

# PEN POWER

POWER OF JOURNALISM

ENGLISH MORNING DAILY

**Sri Geetaansha Digitals**  
Hyderabad | Visakhapatnam | Kakinada | Vijayawada | Ongole

Print  
Compactable Pigment Inks Available at Low Cost  
News Print Rolls Available at Reasonable cost  
\*Conditions Apply  
For More Details: 93948 55244, 9059465965

Volume : 1 No. 146 VISAKHAPATNAM Tuesday, March 24, 2026 Editor: GANTYADA APPARAO Pages : 4 Rs: 5-00

## A covid reminder in PM Modi's Rundown of Middle East War Impact On India



**New Delhi:** Drawing a parallel between the COVID-19 pandemic and the current geopolitical situation because of the war in the Middle East, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said elements such as black marketeers and hoarders try to take advantage of such crises and urged all political parties and governments to stay united. The Prime Minister was addressing the Lok Sabha on the Middle East conflict and the challenges it has cre-

ated for India. Advising state governments to stay alert, he said that elements such as hoarders become active during such crises, and strict monitoring and swift action are required to tackle this menace. "Because of this war, the difficult global situation may continue for a long time. Therefore, we must remain prepared and stay united. We have faced such challenges before as well by staying united during the coronavirus pandemic.

## 'Spoke To Heads Of Nations Twice' : PM On Shielding Indians Stuck Amid War

**New Delhi:** Every Indian stuck in the war-affected Middle East is being given every possible help, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Parliament this afternoon, adding that he has spoken twice to heads of countries in the region, and they have ensured the safety of Indians. "Sadly, many lives were lost, and many people were injured. Their families are being given the necessary help, and treatment is being ensured. In India and in

other affected countries, 24/7 emergency services are being ensured for help," he said, adding that Indian missions in the Middle are working around the clock. "I have personally spoken over the phone with the heads of state of most West Asian countries in two rounds. All of them have assured full safety for Indians," he said. The Prime Minister said that over 3 lakh Indian nationals living and working

in the region have already returned to the country. The war, the Prime Minister said, has created unexpected challenges, including economic, national security, and humanitarian issues. "The countries affected by the war have business relations with India. A significant portion of our crude oil and gas requirements is fulfilled by this region. This region is also important because around 1 crore Indians live and work there," he said.



# Indian Farmers Protected From Iran War Crisis: PM

**New Delhi March, 23:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated on Monday that India is facing significant challenges due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, highlighting the impact on Indians living in Gulf nations as well as the trade and economic consequences of the crisis. Every Indian stuck in the war-affected region is being given every possible help. It is a

challenge for cargo movement through the Strait of Hormuz from the start of the war. Despite this, our government is ensuring that gas and fuel supplies remain least affected. \* We all know that India imports 60 percent of its LPG requirement. Due to uncertain supply, the government is prioritising domestic supply. LPG production in the country is also

being increased. \* The government is sensitive as well, vigilant as well, and also ready for every assistance. \* Indian farmers are protected from the crisis. Organic farming has been encouraged and the government will continue to help farmers. A large quantity of essential items like crude oil, gas, and fertilizers come to India through the Strait of Hormuz. Since the war,

the movement of ships through the Strait of Hormuz has become very challenging. Despite this, the government's effort has been to ensure that the supply of petrol, diesel, and gas is not excessively affected. Our focus has been on this. \* Our mission is regularly issuing advisories. Here, in India and other affected countries, 24x7 control rooms and emergency

helplines have been established. \* Through these, rapid information is being provided to all affected individuals. In this crisis situation, the safety of Indians both in the country and abroad has been our top priority. \* Since the war began until now, more than 3 lakh 75 thousand Indians have safely reached India. \* It is essential that a unanimous and united

voice from India's Parliament on this crisis reaches the world. \* I myself have spoken over the phone in two rounds with most of the heads of state in West Asia. All have given full assurance of the safety of Indians. \* Unfortunately, during this time, some people have tragically lost their lives and some have been injured. In such difficult circumstances, help is

being provided to the affected families. \* This war has also posed unprecedented challenges before India. These challenges are economic, related to national security, and humanitarian as well. \* India has extensive trade relations with the warring and war-affected countries. \* The region where this war is taking place is also an important route for our

trade with other countries of the world. In particular, a large part of our needs for crude oil and gas is met by this very region. \* India has more than 5.3 million metric tonnes of strategic petroleum reserves. The country is also working on arrangements for more than 6.5 million metric tonnes of additional storage. Apart from this, the reserves held by our oil companies are separate

### Vijayawada west bypass set for grand launch on Sri Rama Navami

**Vijayawada:** In a major relief to commuters, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is gearing up to open the Vijayawada West Bypass for full-fledged vehicular movement from the auspicious occasion of Sri Rama Navami, i.e., March 27. Preparations are in full swing to operationalise the key corridor, which is expected to significantly ease traffic congestion in and around Vijayawada. According to officials, key works related to landing portions near Chinna Avutapalli (Package-3) and Kaza (Package-4) are being expedited and will be completed ahead of the inauguration. Barring the Road Over Bridge (ROB) slab at Jakkampudi near Pamulakalva—delayed due to a pending court case—the rest of the bypass is ready for traffic. Authorities, however, clarified that service roads will ensure uninterrupted vehicular movement even at the ROB location. Spanning approximately 47 kilometres, the six-lane access-controlled bypass runs from Chinna Avutapalli to Kaza and is part of the Kaza-Vijayawada-Gundugolanu National Highway project. Executed in two packages, the alignment passes through key packages including Gannavaram, Nunna, Jakkampudi, Gollapudi, Mangalagiri and Amaravati, forming a crucial outer corridor for the city. The project, estimated to cost around Rs 4,200 crore, includes major infrastructure components such as two large flyovers at Marlapalem and Gollapudi, about 20 Road Over Bridges (ROBs) and Vehicular Under Passes (VUPs), and multiple service roads to facilitate local traffic.

## Arcelormittal Steel Plant Will Showcase Andhra Pradesh's Strength to the World: CM



**From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, March, 23:** Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said that a steel plant larger than the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is going to be established at Rajayyapeta in Nakkapalli mandal of Anakapalli district, and that a new chapter in history will be written in North Andhra. He expressed optimism that the ArcelorMittal steel plant investment would be a major turning point. On Monday, the groundbreaking ceremony (Bhoomi Puja) for the ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India plant was held, and the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone. **Speaking at a public meeting afterward, he said:** "This steel plant is a project that will demonstrate Andhra Pradesh's capability to the world. The plant became possible with the support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Minister Lokesh has contributed significantly to this project. I thank Pawan Kalyan for his support in every way. With this plant, the landscape of North Andhra will change. This is not just the foundation for a steel plant, but the foundation for a steel city. We are delivering development, welfare, and good governance in Andhra

Pradesh. Development is possible only with the co-operation of the central government. The plant will create employment and livelihood opportunities for one lakh people. We are indebted to the farmers who gave land for this project. Amaravati will be developed into a world-class city and will become the address for a 'Quantum Valley'. We are committed to the comprehensive development of North Andhra. A Google data center is also coming to Visakhapatnam. **Investments Are Coming to AP Because of Chandrababu: Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan** Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan said that investments are coming to Andhra Pradesh because of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. He stated that the plant will provide significant employment opportunities to the people of North Andhra. He added that ArcelorMittal's investment has increased their confidence and that only a visionary leader like Chandrababu can attract such investments. He mentioned that Amit Shah also acknowledged that investments are coming to AP because of Chandrababu. He further stated that this will

be the largest integrated greenfield steel plant in the country with advanced technology. **Anakapalli Will Be on the World Map with This Plant: Lokesh** Minister Nara Lokesh said that they had invited Aditya Mittal to invest in Andhra Pradesh as early as 2019, and after coming to power in 2024, they worked actively towards setting up the steel plant. He said Andhra Pradesh is becoming a destination for investments and that Anakapalli will gain global recognition due to this project. He reiterated that the plant will create employment opportunities for one lakh people and credited Chandrababu for instilling confidence among investors. He also mentioned

that Union Minister Kumaraswamy expedited approvals for the plant. **AP Will Benefit Under Chandrababu and Pawan Kalyan: Kumaraswamy** Union Minister Kumaraswamy said that Andhra Pradesh will benefit under the leadership of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan. He praised Nara Lokesh as a worthy son of his father and a leader with a bright future. He added that development is possible only with a "double-engine government" and stated that several reforms are being introduced in the steel sector. He also mentioned that financial support has been extended to the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

## Another Step Forward in Industrial Development: Groundbreaking Ceremony Completed for Steel Plant

**From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, March, 23:** Andhra Pradesh has taken another step forward in its industrial development. The groundbreaking ceremony (Bhoomi Puja) for the ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India plant was held on Monday at Rajayyapeta in Nakkapalli mandal of Anakapalli district. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu laid the foundation stone for the plant. Union Ministers Kumaraswamy and Srinivasa Varma, Deputy Chief Minister

Pawan Kalyan, and Ministers Lokesh, TG Bharat, Atchannaidu, and Anita also participated in the ceremony along with the Chief Minister. ArcelorMittal Executive Chairman Lakshmi Narayan Mittal, AM/NS India Chairman Aditya Mittal, representatives of Nippon Steel India, and senior officials from various departments attended the event. The global giants ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel are jointly setting up this steel plant. The project will be developed in two phases over 2,164 acres. In

the first phase, the plant will have a production capacity of 7.3 million tonnes, and in the second phase, it will expand to 10.5 million tonnes. The government has allocated land for the plant through APIIC across multiple locations: 102.18 acres in Buchchirajupeta, 840.2 acres in Chandanada, 674.39 acres in DL Puram, 36.62 acres in Rajayyapeta, and 510.92 acres in Vempadu. It is estimated that this industry will generate employment opportunities—both direct and indirect—for about 1.25 lakh people.

## Key Meeting on Fishermen's Issues Held in Nellore

**From Our Staff Reporter Nellore:** A comprehensive meeting was held at the Collectorate regarding the issues faced by fishermen. On this occasion, Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy expressed concern that boats from Tamil Nadu are looting the marine resources of our region. He stated that recently, local fishermen had seized four such boats and kept them at Juvvaladinne harbor. However, fishermen allege that those boats were later released by a watchman and local authorities. The minister clarified that the state government has

taken this incident seriously. He mentioned that the issue between fishermen of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh has been ongoing for a long time. He revealed that the boat owners from Pondicherry and Karaikal had come one night and taken the boats away. To resolve this issue, the government is considering forming a task force. District public representatives will prepare a report and submit it to the government. For the safety of fishermen, two special speed boats will be deployed for patrolling, and the boats at

marine police stations will be repaired immediately. Actions will be taken in coordination with the police, fisheries, marine, and forest departments. The minister assured that Chief Minister Chandrababu has already issued several directives and that the government will always support fishermen. The meeting was attended by Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, along with Collector Himanshu Shukla, SP Ajitha, MLC Beeda, MLAs Somireddy, Kavya Krishna Reddy, Prashanti Reddy, Pasham, and Vijayashree.

## Supreme Court Hearing on Extension of PG Medical Seat Counselling

**From Our Staff Reporter New Delhi / Amaravati:** On Monday, the Supreme Court heard a case regarding the extension of counselling for filling PG medical seats in the Telugu states. The court directed the Medical Commission to explain why permission for extending the counsel-

ling process was not granted. The bench observed that students are ready to join PG courses and emphasized that seats should not go to waste. The hearing on the issue of extending the counselling process was adjourned to Tuesday. Recently, managements of medical

colleges approached the Supreme Court regarding the unfilled PG medical seats in the Telugu states. They informed the court that although counselling ended on February 28, a total of 246 seats in Andhra Pradesh and 377 seats in Telangana remained unfilled. Out of these, around 45

seats in Andhra Pradesh belong to the convener quota, as pointed out by the lawyers representing the college managements before the bench of Justice P. S. Narasimha and Justice Alok Aradhe. The managements stated that students are ready to take admission into colleges, but the counselling

process was closed due to the deadline. They also mentioned that universities and colleges had requested the National Medical Commission (NMC) to extend the deadline even before February 28. However, despite these requests, no response was received from the NMC, the lawyers told the court.

## EDITORIAL

Budget towards  
Indiramma's kingdom

The Telangana Congress government has presented a huge budget for 2026-27, giving priority to the development of the state and public welfare towards the Indiramma Rajya. The government has once again proven that it is a government of deeds, not words, by allocating huge funds in the budget for women empowerment, farmers, the welfare of the poor and weaker sections, as well as the progress of education, health and industries. This budget will help improve the conditions of the people rather than juggling numbers. The Congress government, which is moving towards the goal of Telangana Rising 2047, has taken necessary steps in the budget. The government, which announced a budget with an expenditure of Rs. 3,04,965 crore for the last financial year, has presented a budget with an expenditure of Rs. 3,24,234 crore this time. In the budget, Rs. 2,34,406 crore is revenue expenditure, while capital expenditure is Rs. 47,267 crore. While the country's growth rate is 8 percent, the state's growth rate is recorded at 10.7 percent, which is a testament to the economic progress of the Congress government. It is a matter of pride for Telangana that the state's average per capita income is 10.2 percent, while the national average is 6.9 percent. The state's GSDP, which accounts for 5 percent of the country's GDP, is a testament to the state's contribution to the country's progress.

This budget proves that the state's financial situation is in line with the government's goal of taking the economy, which is currently 200 billion US dollars, to 1 trillion by 2034 and 3 trillion by 2047. Many key decisions have been taken in the budget with a high priority on public welfare. The budget announcement that the Indiramma Family Life Insurance Scheme of Rs. 5 lakh will be introduced for 1.5 crore families in the state from June 2, the Telangana Formation Day, is reassuring the people. It is gratifying to introduce a comprehensive insurance scheme for the safety of employees for the first time in the country. The announcement in the budget that breakfast and mid-day meals will be provided to school and intermediate students studying in government educational institutions, distribution of one crore sarees to one crore women, and granting 2 lakh new pensions to those eligible for the Cheyutha scheme, with a focus on educational development in the state, is a welcome development. Committed to women empowerment, the government has allocated Rs. 3143 crore for women and child welfare. As part of the Mahalaxmi scheme, women have saved Rs. 9222 crore by providing 269 crore zero tickets through free bus travel. In the state, 42.90 lakh families have been provided with Rs. 500 gas cylinders and 53.09 lakh families have been provided with Rs. 3900 crore under the Gruha Jyoti scheme and 200 units of free electricity have been provided. With the issuance of 15.12 lakh new ration cards across the state, 3.38 crore people are having a satisfying meal with free rice. In the budget, Rs. 7366 crore has been allocated for the Civil Supplies Department. Under the Indiramma Indla scheme, 3,24,536 houses have been sanctioned, while 2,62,449 houses are under construction. In the budget, Rs. 1,10,000 has been allocated for the Housing Department. With the proposal of Rs 7430 crore, the poor will get houses faster. The Congress government in Telangana has set an example for the country by providing 42 percent reservation for caste and BCs. The government, which is moving forward with the aim of providing social justice to the poor, backward, weak and minority communities, has done justice to the backward communities in the budget. Rs. 11,784 crores have been allocated for SC welfare, Rs. 7937 crores for ST welfare, Rs. 12,511 crores for BC welfare, and Rs. 3769 crores for minority welfare. The government, which has allocated Rs. 500 crores for the upcoming Godavari Pushkarams and Rs. 1,224 crores for the tourism department, has given equal priority to all departments. The government, which is committed to bringing reforms in the education system, has allocated Rs. 26,674 crores for the education department. As part of the construction of 105 Young India Integrated Residential Schools, 79 schools have already been sanctioned and work has also begun at 44 locations, it was announced in the budget. Osmania University has been allocated Rs. 1,000 crore and Veeranari Chakali Ailamma Women's University has been allocated Rs. 400 crore. The government, which will build 17 new medical colleges, has allocated Rs. 13,679 crore for the medical and health departments in the budget. Giving priority to Panchayat Raj and rural development, Rs. 33,688 crore has been allocated in the budget. The government, which is committed to completing the projects left incomplete by the previous KCR government, has allocated Rs. 22,615 crore for the irrigation department. The Congress government is giving priority to the agriculture sector with the aim of welfare of the food grains. Rs. 23,179 crore has been allocated for agriculture and Rs. 1529 crore for the animal husbandry department. In a record short period, Rs. 2 lakh has been waived off loans of Rs. 20,616 to 25 lakh farmers. The government, which paid Rs. 8,284.66 crore as farmer's insurance for more than 138 lakh acres of land to more than 67 lakh farmers in the last season, has made plans to provide farmer's insurance for the current season as well. Telangana, which had a surplus budget at the time of the formation of the state, was turned into a debt-ridden state by the previous BRS rulers. The loans of Rs. 25,612 crore brought by the previous KCR government at high interest rates were reorganized at low interest rates with the hard work of Deputy CM Batti Vikramarka under the leadership of CM Revanth Reddy. Despite the financial difficulties, the Congress government has shown its commitment by allocating huge funds for the development of the state, welfare schemes and six guarantees. The Telangana Congress government, which has been an inspiration to other states in implementing public welfare schemes, has presented a budget for the third consecutive time towards Indiramma Rajyam.

Inside The '\$500 Billion' Iran War Bill  
No Economist Is Talking About

In 1916, as Europe was converting its young men into statistics, an American economist named JM Clark sat down to ask a question nobody in power wanted answered: what, precisely, does a war cost? Not the spiritual cost, not the civilisational cost, not the kind measured in widows and orphans. He meant money. His answer, published in the Journal of Political Economy, was careful and devastating. Direct costs were only the beginning. The real damage lay in what he called the indirect costs. The production foregone, the trade disrupted, the capital consumed and never replenished. War was the single most efficient mechanism humanity had devised for destroying wealth. One hundred and ten years later, we are still learning this lesson. We are, as a species, slow students. On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel began strikes on Iran. By the end of six days, the Pentagon had spent \$11.3 billion. Not allocated. Not requested. Spent. By week two, the White House's own National Economic Council revised the figure to \$12 billion, presented as a routine accounting update. The war was, officials noted, "proceeding on schedule". Nobody appeared to find the phrase alarming. War has acquired the cadence of project management. It runs at approximately \$900 million a day. The \$12 billion is the smallest number in the ledger.

**Only The 'Direct' Costs**  
It is what economists call the direct, visible, immediate fiscal cost. It does not include the aircraft carriers repositioned from the Indo-Pacific, whose depreciation was already on the books. It does not include the veterans who will spend the next thirty years negotiating with a disability system not designed to receive them. And it does not include what is happening right now in the Strait of Hormuz, which is the figure that should unsettle every government on earth, including all those who did not choose this war. Through that narrow pas-

sage flows roughly a fifth of the world's oil, a fifth of global liquefied natural gas, 22% of globally traded urea, 24% of aluminium, 33% of helium, and 45% of sulphur. Iran, whose navy has lost more than 50 ships to American strikes, retains virtually all of its mine-laying craft. The economic war compounds daily even as the military contest winds down. This is not incidental. It is a deliberate strategy. Brent crude stood at \$72 a barrel on February 27. By mid-March, it had crossed \$106. After Iran struck Qatar's Ras Laffan industrial complex on the night of March 18, Brent briefly touched \$113, an 83% rise since the start of the year. US natural gas jumped 6.5% in a single session. European gas prices rose to EUR 54 per MWh.

**The Ras Laffan Catastrophe**

The Ras Laffan strikes deserve a paragraph of their own, because they are unlike anything else in this ledger. Iran fired five ballistic missiles at the complex: four were intercepted, one struck. Hours later, a second attack set fires that Qatari civil defence teams spent the night containing. QatarEnergy reported "sizable fires and extensive further damage" to several of its LNG facilities. Ras Laffan covers 295 square kilometres, roughly one-third the area of New York City. It is home to Shell's \$18 billion Pearl GTL plant, QatarEnergy's LNG export terminals, and multiple gas-related installations whose total construction cost, in 2011 dollars, was \$70 billion. It accounts for roughly a fifth of global LNG supply. The critical detail, often missing from the coverage, is that production had already been halted weeks earlier after an Iranian drone attack prompted QatarEnergy to declare force majeure on deliveries. The missile damaged a facility whose reconstruction timetable is now measured not in weeks but in seasons. With oil, governments can release buffers. With LNG, the loss is immediate, structural, and without offset.

**The Wealth That Won't Be****Created**

The deeper damage extends below the surface. Ras Laffan sits atop Qatar's North Field, one half of the world's largest natural gas reservoir. The other half is Iran's South Pars field. Israel struck South Pars. Iran struck Ras Laffan. The reservoir they share (9,700 square kilometres, approximately the size of Qatar itself) now has damaged extraction and export infrastructure on both sides of its border. On the list of the world's 25 largest natural gas fields, this single reservoir holds roughly 40% of their combined recoverable reserves. It is nearly six times larger than the second-biggest field on earth. And it is only 10% depleted. As much as 90% of the gas remains underground. It will remain there, inaccessible, for at least a decade while surface facilities are rebuilt on both sides. Clark would have a word for this. He called it 'indirect cost', the production foregone, the capital consumed, the wealth that will not be created. LNG prices rose 60% after the initial drone strike on Qatar. That complex is now shut. Helium production (Qatar alone had been producing 17 tonnes per day at Ras Laffan, a third of global supply) has ceased. There are no ready substitutes for helium. Semiconductor fabrication, which depends on it for cooling

supermagnets, is beginning to feel the constraint. South Korean chipmakers are already reporting shortages. This is not a disruption to one sector. It is a disruption to the supply chain that manufactures the physical substrate of the modern economy.

**Just Days Of Jet Fuel Left**

The Economist's modelling of fuel stocks, drawing on Kpler shipping data, is the kind of number that belongs in a war communique rather than a commodities note. If the Strait of Hormuz remains blocked, Oceania will have exhausted 80% of its jet fuel within 36 days. Africa within 23. Asian countries outside China, Japan, and South Korea will be critically short of petrol within 12. Right now, 125 product tankers (five percent of the global fleet) are trapped inside the Gulf with nowhere to go. The disruption is not only about oil, and it was never only about oil. The Gulf, by accident of geology, has become the processing hub for an interlocking web of industrial inputs. When its factories close, the consequences cascade through industries that have nothing to do with hydrocarbons. Urea is up 35% since the war began, and up 70% over the preceding three months. Sulphur is up 40%. The most telling image from The Economist's commodity analysis is this: Iranian steel

billets, the unfinished intermediate product, are now trading dearer than the finished hot-rolled coil. It is as though raw dough has become more expensive than a baked loaf. Supply chains, when they invert this way, do not self-correct overnight. Restarting idle refineries and smelters (which operate at extreme temperatures and pressures) takes months. The knock-on effects on metal processing could persist well into 2027.

**Where The Hormuz Really Takes You**

Then there is the human geography of the crisis, which does not distribute itself along the lines of the decisions that caused it. More than 80% of the oil and LNG that transited Hormuz in 2024 was bound for Asia. Japan sources 95% of its crude from the Middle East, 70% of it through Hormuz. South Korea buys 70% of its oil from the region. The South Korean won has approached 1,500 to the dollar, its weakest since 2009. Japan's Nikkei 225 slid 3% on the morning of the Ras Laffan strikes alone. Seoul has launched a 100 trillion won stabilisation package. India's rupee has fallen to a record low. In Pune, municipal authorities have suspended gas-fired cremations for want of LPG, asking families to use the electric crematorium instead. Bangladesh has closed its universities.

## 'Humiliation', 'Neglect': Congress's Quiet Unravelling As Leader After Leader Leaves

Ahead of the April 9 Assembly elections, the Congress party received a severe jolt in Assam when Pradyut Bordoloi, its veteran leader and incumbent Member of Parliament from Nagaon, resigned from the party. Later, Bordoloi told the media that he was leaving after three decades with the Congress because he was feeling humiliated and isolated, insinuating that all was not well between him and Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Gaurav Gogoi. Bordoloi described how the party renominated an MLA who orchestrated an attack on him during the Panchayat elections in April 2025, but emphasised that his decision to quit was driven more by the humiliation and neglect he faced in the Congress than by ticket distribution or political opportunism. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who switched to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from the Congress in 2015, citing similar reasons, lost no time in welcoming Bordoloi into the BJP. "The Assam Pradesh BJP will recommend to the central leadership that he (Bordoloi) should fight the Assembly elections. There is no reason for someone with self-respect to stay with the Congress party. We aim to bring more Congress leaders into the party," Sarma said.

**Not Just A Bordoloi Story**  
While the renomination of a tainted MLA may have triggered Bordoloi's resignation,

discontent inside the Assam Congress has been hurting the party for the past several months. "When we inform Delhi of problems we face at the ground level, we get no response. They do not even respond to our emails," a Congress worker from Assam says. During conversations with state-level Congress leaders, words like '[lack of] self-respect', 'isolation', 'sidelined', and 'ignored' come up frequently. This undercurrent, left unaddressed, has resulted in significant resignations. In May 2025, PCC spokesperson Bobbeeta Sharma resigned. This was followed by a bigger blow in February 2026, when Bhupen Borah, two-time MLA and the president of the state unit from 2021 until 2025, quit the party. Borah was regarded as the "indigenous Hindu face". Himanta Biswa Sarma was quick to move in, wasting no time to accommodate Borah into the state executive of the BJP. A senior police official in Guwahati summed up the situation cogently. "Now, it will be a cakewalk for the BJP," adding that it is the Congress that has now become the BJP in Assam.

**Same Plot, Different Characters**

In West Bengal, it is a similar story - of neglect and isolation. The only silver lining being that there are fewer instances of desertion. Ironically, it is because neither the Trinamool Congress (TMC) nor the BJP



can accommodate the Congress deserters. Battle-scarred party veterans are clearly upset at the High Command's decision to field candidates in all 294 seats. They argue that given the strong anti-incumbency sentiment against the TMC and the communal politics of the BJP, a secular alliance with the Communist Party of India Marxist (CPI-M) could perhaps break the TMC-BJP binary in West Bengal's politics. However, given the Congress' electoral stake in Kerala, where it is pitted head-on against the CPI(M), an alliance in West Bengal would be mired in political contradictions, which the BJP would leverage. While there may be creative ways to resolve such contradictions, the prevailing mood within the Bengal Congress is that of frustration - frustration that local interests do not feature in the party's larger scheme of things. Over in Odisha,

things are not dissimilar, as Sofia Firdous, the state's first Muslim woman legislator, defied a party whip and cross-voted with two other Congress MLAs during the recent Rajya Sabha election. This led to the surprise victory of the BJP-backed independent candidate Dilip Ray, who defeated his Congress-Biju Janata Dal (BJD) backed rival. The Congress has expelled Firdous from the party and sought her disqualification from the Assembly under the anti-defection act. But what made Sofia Firdous break ranks? Firdous has claimed that the Congress leadership did not consult their MLAs before deciding to support the BJD candidate. She argued that the BJD had historically acted as the "B-team" for the BJP and that aligning with them betrayed the struggle of Congress workers in Odisha. Her father, Mohammed Moquim, pointed out that Firdous was repeat-

edly sidelined within the party's decision-making processes.

**New Mutation, Old Disease**

It would be intellectually dishonest to pretend that the Congress has never split before. It split, repeatedly, in its moments of genuine crises. The 1969 split, triggered by Indira Gandhi's clash with the Syndicate following the 1967 electoral setback, was ideological and seismic. The post-Emergency collapse in 1977 spawned the Janata coalition. The Narasimha Rao era saw a rash of splinter formations - the Tiwari Congress, the Bangarappa Congress, the Scindia Congress (the original one, under Madhavrao). The Sitaram Kesri interregnum added more turbulence. And when Sonia Gandhi came to power, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) split away in 1999 over her foreign-origin, and YS Rajasekhara Reddy eventually walked Andhra Pradesh into the arms of a dynasty of its own making.

## End Child Marriages, Raise Public Awareness: Joint Collector T. Nishanthi



**Amalapuram, March 23:** District Joint Collector T. Nishanthi emphasized the need to completely eradicate child marriages and create widespread public awareness on the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. She urged coordinated efforts from officials and the public to protect the future of girl children. At a district-level meeting, officials from mandal and village levels—including Tahsildars, MPDOs, MEOs, CMPOs, police, ICDS staff, and others—were directed to actively identify and prevent child marriages, especially in vulnerable areas. Awareness programs through cultural activities like Burrakatha and Harikatha were suggested in rural regions. Officials reported that 65 child marriages were prevented between 2022 and 2025.

Due to increased awareness, only four cases were reported between November 2025 and March 23, 2026, and all were successfully stopped. The Joint Collector highlighted that the legal marriage age is 21 years for men and 18 years for women, and any violation is punishable under law. She also noted that those who conduct, support, or participate in child marriages can face penalties. While child marriage cases have significantly declined over the past decade, challenges such as poverty, lack of security, and traditional practices persist in remote areas. She stressed that along with strict law enforcement, social change through education and economic empowerment is essential to eliminate this practice completely.

## Training Begins for Census-2027

**Paderu, March 23:** A three-day training program for field enumerators for Census-2027 commenced on Monday at the District Collector meeting hall. District Collector A.S. Dinesh Kumar inaugurated the session and emphasized the need for accurate and meticulous data collection, highlighting the importance of the census for national development. The training will continue from March 23 to 25. A total of 22 teachers, selected from 11 mandals, are being trained as field trainers. Census Officer B. Trinadha Rao and Degree College Lecturer Dr. P. Janaki Rao are serving as master trainers. These trained personnel will further train enumerators and supervisors at the mandal level. The Collector stated that this year's census will be conducted entirely through a digital system, with data to be recorded using the "Hello App" for faster and error-free collection. In-charge Joint Collector Tirumala



Sripuja, ITDA Project Officer and Assistant Collector K. Saheth, In-charge DRO Ambedkar, Special Deputy Collector B. Neelakantha Rao, and others attended the program.

## Precautions Key to Prevent Heat Stroke: NTR District Collector



**Vijayawada, March 23:** NTR District Collector Dr. G. Lakshminisha urged the public to take necessary precautions to avoid heat stroke during the summer season. He emphasized that preventive measures are essential for protection against extreme heat. At a meeting held at the Collectorate on Monday, the Collector, along with Joint Collector S. Ilakkiya and health officials, released awareness posters on heat stroke prevention. He advised people, especially the elderly, children, pregnant women, and out-

door workers, to remain cautious as they are more vulnerable. The Collector suggested avoiding outdoor activities during peak afternoon hours, using protective gear like caps or umbrellas, staying hydrated with water, ORS, and coconut water, and wearing light-colored cotton clothing. He also directed officials to display awareness posters at public places, schools, Anganwadi centers, and health facilities, and to spread awareness at the ????? level through ASHA workers and ANMs.

## Agency Issues Taken Up on Priority: JC Bachu Smaran Raj



**Rampachodavaram, March 23:** Polavaram District Joint Collector and ITDA Project Officer Bachu Smaran Raj stated that special focus is being given to resolve issues of tribal people in remote agency areas. Speaking at the Grievance Redressal meeting held at the ITDA office on Monday, he said around 90 petitions were received this week. Some issues were resolved on the spot, while others were forwarded to concerned departments for necessary action. He directed officials to examine all applications thoroughly and

resolve them based on eligibility. Key issues raised included road works, school and health centre buildings, ????? infrastructure, and compensation matters. In the Revenue Clinic, petitions related to land issues, D-patta, land acquisition, and webland were received. The Joint Collector said five applications were registered and sent to respective Thasildar for resolution as per norms. Officials were instructed to regularly review pending cases and ensure timely disposal, giving clear reports where issues remain unresolved.

## Summer Action Plan to Be Prepared: Collector Dinesh Kumar

**Paderu, March 23:** District Collector A.S. Dinesh Kumar has directed officials to prepare a comprehensive Summer Action Plan in coordination with all departments to tackle the upcoming heatwave conditions. During a video conference with officials of Alluri and Polavaram districts on Monday, the Collector instructed authorities to take preventive measures to avoid public inconvenience. He emphasized setting up drinking water kiosks at crowded places such as ITDA offices, Collectorates, Primary Health Centres, markets, RTC bus stands, bus shelters, and tourist spots. He also directed officials to ensure protection for workers under employment guarantee schemes, as well as students in schools and Anganwadi centres, by providing shade and necessary safety measures. Continuous monitoring of drinking water supply in villages was advised to prevent shortages. Further, arrangements should be made for water availability for livestock, and irrigation facilities should be ensured through check dams to avoid water scarcity for agriculture and horticulture crops. The Collector instructed that ORS packets, first aid kits, and essential medicines be kept ready



at all Primary Health Centres to prevent heatstroke cases. He urged people to remain cautious and avoid going out during peak afternoon hours unless necessary. An awareness poster on heatstroke prevention was also released during the meeting.

## Strict Action Against Illegal Activities: SP Harshavardhan Raju

**Ongole, March 23:** District Superintendent of Police Harshavardhan Raju has directed officials to take stringent action against illegal activities. During his inspection of the Podili Police Circle Office on Monday, he reviewed records and assessed security measures in the area. He instructed police personnel to ensure better public safety, intensify night patrolling, and strictly curb anti-social activities. Warning against negligence in crime control, he emphasized the use of technology for swift investigation and apprehension of offenders. The SP also directed regular checks on migrant labourers, including collection of complete details and fingerprints. He stressed special focus on road safety, including strict action against drunk driving, traffic violations, and minors driving ve-



hicles. Special Branch Inspector M. Srinivasa Rao, CI Rajesh Kumar, and SI S. Rajesh were among those present.

## Ravulapalem Set to Become First ISO-Certified Gram Panchayat in State



**Amalapuram, March 23:** Ravulapalem Gram Panchayat, the gateway to Konaseema, is on track to become the first ISO-certified village panchayat in the state. A Kerala-based audit team visited the village on Monday and conducted

field inspections, reviewing governance, development works, record maintenance, and citizen services. As part of the state's initiative to grant ISO certification to village panchayats, 56 were initially selected, with 24 now in the final race. Ravulapalem is among the frontrunners, alongside a few other panchayats from the Godavari region. The audit team assessed key parameters such as sanitation, infrastructure, drinking water, street lighting, healthcare, education, tax collection, welfare implementation, and administrative transparency. Despite having a population of around 35,000, Ravulapalem has made significant progress in meeting these standards. Strong infrastructure, growing commercial activity, and consistent efforts by public representatives, officials, and residents have contributed to its development. The final decision on ISO certification will be made based on the audit report to be submitted to the government.

## Pithapuram Town Development Gets Top Priority: Minister Narayana

**Kakinada, March 23:** Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister Ponguru Narayana stated that top priority will be given to basic infrastructure development in Pithapuram town, including drinking water, drainage systems, CC roads, street lighting, and parks. During his visit to Kakinada district on Monday, the Minister reviewed urban development works at a meeting held in the Pithapuram municipal office with state-level officials. He said that under the AMRUT scheme, ₹60 crore has been allocated for drinking water projects in Pithapuram and ₹80 crore for Gollaprolu, aiming to ensure clean tap water supply to every household within two years. He also mentioned plans to set up wastewater treatment systems with an investment of ₹14.6 crore in Pithapuram and ₹8 crore in Gollaprolu. The Minister assured that all major civic works would be completed 100% within the next two years. Narayana directed officials to ex-



pedite irrigation proposals and indicated that municipal elections may be held within six months. He also noted that efforts are underway to increase divisions in municipalities.

## Resurvey of Lands to be Accelerated in Polavaram District

**Rampachodavaram, March 23:** Polavaram District Joint Collector Bachu Smaran Raj has directed officials to expedite the resurvey of

villages in Rampachodavaram division. The remaining villages should be taken up as per government norms. Officials were instructed to create awareness among farmers before conducting surveys to avoid disputes during boundary marking. Survey teams should report to the field every morning, and village surveyors must actively participate in daily operations. The Joint Collector set a target to complete the resurvey in all assigned villages by April 15 and directed that progress reports be submitted regularly.



lands that are yet to be covered. During a review meeting held at the ITDA conference hall on Monday evening with survey officials, and staff from 12 mandals, he stressed the need for timely completion. He noted that resurvey has been completed in 22 out of 159 villages in Chinturu division and 13 out of 209

He also emphasized training for village surveyors by mandal-level officials. Assistant Director of Survey Eshwar Dora, Deputy Inspector Miriyala Lakshman, and several Thasildhar and survey staff attended the meeting.

# MATLAB Workshop Launched at Aditya University



**Gandepalli, March 23:** A special workshop titled "MATLAB for Everyone" was launched at Aditya University, Surampalem, under the collaboration of the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation. The program aims to provide students from all departments with a strong foundation in MATLAB programming and enhance their analytical and problem-solving skills. Deputy Pro-Chancellor Dr. M. Srinivasa Reddy stated that the initiative is designed to meet future technological demands. The workshop covers key topics such as matrix operations, data analysis, visualization techniques, and algorithm

development. Organizers said the training is structured to be beginner-friendly, including hands-on sessions, real-time examples, and practical applications, enabling even non-programming students to learn effectively. Expert resource person Y. Vara Prasad is conducting the sessions, guiding students on modern MATLAB tools and their practical use. University officials, including Vice-Chancellor Dr. M. B. Srinivas and other academic leaders, attended the inaugural session and appreciated the initiative for equipping students with essential computational skills.

# Quality Resolution for Every Petition: Collector Dr. G. Lakshmeesha

**Vijayawada, March 23:** District Collector Dr. G. Lakshmeesha directed officials to ensure quality and time-bound resolution of every grievance received through the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS), stressing that applicants must be fully satisfied. On Monday, the Collector, along with Joint Collector Ilakkiya and other officials, received 112 petitions from the public. Most complaints were related to Revenue (31), Municipal &

Urban Development (24), Police (14), and Panchayat Raj (9) departments. He emphasized that the State Government gives top priority to PGRS and called for better coordination with field-level officials for speedy grievance redressal. Transparency and accountability in resolving public issues were also highlighted. District officials, including DRO M. Lakshminarasimham and PGRS Coordinator Jyothi, participated in the program.



# SSC Exams Conducted Smoothly in Vijayawada



**Pen Power, Vijayawada, March 23:** Class 10 (SSC) examinations are being conducted smoothly across the district without any issues. District Collector Dr. G. Lakshmeesha inspected examination centres at Boyapati Sivarama Krishnaiah Municipal Corporation High School and Karnati Ramamohan Rao Municipal High School on Monday. He reviewed arrangements such as drinking water, uninterrupted power supply, fans, and medical facilities in view of the summer conditions. Offi-

cialists were instructed to ensure error-free and transparent conduct of exams. A total of 27,360 students are appearing for exams at 149 centres, with all necessary facilities provided to ensure a peaceful environment. Tight security arrangements are in place to prevent any untoward incidents. The Collector also stated that students can avail free RTC bus travel by showing their hall tickets. He emphasized that the examinations are being conducted with utmost transparency and responsibility, ensuring no inconvenience to students.

# 253 Petitions Filed in PGRS; Collector Orders Swift Disposal

**Visakhapatnam, March 23:** District Collector M.N. Harendhira Prasad directed officials to resolve public grievances without delay, warning that negligence will not be tolerated. Reviewing the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS), he instructed all departments to ensure timely and quality disposal of pending petitions. The Collector ordered immediate action on pending cases in departments such as Revenue, Forest, and Municipal Administration, and called



for improved performance in certain zones. He also directed issuing notices to officials failing to resolve complaints within 21 days and warned of strict action against repeated negligence. A total of 253 petitions were received during Monday's PGRS, including 91 related to Revenue, 96 to GVMC, 13 to Police, and 53 to other departments. Senior officials, including the Joint Collector and other district officers, were present to receive grievances.

# Educationist Dommeti Venkata Reddy Remembered on 173rd Birth Anniversary

**Srikakulam, March 23:** District Collector Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar paid rich tributes to noted educationist Dommeti Venkata Reddy, describing him as a pioneer in uplifting backward classes, especially the Shettibalija community. The Collector garlanded his portrait and lit a ceremonial lamp at a commemorative event held at the

Collectorate under the BC Welfare Department. He highlighted Venkata Reddy's efforts in the 18th century to eradicate untouchability and illiteracy, calling his life an inspiration for today's youth. District Revenue Officer SV Lakshmanamurthy, BC Welfare Officer Anuradha, and representatives of BC associations attended the programme.



# Special Focus on Grievance Redressal: Collector Kritika Shukla

**Narasaraopet, March 23:** District Collector Kritika Shukla received petitions from applicants across various mandals during the Public Grievance Redressal Program held at the Palnadu District Collectorate on Monday. A total of 109 petitions were submitted. The District Revenue Officer and officials from various departments participated in the program. The Collector directed officials to give special attention to resolving the petitions promptly and efficiently. She emphasized understanding each applicant's issue thor-



oroughly and ensuring quality and timely solutions, while also reviewing and clearing all pending petitions without delay.

# Pramod Bhagat wins two golds as India shines at Spanish Para Badminton International



**Vitoria (Spain):** India delivered an exceptional performance at the Spanish Para Badminton International 2026 - Level 2, held in Vitoria, Spain, led by standout performances from Paralympic champion Pramad Bhagat and Sukant Kadam. Bhagat secured two gold medals and one silver, while Kadam added one gold and one silver to India's tally, underlining the nation's dominance on the global para badminton stage. Bhagat produced a thrilling performance in the Men's Singles SL3 final, overcoming compatriot Nitesh Kumar in a hard-fought three-set encounter lasting 51 minutes. Bhagat claimed the first set 21-17 before Nitesh responded strongly to take the second 21-10. In a tense decider, Bhagat showcased his experience and composure to seal the match 21-18.

**Final Score: 13-21, 21-12, 21-19**  
Bhagat also secured a silver medal in Men's Doubles SL3-SU5 alongside Sukant Kadam, finishing runners-up to fellow Indians Nitesh Kumar and Ruthick Ragupathi.

**Final Score: 19-21, 14-21**  
**Speaking after his performance, Pramad Bhagat said:** "This tournament was a true test of patience and resilience. The singles final was very intense, and I had to dig deep after losing the second set. I'm happy with the way I stayed composed in crucial moments. Winning two golds here gives me great confidence moving forward."

Junior Xavier de Oliveira and Edwarda De Oliveira Dias. They bounced back 21-12 in the second set and edged a closely contested third set 21-19 to clinch gold.

Meanwhile, Sukant Kadam delivered a commanding performance in the Men's Singles SL4 final, defeating Korea's Cho Nadan in straight sets. Kadam controlled the match from the outset, winning 21-16, 21-17 to secure gold in convincing fashion.

**Kadam said:** "I felt in control throughout the match and was able to execute my game plan well. This gold reflects the hard work I've been putting in, and I'm motivated to build on this momentum in the upcoming tournaments." India's strong showing extended across multiple categories. Nitesh Kumar secured silver and Jagdish Dilli won bronze in Men's Singles SL3. Neeraj claimed bronze in Women's Singles SL3. In Men's Doubles SL3-SU5, Deep Ranjan Bisoyee and Kuldeep Mahkul earned bronze. In mixed doubles SL3-SU5, pairs of Shivam Yadav & Neeraj and Nitesh Kumar & Thulasimathi Murugesan both secured bronze medals. Ruthick Ragupathi (silver) and Shivam Yadav (bronze) delivered strong performances in men's singles SU5. In Women's Singles SU5, Manisha Ramdass clinched gold while Thulasimathi Murugesan secured silver. Jatin Azad and Shivam Yadav won bronze in Men's Doubles SU5, and Manisha Patel added another bronze in women's singles SH6.

# Virat Kohli calls RCB's maiden IPL title 'culmination of 18-year journey'

**Hyderabad:** Virat Kohli reflected on Royal Challengers Bengaluru's maiden IPL triumph, describing the moment as the culmination of an 18-year journey with the franchise. "It was a very special night for all of us at RCB. I have been here since day one and so has Ramesh Mane [Team Masseur and Caretaker]. We are probably the oldest members of the RCB group," Kohli said. Reflecting on the lead-up to the title clash against Punjab Kings, Kohli said the team entered the Final with quiet confidence. "When we reached the finals, I felt a sense of calm confidence. But you also understand it's not going to be a cakewalk. It's a final and there is another team who has played really well to get there. Obviously, they have also beaten a lot of good sides so they are also very confident of what they want to do." Kohli said that the team's history of near misses served as additional motivation to hold their nerves. "Given the history of the near

misses and the almost moments of the past where we reached the finals and we could not win. I think that gave us extra motivation to hold our nerve. Because the league has become so much more competitive, we must have played really good cricket to get to the finals. It's not a fluke; it's not by chance. We have beaten some really good teams, and we are an amazing team. Who have earned the right to be here on this day." Reflecting on the final moments of the match, Kohli said the emotions of the journey came rushing back. "All in all, it was an amazing night for all of us. It was quite surreal for me honestly, quite unbelievable when it was all unfolding in the end. So many things flashed in front of your eyes. The whole journey for 18 years. All the ups and downs, all the good moments, bad moments. It's like the accumulation of all of that is unfolding in front of you and that is going to happen in the next ten minutes. It's a very difficult



thing to explain. It's a thing to experience. And that experience I will never ever forget." He also spoke about the tension in the final over as the result drew closer. "Especially the last over where you know the game is sealed. Hoping that Josh doesn't bowl a no ball which he never does. There was quite confidence but still as I said, you are hoping for the perfect result. So, knowing that the game is beyond them and then to wait for those last three balls was probably the toughest part of the night."