

ELEPHANT RAIDS

Solar fencing brings hope to farmers in Chittoor region

• Tirupati East forest division installed a hanging solar-powered fence covering about five kilometres in Pulicherla mandal

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FARMERS across several mandals of the erstwhile Chittoor district are beginning to see hope after years of crop destruction caused by recurring elephant incursions, with forest authorities rolling out a solar-powered fencing system aimed at keeping herds away from agricultural lands.

For nearly a decade, villages located along forest fringes in Pulicherla, Somala, Sadum, Palamaner, Punganur and Kallur mandals have witnessed frequent elephant movement. The



animals often strayed into cultivated fields, damaging crops across vast stretches and destroying farm equipment, leaving cultivators struggling with mounting losses. The persistent threat forced many farmers to either reduce cultivation or shift to less vulnerable farming practices.

In an effort to address the issue, officials of the Tirupati East forest division have in-

stalled a hanging solar-powered fence covering nearly five kilometres, stretching from Gantavaripalle village in Pulicherla mandal up to the Kallur ghat road. The project, implemented at a cost of Rs 49 lakh, has been completed and is set to undergo trial operations shortly.

Forest authorities noted that a similar fencing system introduced earlier in the

Palamaner range had yielded positive outcomes.

Elephant activity has been particularly intense in villages such as Pathapeta, Palem, Devalampeta, Kammappalle, Rayavaripalle, Challavaripalle and Ellankaviripalle. Farmers in these regions reported heavy losses to crops including paddy, tomato, brinjal and banana. Mango orchards and fodder crops were also affected, prompting several cultivators to cut down on agricultural operations due to uncertainty and financial strain.

Forest department officials said the solar fence installed earlier along the forest boundary at Palyam in Pulicherla mandal has begun yielding favourable outcomes.

In the month following its installation, elephant herds attempting to enter nearby farmlands have reportedly turned back upon reaching

the barrier, providing relief to local farming communities.

Officials explained that the fencing system operates using solar-powered batteries to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply. During summer months, when elephants frequently venture out searching for food and water, power is maintained round the clock. The fence delivers a mild, non-lethal electric shock that deters the animals without causing harm. In the monsoon season, however, the power supply will function between 6 pm and 6 am, aligning with peak elephant movement hours.

Forest authorities expressed optimism that the new measure would significantly reduce human-elephant conflict in the region and help farmers regain confidence in cultivation.

Naidu sets 2027 deadline for land re-survey

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has rolled out a sweeping set of land and revenue reforms, setting a March 2027 deadline to complete the State-wide 'Resurvey 2.0' and directing the issuance of 1.12 crore new Pattadar passbooks.

At a review meeting of the revenue department held at the Secretariat on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said the exercise aims to resolve land disputes and restore clarity in ownership records, which he alleged had escalated under the previous government's re-survey drive.

So far, surveys have been completed in 6,976 villages, with distribution of 22.79 lakh passbooks already underway in 5,717 villages. Naidu directed that the remaining 9 lakh passbooks in 1,259 surveyed villages be distributed by July, and set a target to complete both the survey and passbook issuance entirely by March next year. He further instructed officials to distribute 80 lakh passbooks between July and March, stressing zero-error



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holds a review on revenue department at the Secretariat on Wednesday

execution through strict monthly targets.

In a major policy shift, the CM approved the removal of 1.37 lakh acres of 'Village Service Inam' lands from the Section 22-A prohibited list, along with an additional 1 lakh acres under other inam categories. He directed the drafting of new legislation to formalize the move, stating that previous efforts had stalled due to inaction.

Naidu also announced that houses allotted under government schemes prior to 2016 will now be eligible for full property registration. The decision is expected to benefit around 75 lakh families, enabling them to legally sell, transfer, or mortgage their properties—effectively con-

verting them into formal economic assets.

Further, the government plans to confer full ownership rights on 9.25 lakh acres out of 13.59 lakh acres currently classified under freehold categories. Emphasizing transparency and security, the CM ordered complete digitization of land records, with copies to be delivered directly to landowners via mobile phones. He also proposed integrating blockchain technology after e-KYC verification, allowing property owners to activate a 'record-locking' system that prevents unauthorized transactions without their consent.

Chief secretary G Sai Prasad and revenue minister A Satya Prasad attended the meeting.

Jagan intensifies attack on Amaravati, pushes MAVIGUN

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has once again reiterated his stand in the Amaravati vs MAVIGUN capital controversy, making it clear that he is not backing down from opposing Amaravati as the state capital. Advocating the MAVIGUN (Machilipatnam-Vijayawada-Gun-

tur) model, Jagan termed it a more practical and cost-effective alternative.

Addressing party leaders and cadre from Tadepalligudem constituency at YSRCP central office in Tadepalli, Jagan launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, alleging that Amaravati is being developed purely for "corruption, commissions, and to



YSRCP chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy addressing party leaders from Tadepalligudem constituency at party central office in Tadepalli on Wednesday

benefit a select few." He described Amaravati as a "massive hub of corruption and exploitation," accusing the government of misleading both farmers and the public. "Amaravati is a huge mine of corruption and loot," Jagan said, adding that the YSR Congress had already offered a "practical solution," which the government ignored. Jagan warned that the

current approach could leave Andhra Pradesh without a functional capital. He pointed out that even basic infrastructure—roads, electricity, drainage, and water supply—has been estimated at Rs 2 crore per acre. "For 50,000 acres, Rs 1 lakh crore is insufficient. Now expanding to 1 lakh acres means Rs 2 lakh crore. If all the money is spent just on infrastructure, when will

the actual capital be built?" he said.

Highlighting delays, he noted that even after 12 years since 2014, there is no substantial progress. He cautioned that costs could escalate further to Rs 4 lakh crore or even Rs 10 lakh crore in the coming decades, without delivering a complete capital. Jagan argued that investing even 10 per cent of the projected

Rs 2 lakh crore would be enough if planned efficiently.

Promoting the MAVIGUN concept, Jagan emphasized the strategic advantage of the 110-km stretch between Machilipatnam, Vijayawada, and Guntur. He highlighted existing infrastructure, including highways, the international airport in Vijayawada, and the

upcoming Machilipatnam port, stating that development could be decentralized across this corridor to create an effective capital region. "With minimal investment and better connectivity, MAVIGUN can function as a capital from day one and become a major growth engine. It will also generate employment locally, preventing migration," he said.

Iran oil refinery struck despite ceasefire

TEHRAN

AN oil refinery on Iran's Lavan Island was hit in what Iranian authorities described as an "enemy attack" on Wednesday, hours after a two-week ceasefire between Iran and the United States took effect. The National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company reported the incident, according to

Shana, the news outlet of the Iranian Oil Ministry. The company said the facility was struck around 10:00 local time. No casualties were reported. Safety and firefighting teams were deployed immediately to contain the blaze and secure the site. The attack occurred despite a ceasefire agreement announced on Tuesday between the United States and Iran.

TRUMP WARNS 50% TARIFFS ON NATIONS SUPPLYING WEAPONS TO IRAN

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday warned that any country supplying military weapons to Iran will face immediate 50 per cent tariffs with no exemptions. His announcement came in a social media post days after agreeing to a two-week ceasefire with Tehran. "A Country supplying Military Weapons to Iran will be immediately tariffed, on any and all goods sold to the United States of America, 50%, effective immediately," the US President wrote in a post on Truth Social. In a separate post, Trump stated that the United States will "work closely" with Iran following what he called it as a "very productive regime change," and also claimed that there would be no further advancement of uranium in Iran.

Both US, Iran claim victory

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN

BOTH US President Donald Trump and Iran have portrayed the last-minute ceasefire deal as a victory for their nations. Trump said many aspects of a 15-point plan have been agreed to, adding that the US will work with Iran to dig up and remove buried uranium in the country. He also suggested the US may be involved in securing the critical waterway in a "joint venture" with Iran, while Tehran said Iran's military will coordinate the passage of ships. Minutes after Trump announced the two-week ceasefire, Tehran accepted the deal, claiming victory in the war. In a post on the social media platform X, Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi wrote: "If attacks against Iran are halted, our Powerful Armed Forces will cease their defensive operations." In his statement, Araghchi expressed gratitude and appreciation for his "dear brothers" - Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir. He thanked them for their "tireless efforts to end the war in the region."

MOJTABA HELPED CUT TRUCE DEAL

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It was Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of former supreme leader Ali Khamenei who was killed in an airstrike at the start of the war on February 28, who nudged his negotiators, for the first time since the war began, to move towards a deal. Iran's Foreign minister Araghchi said that under the two-week ceasefire agreement, maritime traffic through the vital Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil and gas passes, would be guaranteed.

Kamenei, who is yet to appear in public since being named the Supreme Leader, was actively involved in the process to make a truce deal on Monday and Tuesday. Khamenei's blessing for his negotiators to cut a deal was a "breakthrough". Araghchi also played a key role both in handling the negotiations and in pushing commanders from the Revolutionary Guards, an elite force, to accept a deal. China too was advising Iran to seek an off ramp.

Fragile ceasefire takes effect

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Meanwhile, global oil prices have fallen sharply, and stock markets soared after the US and Iran agreed to a conditional two-week ceasefire deal that includes the reopening of the key Strait of Hormuz waterway.

The price of benchmark Brent tumbled more than 15% to less than \$92 (£68.4) a barrel, while US-traded oil fell similarly to just under \$94. But oil prices remain higher than before the conflict started on 28 February. At the time, it was trading at around \$70 a barrel.

In the streets of Tehran, pro-government demonstrators screamed: "Death to America, death to Israel, death to compromisers!" after the ceasefire announcement and burned American and Israeli flags.

The chants underscored the anger animating hard-liners, who have been preparing for what many assumed would be an apocalyptic battle with the United States. Trump warned

Tuesday that "a whole civilization will die tonight," if a deal wasn't reached.

Trump initially said Iran proposed a "workable" 10-point plan that could help end the war the US. launched with Israel on Feb. 28. But when a version in Farsi emerged that indicated Iran would be allowed to continue enriching uranium — which is key to building a nuclear weapon — Trump called it fraudulent without elaborating. Vance later said the deal was being misrepresented within Iran, though he did not offer details.

Iran's demands for ending the war include a withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from the region, the lifting of sanctions, and the release of its frozen assets.

In his post on Wednesday, Trump said: "We are, and will be, talking Tariff and Sanctions relief with Iran."

It was not clear if other Western nations would agree to that, and the other points are likely nonstarters. United

Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres's personal envoy arrived in Iran for talks on "the way forward."

Pakistan said talks to hammer out a permanent end to the war could begin in Islamabad as soon as Friday.

Israel backed the US ceasefire with Iran, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the deal does not cover fighting against Hezbollah.

Israeli Chief of Staff Lt Gen Eyal Zamir said Israel will continue to "utilize every operational opportunity" to strike Hezbollah. The Israeli military said it struck more than 100 targets within 10 minutes Wednesday across Lebanon, the largest wave of strikes since March 1.

Hezbollah has not confirmed if it will abide by the ceasefire, though the group has said it was open to giving mediators a chance to secure an agreement. An official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly, said the group would

not stop firing at Israel unless Israel agreed to do the same.

While Iran could not match the sophistication of US and Israeli weaponry or their dominance in the air, its ability to control the Strait of Hormuz proved a tremendous strategic advantage. Iranian attacks and threats deterred many commercial ships from passing through the waterway, through which 20% of all traded oil and natural gas passes in peacetime.

That roiled the world economy and raised the pressure on Trump both at home and abroad to find a way out of the standoff. The ceasefire may formalize a system of charging fees in the strait that Iran instituted — and give it a new source of revenue. The plan allows for both Iran and Oman to charge ships, according to a regional official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss negotiations they were directly involved in. The official said Iran would use the money it raised for reconstruction.

CM bats for EV bus shift, expansion of AP highways

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For 570 km of vulnerable canal-side roads, he proposed collaboration with academic institutions to explore durable materials.

With the upcoming Godavari Pushkarams in view, the Chief Minister directed expedited road works in Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts. In the Godavari region alone, 531 km of roads will be upgraded at a cost of Rs 400 crore using funds under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI).

For context, the SASCI scheme in AP focuses on developing iconic tourism centers (like Gandikota and Rajahmundry) and enhancing rural road infrastructure. The initiative, with 100% central funding, aims to boost the lo-

cal economy and create jobs through 50-year interest-free loans. Naidu also asked officials to seek special Central assistance on the lines of Kumbh Mela funding.

The Chief Minister emphasized strategic port connectivity, underlining that ports are critical economic nodes. He called for seamless highway links to various ports, including Mulapeta, Visakhapatnam, Gangavaram, Kakinada, Machilipatnam, Ramayapatnam and Krishnapatnam, alongside development of East-West corridors to reduce logistics costs, with nearly 73 per cent of cargo currently moving by road.

The Chief Minister spotlighted key upcoming projects such as the Kharagpur-Amaravati greenfield highway,

Hyderabad-Srisailem-Dornala corridor and the Kalwakurthy-Nandyal Highway. Around 1,335 km of national highways are expected to be completed within two years, while projects worth Rs 24,502 crore are targeted for completion this year.

Naidu proposed ring roads and outer corridor models for certain cities, including Rajamahendravaram, Kakinada, Tirupati, Kurnool and Nellore, to support urban expansion and economic growth.

Ministers BC Janardhan Reddy and Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy, along with senior officials from the Transport Department, Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation and the National Highways Authority of India, attended the review.

US V-P Vance, Ghalibaf to lead US-Iran talks

Continued from P1

The diplomatic momentum follows an announcement by US President Donald Trump, who confirmed a two-week ceasefire agreement with Iran shortly before a deadline linked to the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian officials have indicated that talks will commence in Islamabad, crediting Pakistan for playing a key mediating role in securing the ceasefire. The planned talks are being closely watched as a potential step toward ending weeks of escalating conflict and restoring stability in the region. With negotiations expected to begin Friday, the spotlight is firmly on Vance's diplomatic role. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump has credited China for helping broker the fragile truce, even as he claims the U.S. still holds untapped leverage over Iran.

MARKET CHEERS CEASEFIRE

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Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that from a technical standpoint, the 23,700-23,600 zone remains a key immediate support. "A breakdown below this range could trigger profit booking. On the upside, a decisive breakout above the 24,500-resistance zone is required to confirm continuation of the current uptrend and unlock further upside potential," an analyst stated.

Investor sentiment improved significantly after geopolitical concerns showed signs of cooling and the central bank-maintained policy stability. Among the top performers in the Nifty index were Shriram Finance, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, and Adani Enterprises, which saw strong buying interest.

Centre readies ₹2,534- cr Central Secretariat project

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With this procedural step completed, there is a strong likelihood of the proposal being taken up in an upcoming Union Cabinet meeting.

The projects have already received approval from Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, following a proposal routed through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, indicating advanced-stage processing at the Centre.

Land allocation for the projects has also been finalized. The Andhra Pradesh government has allotted 22.53 acres to the Central Public Works Depart-

ment (CPWD), including 5.53 acres for the Secretariat complex and 17 acres for residential quarters under the General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) scheme.

Once the Cabinet Secretariat grants clearance, construction activity is expected to accelerate, marking a key step in establishing a permanent central government presence in Amaravati.

The planned Secretariat and residential infrastructure are expected to strengthen administrative integration and support the long-term development of Amaravati as the capital city.

ALL SET FOR POLLS IN ASSAM, KERALA, PUDUCHERRY

Continued from P1

In Assam, the campaign centred around Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's governance record and the Congress challenge led by Gaurav Gogoi.

The run-up to polls saw allegations and counter-allegations between the BJP and Congress, leading to a political slugfest. The Election Commission has said it is fully prepared to conduct free, fair and peaceful polling in Assam, with webcasting enabled at all polling stations and security forces deployed across sensitive areas.

Over 2.5 crore voters are eligible to cast their vote in the state. In Puducherry, campaigning has also concluded for the 30-member Assembly, where 294 candidates are contesting. The Union Territory has over 9.5 lakh voters. The April 9 voting marks the first leg of a wider election cycle, with Tamil Nadu set to vote on April 23 and West Bengal going to polls in two phases on April 23 and April 29.