

Minister assures adequate LPG supply, warns against rumours

- Civil supplies minister Manohar says state is delivering nearly 3 lakh cylinders daily, exceeding bookings
- States strict action is underway against black marketing; 616 cases filed, 2,500 cylinders seized
- OTP verification and digital booking promoted to curb misuse and ease consumer access

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CIVIL supplies minister Nandendra Manohar on Monday assured that there is no shortage of LPG cylinders for domestic consumption in the state and urged people not to panic or believe rumours circulating on social media.

Addressing a press conference at the Secretariat, the minister said the government is taking strict measures to prevent black marketing and artificial shortage of LPG. He warned that strict action would be taken against those involved in illegal sale or diversion of domestic cylinders.

The minister explained that the review meeting on



Civil supplies minister Nandendra Manohar along with officials addressing a press conference at the Secretariat on Monday

LPG supply conducted by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu confirmed that the state has sufficient stock and delivery systems are functioning normally. He said people should avoid standing in queues at gas agencies out of fear and instead use online booking methods such as mobile apps, phone calls, WhatsApp, missed calls and digital payment platforms.

According to the minister, the state normally records about 2.81 lakh LPG bookings per day, while gas companies have been delivering an average of 2.92 lakh cyl-

inders daily in the past five days, with deliveries touching three lakh cylinders on some days.

Manohar said the sudden surge in bookings due to rumours had temporarily affected servers, but supply remains adequate. As per central guidelines, a new booking can be made after 45 days in rural areas and 25 days in urban areas.

To curb misuse and black marketing, the government has made OTP verification mandatory for cylinder delivery. Officials have also been directed to ensure that domestic LPG cylinders are

not diverted for commercial use. He revealed that 616 cases have been registered and about 2,500 LPG cylinders seized in the last five days during enforcement drives. District-level call centres have been set up under the supervision of Joint Collectors to assist consumers.

The minister further assured that schools, hospitals, temples and welfare hostels will receive uninterrupted gas supply, adding that gas companies have also assured the government that there will be no shortage of domestic LPG in the state.

Continuous Annaprasadam launched at Vontimitta temple

- TTD chairman says a German shed is installed to provide comfortable seating for pilgrims to take Annaprasadam
- CM Chandrababu Naidu will take part in Sri Sitarama Kalyanam on April 1

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VONTIMITTA
(YSR KADAPA DISTRICT)

TTD chairman B R Naidu on Monday announced that Annaprasadam will be distributed continuously to devotees visiting Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple in Vontimitta. He inaugurated the Annaprasadam distribution centre set up opposite the temple premises.

Speaking on the occasion, Naidu said the facility was established following the directions issued by the Chief Minister last year to ensure uninterrupted serving of free meals to devotees. A German shed has been installed at the centre to provide comfortable seating for pilgrims while partaking of Annaprasadam.

The chairman said Sri Kodandarama Swamy Brahmotsavams will be conducted for nine days from March 27 to April 5 with elaborate arrangements. Special preparations are being made for Sri Sitarama Kalyanam sched-



TTD chairman B R Naidu serving food to devotees after inaugurating Annaprasadam distribution programme at Vontimitta on Monday

uled on April 1. On behalf of the State Government, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will offer Pattu Vastrams to the deities during the ceremony.

Devotees attending the Sri Sitarama Kalyanam will be provided free Srivari Laddu Prasadam worth Rs 50. Arrangements are also being made to distribute Annaprasadam, drinking water, and buttermilk packets to pilgrims. The district administration and Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) are jointly overseeing the arrangements for the annual festivities.

Sri Sitarama Kalyanam will be telecast live worldwide through SVBC. Electrical illumination, LED lighting, and a public address system are being arranged at an estimated cost of Rs 4 crore for the celebrations.

Naidu further said steps are being taken to construct a 108-foot statue of Jambavan-

tha at a cost of Rs 20.17 crore. Under the temple master plan, 100 rooms will also be built at an estimated cost of Rs 37 crore to improve accommodation facilities for devotees. He added that, as per the directions of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, free Annaprasadam will now be served three times a day to devotees at Vontimitta.

Earlier, the TTD chairman visited Sri Kodandarama Swamy Temple and offered prayers. Temple priests and officials welcomed him with traditional honours, and he was presented Theertha Prasadam after Darshan.

Later, he inspected the arrangements being made for the Sri Sitarama Kalyanam. District Collector Dr Cherukuri Sridhar, Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary, SP Shelke Chakraborty, JEO V Veerabrahmam, CVSO KV Murali Krishna and other officials were present.

US PREZ TRUMP ACCUSES IRAN OF SPREADING LIES

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"Now, AI has become another Disinformation weapon that Iran uses, quite well, considering they are being annihilated by the day," he said on his social media platform on Monday. Trump said Iran showed "phony Kamikaze Boats," shooting at various ships at sea, which looks "wonderful, powerful, and vicious." "But these boats don't exist — It's all false information to show how tough they already defeated Military is!"

The five US refuelling planes that were supposedly struck down and badly damaged, according to the "Wall Street Journal's false reporting," and others, are all in service, except for one, which will soon be flying the skies, Trump claimed. "Buildings and Ships that are shown to be on fire are not — It's FAKE NEWS, generated by AI."

Karnataka Speaker raps govt

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Stating that there had been no improvement from the government side, the Speaker questioned how the House could function smoothly if such lapses continued. "If this is the attitude of the government, how are we supposed to run the House in a manner agreeable to all?" he asked. Khader further declared that the proceedings would not continue until the ministers and officials concerned explained the reason for the delay in answering questions. "Until the ministers and officials concerned come to me and explain what the issue is, I will not conduct the House. I am adjourning the House," he said. Earlier, after Question Hour, Home Minister G. Parameshwara informed the House on behalf of the government that out of the 230 questions that were to be answered in written format, the government had responded to 84.

Chandrababu: Haj House in Amaravati soon

Releases Rs 45 crore honorarium dues for imams and muezzins

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu announced here on Monday that the Andhra Pradesh government will construct a new Haj House in Amaravati and immediately release Rs 45 crore in pending honorarium dues for imams and muezzins. He pointed out that the coalition government has implemented several welfare initiatives for Muslims over the past 21 months.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while participating in an iftar hosted by the state government here. He joined the prayers and extended Ramzan greetings to the Muslim community.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said the incomplete Haj House in Kadapa would soon be made operational. The government has organised iftars across districts and constituencies during the holy month of

Ramzan. Emphasising the teachings of Prophet Muhammad on charity and compassion, the Chief Minister said the government is committed to supporting the poor and ensuring the socio-economic advancement of Muslims.

Naidu highlighted several welfare measures implemented by the state government. Under NTR Bharosa pensions, about 4.38 lakh Muslims receive financial assistance, with the government spending around Rs 3,511 crore annually. Around 4.5 lakh Muslim students are benefiting from the 'Thaliki Vandanam' scheme, while Rs 264 crore has been released as post-Matric scholarships for 19,215 students. Under the Deepam 2.0 scheme, 6.2 lakh families are receiving LPG support worth Rs 158 crore.

The Chief Minister said Rs 180 crore has already been distributed as honorariums, providing Rs 5,000 for imams and Rs 10,000 for muezzins,

and ordered the immediate release of the remaining Rs 45 crore dues.

Naidu stated that the government respects the sentiments of Muslims and is taking steps to protect Waqf properties. Around 1,500 Waqf properties have been surveyed and the board has been recast, after cancelling earlier orders that created disputes.

The Chief Minister mentioned that Rs 100 crore has been allocated to the Dadekula Muslim Finance Corporation, minority welfare allocations were increased from Rs 5,434 crore to Rs 6,090 crore, and Rs 7 crore was sanctioned to the Urdu Academy.

The event was attended by Minority Welfare Minister NMD Farooq, MP Kesineni Sivanath, MLAs Mohamed Nasseer Ahmed, Bondam Umamaheswara Rao, Gadde Rammohan, and several public representatives and leaders from the Muslim community.

Trump may send troops to capture 'Crown Jewel of Iran'

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is reportedly weighing the possibility of seizing Kharg Island-- a scrubby stretch of land in the Gulf that handles almost all of Iran's crude exports-- amid a growing energy crisis due to war in the Middle East.

Trump may order the seizure of Iran's critical oil depot on Kharg Island if tankers remain bottled up in the Persian Gulf amid Tehran's blockade, US officials said. If the US goes ahead with the move, it will put US troops on the ground, which risks triggering Ira-

nian retaliatory strikes against oil facilities and pipelines across Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. But America's main ally in the Middle East, Israel, may not be inclined to put its boot on the ground in Iran just yet, as Israel's ambassador to India, Reu-

ven Azar, has claimed that neither Washington nor Jerusalem intends to invade Iran. He said the focus of US-Israeli actions remains on encouraging change within Iran through pressure from its own people rather than through military occupation.

True tribute to Amarajeevi lies in all-round growth of state: Naidu

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The monument has been installed by the Amarajeevi Potti Sreeramulu Memorial Trust.

The Chief Minister observed that the "real tribute" to Potti Sreeramulu would be the comprehensive development of the state in all sectors. He urged people to constantly remember Sreeramulu's sacrifice and work collectively for the progress of Andhra Pradesh.

Naidu said the statue is the first major sculpture in Amaravati and stands as a lasting symbol of Sreeramulu's sacrifice. The memorial has been built across 6.80 acres in Shakamuru Park, with the first phase of the project completed in a record six months. In the first phase, the massive structure used 26 tonnes of bronze and 42 tonnes of iron framework. In the next phase, a museum, an auditorium and skill devel-

opment centres will be developed as part of the memorial park.

Describing Sreeramulu as a symbol of inspiration, the Chief Minister said the great freedom-fighter belonged to all communities and not just one section of society. Sreeramulu's sacrifice paved the way for the creation of Andhra State and later encouraged the formation of linguistic states across India. Naidu recalled that Sreeramulu fought also for social causes, including Dalits' entry into temples by undertaking a 29-day fast earlier in his life.

Naidu emphasised that Andhra state was achieved through Sreeramulu's sacrifice, just as the state capital has been made possible by the sacrifices of farmers who contributed land for Amaravati's development. The Chief Minister criticised the previous government for attempting to

divide the capital and said Amaravati is now progressing as a "people's capital".

Naidu also announced that the state government would soon issue a Government Order (GO) to recognise various Vaishya groups under the unified identity of Arya Vaishyas, respecting their sentiments. He assured that the coalition government is committed to creating a business-friendly environment for the community.

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Union Minister Pemmasani Chandrababu Naidu, Ministers Nara Lokesh, Nandendra Manohar and several public representatives attended the unveiling ceremony. The Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister also released a postal cover issued by India Post in honour of Potti Sreeramulu and felicitated members of his family during the event.

Global energy crisis deepens as Iran keeps hold on Hormuz

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As morning broke Monday, a drone hit a fuel tank near Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international passenger traffic, causing a large fire. Firefighters contained the blaze and there were no injuries reported, but the airport suspended all flights before resuming them a few hours later. Later, a person was killed in the capital of the United Arab Emirates when an Iranian missile hit a vehicle, the Abu Dhabi media office said. Fire also broke out at an oil facility in Fujairah, one of the UAE's seven emirates, following a drone attack.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, said it intercepted a wave of 35 Iranian drones sent to its eastern region, home to major oil installations. Iran has fired hundreds of missiles and drones toward countries in the region hosting U.S. military assets since the war began. Emirati authorities say most have been intercepted by air defenses, though debris and some drones have fallen in-

side the country. Israel's military said on Monday that Iran launched missiles toward Israel as well.

The conflict is battering the world economy, driving up energy and fertilizer prices; threatening food shortages in poor countries; destabilizing fragile states; and complicating efforts by central banks to drive down prices for consumers. Much of the difficulty stems from the virtual shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump said on Sunday that he wants to police the strait to make it safe for shipping, with his party increasingly concerned that rising prices for American consumers will hurt the Republicans in elections this fall. He did not identify the countries he said he asked to help with those efforts, but he said he won't forget the countries that decline. He has previously appealed to China, France, Japan, South Korea and Britain. "Whether we get support or not, but I can say this, and I said to them: We will remember," Trump said.

'Take steps to prevent LPG black marketing'

Naidu suggested holding consultations with hotel associations to encourage measures that could temporarily reduce LPG consumption if necessary. Officials also informed the

Chief Minister that the Centre is expected to allocate additional LPG supplies to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka in the coming days.

He further advised offi-

cials to explore alternative options such as pipeline gas and induction stoves as supplementary solutions to ensure energy security and reduce dependence on LPG in the long term.

MEA slams US report recommending sanctions on RSS

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This comes after USCIRF designated India as a "country of particular concern" and asked United States to link arms sales and trade policies to religious freedom.

USCIRF said its report, Systematic Religious Persecution in India, provides an overview of India's social, political, and criminal justice systems as they relate to issues regarding freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). "It also examines the relationship between Hindu nationalist groups like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the implications of this dynamic for FoRB."

Despite offering some constitutional protections for FoRB, India's political system facilitates a climate of discrimination toward religious minority communities," the

report alleged. USCIRF also argued that conditions for religious freedom in India have "continued to deteriorate" and accused the Indian government of "targeting" religious minorities and houses of worship. "Several states undertook efforts to introduce or strengthen anti-conversion laws to include harsher prison sentences. Indian authorities also facilitated widespread detention and illegal expulsion of citizens and religious refugees and tolerated vigilante attacks against religious minority communities," the report said.

Created in 1998 by an act of the United States Congress, the USCIRF "monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) abroad" and makes recommendations to the President of the United States, the United States Department of State, and Congress.

10 killed in Cuttack ICU fire

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The fire broke out around 2:30 am to 3 am, where critically ill patients were being treated. Multiple fire engines rushed to the spot and are engaged in the rescue operations.

Shortly after the incident, the Odisha Chief Minister, along with Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling, visited the hospital and reviewed the situation. They also visited other patients who are receiving treatment at the facility.

"A total of 23 patients have been shifted to other departments. Seven serious patients died while shifting to other ICUs and wards, while another three patients died later."

I have directed the concerned officers for proper treatment of the injured patients," the Chief Minister told the media. Majhi announced a compensation of Rs 25 lakh for the families of those people who died.

Iran seeks return of 3 tankers seized by India

IN RETURN FOR HORMUZ SAFE PASSAGE

TEHRAN

IRAN has asked India for the release of three seized tanker ships in return for the safe passage of India-bound tankers through Strait of Hormuz amid the ongoing Gulf crisis, sources said on Monday.

The report said that Iran's ambassador to India met Foreign ministry officials on Monday to discuss the issue. However, neither India, nor Iran has not reacted to the report yet.

Indian coastal authorities in February reportedly seized three oil tankers sanctioned by the United States and allegedly linked to Iran. The vessels were intercepted off the Mumbai coast and taken in for investigation over sus-

pected involvement in illicit oil trade activities.

The 'Shadow Fleet' vessels Stellar Ruby, Asphalt Star, and Al Jafzia, which were carrying sanctioned Iranian oil, were seized on February 6.

Iran, meanwhile, has made it clear that Strait of Hormuz cannot be used to launch strikes on Tehran and set conditions on the passage of vessels through it. It said vessel movement through the strait could occur only under special conditions due to what he described as insecurity created by Israel and the United States, adding that Iran's armed forces oversee the passage and would prevent its use for military action against Tehran.

PNG and CNG supply uninterrupted: Govt

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During an inter-ministerial briefing, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary (Marketing and Oil Refinery) at the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said fuel stations supplying CNG and households using PNG continue to receive normal supply. Authorities have also initiated enforcement action against hoarding, with raids conducted across several states to monitor storage and distribution. The government said crude oil availability remains adequate, with refineries operating at full capacity and petrol pumps functioning normally without reported shortages.

City gas distributors are also promoting PNG adoption. Indraprastha Gas Lim-

ited has announced an incentive of free gas worth Rs 500 for consumers registering for PNG connections before March 31.

LPG bookings have declined as concerns over domestic gas availability eased. Meanwhile, 22 states and Union Territories have set up control rooms to monitor supply and curb hoarding or black marketing.

The ministry urged consumers to avoid panic bookings and use digital platforms for LPG orders. The government said it continues to prioritise uninterrupted supply to households and key sectors such as hospitals and educational institutions, while closely monitoring the situation amid prevailing geopolitical developments.

India rules out talks with US on Hormuz

NEW DELHI: India on Monday said it has not held bilateral talks with the United States on deploying naval vessels to secure merchant shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

The clarification came after US President Donald Trump urged countries to send warships to keep the strategic waterway open amid tensions with Iran. Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Trump said that his administration has contacted 7 countries for support. India has not held bilateral discussions with the United States on deploying naval vessels to ensure the safe passage of merchant shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the External Affairs Ministry said on Monday.