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"Do ED Officers Lose Rights When On Duty?" Top Court Raps Mamata Banerjee

New Delhi: What if your government is in power at the Centre and some other political party does the same at the state level, the Supreme Court posed this counter question to the Mamata Banerjee government during a hearing on the Bengal Chief Minister's alleged interference in the search operations conducted against political consultancy firm I-PAC. The Enforcement Directorate, or ED, has accused Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and state officials of interfering with its investigation and searches at the offices of political consultancy firm

Indian Political Action Committee, or I-PAC, which works with the Trinamool. The raids happened in early January as part of a money laundering investigation. The top court questioned the objections raised over maintainability of the plea moved under Article 32 by Enforcement Directorate (ED) against Mamata Banerjee's alleged interference in the raids against I-PAC. A bench of Justices PK Mishra and NV Anjaria said that some officers of the ED, which investigates financial crimes, have also petitioned it in their individual capacity. The court asked the counsel oppos-



ing the ED plea to answer whether the agency's officers cease to become citizens of India merely because they are officers of the ED. "Please concentrate on the fundamental right of the officers of the ED against whom the offence has been committed. Otherwise you

will miss the point," Justice Mishra remarked. "You can't forget the second petition which is preferred by individual officers who are the victims of the offence. You will be in difficulty, I am telling you. Don't just say ED, ED, ED," Justice Mishra added.

"India Has Adequate Crude Oil Stores, Need To Be Atmanirbhar": PM Amid Iran War

New Delhi: The conflict in the West Asia has spawned a "severe energy crisis" across the world, and this is a matter of concern for India as well, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in parliament on Tuesday. Since the Iran war erupted at the end of February, Tehran has retaliated against US-Israeli attacks by throttling traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for one-fifth of global crude, and by hitting Gulf energy sites and US embassies as well as targets in Israel.



2 Lakh Soldiers, Caste and Gender No Bar... Shankaracharya Has An 'Army' Plan

New Delhi: Avimuktesh waranand, the Shankaracharya or head of Jyotish Peeth in Uttarakhand's Joshimath, has announced plans to launch a two-lakh-strong 'army'. Currently in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, the religious leader has said this 'army', armed with traditional and modern weapons, will protect the cow progeny and Hinduism. This 'army' would have 2,18,000 soldiers from all Hindu castes, he said, adding that the soldiers

would be male, female, and from the third gender. This 'army' will be launched in Prayagraj on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya in February next year, Avimukteshwaranand said. He said it would be called the 'Chaturangini Sena'. The Shankaracharya explained that 'Chaturangini Sena' refers to any army that has infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots. He also said the Mahabharata mentioned Chaturangini Sena.



Nitish Kumar Elected Unopposed As JDU President For 5th Time



Patna (Bihar): Janta United Dal Chief Nitish Kumar has been elected unopposed as the President of the Janata Dal

(United), the party announced on Tuesday. A press conference regarding the election will be held at 2:30 PM at

the party office in Delhi. "After the time for withdrawal of nomination, since the nomination of only Shri Nitish Kumar is remaining with the Returning Officer, the Returning Officer, Shri Aneel Prasad Hegde (Ex-MP, Rajya Sabha), will be issuing the certificate of election of Shri Nitish Kumar today at 2:30 PM," the party said in a statement. Party Working President and Rajya Sabha (Leader of Parliamentary Party) Sanjay Kumar Jha, Union Minister, Government

of India, Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, Minister, Government of Bihar, Shrawan Kumar, and other senior party leaders will be present on the occasion. The party requested the media to be present for the event. Earlier, multiple leaders of the Janata Dal (United) filed the nomination for the post of the party's president on behalf of Nitish Kumar, with him set to lead the party at the national level for the fourth consecutive term.

Food poisoning in Nandyal... 60 people fall ill

From Our Staff Reporter Nandyal, March 24: A food poisoning incident created panic in the YSR Nagar Budaga Jangala Colony in Nandyal. Leftover food from a wedding was distributed to residents of the colony by the wedding party. After consuming the food, around 60 people fell ill. They were immediately shifted to a hospital in Nandyal for treatment. Among the victims, 10 are children. Doctors stated that the condition of one woman is critical.

As soon as the information was received, the Municipal Commissioner and senior officials from the district medical and health department reached the hospital and reviewed the situation. Officials collected details from the affected families. They stated that tests are being conducted to determine whether it is food poisoning or if there was any contamination in the drinking water. Authorities reassured the families that there is no need to panic and promised to provide better medical treatment to the victims.

Minister Janardhan Reddy reviews the incident...
Minister B. C. Janardhan Reddy inquired about the incident and asked local medical officials about the current condition of the victims. He directed district authorities to ensure better medical care for those affected.

AP Government signs MoU with Centre on Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0



From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, March, 24: The Andhra Pradesh government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Central Government for Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0. Officials from both the central and state governments signed the agreement at the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti in Delhi.

The goal of Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 is to provide safe

drinking water to every household in rural areas. Union Minister C. R. Patil attended the MoU event in Delhi, while Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu joined via Zoom from the camp office, and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan participated virtually. The Centre and State have agreed to achieve the "Har Ghar Jal" goal by December 2028. The Central Govern-

ment has decided to extend the mission until 2028. Both governments will focus on service delivery and public participation. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan expressed happiness over the Union Cabinet's decision to continue the mission and thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Agreement with AP Gov-

ernment: C. R. Patil

After the agreement, Union Minister C. R. Patil spoke virtually from Delhi. He stated that approvals for Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 were granted based on requests from various states. He mentioned that CM Chandrababu Naidu had discussed the matter with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and thanked him for proposing the extension of the mission. He noted that in the first phase of the program, tap connections were provided to 16 crore households. Certain shortcomings in the project are being corrected, and maintenance is also being improved. He added that safe drinking water still needs to be provided to another 3 crore households. The extension aligns with the scheme approved before 2024. Measures are also being taken to test water quality in Andhra Pradesh.

No tolerance for conspiracies against Amaravati: Minister Anita

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, March, 24: State Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha warned that no conspiracies against Amaravati will be tolerated. She stated that an investigation has been ordered into the recent series of fire accidents occurring in Amaravati, especially since they appear to follow a similar pattern. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, she said that a major fire broke out near the government officials' bungalows close to Rayapudi in Amaravati late Monday night, and it was brought under control with great effort using five fire engines.



She mentioned that a district collectors' conference was recently held in Amaravati, and even on that day, a fire incident had occurred, raising suspicions that it might have been intentional. Minister Anita noted that due to recent rain-

fall in the Amaravati region, the chances of such fire incidents occurring naturally are very low.

She also expressed suspicion that the recent groundbreaking ceremony for the ArcelorMittal steel plant in Anakapalli might have triggered jealousy, leading to deliberate acts like setting pipes on fire in the capital. She recalled past incidents where attempts were allegedly made to disrupt Amaravati's development, including setting fire to banana plantations. Minister Anita concluded that the police are investigating the incident from all possible angles.

Rayapudi incident: Accident or conspiracy? Investigate, says CM



From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, March, 24: Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu held a review meeting at the Secretariat on Tuesday regarding the fire accident that occurred on Monday night in Rayapudi, a part of the capital region Amaravati.

Officials briefed the Chief Minister with preliminary information about the incident in which plastic pipes belonging to a mega construction company were burnt at the site of HOD

(Heads of Department) towers under construction in Rayapudi. The Chief Minister expressed suspicion over the frequent occurrence of fire accidents in the capital region. He instructed officials to conduct a comprehensive investigation to determine whether it was an accident or part of a conspiracy. He noted that in three recent incidents, construction materials belonging to different contracting firms were burnt. CM Chandrababu Naidu

stated that a high-level review meeting with CRDA officials and senior police officers would be held later in the day. Plastic pipes caught fire near the All India Services officers' towers currently under construction at Rayapudi in Amaravati. Doubts have been raised about whether this was an accident or a deliberate act. Recently, near Velagapudi at Seed Axis Road, there were suspicions that some individuals intentionally set fire to pipes.

"Obstacles cleared for RDT with the Centre's special initiative... CM Chandrababu expresses happiness

Amaravati, March 24: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu stated that the Rural Development Trust (RDT) has been providing various services to the poor in thousands of villages across the Telugu states.

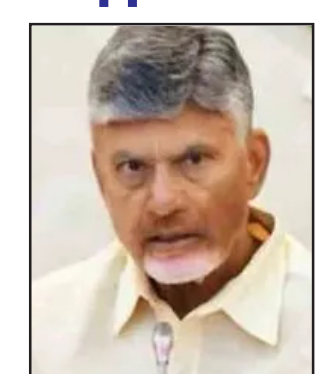
He mentioned that the earlier decision to halt foreign funding to voluntary organizations under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act had disrupted the services of this organization. He expressed special thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for resolving the issue related to foreign funding for

RDT. The Chief Minister shared this through a post on social media platform X.

He explained the services provided by RDT and said that after he requested the Union Home Ministry to resolve the issue, the obstacles were cleared due to their special initiative. By allowing RDT to receive foreign funds again under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, the flow of funds has been restored. He thanked the Central Government on behalf of the lakhs of poor beneficiaries who receive support through the trust. Andhra Pradesh IT and Education Minister Nara Lokesh also

spoke about the issue. He said that the technical difficulties faced by RDT in receiving foreign funds have now been resolved and that the Central Government has renewed the organization's license.

Lokesh thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and officials for their support, sharing his gratitude on social media platform X. He added that he had promised during and after the elections that RDT's services would not face any disruption. By securing approvals from the Central Government, he has now fulfilled that promise.



This decision is expected to accelerate social development in the Rayalaseema region. It stands as an example of how collaboration between governments and service organizations can significantly benefit the poor.

EDITORIAL

West Asian
influence on urea

The central government says that urea stocks are sufficient for the upcoming Kharif season and that there will be no disruption to agriculture, but the situation remains unpredictable. As of March 10, the government says that urea stocks in India were up to 61.5 lakh metric tons, which is 1 million tons more than the stocks at the same time last year. The ongoing war in West Asia is disrupting global trade. This crisis is having a serious impact on the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG), which is required to manufacture urea, a major agricultural commodity. The tremors of the war are already affecting India's urea supply. As of Sunday (March 22), urea plants in India were running at half capacity. Some urea companies were forced to close their plants. India's largest LNG importer, Petronet LNG, has been managing gas supplies from Qatar under long-term contracts. Recently, Petronet withdrew its supply contract after the war in Ras al-Khaimah in Qatar damaged its gas supply system. This action led to supply cuts by central government-owned gas distributors such as GAIL (India), Indian Oil Corporation and Bharat Petroleum Corporation. India is heavily dependent on imports for its LNG supply. India imports 4.7 million barrels of crude oil per day, or 88% of its requirements, and liquefied natural gas from abroad to meet 47% of its natural gas demand. This is likely to not only increase urea prices in the global market, but also affect the subsidies provided by the Indian government on fertilizers. The shortage of urea is likely to increase agricultural production costs and increase inflation. India imported over 50% of its liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the international market in 2025. India is the fourth largest buyer of LNG in the world. India imported 26.1 million metric tons of LNG in 2025. Of this, 40% is supplied from Qatar and the remaining 20% is supplied through the UAE and Oman. All this LNG is transported by ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Up to 60% of India's LNG imports are disrupted due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. In India, natural gas is mainly used for the manufacture of ammonia and, consequently, for the manufacture of fertilizers. It is noteworthy that 30% of the LNG supplied to India in 2026 was used for the manufacture of fertilizers. LNG is the main source for the production of urea. Urea is the most widely used fertilizer in the country. Urea production is a highly energy-intensive process. These urea plants have switched to using natural gas, which emits less emissions. National urea consumption has increased steadily over the past decade and is expected to reach 387 lakh metric tonnes in 2025. Even though domestic urea production in 2025 was around 306 lakh metric tonnes, it is not able to meet the overall demand of the country. Therefore, India has to rely on urea imports. In this context, the war in West Asia is affecting domestic urea production and supply. India's urea imports in 2025 are up to 2300 lakh metric tonnes. While 71% of these imports are to come from West Asia, 45% of which is to be supplied from Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE. This entire supply has to be transported through the Strait of Hormuz. In this context, the Indian government has issued the Natural Gas Supply Control Order 2026. In this, the fertilizer sector has been included in the priority list. Even when Russia started its war on Ukraine two or three years ago, India had to face serious difficulties in terms of fuel and fertilizer supply. Fertilizer production can be produced only if gas is available domestically at subsidized prices by giving priority to fertilizer manufacturing. The war between Russia and Ukraine has also affected the supply of potash. 14% of the urea supplied to the world is supplied from Russia alone. Russia is the second largest producer with a share of about 10% of Russia's supply of DAP. 50% of the potash required has to be imported from Russia and Belarus. India gets about 60% of its DAP demand from China and Saudi Arabia. Now that Saudi Arabia is also a war-torn country, DAP supply is being affected. Trade circles are concerned that not only are India facing supply difficulties, but the import bill could also skyrocket.

The \$2 Trillion Wipeout: How The Market
Exposed Gold's Biggest Lie

A recent collapse of gold and silver prices, erasing nearly \$2 trillion in market value within hours, appears to defy macro-economic logic but should not be read as some market anomaly. It can be better understood as a structural inflexion point on how volatile markets are eroding trust and faith in secured instruments of investment. When geopolitical logic allows a surge in safe-haven demand amid one of the sharpest military escalations in West Asia - seen in decades, precious metals witnessed a violent sell-off. This inversion of historical behaviour signals a deeper transition: the displacement of geopolitics by monetary liquidity as the primary driver of global asset prices.

From War Premium to Rate Shock

The immediate trigger was geopolitical. The February 28 US-Israel strikes on Iranian infrastructure, combined with threats to disrupt the Strait of Hormuz, which carries nearly 20% of global oil and LNG flows, pushed Brent crude above \$119 per barrel, a surge of around \$50 per barrel. Historically, such conditions would generate a "gold-to-war" rally. Instead, markets processed the shock through a different channel. Rising energy prices fuel inflation, prompting expectations of tighter monetary policy; this drives up real interest rates, increasing the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding assets like gold and consequently exerting downward pressure on its price. This transmission mechanism reflects a regime shift. Oil no longer drives gold directly; it operates through central bank reaction functions. Elevated crude prices reinforced expectations of a "higher-for-longer" rate environment, effectively neutralising gold's inflation-hedge appeal. Empirically, the divergence was stark: gold fell approximately 3.8% intraday despite escalating conflict, sil-

ver declined over 7%, reflecting both financial and industrial stress, gold posted consistent weekly declines throughout the escalation period. The safe-haven function did not merely weaken; it failed under conditions where it should have been strongest.

Yield-Bearing Safety Replaces Gold

The more fundamental driver lies in the transformation of global monetary conditions. The nomination of Kevin Warsh as Federal Reserve Chair introduced a credible expectation of aggressive quantitative tightening and sustained policy rigidity. Markets rapidly repriced. American 10-year yields rose to around 4.3% (more than half a year high), 30-year yields approached 4.8%, signalling long-term inflation persistence, rate hike probabilities re-entered forward curves for late 2026. This redefined the concept of safety. Gold, a non-yielding asset, must now compete against sovereign instruments offering 4-5% nominal returns. The opportunity cost is no longer theoretical - it is quantifiable and immediate.

Safety has shifted from "store of value" to "store of value with yield". In such a regime, even geopolitical crises fail to offset the gravitational pull of real returns. Capital allocation becomes a function of yield differentials, not fear.

The Mechanics of Collapse

While macro conditions explain direction, they do not explain velocity. The scale of the \$2 trillion wipeout reflects market structure fragility, particularly the role of leverage. The 2025 rally during which gold rose over 60% was accompanied by elevated speculative positioning (over 60,000 COMEX long contracts in silver) and record ETF inflows of around 4,000 tonnes, as well as increased use of leveraged derivatives and algorithmic strategies. When prices began to correct, the system transitioned from equilibrium to cascade - technical breakdown below



key levels (\$4,708 Fibonacci; \$4,400 psychological), margin calls on leveraged positions, forced liquidations across futures and ETFs, liquidity withdrawal, creating "air pockets" in order books. Exchanges amplified the process; margin requirements for silver were raised by over 15%, forcing additional deleveraging. This produced a classic liquidity vacuum: prices collapsed not because of new information about fundamentals, but because balance sheets were forced to contract simultaneously. Silver, with trading volumes less than one-fifth of gold, exhibited even greater fragility, plunging 36% intraday, the largest drop on record. Its dual identity as a financial and industrial metal compounded the decline, as oil-driven recession fears triggered expectations of demand destruction.

If gold failed as a safe haven, the question is where capital migrated. The answer reinforces a long-standing but often contested reality: the primacy of the US dollar system. During the crisis, the DXY index rose broadly, capital flowed into US Treasuries, combining liquidity with yield, and dollar strength exerted additional downward pressure on gold prices. This dynamic reveals a structural asymmetry. In periods of stress, investors require

not just safety, but liquidity at scale. Only the US financial system provides both. The implication is clear: each crisis that tests the system continues to reinforce dollar hegemony, not weaken it. The "dedollarisation" narrative, while relevant in the long term, was temporarily suspended under the weight of immediate liquidity needs.

From Metals to Tech and Back

The metals collapse cannot be viewed in isolation. It coincided with broader cross-asset deleveraging, including the February 2026 "SaaSpocalypse", which wiped out nearly \$1 trillion in technology valuations within a week. This interconnection is critical. Gold often functions as a liquidity buffer within institutional portfolios. When algorithmic strategies triggered "basket liquidation" across equities, metals were simultaneously sold to meet margin requirements. Volatility indicators (VIX futures) steepened sharply, ETF redemptions accelerated across asset classes, systematic funds executed synchronised global sell orders. The result was synchronised cross-market stress, compressing reaction times and amplifying volatility.

Institutional Accumulation vs Retail Exit

Despite the sell-off, underlying demand dynamics reveal an important divergence: Central banks purchased over 1,000 tonnes of gold in 2025, out of which 95% of central banks surveyed expect to increase reserves. Additionally, retail investors drove most ETF outflows during the crash. For institutional actors, the correction represents a price adjustment, not a thesis failure. For retail participants, it triggered capitulation. This divergence suggests that while financial positioning is volatile, strategic demand remains intact. The March 2026 metals collapse marks a transition in how global markets process uncertainty. Three structural shifts emerge. Firstly, monetary conditions now dominate geopolitical signals. Second, leverage and market structure amplify volatility beyond fundamentals. And third, the US dollar system remains the ultimate crisis anchor. Gold has not lost its intrinsic value. What has changed is its relative position within the hierarchy of safe assets. In a world defined by 4% yields, algorithmic liquidity, and leveraged balance sheets, the traditional assumption that war automatically benefits gold no longer holds. The \$2 trillion wipeout was not a failure of gold. It was a repricing of what "safety" means in modern finance and crisis management.

Exit Denied? Why Iran Won't Make It
This Easy For Trump To 'Pause' The War

On March 23, just as the markets were due to open in America and the 48-hour deadline imposed on Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz was about to expire, US President Donald Trump made a surprise announcement. He pushed the 'pause button' on the strikes on Iran's energy and nuclear infrastructure for the next five days. While the markets responded positively to the declaration, Iran did not seem to share Trump's intent, stating that Iran has not been in any direct or indirect talks with the US. Israel, too, refrained from joining Trump in declaring a pause, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stating that Israel will pursue aims that will best secure its own interests.

Following the sudden announcement, there is a buzz that there could be a possible off-ramp on the cards. Meanwhile, Iran and Israel continued their missile strikes overnight, even as the world waits with cautious optimism on Trump's sudden declaration. The war in Iran is now in its fourth week, and despite the 'unilateral pause' by the US, there are no signs of an exit or a ceasefire. President Trump has repeatedly boasted of complete achievement of the war objectives, complete destruction of Iran, 100% decimation of Iranian armed forces, and has said that the US is considering 'winding down' its campaign in the region. Yet, the war continues unabated. In fact, with every passing day, the scope of the conflict is enlarging, and the threat that it poses not only to the region

but the entire global community is becoming more serious and severe. What are these new threats? How is the escalation matrix rising rapidly? What are the possibilities towards a negotiated end to this war? Is there a possibility of an off-ramp soon?

The Three Initial Objectives

When the US and Israel launched the pre-emptive strikes into Iran on February 28, there were basically three declared objectives. One, heavy punishment on the Iranian leadership, its military, infrastructure and economy, to an extent where Iran will find it very difficult to fight back. As a result, either the regime will come down on its knees or the people will come out to the streets to protest against and overthrow the regime. Two, the destruction of its ballistic missile programme, which is considered an existential threat. And three, Iran should never ever be able to build a nuclear weapon and, therefore, complete destruction of its nuclear programme. As a result, in the first few days, Israel and the US conducted decapitating strikes into Iran. Iran's Supreme Leader was assassinated on Day One in a targeted strike. Plus, in a series of targeted assassinations, over 40 high-ranking officials, including military commanders, were taken out. Having established total air dominance, the campaign thereafter took out Iran's weapon depots, missile silos and mobile launchers in a bid to completely degrade Iran's missile capability. The strikes on gas fields and

oil depots were next, aimed to cripple Iran economically. Going by that, the campaign should have been over in a couple of days. But contrary to the expectations (grossly miscalculated), Iran is still standing and giving a tough fight. Plus, with every new engagement, Iran is hitting back harder and deeper, expanding the scope of conflict to an extent that makes an early off-ramp very difficult.

The Strait of Hormuz

The biggest escalation has been the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital choke point and a crucial lifeline to global energy. Despite the fact that the Strait has not been physically mined, the announcement of its intention by Iran, following up with strikes on a few oil tankers, has well and truly scared the shipping companies as well as insurance. In the absence of either of them being willing to take the risk, ships cannot transit the Strait. Although some countries like India and China have been successful in getting conditional passage to their tankers, the narrow sea passage remains closed for global traffic, and, obviously, the war cannot end in such a flux. Militarily and diplomatically, it will be very difficult for the US to call off its campaign without a clear resolution of this issue. Realising the fact that opening the Strait of Hormuz is an essential prerequisite to ending the war, Trump issued a warning to Iran on March 21 that, if the Strait of Hormuz is not open for transit by March 23, the US-Israel combo will take out Iran's



energy and power grids. Iran has reacted sharply to the threat, stating that if its energy grid is hit, it will hit the energy grids and desalination points across the region. With the Gulf countries almost completely dependent on clean drinking water from these plants, it can create a humanitarian crisis if Iran goes ahead with the threat. It is perhaps partly due to this reason that Trump had to call for a 'pause' to re-examine the possibilities and repercussions of going ahead with this threat.

The Nuclear Threat

Although nuclear sites have been bombed in the initial phase of the war, it seems that Iran is now no longer ready to tolerate any more unilateral strikes on its nuclear plants. Accordingly, following an American strike on the Natanz Nuclear Plant on March 20, Iran did the impossible. It successfully hit the Southern Israel town of Dimona, where the highly protected and secretive nuclear research facility is located. The fact that Iranian mis-

siles could penetrate through the multilayered defence and strike Dimona has added another layer of escalation to this conflict. Although Iran did not hit the nuclear site as such, any further escalation could result in an Iranian missile hitting the Dimona nuclear plant. If that happens, not only will there be a serious risk of radiation leak, but a possibility of the conflict witnessing the exercise of tactical nuclear weapons - a final act of desperation by Israel or the US, unable to rein in Iran - cannot be ruled out.

Whither The 'Off-Ramp'?

Most inputs from the US indicate that President Trump is looking for an early exit. Having been coaxed into the war by Israel, he had definitely not bargained for a prolonged conflict nor such a strong response from Iran. However, unlike the previous occasion in June 2025, when he could call off the war after America's B-2 Bombers bombed the nuclear sites in Iran, this time it won't be easy.

**Autos for Transgenders,
Jobs for Differently-Abled
in Visakhapatnam**



Visakhapatnam, March 24: A special welfare program was at the district Collectorate, emphasizing social justice and inclusion. District In-charge Minister Dr. Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy distributed three CNG autos to transgender beneficiaries. Additionally, appointment letters were handed over to three differently-abled persons to promote employment opportunities. The Minister stated that such initiatives aim to encourage self-employment and empower marginalized communities. Government Whip P.G.V.R. Naidu (Ganababu), MLAs Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu and Vishnu Kumar Raju, along with District Collector M.N. Harendira Prasad, CP Shankhabrata Bagchi, Joint Collector Vidhyadhari, and other officials attended the program. Officials reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for all sections of society.

**Professor Venugopala Rao Receives
Prestigious National Award**



Vizianagaram, March 24: Professor Venugopala Rao Tanneeru, Academic Director of MIMS Medical College in Nellimarla, has been honored with a prestigious national award for his outstanding contributions to teaching in the field of Anaesthesiology. The award was presented by the National Foundation for Entrepreneurship Development (NFED), based in Coimbatore, during the Global Conclave on Sustainable Development. He received the 39th Integrated National Award 2026 from the organization's Chairman, Prof. Dr. R. Ganesan. Professor Rao was recognized for his excellence in medical education and administration. Earlier, he received the FAIMER Fellowship Award in 2009 from CMC Ludhiana for his contributions to medical education and leadership. He also served as President of the Indian Society of Anaesthesiologists (AP State) in 2012. The management and staff of MIMS Medical College congratulated him on this achievement.

**Rubber, Jatropha
Cultivation to be Promoted
in Agency Areas**



Rampachodavaram, March 24: State Tribal Welfare Principal Secretary M.M. Naik said that the government is encouraging tribal farmers in agency areas to take up rubber and jatropha cultivation to improve their livelihoods. On Tuesday, he, along with ITDA Project Officer and Polavaram District Joint Collector Bachu Smaran Raj, inspected a rubber plantation established by ITDA at Devarapalli village in Mareduhilli mandal. He directed officials to prepare an action plan to expand rubber plantations over an additional 3,000 acres by collecting applications from farmers. He reviewed the number of rubber societies and existing rubber processing (smoking) units and said that steps are being taken to set up five more units. Naik noted that rubber currently has good market demand and assured that the government is providing incentives to farmers. Later, he visited a jatropha processing unit set up through Vana Vikas Kendras at Kutravada village. He inquired about the extent of cultivation, number of tribal farmers involved, and the market price of jatropha. He suggested creating an online booking portal and assured that tractors and processing machinery would be arranged. Naik emphasized that improving the economic condition of tribal farmers is the government's main objective and encouraged them to educate their children and strengthen their families financially.

**TB Awareness Rally Held
in Rampachodavaram**

Rampachodavaram, March 24: Polavaram District Joint Collector Bachu Smaran Raj stated that eradicating Tuberculosis (TB) is a collective responsibility. On Tuesday, he flagged off a TB awareness rally from the ITDA office premises. Addressing the gathering, he urged people to immediately visit nearby hospitals for testing if TB symptoms are suspected. He emphasized the need to create awareness in every village and encouraged individuals with persistent cough for more than two weeks to undergo TB tests. He also highlighted that free treatment is available at government hospitals and advised people to avoid smoking habits like cigarettes and beedis to prevent TB. The rally, organized with school students, proceeded from the ITDA office to Ambedkar Center, promoting the "TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan." DMHO P. Sarita, doctors, and health officials participated in the program.

**Healthy Living Through
Village Beautification**



Parvathipuram, March 24: District Collector Dr. N. Prabhakar Reddy praised the beautification of Vappangi village, stating that such initiatives promote healthy living at personal, family, and community levels. During his visit to Gummalakshampuram mandal on Tuesday, he appreciated the clean surroundings and festive appearance of the village. The Collector also visited the Mandal Parishad Primary School and commended the teachers for

maintaining high educational standards. Interacting with students, he expressed over their performance and encouraged them to participate in cultural activities like dance and music for overall well-being. Adding enthusiasm to the visit, he sang songs and danced with the students, creating a lively atmosphere. Local MLA and Government Whip Toyaka Jagadeeshwari, along with district officials, were present at the event.

**ABS Students Shine at National
Rangotsav Art Competition**



Visakhapatnam, March 24: Students of ABS Public School in Gonnavanipalem under GVMC Ward 85 showcased exceptional talent in drawing and earned national recognition at the 'Rangotsav' National Painting Competition held in Mumbai. A total of 136 students won medals, including 42 gold, 23 silver, and 71 bronze, bringing great

pride to the school. A special felicitation program was at the school on Monday, where founders P.M. Kondayya, Principal U. Padmaja, and Director U. Deepak congratulated the winners. Art teacher Nayana Suresh was also appreciated for his efforts. Parents and teachers expressed over the students' remarkable achievement.

**Officials Urged to Work Collectively
for Bapatla District Development**

Bapatla, March 24: District In-charge Minister Kolu Parthasarathy called upon officials to work in coordination to make Bapatla district a top performer across all sectors. Speaking at the District Development Review Committee meeting held at the Collectorate on Tuesday, he appreciated the rise in per capita income and agricultural growth. The Minister highlighted that the cultivated area increased by 18.75%, with an additional 58,000 acres brought under farming. He directed officials to ensure irrigation water reaches tail-end lands and to complete canal repair works promptly. Farmers were encouraged to adopt profitable crops like palm oil and improve awareness on mango crop protection. He also stressed resolving revenue issues, ensuring safe national highways, preventing drinking water shortages, and promoting tourism—especially the development of Suryalanka Beach under the Swadesh Darshan project. Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad emphasized developing Bapatla on the lines of Goa as a tour-



ism hub and called for speedy completion of Nizamapatnam court and shipping harbor works. District Collector Dr. V. Vinod Kumar noted that improved planning and agricultural support helped the district move from 13th to 8th position in per capita income rankings. Public representatives raised issues related to infrastructure, farmer support, drinking water, and tourism facilities during the meeting.

Speed Up Development Works in Tribal Areas: M.M. Naik

Rampachodavaram, March 24: State Tribal Welfare Principal Secretary M.M. Naik directed officials to expedite development works across various departments in Polavaram district. During a review meeting held at the ITDA office on Tuesday evening, attended by ITDA Project Officer and Joint Collector Bachu Smaran Raj and sectoral officers, Naik emphasized timely completion of works benefiting tribal communities. He reviewed progress on sanitation facilities, RO plants in Ashram schools, Jal Jeevan Mission works, housing projects for the poor, Anganwadi buildings under PM Janman scheme, and ICDS services. He also sought details on nutrition for pregnant women,

student strength in tribal schools, and implementation of prescribed menus. Naik instructed officials to prepare action plans for Vandana Vikas Kendras, ensure proper monitoring of education data, and fill vacant medical



posts. He also reviewed healthcare services, anemia prevention measures, and warned of action against non-performing ASHA workers. Several district officials from various departments attended the meeting.

**Paddy Procurement Centers
to Close by March 29**

Parvathipuram, March 24: Joint Collector C. Svanth Kumar Reddy announced that paddy procurement for the Kharif 2025-26 season in Parvathipuram Manyam district is nearing completion. All 281 Rythu Seva Kendras will be closed by the evening of March 29. So far, 2.68 lakh metric tonnes of paddy have been procured, with payments amounting to Rs.617 crore directly credited to 42,309 farmers' bank accounts, ensuring transparency and minimum support price benefits. Officials urged farmers who still have unsold paddy to utilize this final opportunity and sell their produce at the procurement centers before the deadline, as no purchases will be made after March 29.



**Land Acquisition for Projects
Must Be Expedited:
Collector S. Ramsunder Reddy**

Vizianagaram, March 24: District Collector S. Ramsunder Reddy has directed officials to expedite the land acquisition process for various ongoing projects in Vizianagaram district. During a review meeting held at the Collectorate on Tuesday evening, he assessed the progress of land acquisition for key projects including Thotapalli Barrage, Tarakarama Teerthasagar Project, Babu Jagjivan Ram Uttarandhra Sujala Sravanthi Project, National Highway 516B, and multiple railway line expansions. The Collector instructed officials to complete land acquisition within stipulated deadlines and ensure faster execution of projects. He also directed that government lands be handed over to concerned agencies within a week and that awards be passed for cases ready for compensation. Joint Collector Sedhu Madhavan, DRO C.H. Sattibabu, RDOs, and officials from R&B, Irrigation, National Highways, Railways, and municipal departments attended the meeting.



**Make District Ganja-Free
: Collector Dinesh Kumar**

Paderu, March 24: District Collector Dinesh Kumar has directed officials to take strict measures to make the district ganja-free. During a review meeting held at the Collectorate on Tuesday, he emphasized the need for extensive awareness campaigns at the village level, especially in affected areas, to educate people about the harmful effects of ganja use. He instructed the Health Department to provide medical support and counseling to addicts, and stressed the importance of offering alternative livelihood opportunities to help them reintegrate into society. Farmers were encouraged to shift from ganja cultivation to alternative crops with support from government schemes. The Collector also ordered strict legal action against the cultivation, transportation, and sale of ganja, directing police and excise departments to intensify enforcement. He highlighted the need for coordinated efforts among officials and public representatives in organizing awareness programs in villages and educational institutions. Additionally, he called for efforts to bring school dropouts back into education and guide youth towards vocational training. District SP Amit Bardar stated that checks at checkpoints have been intensified to curb ganja transportation and urged villagers to report suspicious activities. Other district officials were also present at the meeting.



**Athlete Yatham
Nagababu Wins Three
Medals at National Level**



Kakinada, March 24: District Collector Sham Mohan congratulated Samarlakota-based athlete Yatham Nagababu for his outstanding performance at the 5th Khel National Masters Athletics Open Championship held from March 20 to 22 at Chandigarh Sports Complex, Sector-7, Haryana. Nagababu, currently serving as District Deputy Malaria Officer in Bhimavaram, hails from Jalluru Raparthi village in Pithapuram constituency of Kakinada district. Competing against around 1,400 athletes from 18 states, he won two gold medals in the 800m and 400m races, and a bronze medal in the 1500m event. The Collector praised his achievement and wished him greater success in the future.

Road Connectivity Works in Remote Villages to Be Expedited: Collector



Paderu, March 24: District Collector A.S. Dinesh Kumar has directed officials to speed up road connectivity works in remote villages to improve transportation facilities. During a video conference held at the Collectorate, he reviewed 22 out of 30 sanctioned road projects. Officials reported that 10 works have been completed, 10 are pending due to forest clearances, 7 are in progress, and 3 are awaiting approvals. The Collector instructed officials to complete pending works at the earliest and ensure that ongoing projects are finished

by December. He also emphasized utilizing NREGS funds for bridge works in Pedabayalu and Jami areas, while tenders are yet to be called for the Seelamgondi bridge in Dumbriguda mandal. Stressing priority for remote and hilly regions, he directed officials to enhance connectivity without compromising on quality. He also asked departments to immediately report any issues related to revenue or forest clearances. Officials from various engineering departments and contractors participated in the meeting.

District Collector Calls for Coordinated Efforts to Make District Drug-Free



Narasaraopet, March 24: District Collector Kritika Shukla has directed all departments to work in coordination to curb drug abuse and make the district drug-free. She conducted a review meeting on narcotics control and awareness programs at the Collectorate along with SP Krishna Rao under the NCORD (Narco Coordination Centre) district-level committee. The Collector instructed officials to ensure the effective functioning of de-addiction centers and to take strict action against those supplying tobacco products illegally to students. She emphasized joint enforcement by departments including police, food safety, and tax authorities. She also directed educational

institutions to conduct regular awareness activities such as drawing and essay competitions, appoint nodal officers in colleges, and display anti-drug posters in hostels. The "Nasha Mukta Bharat" initiative should be actively implemented. Public were encouraged to report drug-related information to the police or through the Eagle toll-free number 1972, assuring confidentiality. Authorities were also told to monitor illegal online sale of medicines and take strict legal action. SP Krishna Rao stressed that collective efforts are essential to eliminate drug abuse and called for increased awareness on ganja cultivation in rural areas. Officials from various departments attended the meeting.

Surprise Inspections on Gas Warehouses in District



Markapuram, March 24: Following the directions of District In-charge SP V. Harshvardhan Raju, police conducted surprise inspections at gas warehouses across Tripuranthakam, Veligandla,

Kanigiri, T.V. Palli, Racherla, and C.S. Puram police station limits on Tuesday. Officials examined safety measures, fire-fighting equipment, water facilities, and emergency response arrangements. They also reviewed cylinder storage, supply systems, transportation safety norms, and maintenance of records. Warehouse owners were instructed to strictly follow legal and safety regulations, ensure proper record-keeping, and prevent any illegal transportation or irregularities. Authorities emphasized implementing all precautionary measures to avoid accidents and advised reporting any issues to the police. Revenue officials, Circle Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors, and staff participated in the inspections.

Support Tribal Welfare, Ensure Constitutional Rights: ST Commission Chairman



Srikakulam, March 24: State ST Commission Chairman Solli Bojjireddy stressed that tribal communities should not face any hardship and that authorities must ensure they receive all constitutional benefits. He was speaking at a district-level review meeting held at the Collectorate under the chairmanship of District Collector Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar.

The Chairman directed the police to act strictly on any attacks or harassment against Scheduled Tribes and warned of action against workplace harassment of tribal employees. He emphasized prioritizing tribals in ITDA works, preventing school dropouts, and filling pending

ST backlog posts. Officials were instructed to ensure drinking water supply in tribal villages during summer and provide basic facilities for workers under employment schemes. He also called for action against fake caste certificates and illegal organizations, and a review of granite lease permissions affecting tribal communities. During his two-day visit, the Chairman toured three mandals and received petitions directly from tribal people. Officials reported that no cases of attacks on STs were registered this year, compared to five last year. The meeting also reviewed welfare measures in health and education sectors, with officials presenting progress reports.

Teaching Should Be Student-Friendly: Tribal Welfare Secretary



Rampachodavaram, March 24 (Pen Power): State Tribal Welfare Principal Secretary M.M. Naik directed teachers in tribal ashram schools of Polavaram district to ensure lessons are taught in a way that students can easily understand, even if it requires repeated explanation.

During his visit to the boys' ashram school at

Peddagedada village in Rampachodavaram, along with ITDA Project Officer and Joint Collector Bachu Smaran Raj, he reviewed school facilities and academic standards.

Naik emphasized that providing quality education, safe drinking water, nutritious food, and good health to tribal students is the government's priority. He instructed teachers to support slow learners through FLN and TARL programs without any pressure or punishment. He also reviewed the implementation of the Mustabu program, school menu, and lesson plans, and inspected ongoing hostel and dining hall construction works under the PM Janman scheme. He directed officials to complete the works quickly with quality. Later, the officials interacted with students and shared a meal with them.

Rubber, Jatropha Cultivation to be Promoted in Agency Areas

Rampachodavaram, March 24: State Tribal Welfare Principal Secretary M.M. Naik said that the government is encouraging tribal farmers in agency areas to take up rubber and jatropha cultivation to improve their livelihoods. On Tuesday, he, along with ITDA Project Officer and Polavaram District Joint Collector Bachu Smaran Raj, inspected a rubber plantation established by ITDA at Devarapalli village in Maredumilli mandal. He directed officials to prepare an action plan to expand rubber plantations over an additional 3,000 acres by collecting applications from farmers. He reviewed the number of rubber societies and existing rubber processing (smoking) units and said that steps are being taken to set up five more units. Naik noted that rubber currently has good market demand and assured that the government is providing incentives to farmers. Later, he visited a jatropha processing unit set up through Vana Vikas Kendras at Kutravada village. He inquired about the extent of cultivation, number



of tribal farmers involved, and the market price of jatropha. He suggested creating an online booking portal and assured that tractors and processing machinery would be arranged. Naik emphasized that improving the economic condition of tribal farmers is the government's main objective and encouraged them to educate their children and strengthen their families financially.

Arrangements in Full Swing for Chandanotsavam

Visakhapatnam, March 24: The district administration is making comprehensive arrangements for the upcoming Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Chandanotsavam. A review meeting was held at the Collector's office in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday under the chairmanship of District In-charge Minister Dr. Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy, with MLA and BJP Floor Leader P. Vishnu Kumar Raju in attendance. The minister directed officials to ensure smooth conduct of the festival without inconvenience to devotees. He emphasized the need for proper drinking water, sanitation, transport, queue management, parking facilities, and tight security arrangements, anticipating a large turnout. Officials from various departments presented their preparedness, and the ad-



ministration resolved to work in coordination to ensure the grand success of the festival.

Facing Debt, Karnataka Hotel Owner Kills Self, Son Cites LPG Shortage

Bengaluru: A debt-ridden hotel owner in Karnataka's Belagavi has allegedly died by suicide, with his son saying the eatery shop had been shut for several days due to a lack of LPG cylinders. The victim, Rama Halluri, was found hanging inside his shop, the Hanuman Hotel, located near the old bus stand. His son, Uday, told reporters that he had some financial problems. "Recently, due to the LPG gas shortage, he was facing a lot of problems. As he was not getting LPG cylinders, he was planning to use firewood to keep the business going," he said. Uday also said he was not sure if his father was being harassed by

money lenders. "But I know he was very stressed about that gas cylinder issue," he said. A senior police officer told that they were verifying all the details. "It was a small restaurant which used LPG cylinders. A cylinder would last about eight days, and there is a suspicion that there was some financial stress," he said. "What exactly led to the man claiming his own life is now a part of the investigation," he said. Meanwhile, in a relief to hotel owners, the Karnataka government on Monday announced an increase in the supply of commercial LPG cylinders, adding 1,000 more to the existing allocation.

Who Made Rs 840 Crore In 20 Minutes? Mystery Bet On Trump's Iran U-Turn Raises Eyebrows

Washington: A mysterious burst of trades ripped through global markets moments before Donald Trump hit a 5-day pause button on Iran, setting off what analysts say may have been a chain reaction that delivered an estimated Rs 840 crore profit in just 20 minutes. At around 6:50 a.m. New York time on Monday, roughly 4:20 p.m. IST, S&P 500 E-mini futures on the CME recorded a sharp and isolated surge in volume, and oil markets moved in lockstep. The timing was unusual: pre-market hours are typically quiet, with thin liquidity. Roughly 15 minutes later, at 7:05 a.m., Trump posted on Truth Social that the United States had held talks with Iran and would halt planned strikes on Iranian power plants and energy infrastructure.

Two mystery bets

According to trading platform Unusual Whales, whoever executed them made two coordinated bets. First, they bought S&P 500 futures worth about Rs 12,600 crore, or 1.5 billion dollars, positioning for a market rally if tensions eased. Second, they sold oil futures worth about Rs 1,615 crore, or 192 million dollars, anticipating a drop in crude prices if supply fears faded. In a narrow one-minute window, around 6,200 Brent and West Texas Intermediate futures contracts worth roughly 580 million dollars, or about Rs 4,870 crore, changed hands, four to six times larger than anything else trading at that hour. Markets

reacted instantly after Trump's post: S&P 500 futures jumped more than 2.5 percent before the opening bell, while oil prices plunged. Brent crude fell from 109 dollars to as low as 92 dollars, and West Texas Intermediate dropped nearly 6 percent, briefly touching 88.70 dollars a barrel.

The payoff was enormous. By some estimates, oil price swings alone could have generated over 100 million dollars in potential profits within just twenty minutes, equivalent to roughly Rs 840 crore, with gains from the equity position likely pushing total profits significantly higher. What makes the episode stand out is the absence of any public signal: at 4:20 p.m. IST, there was no news alert, no scheduled briefing, and no indication that Trump was about to announce a pause in strikes on Iran. Yet someone committed more than Rs 14,000 crore across two markets with precise timing. "In 25 years of watching markets, this is a highly unusual pattern," Matt William, a hedge fund manager, said in an X post, adding that it was hard to explain a trade of this scale on a Monday morning when there were no event factors such as major economic data releases or Federal Reserve officials' remarks, concluding that "as a result, someone may have reaped substantial profits." A U.S. brokerage market strategist raised similar concerns, noting that while it is not easy to



prove causation, questions will inevitably be raised about who had the incentive to aggressively trade futures 15 minutes before Trump's post went up.

Regulators have not weighed in; the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission has not commented on the trades yet. The pattern has surfaced before. Large trades have appeared ahead of major U.S. policy moves in recent weeks. On Polymarket, for instance, a user placed a roughly 34,000-dollar bet that the United States would invade Venezuela by January just before the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, raising suspicions among some traders of insider access.

White House spokesperson Kush Desai, in a report by the Financial Times, said: "The only focus of President Trump and Trump administration officials is doing what's best for the American people." He added: "The

White House does not tolerate any administration official illegally profiteering off of insider knowledge, and any implication that officials are engaged in such activity without evidence is baseless and irresponsible reporting." Several hedge funds noted that this was one of a number of examples in recent months of large trades being made ahead of official U.S. government announcements, with one trader saying energy consultants had recently noticed several large block trades that they found to be unusually timed. Speaker of Iran's parliament, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, in an X post denied that any negotiations between Washington and Tehran had taken place, triggering a pullback for global stocks and fresh buying across energy markets. He added: "Fake news is used to manipulate the financial and oil markets and escape the quagmire in which the U.S. and Israel are trapped."