

State to be developed as East-West cargo corridor

- CM orders faster cargo operations at Mulapeta, Machilipatnam, and Ramayapatnam ports, targeting hinterland cargo from six neighbouring states
- Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam ports slated for completion by December; Ramayapatnam to gain prominence with BPCL refinery and dedicated rail link to Kadapa Steel Plant
- Port townships, industrial corridors, and fishing harbour expansions planned to position Andhra Pradesh as a logistics hub on India's east coast amid global shipping disruptions

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to develop the state as a major East-West cargo corridor by strengthening cargo handling operations at ports across the state.

During a review meeting held at the Secretariat on ports and fishing harbours, the Chief Minister stressed the need to expedite cargo operations at the newly constructed ports of Mulapeta, Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam. He instructed officials to take necessary steps to ensure cargo movement

from the hinterland regions of neighbouring states such as Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka through these ports.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that construction of Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam ports is expected to be completed by December 2026. Naidu said that once the refinery of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited is established, Ramayapatnam will emerge as a major container and bulk cargo port.

The Chief Minister also revealed that the Railway Ministry has approved a dedicat-



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holds a review on works on ports and fishing harbours with officials at the Secretariat on Monday

ed rail connectivity project from Ramayapatnam to the Kadapa Steel Plant, which will significantly improve cargo transportation.

Naidu suggested developing port townships near the three ports to boost commercial activity and said industrial corridors are also likely to emerge in these regions due to improved infrastructure.

He further directed officials to accelerate the second phase of fishing harbour construction at Budagatlappa-

lem Fishing Harbour, Pudidamadaka Fishing Harbour and Kothapatnam Fishing Harbour. Highlighting the state's strategic location, the Chief Minister said Andhra Pradesh is poised to become a logistics hub on India's east coast, with ports and fishing harbours planned roughly every 50 kilometres along the coastline. He emphasized that the state's ports should emerge as game changers in cargo handling.

Naidu also pointed out that due to the ongoing glob-

al conflicts affecting ports in Dubai and Gulf countries, there is a growing perception that ports on India's east coast are safer. He urged officials to take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen Andhra Pradesh's maritime infrastructure and attract greater cargo traffic. The review meeting was attended by Special Chief Secretary for Investments and Infrastructure M. T. Krishna Babu and Maritime Board CEO Abhishek Kumar, among other officials.

AP fixes Rs 2.39 lakh unit cost for PMAY-Gramin 2.0 houses

- Interest subsidy on SHG loans to be reimbursed from 2026-27 to 2028-29
- State housing corporation directed to implement scheme across the state

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VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh government has fixed the unit cost at Rs.2.39 lakh for construction of houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana Gramin 2.0 (PMAY-G 2.0). Housing special chief secretary Ajay Jain issued GO Rt No 20 to this effect on Monday.

According to the government order, the revised unit cost includes convergence funds and Self-Help Group (SHG) loans. The order also provides for reimbursement of interest subsidy on SHG loans by the state government for the financial years from 2026-27 to 2028-29.

Officials said the decision was taken after examining proposals submitted by the managing director of the Andhra Pradesh State Housing Corporation Limited (APSHCL). The proposal



was prepared in accordance with guidelines issued by the ministry of rural development, Government of India, for the implementation of PMAY-Gramin 2.0. Under the scheme, the Centre provides assistance of Rs 1.2 lakh per house, which includes a central share of Rs.72,000 (60 per cent) and a state share of Rs 48,000 (40 per cent). In addition, beneficiaries will be eligible for an SHG loan of Rs 80,000 at an interest rate of 3 per cent, with the state government reimbursing the interest component.

The funding structure also includes convergence components such as wage support under the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mis-

sion - Gramin (VB-G-RAM-G) Scheme and the National Rural Livelihood Mission, amounting to Rs 27,000, and Rs 12,000 for sanitation support for construction of Individual Household Toilets (IHHL) under the Swachh Bharat Mission. With these components, the total unit cost per house has been fixed at Rs 2,39,000.

The government has directed the managing director of APSHCL to take necessary steps for implementation of the scheme across the state. Officials said the revised unit cost would enable beneficiaries to construct better quality houses with additional financial support through convergence schemes and SHG loans.

DRIVER'S MURDER CASE

MLC Anantha Babu's wife appears before SIT

- Lakshmi Durga was questioned by SIT in Kakinada after High Court directive, linked as second accused in 2022 Dalit youth murder
- MLC Anantha Uday Bhaskar, first accused, allegedly staged driver Subrahmanyam's death as a road accident; later released on default bail

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KAKINADA

STATE Legislative Council member Anantha Uday Bhaskar's wife Lakshmi Durga, on Monday appeared before the Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the murder of his former driver.

She appeared before the investigating officer in Kakinada at the direction of the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Anantha Uday Bhaskar dropped her at the office of Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), where investigating officer Manish Patil Devraj questioned her.

The High Court had directed her to appear before SIT between March 16 and March 30 from 10 am to 5 pm. The order was passed on her petition seeking cancellation of a non-bailable war-



File picture of Anantha Babu and his wife Lakshmi Durga

rant against her issued by the Special SC/ST Court in Rajamahendravaram. The SIT, in the supplementary charge sheet filed last month, had stated that Lakshmi Durga had a role in the 2022 murder of Dalit youth Veedhi Subrahmanyam. Following this, she was named a second accused in the case and a non-bailable warrant was issued a week ago.

MLC Anantha Uday Bhaskar, also known as Anantha Babu, is the first accused in the case. He is accused of killing his former driver, Subrahmanyam, and later delivering the body to the victim's house. Sub-

rahmanyam (34) was found dead under suspicious circumstances in Kakinada on May 19, 2022. The MLC of the then-ruling YSR Congress Party had personally transported the body to the victim's parents' residence around 2 a.m. in his own car, claiming it was a road accident.

The family, however, suspected foul play and refused to accept the body. The murder had sparked protests by the victim's relatives and Dalit organisations.

Anantha Babu had allegedly pushed the deceased during an argument, resulting in his fall and death. The

legislator allegedly inflicted additional injuries on the body to make it appear as though the death resulted from a road accident.

The MLC was subsequently arrested, and the YSRCP suspended him from the party.

With the investigating officer unable to submit the charge sheet within 90 days, Anantha Babu was released on default bail in December 2022.

After coming to power in June 2024, the TDP-led coalition government decided to re-investigate the case. Indian Police Service (IPS) officer and incumbent Kakinada DSP Manish Devraj Patil was appointed as the investigation officer. In July 2025, the SC/ST Special Court ordered a re-investigation into the case. The MLC had challenged the order in the High Court, but it granted a stay on a lower court's order, which had also directed that a supplementary chargesheet be filed within 90 days.

Last month, the Supreme Court observed that there was a clear "nexus between police and power" in the case and that the police had attempted to help Ananta Uday Bhaskar secure bail.

Following this, the state government suspended four police officers over the lapses in the investigation that led to the release of the MLC.

KANIPAKAM TEMPLE TO GET RS3.4 Cr PUSHKARINI

- The existing temple tank to be shifted forward by 80-90 ft to create open space in front of temple
- Akhilandam to be developed on Tirumala model for coconut breaking and lamp lighting rituals
- Two Kalyana Mandapams and a guest house to be constructed with Rs 25 cr TTD funds

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

THE historic Sri Varasiddhi Vinayaka Swamy temple at Kanipakam is set to witness a major transformation with temple authorities launching a series of development initiatives aimed at improving pilgrim amenities and ensuring the smooth conduct of religious rituals and festivals. The plans form part of a comprehensive master development programme being implemented for the temple town.

A key highlight of the initiative is the construction of a new Pushkarini near the Supatha Mandapam at an estimated cost of Rs 3.40 crore. The existing temple tank located in front of the shrine



A view of the Kanipakam temple

has been creating difficulties during major processions, particularly Vahana Sevass conducted as part of the annual Brahmotsavams, as it restricts the movement of temple chariots and vehicles despite the presence of Mada streets on three sides.

Devasthanam Chairman V Surendra Babu popularly known as Mani Naidu said permissions for the project had already been secured from the Endowments Department and the temple administration was moving ahead with the execution schedule.

He told The Hans India that, land transfer process from a private hotel owner will be completed in the next 10-15 days after which tenders will be called for. The target is to complete the new

Pushkarini before the Brahmotsavams this year.

Officials stated that the new Pushkarini would be constructed with the same dimensions as the existing one, measuring about 140 feet in length and width and 12 feet in depth. Stones from the present tank will be re-used, preserving traditional elements while introducing improved facilities.

The structure will feature stone pillars sourced from older temple architecture, along with a centrally located stone Neerajana Mandapam housing an idol of Lord Vinayaka. Steps for devotees, barricades, water purification systems and modern lighting arrangements will also be installed.

The redesign will effectively shift the Pushkarini for-

ward by nearly 80 to 90 feet, creating a spacious open area in front of the temple.

According to the Chairman, this change will significantly improve the movement of the Lord's Utsava Murthy idols during festivals and provide better convenience for devotees visiting the shrine in large numbers.

As part of the expansion, the Devasthanam is also planning to establish an Akhilandam in front of the temple on the lines of Tirumala, enabling devotees to break coconuts and light lamps as part of fulfilling their vows. The existing TTD building and a nearby police station will be relocated, and alternative locations have already been identified. Meanwhile, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has sanctioned Rs 25 crore for the overall development of the temple town. With this, two air-conditioned Kalyana Mandapams will be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 16 crore, including one dedicated to conducting mass weddings, the Chairman revealed.

A guest house costing around Rs 9 crore will also be built by TTD. These facilities will be maintained by the Kanipakam Devasthanam, and the revenue generated from them will accrue to the temple administration.

TTD announces schedule for June ticket quota

- Arjita Seva tickets will be released online at 10 am today
- Rs 300 Special Entry Darshan tickets will be released on March 24

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TIRUMALA

THE Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) will release the quota for various Srivari darshan tickets and accommodation for June 2026 in phases starting March 18.

According to TTD, tickets for Srivari Arjita Sevass — Suprabhatam, Thomala, Archana and Ashtadala Pada Padmaradhana — will be released online at 10 am on March 18. Devotees can register for the electronic dip for these sevass until 10 am on March 20.

Those allotted tickets through the electronic dip must complete payment between March 20 and March 22 before 12 noon to confirm their bookings.

Tickets for other Arjita Sevass such as Kalyanotsavam,

Unjal Seva, Arjita Brahmotsavam, Sahasra Deepalankara Seva and Jyeshthabishekam will be released online at 10 am on March 21.

The quota for Virtual Sevass along with their darshan slots will be made available online at 3 pm on March 21. TTD will release Angapradakshinam tokens online at 10 am on March 23, while the quota for Srivani Trust darshan tickets will be released at 11 am on the same day. The quota of free special darshan tokens for senior citizens, differently-abled persons and devotees suffering from chronic illnesses will be released online at 3 pm on March 23.

Special Entry Darshan tickets will be released online at 10 am on March 24. On the same day, the accommodation quota for Tirumala and Tirupati will be made available online at 3 pm.

TTD has advised devotees to book Srivari Arjita Sevass and darshan tickets only through its official website: <https://ttdevasthanams.ap.gov.in>

SSC exams begin smoothly across state

- Over 6.22 lakh students appear on Day 1; attendance recorded at 98.90%
- Authorities conduct 1,753 inspections to ensure fair conduct of exams

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Secondary School Certificate (SSC) public examinations began smoothly across the state on Monday, with authorities reporting peaceful conduct of the examinations at all centres.

According to the Board of Secondary Education (BSE), a total of 6,29,109 regular candidates had registered for the examinations. Of them, 6,22,217 students appeared for the first-day examination, while 6,852 candidates were absent. The exams were conducted at 3,415 centres across the state. Officials said the overall attendance on the first day stood at 98.90 per cent, reflecting a high turnout of candidates.

To ensure smooth and transparent conduct of the examinations, the Board of Secondary Education put in place a comprehensive monitoring mechanism.

As part of these arrangements, various authorities conducted 1,753 inspection visits to examination centres across the state. The inspections were carried out by



SSC students attending the public examinations at a centre in Vijayawada on Monday

Photo: Ch Venkata Mastan

district collectors, district-level observers, district educational officers, assistant commissioners of government examinations, district monitoring coordinators, flying squads and other officials.

Director of Government Examinations KV Srinivasulu Reddy said that four invigilators were found negligent in discharging their duties during the examination. Two invigilators in YSR Kadapa district, one in Anantapur district, and another in Palnadu district were reported

for lapses. He said the matter was taken seriously and strict action would be initiated against the concerned invigilators as per the rules governing the conduct of examinations.

He also instructed district educational officers, chief superintendents, departmental officers and invigilators to maintain strict vigilance and adhere to examination protocols to ensure the smooth conduct of the remaining SSC examinations.

APA India launches tele-counselling for Class 10 students during exams

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Advanced Psychological Services Association launched a free tele-counselling initiative to support Class 10 students appearing for public examinations in the state.

Announcing the initiative, association national working president Krishna Bharat said the organisation has decided to extend psychological support to students facing stress and anxiety during the examination period. As part of the programme, 55 psychologists from across the state have volunteered to provide tele-counselling services.

Krishna Bharat explained that a special poster listing the psychologists, their availability timings and contact numbers district-wise has been prepared and steps are being taken to circulate it widely among students across the state. Students

experiencing examination stress can directly call the listed psychologists and receive counselling support.

He added that the number of psychologists participating in the tele-counselling service will be increased further if required, depending on the demand from students.

The tele-counselling initiative will be coordinated by Krishna Bharat along with Dr Varalakshmi, State president of the AP Committee, and MP Janakiram.

Students or psychologists facing any issues related to tele-counselling can contact the organisers at 9985428261, the association said. Association leaders including honorary president of the AP Committee Dr. Puli Srinivas Appaiee to Class 10 students across Andhra Pradesh to make use of the free counselling facility to manage stress and approach their examinations with confidence.