

APSRTC to introduce 2,500 electric, CNG buses in five yrs

- Corporation's new VC&MD Krishna Babu says they will procure 1,050 electric buses under PM e-Bus scheme; focus will be on green mobility and fuel savings
- 'Stree Shakti' boosted ridership as women commuters rise to 67%, occupancy nears 90%

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

ANDHRA Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) new vice-chairman and managing director M T Krishna Babu on Monday unveiled a comprehensive plan to introduce electric buses across the state over the next five years. Under the PM e-Bus scheme, he said 1,050 electric buses would be inducted, while plans are in place to introduce another 1,450 electric and CNG buses in the coming days.

Krishna Babu took charge as VC & MD at the RTC headquarters in RTC House here following retirement of Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao whose three months service



APSRTC vice-chairman and managing director M T Krishna Babu taking charge at the RTC headquarters in Vijayawada on Monday. He later chaired a review meeting with senior officials

extension expired on January 31. Krishna Babu later conducted a review meeting with executive directors, heads of departments, and district public transport officers to assess the corporation's financial position, bus maintenance, passenger services, bus station amenities, and employee welfare.

Addressing officials, he said the induction of electric and CNG buses would play a crucial role in reducing fuel consumption in urban and inter-urban transport, controlling pollution, improving road safety, and promoting sustainable mobility. He noted that over the next five years, the shift to electric buses would not only save energy and reduce fuel costs, but also provide modern and comfortable public transport facilities while strengthening APSRTC's financial position.

Directing officials to im-

prove operational efficiency and passenger services, he reviewed the 'Stree Shakti' scheme launched by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. He said 23-25 lakh women passengers are availing free travel daily, with women commuters accounting for 65-67 per cent of total ridership. He said that bus occupancy has reached nearly 90 per cent, significantly contributing to APSRTC's financial stability.

Referring to an IVRS survey, Krishna Babu said around 80 per cent of passengers expressed satisfaction with RTC services, while 20% pointed out issues related to toilets and drinking water facilities at bus stations. He instructed officials to address these shortcomings immediately. The VC & MD also discussed commercial utilisation of vacant RTC lands and the expansion of cargo services,

which currently generate about Rs 210 crore annually, to further strengthen non-fare revenue.

Highlighting employee welfare, he said there are nearly five lakh government employees in the State and their role in service delivery is vital. He clarified that all government welfare schemes and facilities would be extended equally to public transport department (PTD) employees. He assured that the government is giving special priority to job security, improved working conditions, and the phased resolution of pending employee grievances.

Orders have been issued to provide alternative employment or Additional Monetary Benefits (AMB) to 682 PTD employees declared medically unfit after January 1, 2020. He said the measure would provide significant financial relief to the affected families.

On infrastructure, Krishna Babu informed that road development works covering 10,700 km are underway across the State.

Funds of Rs.3,000 crore will be released in phases—Rs.1,000 crore by the end of March, Rs.1,500 crore by the end of June, and Rs.500 crore by the end of July—for road repairs, development, maintenance, and allied works. He said the Chief Minister has clarified that the initiative would expedite the development and repair of key highways and help resolve pending infrastructure issues, with the objective of providing safer and improved transportation facilities to the public. APSRTC executive directors K S Brahma Reddy (administration), G V Ravi Varma (engineering), A Appala Raju (operations), FA & CAO Sudhakar Rao and others were present.

YSRCP leader Ambati Rambabu was remanded to 14 days of judicial custody by Guntur special mobile court on Monday. Rambabu was arrested on Saturday in connection with a case registered at the Nalapadu police station over his derogatory remarks against Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

Police booked him under Sections 126(2) and 132 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita. Another case was registered under Sections 126(2), 196(1), 352, 351(2) and 292, citing threats, abusive language and derogatory remarks.

Police said Rambabu was taken to Rajahmundry Central Jail late on Sunday night and formally handed over to jail authorities in the early hours thereafter. According to police, the cases relate to incidents reported on Saturday at Chillies Centre in Gorantla, where Rambabu allegedly obstructed police personnel on traffic duty and was involved in a confrontation linked to the removal of a TDP banner near the NTR statue.

A separate case was registered based on a complaint by a local TDP leader, accusing Rambabu of "issuing threats, using abusive language and making derogatory remarks" against the Chief Minister during a press conference and later at the site, police said.

Police informed the court that 16 cases had been registered against Rambabu



across the state in connection with his remarks against the Chief Minister. Officials said his statements had triggered political debate and public unrest, leading to law and order concerns.

During the hearing, Rambabu alleged that police officials had harassed him. He also told the court that no case was registered despite alleged attacks by TDP activists on his office and damage to furniture.

Separately, Rambabu's wife filed a petition in the High Court seeking police protection, alleging attacks by TDP activists on their residence and office in Guntur city. She claimed that activists had also set fire to a car belonging to the family.

Following the High Court's directions, police pickets were set up at Rambabu's residence and office in Navabharat Nagar, Guntur, on Monday, and security measures were put in place for his family.

On the other hand, the YSRCP alleged that Rambabu was being "politically targeted" and claimed there was "a serious threat" to his life following the incidents.

BACKLASH AGAINST YSRCP LEADERS

Jagan accuses Naidu govt of anarchy, warns of public rebellion

- YSRCP chief blames the TDP-led govt for fostering violence, citing attacks on the houses of former ministers Ambati Rambabu and Jogi Ramesh
- Links the incidents to the Tirumala laddu ghee controversy, claiming central labs like NDBB and NDRI had exposed the govt's 'false allegations'
- Calling it 'jungle raj' and 'barbaric rule,' the former CM warns that public anger is mounting and such intimidation would ultimately 'burn down' the govt

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VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday, accusing the government of encouraging violence and intimidation against opposition leaders.

Jagan connected the incidents to the Tirumala laddu ghee controversy and recent reports by central agencies. He said laboratories such as the National Dairy Development Board (NDBB) and the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) had exposed what he called the government's "false allegations".

In a strongly worded post on social media platform X, Jagan said Naidu was under the illusion that such acts

would instil fear among political opponents. "You set fire to the houses of Ambati Rambabu and Jogi Ramesh and think you have created fear through these heinous acts. This is your delusion. Remember, Chandrababu, you have actually set fire to your own government," he said.

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"When Central govern-



ment laboratories proved your accusations wrong and people questioned your mistakes, you could not digest it. That frustration has now turned into violence," Jagan alleged. He claimed that instead of accepting facts, the ruling party was resorting to intimidation.

Describing the attacks as a dangerous sign for democracy, the YSRCP chief said the burning of opposition leaders' houses symbolised "jungle raj" in Andhra Pradesh. "The fire set to their houses reflects anarchy and barbaric governance. The flames lit against democracy will eventually burn down your own government," he warned. Jagan said public anger was steadily rising and

would soon erupt against the ruling dispensation. "In the coming days, the flames of people's anger will reduce your government to ashes," he said. Issuing a direct warning to Chief Minister Naidu, Jagan said history had repeatedly shown that governments which relied on force and intimidation never survived.

"In a democracy, the hand that lights the fire of violence will inevitably get burned. Anarchic rule will come to an end. The jungle raj you created will be buried," he wrote. He also asserted that political power gained through fear would not last and that democratic resistance would ultimately prevail.

THE CBI chargesheet in the Tirupati ghee adulteration case has triggered a political storm in the state, with both the ruling and opposition parties trading charges and selectively citing portions of the document to back their claims.

Amid the political sparring, the chargesheet brings out a crucial finding: the supply of adulterated ghee to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) began much earlier than previously believed. According to the investigation, Harsh Fresh Dairy—a proxy firm linked to Bhole Baba Dairy—supplied adulterated ghee to the Tirupati trust as early as February 2019, when the TDP-led NDA government was in power in the state.

This finding directly challenges the narrative that revisions to ghee procurement guidelines in February 2020 led to dubious dairies entering the TTD supply chain. The CBI investigation indicates that adulteration was taking place even when procurement norms were considered

Ambati remanded to 14 days' judicial custody amid political row

- YSRCP leader handed over to Rajahmundry central jail after a Guntur court remands him
- Multiple cases filed citing threats, abusive language and obstruction of police; 16 cases registered statewide
- High Court orders police protection for Rambabu's family after alleged attacks by TDP activists on his residence and office

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GUNTUR

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LADDU GHEE CASE

CBI chargesheet sparks fresh political row

- It finds Harsh Fresh Dairy supplied adulterated ghee to TTD as early as Fe 2019
- It's a proxy for Bhole Baba Dairy and the supply occurred during the TDP-led NDA government's tenure in the state
- Former TTD chairman Bhumana also accuses that dairies got repeated approvals under TDP rule

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI



2013, irrespective of changes in procurement guidelines or the government in power.

Even after Bhole Baba Dairy was disqualified during the YSRCP regime, the investigation found that adulterated ghee continued to be routed to the TTD through proxy firms. In 2023, despite tighter rules aimed at restricting supply to reputed companies, the dairy allegedly channelled ghee through Vyshnavi Dairy, AR Dairy, and Malanga by again manipulating inspections and internal processes.

The chargesheet further notes that four ghee tankers from AR Dairy, rejected by NDBB tests in mid-2024 for adulteration, were allegedly rerouted back to the TTD under a different company name and used in the preparation of Tirupati laddu prasadam. Meanwhile, speaking to the media on Monday, YSRCP leader and former TTD chairman Karunakar Reddy said the SIT report had clearly established that a few technical experts, continuing from the TDP government's tenure, colluded with ghee suppliers and indulged in corruption. He said Bhole Baba Dairy, earlier known as Harsh Fresh Dairy, supplied ghee to the TTD until 2018 and received technical approval for ghee supply during the tenure of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at a rate of Rs 291 per kg. According to the SIT findings, Bhole Baba Dairy is the prime accused in the adulteration case and had supplied ghee to the TTD even during the TDP regime. Bhumana also alleged that Premier Dairy, another key accused, was repeatedly granted approval to supply ghee during the same period.

Primary focus should be on financial success: Khushbu

RANI DEVARLA
VIJAKHAPATNAM

THE primary focus should be on financial success to enable philanthropy and contribute to a sustainable India, alleviating poverty and improving lives, actress and Tamil Nadu BJP Vice President Khushbu Sundar emphasised.

Advocating an inclusive society built on secularism, harmony and unity at the Creative Economy Forum South organised in Visakhapatnam, Khushbu delivered a thought-provoking talk on the theme 'Money, Markets, and IP: Financing the Future of Films and Music'. Emphasising the importance of understanding the economy and personal growth, Khushbu said platforms like Creative Economic Forum (CEF) provide insightful ideas for growth and development of the creative domain.

Hosted by The Hans India and CEF in collaboration with HMTV, the CEF aimed at encouraging industry leaders and policymakers to

focus on the growing role of creative industries in India's economic growth. Moderated by founder of CEF Supriya Suri, the session on 'Money, Markets, and IP: Financing the Future of Films and Music' saw Kerala-based actress Cuckoo Parameswaran, filmmaker Satya Reddy and secretary of SIMCA Secretary Sridhar J Swaminathan sharing their thoughts on the theme.

Elaborating the theme, Khushbu said, "Global trade financing, institutional funding, private investments, smart cooperation models and new-age tools are needed to back talent. Films and music are assets that can be structured, valued and scaled." The maiden edition of Creative Economy Forum South brought leaders and entrepreneurs from diverse fields, shared insights into multiple themes and nudged the communities to explore new ideas by adopting innovative methods and unlearning redundant practices.

Creative Tech Revolution

Bringing experts from anima-



Creative Economy Forum Supriya Suri and managing director of Hyderabad Media House Private Limited K. Hanumantha Rao felicitating the speakers at the CEF South organised in Visakhapatnam by The Hans India and CEF

tion, film production, Artificial Intelligence and digital media, the first session focused on 'Creative Tech Revolution: How AI, Gaming, Animation and Digital Media are Redefining Growth.'

As a session moderator-speaker, Professor and Director of The School of Core Engineering GITAM Dr. Pakki Bharani Chandra Kumar highlighted how technology is slowly but surely changing the way one creates or chooses stories.

During the session, Telugu Film Council president KL Damodara Prasad expressed confidence that AI cannot take away human emotions in storytelling but it would certainly help ease lives of certain departments and save time. "Things get pretty fast now," he opined.

Echoing similar views, co-founder of LBS Studio and co-chair of Andhra Pradesh VFX Animation and Gaming Association Meghana

Tirumalasetty opined that AI made the pre-visualisation and VFX parts much effortless. "However, it cannot replace human intervention anywhere in near future," she opined.

Director of Vishal Peripherals Vikash Hisariya and founder Chief Executive Officer and VFX Supervisor Phantomfx Bejoy Aruptharaj shared their views on the theme. **Handlooms to High Streets:** Transforming Heritage Streets: Transforming Heritage

into Scalable Businesses', the following session threw insights into leveraging traditional crafts and design for modern markets. Moderated by product designer of Eco Friends Jameela Akula, executive director of FDDI-Hyderabad Narsimhugari Tej Lohit Reddy, founder of Sankalpa Art Village Chalapathi Rao shared insights into how labour-intensive Indian handloom sector has emerged into a sought-after and sustainable segment, experiencing a significant renaissance.

Speaking about 'culinary crossing borders' in the last session, food expert N Parthasarathy opined, "Food festivals, exhibitions, television shows, and digital platforms draw massive audiences and inspire curiosity, learning, and opportunity." Chairman of Pioneer Institute of Hotel Management chef Saka Sudha Kumar, corporate executive chef of GITAM Deemed to be University Agatamudi Rupeshwar Rao, co-founder of HETC Foods Pvt Ltd

Vavila Srinivas and Sun International of Tourism and management Principal Rajeshwari laid emphasis on how the food industry is one of the largest employment generators globally and how it has evolved in creation of jobs. They spoke about how cuisines connect cultures and serve as an economic and cultural bridge across countries.

Envisioned as an effective platform to foster collaboration among government, industry and the creative community, placing Andhra Pradesh and Telangana as emerging hubs for creative and cultural enterprises of the country, the four sessions of the forum aided in exploring how creativity, technology and heritage can be transformed into scalable economic opportunities.

Featured by founder of the Creative Economy Forum Supriya Suri, the coveted event in the City of Destiny was held in the presence of managing director of Hyderabad Media House Private Limited K Hanumantha Rao, among others.