself beyond the control of others. Talks between US officials and the Saudis - particularly with Defence Minister Khalid Bin Salman, brother to King Salman - focused on the urgency of this, all this while Saudi Arabia publicly declared that it won't allow its territory to be used for strikes against Tehran. Now consider the timeline. Just prior to the war, the Saudis commenced talks with Yemeni separatists, the so-called 'Southern Transitional Government', thus ensuring peace on its key eastern border areas. Then there were the Houthis, who had menaced shipping along the coast for years and attacked Saudi oil installations. A certain uneasy peace prevailed as Iran and Riyadh went through a China-mediated rapproche-



ment deal. Matters were also helped by the US bombing Houthi positions, and a peace deal brokered by Oman that decreed they would not attack American shipping but left them free to attack elsewhere. Though supplied generously with weapons from Iran, the deal seemed to hold, and amazingly seems to continue, despite repeated threats from their leadership of resuming attacks on the Bab al Mandab in support of Iran. If they attack, that's a serious double whammy on oil movement. It could well be that they are being kept in reserve. In other words, Tehran is keeping its part of the bargain. But it could also be that the Houthis, who are no 'proxies' of Iran and follow their own interests, may not be willing to back what they may see as a 'losing' side. This, however, may end. Recent statements by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi took note of reports of US-Saudi

collusion, even while Iranian officials denied hitting Saudi oil facilities at all. The officials even declared that relations with Riyadh remain good. This is not just the 'fog of war'; it seems to point to some deliberate obfuscation. It could equally be an attempt to divide the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and influence the Saudi posture.

That Lonely Pipeline

As the Saudis remain reticent, a vital pipeline has come to notice. That is Aramco's East-West pipeline network, or Petrolina, a roughly 750-mile system that transports crude across Saudi Arabia, connecting Abqaiq on the oil-rich kingdom's eastern Gulf coast to the port of Yanbu on the Red Sea. There is also an Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline (ADCOP), which bypasses Hormuz. But a drone attack on Fujairah last week has disrupted that for the moment. All of this makes the Saudi pipeline vital for every

country struggling with rising oil prices. It also especially concerns Riyadh. Capable of transporting up to 7 million barrels of crude oil per day, it is now the largest bypass infrastructure that avoids the Strait of Hormuz. All this brings the focus back to Saudi-Iran relations. Any erosion of these ties, and Iran is more than capable of hitting this part of the coast with its Sejil-2 missile in play, which has a 2,000-km range and a reported Manoeuvrable Re-entry Vehicle (MaRV) or potential Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRV) capability. More usefully, it could activate the Houthis with more funds and weapons. The next few weeks are going to be vital to see which way Riyadh jumps. The key to the whole enigma, meanwhile, is the architect of the new Saudi Arabia, Prince Mohammed, who has propelled the country to emerge as a power to reckon with in the region.

Divyang Shakti Scheme Boosts Confidence Among Differently-Abled: NTR District Collector

Vijayawada, March 18: NTR District Collector Dr. G. Lakshminsha stated that the newly launched "Divyang Shakti" scheme by the state government will empower differently-abled persons and help them move forward with confidence. After the scheme's launch in Mangalagiri by the Chief Minister, along with Deputy Chief Minister and Minister Nara Lokesh, the Collector participated in an awareness program at Pandit Nehru Bus Station, Vijayawada. He interacted with beneficiaries and even traveled a short distance in a bus along with them. He explained that under the scheme, persons with 40% or more disability across 21 categories are eligible for free travel in various bus services, including City Ordinary, Metro Express, Palle Velugu, Ultra Palle Velugu, and Express buses. The Collector emphasized that the initiative aims to provide equal opportunities for all sections of society and



improve the quality of life for differently-abled individuals by enhancing their mobility and social participation.

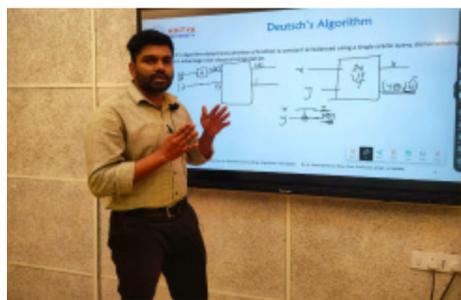
Women Should Grow as Entrepreneurs: Minister Sandhya Rani

Vizianagaram, March 18: Tribal Welfare Minister G. Sandhya Rani urged women to excel as entrepreneurs across various sectors. She addressed a meeting of DWCRA women held at the Salur Mandal Parishad office under the chairmanship of MPDO G. Parvathi. The minister said loans have been provided through Velugu to support women's development and encouraged them to establish small-scale industries such as poultry, vegetable businesses, and dairy units to achieve financial independence. She highlighted development works in Salur, stating that funds worth ₹400 crore have been allocated for infrastructure, including road connectivity to tribal hill villages and drinking water facilities. She also mentioned that sanitation workers are being paid monthly wages across 28 panchayats. Sandhya Rani added that the government is implementing welfare schemes, including financial support to farmers and pensions for the elderly and widows. She later distributed sanitation



vehicles, dustbins, and computers to maintain cleanliness and greenery in every village.

Online Certification Program Concludes at Aditya University



Gandepalli, March 18: An online certification program titled "Introduction to Quantum Computing: Algorithms

with Qiskit" was successfully completed at . The program was jointly organized by the Aditya Learning Academy and the Department of Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning.

According to Deputy Pro-Chancellor Dr. M. Srinivasa Reddy, the course provided in-depth insights into quantum computing fundamentals, including quantum gates, entanglement, multi-qubit systems, and quantum algorithms, along with their applications.

The sessions were conducted daily from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM and helped students and industry professionals understand the latest developments in the field.

Dr. K. Venkateswara Rao served as the key resource person. University officials, faculty members, and department heads actively participated in the program.

Free Bus Travel for Differently-Abled Launched in Visakhapatnam



Visakhapatnam, March 18: The state government's flagship "Divyang Shakti" scheme was launched with grandeur at the Maddilapalem RTC depot in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday. District Collector M.N. Harendhira Prasad, along with public representatives, flagged off the buses and even traveled a short distance with beneficiaries. Under the scheme, differently-abled persons will receive free bus travel across city ordinary, metro express, palle velugu, ultra palle velugu, and express services, while a 50% concession will continue for interstate travel. The initiative applies to 21 categories of persons with over 40% disability. Special concessions are also provided for escorts of fully blind and mentally challenged individuals. Officials stated that bus passes will be issued through the RTC app based on Sadaram certificates. The scheme is expected to enhance mobility and provide financial relief to differently-abled citizens.

Surprise Inspection of SSC Exam Centre



Parvathipuram, March 18: District Collector Dr. N. Prabhakar Reddy conducted a surprise inspection at an SSC (Class 10) examination centre set up in the Government High School at Thalladamma village in Jiyammavalasa mandal on Wednesday. He advised students to write exams in a calm and stress-free manner. The Collector reviewed the examination arrangements, including basic facilities like drinking water, lighting, and fans. He instructed officials to strictly imple-

ment Section 144 near the centre and ensure a malpractice-free environment. Inspectors were directed to monitor students carefully and behave in a way that reduces their anxiety.

Considering the summer heat, he also ordered the availability of ANMs, essential medicines, and ORS packets at all centres.

Joint Collector C. Yashwanth Kumar Reddy and other officials were present during the inspection.

Divyang Shakti Scheme Launched in Bapatla



Bapatla, March 18: District Collector Dr. V. Vinod Kumar inaugurated the Divyang Shakti Scheme at the RTC bus stand on Wednesday. He urged all persons with disabili-

ties to make full use of the scheme. The Collector stated that the scheme, launched by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, provides free bus travel for persons with 40% or more disability. It is applicable in city ordinary, metro express, palle velugu, ultra palle velugu, and express bus services. He informed that eligible beneficiaries must possess a SADAREM certificate. While disabled passengers can travel free, their escorts will get 50% concession in ticket fares. Dr. Vinod Kumar also highlighted that over 22,000 beneficiaries in the district are eligible and encouraged them to utilize the facility. He instructed RTC officials to ensure better facilities, cleanliness, and special seating arrangements for disabled passengers. The scheme was formally flagged off with a bus journey from Bapatla RTC bus stand to Jillelamudi village, where the Collector also interacted with beneficiaries and understood their concerns.

Free Bus Travel for Persons with Disabilities Launched in Tirupati

Tirupati, March 18: The "Divyang Shakti Scheme," aimed at the welfare of persons with disabilities, was launched by District Collector Dr. S. Venkateshwar and Tirupati MLA Arani Srinivasulu at Alipiri Bus Depot on Wednesday. Under this scheme, persons with disabilities (with 40% or more disability) can travel free of cost in APSRTC buses, including Palle Velugu, Express, and City services. The government also provides pensions up to ₹6,000 per month and up to ₹15,000 for bedridden individuals. Officials stated that over 30,000 beneficiaries in the district will benefit, with an estimated annual support of ₹12.78 crore. Concessions of 50% will also be available in select services and for attendants. The Collector emphasized inclusive travel, better facilities like ramps and reserved seating, and special assistance by bus staff. MLA Srinivasulu said the initiative fulfills the government's



promise and will significantly help the disabled community.

Vignan Institute Launches "Kartavya 2K26" CSR Initiative to Support Orphanage Children



Visakhapatnam, March 18: Vignan Institute of Information Technology, Duvvada, unveiled the wall magazine for its CSR initiative "Kartavya 2K26," scheduled for April 4, 2026. Organized by the Wings Club of the Department of Management Studies, the program aims to support orphanage children while promoting social responsibility and compassion among students. Under the theme "It's Our Duty to Care," the initiative will feature a medical camp, including general and dental check-ups, creative activities for children, and distribution of essential items. The program is being conducted under the guidance of MBA Head Dr. B. Chandra and coordinated by senior assistant professor V. Shivaji. Principal Dr. J. Sudhakar and Rector Dr. V. Madhusudana Rao appreciated the organizers, highlighting the importance of such initiatives in shaping responsible citizens.

Accurate Voter List Mapping is Crucial: District Collector

Visakhapatnam, March 18: District Collector M.N. Harendhira Prasad emphasized that utmost care must be taken to ensure accuracy in the voter list mapping process. He instructed officials and Booth Level Officers (BLOs) to avoid any errors while handling voter data. A special training program was conducted at Gurajada Kalakshetram for officials and BLOs from seven constituencies in the district. The session was held in two phases—covering four constituencies in the morning and three in the afternoon. The Collector directed officials to compare the current voter list with the 2002 records to ensure precise mapping. He stressed thorough verification of voter details to eliminate duplicates and errors. Highlighting the importance of transparency and accuracy, he warned against negligence in this critical election-related process. Master trainers, election cell officials, and staff from various departments attended the program.



Ivory Smuggler Arrested in Tirupati

Tirupati, March 18: Forest officials of the Chamal Range in Tirupati district arrested a man for illegally possessing elephant tusks. The accused, identified as Shivakumar from Harijanawada in Bhimavaram Panchayat of Chandragiri mandal, was found with two elephant tusks at his residence following a tip-off.

A team of around 20 forest officials conducted a raid and seized the tusks, taking the accused into custody. During interrogation, officials discovered the involvement of another person, who is currently absconding. A case has been registered against Shivakumar under the Forest Act, and he has been produced before the court and remanded.



Divyang Shakti Scheme Launched: Free Bus Travel for Differently-Abled



Rajahmundry, March 18: District Collector inaugurated the free bus travel facility for differently-abled persons under the "Divyang Shakti" scheme at the Hitech Bus Stand on Wednesday. Along with beneficiaries, she traveled in a bus with beneficiaries, boosting their morale. Later, officials including Joint Collector joined a community meal with the participants. The Collector said the scheme will enhance mobility and confidence, benefiting around 40,000 differently-abled persons in the district with free travel across five categories of RTC buses.

Fugitive Lalit Modi's Clear Message To SunRisers Owner Kavya Maran After Pakistan Star Auction Row At The Hundred



London: The Sunrisers acquiring Pakistan's Abrar Ahmed at The Hundred auction has spiralled into a major controversy. The cricketer in question was picked by the Kavya Maran-owned Sunrisers at a cost of 190,000 GBP (approximately Rs 2.34 crore) during the inaugural men's Hundred auction in London on Sunday. The backlash has been huge, with the Sunrisers Leeds' X account even getting temporarily suspended. Pakistan players are barred from the IPL and only featured in its inaugural 2008 edition. After that, the terror attack in Mumbai led to stringent action being taken against the

presence of Pakistani players in the IPL. Generally, Indian franchises with teams in overseas leagues avoid picking Pakistan players. However, Sunrisers did not walk that path. Days after the auction and the subsequent furore, former Indian Premier League (IPL) chairman Lalit Modi sent a message to Sunrisers Leeds. He wrote on X: "Investing 2.34 crore on a Pakistani player when the fans are already on edge? I know a thing or two about managing optics and building empires. Call me." The caption of the post read: "Controversy over #players has hit @thehundred with the @sunrisersleeds." Kavya

Maran is the owner of Sunrisers franchise which also has teams in the IPL and the SA20. Although no names were mentioned, the amount, the reference to a Pakistan player, and the timing of the post clearly indicate what Lalit Modi is implying. Modi, who is facing serious charges in India, has been living in the UK. Lalit Modi fled India in 2010 following allegations related to tax evasion, money laundering, and proxy ownership linked to the money-minting IPL. The Enforcement Directorate claimed that he manipulated the process of assigning broadcast rights of the IPL in 2009, reportedly in exchange

for a kickback of over 125 crores. Earlier, in December 2025, Lalit Modi had apologised to the Indian government days after he referred to himself and Vijay Mallya as the two "biggest fugitives" in a viral video which seemed to be an apparent swipe at India. Modi, however, did not specify what exactly he was apologising for in his post on X. "I apologise if I have hurt anyone's feelings, especially the Indian Government, for whom I have the highest respect and regard. The statement was misconstrued and was never intended to be as played out. Once again, my deepest apologies," he wrote.

Afghanistan Star Allah Ghazanfar Sends Message To India After Deadly Air Strikes By Pakistan

Afghanistan spinner Allah Ghazanfar issued an emotional message to the international community following a strike on a rehabilitation center in Kabul. Allah spoke about the implications of the conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan. In one of the deadliest airstrikes on Afghanistan by Pakistan, at least 400 people were killed while around 250 were injured. Afghanistan's deputy government spokesperson Hamdullah Fitrat said the airstrike hit a drug rehabilitation hospital and destroyed major portions of the 2,000-bed facility. However, the allegations were denied by Pakistan. Ghazanfar said that the hospital supports a lot of people and these strikes can be devastating for the common people.



"The people there don't have money for treatment," Ghazanfar told News18. "And now, they've targeted that place as well; they've martyred those people. This is not acceptable to the people of Afghanistan." Ghazanfar condemned the attack and even questioned the motive behind the military strikes. "I don't know what they're trying to prove. They come and target ordinary people, and we simply cannot accept this. Afghanistan cannot accept this," he said in the interview. "Everyone knows Afghanistan's history," he warned. "If that history repeats itself, it will be very bad

for Pakistan." The Afghanistan spinner, who will represent Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026, concluded by saying that India is a 'close friend' to Afghanistan and urged the international community to come together and support them. He added that the authorities need to work together because the conflict is not good news for any-

one involved. "India is our close friend. We want to engage with them, to talk about these issues, so that things like this don't happen. This is our request to other countries too. This is not good for the people. Right now, the world is going through many challenges, and this is not good for anyone," he concluded.

PSPB men and RBI women clinch team titles at nationals

Hyderabad: Dominance and drama shared centre stage at the Abhay Prashal Stadium as the team events at the 87th UTT Senior National Table Tennis Championships concluded on a compelling note. While the Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) men reinforced their long-standing supremacy with a clinical title win, the women's final delivered a thrilling five-match contest, with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) emerging as champions after a stirring comeback, reclaiming the trophy after two years. PSPB's men added yet another trophy to their

already swelling cupboard, outclassing West Bengal 3-0 in a commanding display. In contrast, the women's final was a rollercoaster that went down to the wire. RBI edged PSPB 3-2 in a contest defined by momentum swings and clutch performances. **The results:** en: Final: PSPB bt West Bengal 3-0 (Payas Jain bt Ankur Bhattacharjee 12-10, 11-4, 1-11, 11-9; Manav Thakkar bt Aniket Sen Choudhury 15-13, 11-5, 11-5; Harmeet Desai bt Bodhisatwa Chaudhury 11-4, 11-2, 9-11, 6-11, 11-8). **Final placings:** PSPB, West Bengal, Telangana, RSPB, Tamil Nadu,



Karnataka, Assam, Delhi, Gujarat, Punjab. **Women:** Final: RBI bt PSPB 3-2 (Sreeja Akula lost to Taneesha Kotecha 12-10, 12-10, 7-11, 13-15, 4-11; Ayhika Mukherjee lost to Yashaswini Ghjorpade 7-11, 5-11, 8-11; Diya Chitale bt

Syndrela Das 12-14, 12-10, 11-7, 14-12; Ayhika bt Taneesha 11-7, 11-4, 11-5; Sreeja bt Yashaswini 11-5, 4-11, 11-9, 12-14, 11-6). Final placings: RBI, PSPB, UP, Karnataka, Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, Haryana.

Vulgar Comments on Actresses? Direct Ticket to Jail!



The governments of Telugu states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have been repeatedly warning against social media bullying. Any sort of vulgar comments on women and children will immediately land in legal paper collection, as stated by the governments. In accordance with this Telangana Police department has taken substantial action against an individual who reportedly posted vulgar comment on Renu Desai on Instagram. According to the

latest development and individual named Kotipalli Venkanna was arrested by Hyderabad police for posting a vulgar comment regarding Renu Desai on social media. He is a security guard by profession and has the habit of using Instagram avidly. He recently came across a post on Renu Desai, and came up with a vulgar comment to the same. The police were called to attention then, and they nabbed the individual on social media bullying ground. He is currently

held in custody. Another point to be noted here is that a similar scenario emerged a couple of days ago when another man was arrested for posting vulgar comments on Anasuya. It is evident that the governments and the police departments are extremely clear about social media regulations. But despite these repeated warnings, certain individuals are continuing their antisocial behaviour and it is good to see some of them facing the reaction for the same.

Pradeep's LIK to Face a Tough Fight in Telugu?



Director Vignesh Shivan has once again sparked curiosity around his upcoming film Love Insurance Kompany (LIK), starring Pradeep Ranganathan. A recent Instagram story posted by the filmmaker has led fans to speculate that the film might finally be eyeing an April 3 release. If the hinted date turns out to be accurate, the makers are left with barely two weeks to build momentum, an unusually short window for a film that has already seen multiple de-

lays. This has raised concerns within trade circles, especially considering the current lack of aggressive promotions. Adding to the challenge, the Telugu market is expected to see a few releases around the same time, including Biker and Rakasa. While these may not be massive competitors, they still contribute to a crowded release frame, making it tougher for LIK to stand out. What also works against the film is the dip in buzz. Despite Pradeep Ranganathan

delivering back-to-back hits in recent years, the repeated postponements seem to have slowed down audience excitement. The initial hype that once surrounded the project has noticeably faded. If April 3 is indeed locked, Pradeep and the team will need to rebuild interest from scratch with strong promotional content. Any further delay, however, could worsen the situation and risk pushing the film into a zone of diminished returns.

Mamitha Baiju eyes big Telugu breakthrough

Mamitha Baiju is aiming to make a strong mark in Telugu cinema after gaining popularity across South India. The young actress shot to fame with "Dude," where she starred opposite Pradeep Ranganathan. Even before this, she had built a solid fan base among youth through her Malayalam films. Mamitha is now part of multiple big-ticket projects, though one of her key films, Jana Nayagan, has run into controversy and is facing delays. The film, starring Vijay, is yet to lock a release date. Mamitha reportedly plays a daughter-like role to Vijay in the film. Amid this uncertainty, she is placing high hopes on her Telugu-Tamil bilingual "Vishwanath and Sons." In the film, she plays a lively young woman who falls in love with a 40-plus character portrayed by Suriya, featuring a significant age gap both on-screen and off-screen. Mamitha believes this family-oriented romantic drama will help her establish a strong foothold in the Telugu market. With Tollywood offering substantial opportunities and remuneration for actresses, she is keen to sign more Telugu projects and expand her career further.

