

Tirumala laddu ghee row set for stormy debate in Legislature

● Govt, YSRCP trade fresh allegations as Assembly and Council take up adulteration issue

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VIJAYAWADA

THE politically sensitive Tirumala laddu adulterated ghee controversy is set to come up for a full-fledged discussion in state Legislature this week, with the state government announcing that the issue will be debated in the Assembly on Tuesday and in the Legislative Council on Thursday.

The issue has repeatedly disrupted the session that began on the 11th of this month. With the YSRCP having significant strength in the Council, adjournment motions over the laddu controversy have stalled proceedings almost every day. The controversy has escalated into a direct political confrontation between the ruling NDA coalition led by TDP and the opposition YSRCP. While the TDP, along with its NDA allies, initially targeted the previous YSRCP regime over the alleged adul-



teration of ghee used in the preparation of Tirumala laddu prasadam, the YSRCP in recent days has turned the attack towards Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and his family-promoted company, Heritage Foods.

Chandrababu Naidu has maintained that he spoke on the issue only after receiving a report from the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), which, according to him, confirmed adulteration in the ghee supplied for Tirumala laddu preparation. He said laboratory reports revealed the presence of animal fat and that the Special In-

vestigation Team (SIT) probe established that the substance supplied was chemically manufactured and not genuine ghee. Based on the SIT findings, the government constituted a one-man committee to determine administrative responsibility. A petition filed by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy challenging the move was dismissed by the Supreme Court on Monday.

Naidu alleged that instead of accepting responsibility, the YSRCP was attempting to divert the issue and resort to character assassination. He accused YSRCP MLCs of making baseless allegations

against Heritage Foods to shield irregularities that allegedly occurred during the previous regime in the supply of ghee to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD). He asserted that those responsible for the adulteration would be brought before the law and that the matter involved large-scale irregularities.

On the other hand, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Botcha Satyanarayana alleged that the Chief Minister was linked to the scam involving Indapur Dairy and that efforts were made to benefit Heritage Foods through TTD ghee contracts.

He claimed that Indapur Dairy and Heritage were closely associated, pointing out that Indapur was earlier listed as a manufacturing unit on Heritage's website and later described as a co-manufacturing unit after the controversy surfaced. According to him, between 2014 and 2019, TTD ghee contracts worth hundreds of crores were awarded to Indapur Dairy, and despite alleged failed lab tests in 2016,

the firm was allowed to continue supplies. He further alleged that the company did not participate in tenders during the YSRCP regime but re-entered after the coalition government assumed power.

The YSRCP on Monday also raised questions over pricing. It alleged that ghee supplied to TTD by Indapur Dairy was priced at Rs 658 per kg, while similar products were reportedly sold in the open market at around Rs 560. The opposition questioned why TTD was paying a higher rate and how the 10 lakh kg ghee tender for 2025 was finalised.

The opposition is also expected to raise issues relating to procurement decisions taken during the TDP regime in 2018, including the alleged induction of a private Bhole Baba Dairy into TTD through questionable certification and the reported purchase of small quantities of premium ghee specifically for aroma. With both sides preparing to present documents, reports and procurement data, the debate in the Assembly and Council is expected to be intense.

TIRUMALA GHEE ISSUE

SC clears AP's one-man panel; says no clash with SIT probe

- The apex court refuses to hear a petition by former MP Subramanian Swamy challenging Dinesh Kumar panel
- A Bench led by CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi rules the state's review is administrative and separate from the earlier SIT criminal investigation



such remarks continued even after the investigation ended.

Appearing for the Centre, solicitor general Tushar Mehta told the Bench that the SIT's final report had already been filed and that it separately flagged certain administrative deficiencies unrelated to criminal wrongdoing. He said the State panel was tasked only with examining those issues. Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, for the State government, maintained that the petition largely relied on media reports and appeared intended to stall corrective administrative action. The dispute traces back to 2024, when Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu alleged that ghee supplied for Tirumala laddus during the previous YSRCP administration had been contaminated with animal fat. During earlier hearings, the Supreme Court had ordered a SIT probe and noted that available lab tests did not initially indicate the presence of such material.

Subsequently, reports indicated that the SIT's final findings, submitted in January, ruled out animal fat but identified adulteration with other unsafe substances along with irregular procurement practices that enabled substandard ghee supply.

Acting on a separate SIT note flagging administrative lapses, the State recently constituted a one-member panel headed by former AP Chief Secretary Dinesh Kumar to fix accountability and recommend further action—a move that leaders of the YSRCP have strongly protested over the past few days.

Will place Tirumala ghee facts before Assembly today, asserts Lokesh

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"Doesn't such a senior leader know that the term 'co-company' doesn't even exist?" Lokesh asked, alleging that false information was deliberately being spread. Lokesh stated that Indapur Dairy is only a packing unit, while Heritage is a listed company. He pointed out that leaders of the YSR Congress Party, including Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, had filed complaints with SEBI against them.

The IT Minister called out YSRCP leaders for their wild allegations regarding ghee procurement. He challenged them to prove where a kilogram of ghee is available for Rs 360. "If ghee is being sold at Rs 360 per kilo, it can only be adulterated. The market price is usually above Rs 1,000," he pointed out.

Lokesh further alleged that during Jagan's five-year

tenure, Sakshi and Bharathi Cements had received Rs 1,000 crore from the government, while stating that his side had not taken a single rupee from the government.

Lokesh said that if India reaches the finals of a cricket match, he would certainly attend, adding that if needed, he would even buy a ticket for former Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. Turning to the Legislative Council proceedings, Lokesh questioned why YSRCP members, currently seeking discussion on the Budget, had obstructed the Council for four days. "If they want smooth functioning, why did they block proceedings?" he asked. Lokesh emphasised that the government would present detailed facts on the Tirumala ghee issue in the Assembly on Tuesday.

CCPA slaps ₹15L penalty on Vajirao & Reddy

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The CCPA highlighted that the specific courses undertaken by successful candidates constitute material information for UPSC aspirants. Concealment of this information misleads prospective students regarding the efficacy and scope of the institute's programs, violating consumer rights under Section 2(9) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. During the investigation, the Authority examined enrolment records and found that 431 forms lacked course details and submission dates, and many others indicated enrolment only in "Interview Guidance Programmes" or mock interviews. This showed that several candidates had cleared the preliminary stages independently and approached the institute solely for final-stage guidance.

The CCPA noted that Vajirao & Reddy Institute

had previously been penalised Rs 7 lakh for similar violations related to the UPSC CSE 2022 results. The recurrence of misleading advertisements warranted a higher penalty this time.

The Authority also emphasised the scale of impact, noting that approximately 11 lakh candidates appear for the UPSC exams annually. Misleading claims can distort expectations, influencing students and parents who invest significant time, effort, and money in competitive exam preparation.

So far, the CCPA has issued 57 notices to coaching institutes for misleading advertisements, imposing penalties totalling Rs 1.24 crore on 29 institutes. The Authority has directed coaching centres to ensure truthful and transparent disclosure of material information in their advertisements, enabling students to make informed academic decisions.

Tamil Nadu SIR complete

Continued from P1

The total electorate then stood at 5.43 crore, a drop from the previous 6.41 crore. However, after SIR, 34,75,717 applications were received both offline and online, including for inclusion. As many as 27.53 lakh eligible electors were added and 4.23 lakh ineligible electors were deleted during the period for filing of claims and objections from Dec 19 in 2025 to Jan 30.

As per the final electoral roll, the Assembly constituency with the highest number of electors is Shozhinganallur in Chengalpet district, with 5,36,991 electors — 2,62,621 men, 2,74,254 women, and 116 from the third gender. The Assembly constituency with the lowest number of electors is Harbour in Chennai district, with 1,16,896 electors — 58,221 men, 58,620 women, and 55 from the third gender.

CM announces ₹10L ex gratia

Continued from P1

Describing the incident as "very painful," Chandrababu said the victims were admitted to hospitals with symptoms including vomiting, severe stomach pain and kidney-related complications requiring dialysis. Clinical tests revealed elevated levels of urea and serum creatinine in their blood.

According to officials, milk supplied by Varalakshmi Milk Dairy in Narasapuram village of Korukonda mandal was distributed daily to 106 families in the affected localities. Authorities confirmed that those who consumed the milk fell ill. Four persons have died in the incident, three aged above 70 and one aged 58. Two patients are on ventilator support, while eight others are

undergoing treatment.

Milk and blood samples have been sent to laboratories in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam for detailed analysis. The dairy manager, Addala Ganeswara Rao, is being questioned by police, and a case has been registered based on complaints from the victims' families. "If anyone indulges in adulteration out of greed for money, the government will take it very seriously. We will act strictly after completing the investigation. We will not remain indifferent if anyone's actions endanger public health," the Chief Minister warned. After learning about the incident, the Chief Minister conducted a review meeting in the morning with the District Collector, Superin-

tendent of Police, and officials from the medical and health and food safety departments. He inquired about the treatment being provided and directed that the best possible medical care be ensured.

Officials informed him that samples had been collected from 75 affected individuals and that testing of the remaining families was underway. Chandrababu instructed food safety and health department officials to immediately proceed to Rajamahendravaram and personally monitor the situation. He later held another review with ministers and senior officials in his Assembly chamber, reiterating that stringent action would follow once the investigation establishes responsibility.

Maha seeks CBI probe into Ajit Pawar plane crash

Continued from P1

The Mahayuti government will ensure that all doubts regarding the plane crash are cleared, Fadnavis said at a press conference on Sunday on the eve of the budget session of the Maharashtra legislature. "I had received a letter from the NCP (an ally of the BJP) seeking a CBI probe into the air crash and spoke with Home Minister Amit Shah. Along with investigations by DGCA and state CID, there will be a probe by the CBI," he added. Ajit Pawar and four others onboard a chartered plane were killed when it crashed while attempting to land near Baramati in Pune district on January 28.

'Milk contamination' leaves four dead, 12 in hospital with anuria

Continued from P1

Amid extensive investigation and public outrage, District Collector Kirti Chekuri confirmed that four deaths linked to symptoms of acute kidney failure have been recorded so far. She told the media on Monday that 12 patients were undergoing treatment in different private hospitals and that their health condition was being monitored continuously. "We conducted a door-to-door survey and collected 73 blood samples. Milk samples obtained from 42 cattle connected to the supplier were also sent to Hyderabad laboratories for detailed analysis," she said.

The district collector said that blood tests are being conducted in 106 households where the vendor has supplied milk. Samples have so far been collected from 73 families under continuous medical supervision.

The Animal Husbandry Department tested 46 cattle and sent samples to scientific and veterinary laboratories, while Food Safety officials sent milk and curd samples to laboratories in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam.

East Godavari district Superintendent of Police (SP) D Narasimha Kishore said post-mortem reports are awaited and the unauthorised dairy unit has been sealed. Based on the blood samples collected so far, Kishore said, children and elderly persons appear to be more affected and advised the public to consume only properly boiled milk for the next few days.

District Medical and Health

Officer V Venkateswara Rao said symptoms included nausea, vomiting and reduced urination, and most patients were aged above 60 years. He said epidemiological investigations were underway and clarified that there was no evidence so far of an infectious disease outbreak. Medical camps have been organised in affected areas and continuous surveillance is in place.

The incident surfaced after some residents of Chowdeswari Nagar and Swaroor Nagar near Lalacheruvu began vomiting, after abdominal swelling and stoppage of urine from February 15 onwards. Within days, 16 persons were hospitalised. Most of the victims are aged above 60 years, though a five-month-old infant and a three-year-old child were also affected. Two elderly patients, N. Seshagiri Rao (72) and Radha Krishnamurthy (74), died on Monday morning while undergoing treatment, raising the toll to four. Two others, B. Kanakaratham (76) and Tadi Krishnaveni (75) succumbed on Sunday. Doctors said that the condition of four patients undergoing treatment in hospitals remains critical. They suspect acute renal failure, pending confirmation through toxicology reports.

Preliminary medical inquiry suggests that all the families with affected individuals had consumed milk supplied by a single vendor from the Korukonda mandal. Residents told officials that milk and curd tasted unusually bitter on Maha Sivaratri day. Police have taken the milk

supplier, identified as Ganesh, into custody and seized materials from his premises for examination. Officials said the vendor collected milk from 46 farmers and supplied it to 106 households.

District Superintendent of Police D Narasimha Kishore said special clue teams from Vijayawada were assisting in the investigation. "Post-mortem examinations have been completed and further cases will be registered based on forensic and laboratory reports," he stated.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reviewed the situation with senior officials and issued directions for strict monitoring and immediate action. The state government has announced ex gratia payment of Rs 10 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased. "We are offering Rs 10 lakh financial compensation to the family of the deceased and free treatment for all those hospitalised," Naidu said. The CM ordered strict action against vendors. Tourism and Culture Minister Kandula Durgesh said the administration must remain alert and ensure quality treatment for victims, urging people to approach government hospitals if symptoms appear. Rapid Response Teams comprising health, food safety, municipal, veterinary and police departments have been deployed.

Political reactions followed the incident. YSRCP supremo Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed shock over the deaths in Rajamahendravaram and offered condolences to the bereaved families. He said 'negli-

gence' in food safety enforcement had endangered public lives and demanded stringent action against those responsible for the alleged adulteration. "Such incidents reflect serious lapses in monitoring mechanisms, and immediate corrective steps must be taken to prevent recurrence," Reddy said in a YSRCP press release.

Congress Working Committee Member Gidugu Rudra Raju went to the hospital and visited the anuria patients. He demanded that Rs. 1 crore be paid to the families of the deceased as ex gratia.

Communist Party of India leader Tatipaka Madhu demanded enhanced compensation of Rs 50 lakh for victims' families and called for a judicial inquiry into the alleged milk adulteration. Former MP Margani Bharat alleged that several patients showed dangerously high creatinine levels and urged strict action against those responsible.

Leaders from various parties visited the victims in hospitals and demanded improved medical facilities and compensation. YSRCP district president Chelluboina Srinivasa Venugopala Krishna, former MLA Jakkampudi Raja, YSRCP leader J Vijayalakshmi also went to the hospital and visited the victims. The district administration has appointed a nodal officer and set up a helpline (9494060060) for reporting symptoms. Officials appealed to residents not to panic and to follow health advisories while awaiting laboratory results that will determine the exact cause of the suspected contamination.

