

3 ANDHRA VILLAGES LEAD RAINWATER REVOLUTION

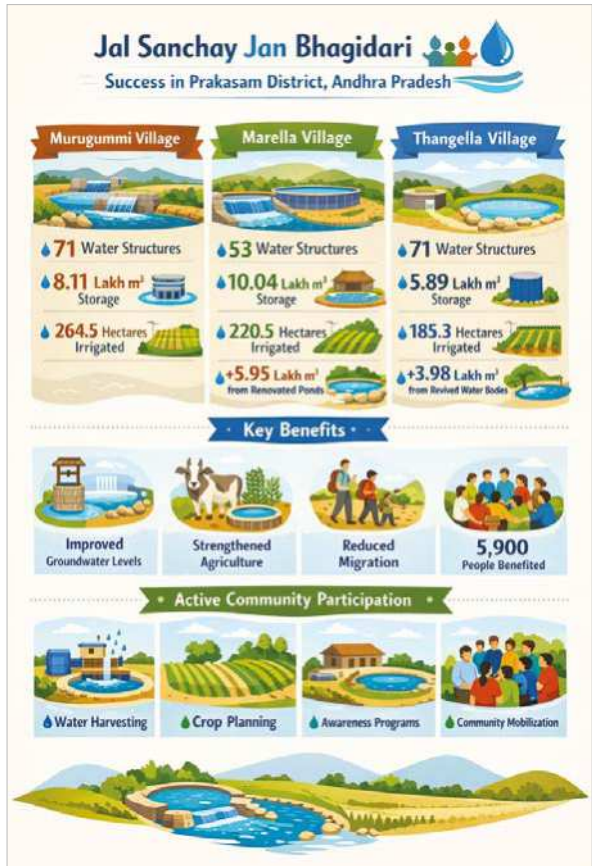
- Murugummi, Marella and Thangella boost groundwater with over 260 water structures, storing nearly 30 lakh cubic metres
- Community-driven efforts like pond revival, rooftop harvesting, crop planning lifted agriculture, dairy, and livelihoods for 5,900 residents
- Murugummi won 2nd-best panchayat at Water Awards 2024; Marella and Thangella also earned honours

NEW DELHI

THREE villages from the coastal district of Prakasam in Andhra Pradesh have emerged as models of water resilience through community-led rainwater conservation initiatives implemented under the 'Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari' campaign, the Jal Shakti ministry said on Thursday.

The ministry noted that villages such as Murugummi, Marella, and Thangella have significantly improved groundwater availability, strengthened livelihoods and reduced distress migration through sustained community participation.

Highlighting the outcomes, the ministry said that Murugummi saw the



construction of 71 water conservation structures with a cumulative storage capacity of about 8.11 lakh cubic metres, providing protective irrigation to 264.5 hectares of agricultural land. In Marella, 53 such structures were developed with a cumulative storage capacity of around 10.04 lakh cubic metres, enhancing agricultural sustainability across 220.5 hectares, it

said, adding that renovation of community ponds and tanks contributed an additional 5.95 lakh cubic metres of storage capacity.

Thangella recorded the construction of 71 water conservation structures with a storage capacity of about 5.89 lakh cubic metres, supporting irrigation across 185.3 hectares, while the revival of traditional water bodies added around



A water conservation structure in Marella

3.98 lakh cubic metres more, the ministry said.

The initiative has improved groundwater levels, benefiting around 5,900 people by enhancing access to water for domestic and agricultural purposes, the ministry said in a statement. Earlier, these villages faced acute water scarcity due to erratic rainfall, declining groundwater levels and frequent borewell failures, adversely affecting agriculture and livelihoods, it said.

The ministry said the situation began to change with active community mobilisation through gram sabhas, door-to-door awareness campaigns, Kalajathas (traditional folk theatre), workshops and field demonstrations. Farmers, women, youth and local institutions collectively adopted practices such as water budgeting, crop planning and groundwater sharing, fostering a strong sense of ownership, the statement added. Adopting a ridge-to-valley approach, the villages implemented a range of rainwater harvesting and conservation measures to capture, store and recharge rainwater, including percolation tanks, farm ponds, staggered trenches, rooftop rainwater harvesting systems and the rejuvenation of community ponds. It also led to enhanced agricultural productivity, increased milk production supporting dairy activities, restoration of soil moisture and reduction in distress migration as livelihood opportunities improved, the statement said. Murugummi village was conferred the second-best village panchayat award at the sixth National Water Awards, 2024, while Marella was among the top 30 villages, and Thangella was nominated for national recognition, it added. (PTI)

War of words erupts as Atchanna targets Jagan, YSRCP hits back

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA/VISAKHAPATNAM

A fierce political confrontation erupted after agriculture minister K Atchanna made allegations against YSRCP chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, triggering a strong and emotional rebuttal from senior YSRCP leader Botcha Satyanarayana.

Addressing a press conference, Atchanna claimed that even leaders within former chief minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy's own party such as Botcha Satyanarayana, in the past, raised suspicions about Jagan Mohan Reddy's role in his father's death. He alleged that Jagan was driven by an unrestrained ambition for power and would "stop at nothing" to become chief minister. The minister further revived past political controversies, accusing Jagan of amassing wealth during YSR's tenure between 2004 and 2009 by leveraging his father's position. He also questioned Jagan's conduct during the period when YSR's helicopter went missing in September 2009, demanding clarity on his whereabouts at that critical time.

Atchanna also alleged that even before YSR's death was officially confirmed, efforts were allegedly underway to mobilize support for Jagan's elevation as chief minister. He also referred to attacks on a private company establishments following allegations



Minister K Atchanna speaking to media at the Secretariat on Thursday



YSRCP MLC Botcha Satyanarayana addressing a press conference in Visakhapatnam

made at the time, and later political developments involving individuals linked to the same corporate group. In a further escalation, the TDP leader drew parallels with the murder of Y S Vivekananda Reddy, suggesting a pattern of political ambition overriding relationships, remarks that added fuel to the already intense political confrontation.

Reacting strongly, YSRCP senior leader and Leader of Opposition in Legislative Council Botcha Satyanarayana lashed out at Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and the TDP, accusing them of resorting to "cheap and disgraceful politics" for political mileage. Satyanarayana turned emotional while recalling YSR, visibly moved as he condemned the remarks. "Is this the level of politics? Don't they feel ashamed?" he said, alleging that the ruling party was deliberately making provocative statements to divert attention from the positive discussions around the MAVIGUN (Machilipatnam-Vijayawada-Guntur) proposal put forward by Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Satyanarayana asserted that the aggressive response from TDP leaders indicated political insecurity. "The intention is clear - divert the MAVIGUN debate and indulge in personal attacks. There is nothing beyond that," he said.

He also criticised the repeated references to the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy, calling it inappropriate to drag a leader who passed away 15 years ago into current political battles. "Political discourse should have limits. Using deceased leaders for gain reflects the fall in standards," he said.

Rejecting the allegations, Satyanarayana maintained that leadership discussions after YSR's death were natural and that several senior leaders at the time had proposed Jagan's name. He said there were still witnesses who could testify to those developments.

The YSRCP leader further accused TDP ministers of holding frequent press conferences to make "baseless and inflammatory" statements instead of focusing on governance. "If you work well, people will support you. Let the public decide," he added.

Ayyanna calls for 33% youth quota in legislatures

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA

ASSEMBLY Speaker Ch Ayyanna Patrudu said youth play an important role in shaping India's future. He was addressing the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association West Zone Meeting in Goa on Thursday.

Extending greetings to dignitaries including Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha Harivansh Narayan Singh, Ayyanna Patrudu said that the central issue in achieving the vision of a developed India by 2047 lies in increasing youth participation in legislative bodies.

Citing statistics, he noted that only 11 per cent of members in the 18th Lok Sabha and 7 per cent in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly are below 40 years of age, despite the country's average age being around 32. This significant gap, he said, must be addressed to ensure better representation and inclusive policymaking.

He stressed that for youth to contribute meaningfully they must first enter politics and succeed in legislative roles. However, prevailing political practices, including disruptions in legislatures and lack of decorum, discourage young aspirants. He called for exemplary conduct



Assembly Speaker Ch Ayyanna Patrudu addressing

- Assembly Speaker stresses greater youth participation at Commonwealth Parliamentary Association West Zone Meeting, calling it key to achieving developed India vision by 2047
- Flags low representation: only 11% in Lok Sabha and 7% in AP Assembly are under 40, despite India's average age being around 32
- Proposes 33% reservation for under-40s in legislatures; urges better political conduct and revival of student politics to attract young leaders

by elected representatives to restore faith in politics as a respectable profession.

Ayyanna Patrudu also pointed out the decline of student politics, once a vital training ground for future leaders. Reflecting on his own journey, he credited NT Rama Rao for giving opportunities to young individuals without political backgrounds, enabling them to rise in public life.

He proposed a bold re-

form, reserving at least 33 per cent of legislative seats for individuals below 40 years on a rotational basis, similar to women's reservation. Such a step, he said, would infuse fresh energy, innovative ideas, and dynamism into governance.

He reiterated that without creating opportunities for youth, expecting their contribution to national development would remain unrealistic.

Drones Corpn to act as nodal agency for drone ops in AP

Unmanned aerial systems to be used in agriculture, logistics, surveillance, infrastructure and disaster management

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA

THE state government has designated the AP Drones Corporation (APDC) as the exclusive nodal agency for all drone-related activities in Andhra Pradesh, centralising planning, execution and regulation under a single authority.

The decision aligns with the State's Drone Policy 4.0 (2024-29), which aims to expand the use of unmanned

aerial systems across sectors such as agriculture, logistics, surveillance, mapping, infrastructure monitoring and disaster management.

Under the new orders, all government departments, district administrations, public sector undertakings and local bodies must route their drone-related requirements through APDC at every stage, from project conceptualisation to implementation. The corporation will oversee vendor empan-

ment, technical evaluation, execution and operational coordination.

APDC will also act as the central procurement agency for drones and related services, ensuring standardisation and compliance with government procedures. It has been authorised to receive advance payments of up to 90 per cent of the estimated project cost from user departments for executing drone services.

In addition, the corporation will spearhead capacity-



building efforts by coordinating with DGCA-authorized Remote Pilot Training Organisations (RPTOs), academic institutions and other stakeholders to strengthen the drone ecosystem in the State.

APDC will also facilitate regulatory clearances by working closely with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and other authorities to ensure adherence to national drone rules and airspace regulations.

To support its operations, the government has approved a service charge structure: 5 per cent for projects below Rs 50 lakh, 3.75 per cent for projects between Rs 50 lakh and Rs 1 crore, and 2.5 per cent for projects above Rs 1 crore.

Officials said the move is expected to streamline drone adoption, improve efficiency in public service delivery and position Andhra Pradesh as a leader in drone-driven governance.

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA

THE state government has approved the Request for Proposal (RFP) for developing inland waterways connectivity on the Krishna river linking Muktyala to Machilipatnam port, marking a major step towards strengthening multimodal transport infrastructure in the State.

The project will be executed under the Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Transfer (DBFOT) model through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP), aiming to unlock the potential of inland waterways for cargo, passenger, and tourism movement.

According to the AP In-

land Waterways Authority (APIWA), the proposed corridor spans 168 km, comprising an 82-km river stretch on the Krishna river — part of National Waterway-4 — and an 86-km canal stretch along the Bandar canal.

The proposal follows detailed feasibility studies conducted by WAPCOS, which assessed traffic potential, industrial demand, and infrastructure requirements, particularly for cargo movement such as cement transport

from Muktyala to Machilipatnam. The study recommended navigation using Class-III vessels, along with key interventions including a navigational lock at Prakasam barrage, repairs to existing lock gates, and removal of low-clearance bridges.

The state government's decision comes after stakeholder consultations held in June 2025, where representatives from the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), government agencies, and

industry participants emphasized the need to develop waterways as an alternative, cost-effective transport mode.

Following this, APIWA floated an Expression of Interest (EoI), which indicated strong market demand for port connectivity through inland waterways, especially in view of Andhra Pradesh's expanding port ecosystem, including operational ports at Kakinada and upcoming greenfield ports at Machilipatnam, Mulapeta, and Ramaya-

patnam. The RFP has already been cleared by the Tender Evaluation Committee and EPC Committee in February 2026. With the government now formally approving the proposal, the project is set to move into the bidding stage. Officials said the initiative is expected to significantly reduce logistics costs, improve connectivity between hinterland industries and ports, and position Andhra Pradesh as a leader in inland water transport on the east coast.

TTD plans expansion of Srivari Seva, ranking system for sevaks

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI TIRUPATI

TIRUMALA Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) executive officer M Ravichandra announced plans to expand the Srivari Seva programme and introduce a ranking system for Srivari Sevaks based on their performance, enabling them to serve in key areas of the temple, including the sanctum surroundings. Speaking to The Hans India, the EO said the initiative aims to strengthen volunteer services and improve pilgrim management across temples.

The EO said that, as sug-

- EO Ravichandra says higher-ranked volunteers may serve in key temple areas, including sanctum surroundings
- The Seva to be linked with nearly 27,000 temples under endowments dept
- Focus is on accommodation facilities for middle-class devotees in Tirumala

gested by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the Srivari Sevak system will be expanded by linking it with nearly 27,000 temples under the endowments department.

Volunteers will be engaged in various services such as regulating pilgrim queues during special occasions, assisting devotees, and

even performing small services like preparing flower garlands.

Based on their dedication and performance, sevaks will be assigned ranks, and higher-ranked volunteers may be given opportunities to serve in important locations within the Tirumala temple.

Ravichandra also said



TTD executive officer M Ravichandra

TTD is focusing on improving accommodation facilities for middle-class devotees. At present, lodging options in Tirumala largely cater to upper, upper-middle, lower-income, and poor sections, while affordable rooms for the middle class are limited.

He clarified that no new buildings will be constructed on the hill, but old and dilapidated structures will be rebuilt and allocated to middle-class pilgrims at reasonable rents. Future expansion of accommodation facilities will mainly take place in Tirupati.

The EO stressed the need to ensure a smoother

darshan experience so that devotees get at least a few moments to pray before Lord Venkateswara. Currently, only 15 to 16 hours a day are available for darshan after accounting for daily rituals, and these rituals cannot be reduced as they follow Agama traditions.

However, changes may be considered in certain Arjitha Sevaks introduced mainly for revenue generation. Since TTD's financial position is stable, some paid services may be modified or conducted in seclusion so that darshan can continue during those periods, after consultations with Agama scholars

and Hindu religious heads.

Ravichandra further said TTD is studying pilgrim footfall patterns over the past decade to increase daily darshan capacity. By identifying days with lower crowd levels and issuing more tokens in Tirupati during less crowded periods on the hill, the number of devotees can be increased.

With the help of artificial intelligence technology, TTD aims to gradually raise the daily pilgrim count from the present 80,000 to 90,000 and eventually to one lakh devotees, while ensuring all decisions strictly follow Agama rules and regulations.