

CM targets natural farming expansion in state by 2031

- Aims to bring 40 lakh farmers under natural farming
- Launches Digi Rythu Bazaar, APAIMS, Kisan Drone apps
- Directs officials to counter El Niño impact

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VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu launches apps related to agriculture and allied sectors at the Secretariat on Tuesday

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday directed officials to launch a comprehensive programme to make Andhra Pradesh the country's largest natural farming State. He said 1.8 million farmers were currently practicing natural farming on two million acres and set a target of covering four million farmers and five million acres by 2030-31.

Reviewing agriculture and allied sectors at the Secretariat, Naidu stressed the need to reduce the use of chemical fertilisers to cut cultivation costs and improve farmers' incomes. He called for certi-

cation and traceability systems to ensure product quality and market credibility.

He directed officials to implement these facilities by April and complete them statewide by June. He also suggested encouraging agriculture students to take up natural farming and said training programmes would be conducted with Subhash Palekar.

The Chief Minister emphasised that Andhra Pradesh's farm products must secure a strong presence in national and international markets. He instruct-

ed officials to take proactive steps to prevent losses due to the impact of El Niño and prepare alternative crop plans in drought-prone areas. He also directed the use of AI-based advisory services such as 'Bharat Vistar'.

Naidu said water scarcity in Rayalaseema had been addressed through efficient management and that major reservoirs were full, ensuring sufficient irrigation. Officials informed him that trade agreements with the US and EU had opened new export opportunities for shrimp, dried chillies, mangoes, rice,

and processed foods. He stressed strict adherence to quality standards.

The Chief Minister directed the establishment of a Cocoa City over 500 acres in Eluru district with international standards. He encouraged intercropping in mango, cocoa, cashew, and coconut plantations and called for increased focus on banana exports. He also approved saffron cultivation in Lambasingi under the PPP model with tribal participation.

He made registration of aquaculture farming mandatory and directed that egg

supply contracts for schools and Anganwadis be given to farmers. He said State policies should align with those of the Centre.

Naidu proposed organising crop-based festivals in different regions to promote tourism and stressed the need to reduce logistics costs. He suggested discussions with the Centre for special railway wagons to transport farm produce.

He directed the establishment and modernisation of Rythu Bazaars and approved a flower market in Vijayawada under the PPP model.

During the review, he launched the Digi Rythu Bazaar, APAIMS, and Kisan Drone apps, enabling farmers to book machinery and drones. About 9,512 machines have been made available. He instructed officials to educate farmers on crop registration and promptly resolve their doubts. Agriculture minister K Atchanna Naidu and senior officials attended.

CM happy over turnaround of Vizag steel plant



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holds a review on Visakhapatnam steel plant at the Secretariat on Tuesday

achieved unprecedented progress in the last one-and-a-half years, moving from heavy losses to a profitable path. Hot metal production has risen sharply to 19,401 tonnes per day, compared to just 9,215 tonnes per day during the second quarter of 2024-25. The significant increase in output was attributed to the operation of all three blast furnaces.

The capacity utilisation of the plant has reached a record 94 percent, a sharp rise from about 45 percent during the second quarter of 2024-25.

Financially, RINL has staged a strong recovery, turning around from a loss of Rs 486 crore in September 2024 to a profit of Rs 54 crore in January 2026. Officials also noted that the Rs 11,000 crore

assistance extended by the Central government played a crucial role in stabilising the plant, and that RINL's credit rating has improved.

The Chief Minister advised the management to introduce new policies across all departments to further strengthen the plant. He emphasised the efficient utilisation of workers and employees to achieve better results and said that management, workforce and governments must work together to take Visakhapatnam Steel to greater heights. Recalling the reforms implemented in Singareni during the United States, he expressed confidence that similar cooperation would ensure sustained success. He assured full support from the State government to Visakhapatnam Steel.

Cabinet nod for panel to probe TTD laddu issue

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Hence, the government ordered an independent inquiry and would direct the Commission to submit its report at the earliest.

Ministers discussed changes in tender norms for the procurement of ghee and questioned why former TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singh did not object to these relaxations. The Cabinet reviewed the 2022 Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) report indicating adulteration, which was allegedly ignored by officials Balaji and Subrahmanyam. It was also noted that the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) report confirmed the presence of animal fat in the ghee.

Several ministers questioned the alleged use of fake documents to secure tenders and the sidelining of cooperative dairies in favour of private and bogus suppliers. The Cabinet directed the Commission to examine these aspects in detail.

Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan sought clarification on whether former chairman YV Subba Reddy's role was mentioned in the SIT report and whether animal fat was cited in the charge sheet.

Officials said Page 35 of the charge sheet clearly referred to it. Ministers stressed that identifying the main conspirators was essential and said the SIT failed to expose the real masterminds. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said the inquiry was ordered to bring the truth before the public and ensure strict action. He assured that further action would be taken immediately after receiving the commission's report.

Addressing the media, Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav said the SIT had submitted a charge-sheet and a confidential 11-page report recommending action against erring committee members and senior TTD officials. He said the charge-sheet was filed in court and formal cognizance was awaited.

Keshav said the Cabinet found serious irregularities in tender relaxations, quality control failures, and dilution of safeguards. He said tender conditions were relaxed without proper technical evaluation or field assessment. Citing the SIT, he said action was recommended against Balaji, Dharma Reddy, and Singh for deliberate omissions. Ministers Kolu Parthasarathi, Nadendla Manohar, and Y Satyakumar Yadav also spoke.

He further said that the government decided to constitute a short-term administrative committee to examine procedural lapses and ensure natural justice. Officials facing allegations will be given an opportunity to explain before disciplinary action. Keshav said the government was following due process and not acting out of political vendetta.

He said the SIT probe was nearing completion and that only extracts had been received so far. Conclusions could be drawn only after examining the full charge sheet.

He clarified that the inquiry was not targeted at individuals but aimed at restoring the integrity of the TTD system. He also warned against politicizing Tirumala.

On whether the government still believed animal fat was present in the ghee, he said decisions were based solely on evidence, particularly the NDDB CALF report, and not on assumptions. Ministers Kolu Parthasarathi, Nadendla Manohar, and Y Satyakumar Yadav also spoke.

NAIDU CALLS US TRADE PACT HISTORIC

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He observed that the pact would significantly boost Indian exports and open new avenues for trade and investment. "Under the leadership of PM Modi, India is steadily consolidating its position as a global economic powerhouse," Naidu said in his tweet.

He also highlighted that the agreement would generate immense opportunities for the country's youth and farmers, including those in Andhra Pradesh. According to him, improved market access and stronger trade relations would help create jobs, encourage entrepreneurship, and strengthen the agricultural sector.

The Chief Minister expressed confidence that the India-US trade partnership would play a key role in driving economic development and strengthening bilateral relations in the coming years.

CII-Yi dialogue spotlights AP-Oz ties, youth and women-led innovation

- CII-AP and Yi Amaravati hold an interactive session with Australian Consul General Silai Zaki, following Minister Nara Lokesh's Australia visit that boosted bilateral engagement
- Talks focus on creating pathways for women entrepreneurs and young leaders in sectors like healthcare, green energy, clean tech, education, tourism, and sustainability
- Emphasis was laid on promoting AP's artisans, arts, crafts, and handlooms through cultural showcases, diaspora platforms in Australia, and global partnerships

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An interactive session of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)-Andhra Pradesh, in association with the Young Indians (Yi) Amaravati Chapter, with Silai Zaki, Consul General of Australia, Chennai in Vijayawada on Tuesday

Discussions focused on building pathways for women entrepreneurs and young leaders from AP to engage with Australian institutions and innovation ecosystems. Key sectors such as healthcare, green energy, clean technologies, education, tourism, and sustainability were deliberated upon. In the tourism and cultural space, participants examined ways to empower local artisans of AP by enabling their participation in national and international platforms, particularly within Indian Diaspora communities in Australia. Cultural showcases, curated ex-

hibitions, and tourism-linked events were highlighted as avenues to enhance global visibility for the State's arts, crafts, handlooms, and creative industries.

Welcoming the gathering, Yi-Amaravati Chapter chairman Balakrishna Chittineni said the interaction encouraged youth and women leaders to think globally and explore international entrepreneurial opportunities. Addressing the session, Silai Zaki emphasised Australia's strong interest in deepening people-to-people and business connections with AP, noting immense scope for collaboration in Andhra Pradesh.

...in final stages: Goyal

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"We will be shortly issuing a joint statement by both countries along with the details, which we will be shortly inking between the United States of America and India. And as soon as the final understanding of the deal is inked, and the joint statement is finalised, technical processes are completed, full details will be shared" he added. "But I can assure every Indian that the details of this deal will make every Indian proud," he further said. He did not share a timeline, but a government source said the joint statement is expected within this week.

NEW BAGGAGE RULES COME INTO EFFECT

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Also, the government has raised the limit for passengers bringing duty-free imported goods into India from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000. Under the new rules, a resident or a tourist of Indian origin arriving in India other than by land, shall be allowed clearance free of duty articles, up to Rs 75,000, if such articles are carried on the person or in the bona fide accompanied baggage of the passenger. A tourist of foreign origin, not being an infant, arriving in India, shall be allowed duty-free clearance of articles up to the value of Rs 25,000.

INDIA PLEDGED ZERO-TARIFF BARRIERS IN US DEAL: TRUMP

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A lot remains unclear about the terms of the deal, but Trump said New Delhi has agreed to several measures, including stopping Russian oil trade, reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers to "zero", and buying over \$500 billion of US goods, including energy, technology, agricultural products, and coal. Tariff barriers are taxes levied on imported goods, making them more expensive to protect local industries. Non-tariff barriers, meanwhile, are indirect restrictions like quotas, subsidies, licensing, standards, and labelling rules that limit trade without direct taxes, often through complex regulations, costs, or delays, affecting quantity, price, or market access.

Both aim to support domestic economies, but tariffs are explicit taxes, whereas non-tariff barriers use policy and procedures, making them more subtle and complex. Trump's claim that India has agreed to "reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers against the United States, to ZERO", has not been confirmed by New Delhi. Moreover, both parties have not explained on which lines the barriers would be reduced, if at all, to zero. Largely, Trump's language signifies an in-principle commitment to lower or phase out duties on selected US products rather than an immediate elimination of all import duties.

'India got best deal'

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"Rahul Gandhi ko kya mirchi lagti hai? (What is Rahul Gandhi's problem?)" The Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha "will have to answer to the people about what he wants to achieve with his negative mentality," Goyal said. "I saw some Opposition leaders asking, 'Why did Donald Trump announce the deal?' The US imposed reciprocal tariffs on India, so it should have announced the removal," he added.

"Friends, we all know, and the entire country knows, how the Prime Minister consistently cares for the welfare of our farmers, our brothers and sisters involved in animal husbandry, and the dairy sector. He protects their interests at every step," he told the media. Describing the broader impact of the agreement, Goyal said the agreement unlocks unprecedented opportunities for farmers, MSMEs, entrepreneurs, and skilled workers to make in India for the world. Design in India for the world, and Innovate in India for the world," he said, adding that it would also help India access advanced technology from the US.

"It is not just a trade deal – it is a historic turning point that will reshape India-US relations and accelerate our journey towards Vitsit Bharat 2047," he added.

The minister also took a swipe at the Congress, recalling

ing India's decision to stay out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). "We also remember the large-scale trade deal, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which Congress had pushed India into in 2011.

The Congress committed a grave mistake in negotiating an FTA with China, but PM Modi protected the country by refusing to join the RCEP. That decision brought relief across the nation," he said.

Goyal said the government had intended to make a statement in Parliament on the deal but was unable to do so due to disruptions. "Normally, we would have wanted to speak about this in Parliament, but we all witnessed that disgraceful scene," he said. Drawing a historical comparison, Dr Vohra likened US President Donald Trump's leadership style to that of Roman Emperor Caligula, quoting the Latin phrase "Oderint dum metuunt".

Explaining India's diplomatic approach, Dr Vohra referred to what he described as "duck diplomacy". He said the concept reflects calmness on the surface while intense efforts continue behind the scenes.

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Oppn stages walkout demanding debate on deal

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As Opposition members started protesting in the House, Leader of the House J P Nadda said the US President was informed about the reduction in tariffs on Indian goods through a post on social media and also spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Nadda alleged that the Opposition's frustration was coming out, and it had started seeing bad even in good things. "I want to assure the house that the government is ready to discuss the Indo-US trade deal and provide all minute details of the deal. The government will come

PM buckled under pressure to sell out farmers' blood: Rahul

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out with a suo motu statement on the trade deal.

As the Opposition members continued raising slogans alleging that the interests of the country were being bartered, Chairman C P Radhakrishnan said, when the government is making a statement, and they should listen. He said the government is ready to discuss, but the opposition members are creating an uproar. Opposition members were on their feet, raising slogans against the government, as they moved towards the front row. Nadda said the government will come out with a suo motu statement today itself.

'Father of all deals'

NEW DELHI

FORMER Ambassador of India to Poland Dr Deepak Vohra on Tuesday described the India-US trade deal as a significant diplomatic achievement, highlighting India's patience, strategic restraint and firm protection of key domestic sectors during negotiations and termed it the "father of all deals".

Speaking on the agreement, Dr Vohra said there were a few key takeaways from the development. He claimed that the American establishment had been strongly critical of India in recent years, but New Delhi

maintained restraint. "The first takeaway is that despite repeated criticism from the American establishment since 2023 and 2024, India has not reacted. We have been very patient and very resilient," he said.

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"If you look at a duck on the surface, everything appears calm and quiet, but beneath the surface its feet are paddling furiously. That is how India has handled

the negotiations," he said.

Drawing a historical comparison, Dr Vohra likened US President Donald Trump's leadership style to that of Roman Emperor Caligula, quoting the Latin phrase "Oderint dum metuunt". According to him, President Trump prioritises respect and popularity over being loved. He said India responded to this leadership style with restraint and strategic engagement.

Dr Vohra added that India has largely achieved its core objectives in the trade agreement without compromising sensitive sectors.