

EL NINO THREAT

Chandrababu puts AP on war footing

- 54.9% rainfall deficit, reservoir storage down to 49 per cent; drinking water, fodder get top priority
- 36 irrigation projects to be fast-tracked; new paddy cultivation barred outside Godavari Delta
- Collectors told to prepare lists of insured crops and ensure farmers cultivate the crops

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AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed collectors and officials to prepare for the worsening impact of El Nino, with priority on preventing drinking water and fodder shortages, protecting crops and containing any rise in essential commodity prices.

Addressing the first day of the Collectors' Confer-

ence at the Secretariat on Thursday, Chandrababu said the government must ensure that neither farmers nor consumers bear the burden of the weather crisis. He ordered officials to create awareness among farmers about El Nino, assess future crop demand and promote less water-intensive crops such as pulses, onions and millets, besides encouraging multi-cropping and activating Rythu Bazaars.

He also stressed crop insurance awareness, directing collectors to prepare lists of insured crops and ensure farmers cultivate the crops covered by their policies so that they do not lose insurance benefits in the event of damage.

Water resources special chief secretary Shashi Bhushan Kumar said Andhra Pradesh had received only 206.7 mm rainfall against the normal 457.9 mm between June 1 and September 7, a 54.9 per cent deficit. Reservoir storage stood at 638 TMC, or 49 per cent, against



Agriculture special chief secretary B Rajasekhar at the collectors' conference

1,023 TMC during the same period last year.

The CM directed that available water be prioritised for drinking needs of people and livestock, followed by fodder and life-saving irrigation for perennial horticultural crops. New paddy cultivation should be prohibited outside the Godavari Delta, while semi-dry crops should depend on farm ponds and micro-irrigation. Pattiseema has so far diverted 39.5 TMC of Godavari water to the Krishna Delta. Chan-

drababu said the government would take strict action against canal water theft.

The CM set a two-and-half years target for completing 36 priority irrigation projects to create 17 lakh acres of new command area and stabilise 33.4 lakh acres. He said early completion would be incentivised and ordered collectors to personally resolve land acquisition and rehabilitation issues. He also directed departments to prepare plans for uninterrupted drink-

ing water supply through the coming summer, fill tanks wherever possible and transport water from nearby sources to deficit areas. Jaladhara works, including trench excavation, should continue without interruption, while departments should coordinate groundwater recharge and tank-filling measures.

Agriculture special chief secretary B Rajasekhar said El Nino's impact could intensify by February 2027. Kharif cultivation stood at 22.82 lakh hectares, 74 per cent of normal, with a shift towards less water-intensive crops. An additional Rs 90 crore was sanctioned for seed contingency, while crop insurance coverage expanded to 16.92 lakh hectares.

Chandrababu said he would review the El Nino situation every week and undertake field visits, directing ministers, collectors and public representatives to remain active on the ground and ensure that the crisis does not translate into losses for farmers or consumers.

Low-pressure area to bring moderate to heavy rains in north Andhra

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AMARAVATI

A low-pressure area has formed over the north Bay of Bengal and adjoining areas and is likely to bring moderate to heavy rainfall in the North Andhra districts over the next two days, said Prakar Jain, Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA).

He said strong winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph and gusting up to 60 kmph were likely along the North Coastal Andhra coast. He advised people to remain alert and take necessary precautions. As the sea was likely to remain rough with high waves,

fishermen were advised not to venture into the sea.

On Friday, moderate thundershowers were likely at some places in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Parvathipuram Manyam and Alluri Sitarama Raju districts.

Light to moderate thundershowers were expected at isolated places in Polavaram, Visakhapatnam, Anakapalli, Kakinada, Konaseema, West Godavari and Krishna districts. The remaining districts were likely to receive scattered light rainfall.

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rama Raju and Polavaram districts.

Isolated light to moderate thundershowers are expected in Visakhapatnam, Anakapalli, Kakinada, Konaseema, East Godavari and West Godavari districts. Jain said heavy rainfall had already been recorded in parts of Anakapalli district by 5 p.m. on Thursday. Darlapudi received 37 mm of rainfall, while Nanginarapadu and Udu recorded 34.5 mm each. Paravada received 34.2 mm and Gandhavarum recorded 33.5 mm.

The APSDMA advised people in vulnerable areas to remain cautious and follow official weather and disaster-management advisories.

Bengaluru-bound bus catches fire, all 22 aboard safe

TIRUPATI

ALL 22 people aboard a Bengaluru-bound sleeper bus were safely evacuated after the vehicle caught fire near here in this district on Thursday, police said.

The bus, carrying 19 passengers and three staff members, was travelling from Repalle in Bapatla district to Bengaluru when the incident occurred.

"The Bengaluru-bound private sleeper bus travelling from Repalle in Bapatla district caught fire near Ojili, but all 22 people

on board, 19 passengers and three staff members, were safely evacuated and nobody was injured," an official said.

The bus, operated by a private travel company based in Ongole, had started from Repalle at around 6 pm on Wednesday.

When the bus reached Ojili, the driver noticed smoke and a burning smell coming from the engine at the front of the vehicle, the official said. He immediately alerted everyone and evacuated all the passengers and staff. All 19

passengers and three staff members got down safely and removed their luggage before the bus caught fire. The flames quickly spread through the vehicle, which had been parked on the side of the road. "We reached the spot with a fire engine, managed the traffic and brought the flames under control. Nobody was injured, and only the bus was burnt," he said. The bus was suspected to have caught fire due to a short circuit, he said, adding that officials inspected the spot to assess the incident. (PTI)

Naidu moots land bank portal to unlock unused govt land

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Naidu said a comprehensive picture of government land availability would emerge upon completion of the ongoing survey. Land scarcity, he stressed, should not become an obstacle to development. Officials should identify and reserve land requirements for industrial and other projects in advance rather than start searching only after projects are sanctioned.

The Chief Minister asked departments and collectors to prepare calendars with clear deadlines and utilise the Collectors' Conference for achieving measurable outcomes. Collectors, he said, should monitor all departmental development programmes in their districts, resolve inter-departmental issues, and take speedy decisions, instead of merely passing responsibility to others. Citing his own case as an example, Naidu said he plans his own schedule three months ahead, holding SIPB meetings every month, Cabinet meetings every fortnight, and Collectors' Conferences every three months, besides spending four days a month in the field interacting with people. He advised Collectors to similarly plan their schedules and take into account the priorities of the Union government. Referring to the social welfare front,

the Chief Minister directed officials to immediately issue orders extending benefits available to Scheduled Castes to the Budaga Jangam community, pending the decision on their SC status. He also directed officials to link skill-development programmes with industries and complete curriculum, equipment, and other requirements within 90 days. Reviewing housing schemes, Chandrababu called for speedy completion of already sanctioned houses and phased implementation of additional houses. He said Andhra Pradesh could receive sanction for another 1.5 lakh houses shortly. In view of prevailing El Nino conditions, the Chief Minister directed officials to expedite emergency drinking water works across the state. He asked departments to also prepare in advance for the plantation season to achieve the target of 50 per cent green cover, with 20 crore seeds and saplings to be kept ready. Officials were asked to promote less water-intensive varieties, prioritise water conservation, and encourage pre-monsoon dry sowing. The Chief Minister further directed officials to take up with the Union government the matter relating to the establishment of 905 smart kitchens across Andhra Pradesh.

Building owner locks tahsildar office over 2 years' unpaid rent

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HUZURNAGAR

A building owner locked the Tahsildar office in Palakeedumandal of Suryapet district on Thursday, alleging that the authorities had failed to pay the rent due to him for the past two years.

According to building owner Kasireddy Janardhan Reddy, the government is required to pay a monthly rent of Rs13,800 for the premises. However, he alleged that the rent had not been paid for the past two years. With no resolution despite repeatedly bringing the issue to the notice of officials, he finally locked the Tahsildar office.

Reddy stated two years would be completed on September 19 since the rent payments stopped.

He alleged that officials had assured him that the monthly rent would be paid



regularly, but the payments were not made.

He also claimed that the authorities had agreed to increase the rent by five per cent once every two years, but the promised revision had also not been implemented. Expressing frustration over the delay, the building owner said he had approached several people regarding the pending rent but received no satisfactory response. With no other option left, he said he was compelled to lock the Tahsil-

dar office to draw attention to the issue.

Palakeedumandal of Huzurnagar constituency of Suryapet district was newly formed in Suryapet district in 2016. As the newly established mandal did not have a government building to accommodate its offices, the authorities have been operating various government offices from rented premises. The Tahsildar office has also been functioning from a rented building since then.

International air connectivity from Tirupati gets big push

Continued from P1

FLY91 founder, Managing Director and CEO Manoj Chacko said Tirupati was an important addition to the airline's network. He said the new routes were aimed at strengthening connections between regional centres and meeting the travel requirements of local communities. The airline's expansion follows its firm order for 40 ATR 72-600 aircraft from French manufacturer ATR, supporting its plans to widen regional air connectivity across the country. Meanwhile, the inaugural flight was welcomed at Tirupati airport with the customary water cannon salute by the Fire Department of Airports Authority of India. Airport Director D Boominathan and other dignitaries handed over the first boarding pass to a passenger followed by the cake cutting ceremony at Tirupati Airport.

DGCA ORDERS DRUG TEST FOR ALL PILOTS

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Last month, Naidu had said that the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) suggested to DGCA that all pilots should undergo a dope test once a year, against the current regulation that requires 10% of the pilots to undergo random testing annually. According to sources, while the DGCA was already in the process of revising the regulations pertaining to testing of aviation personnel for psychoactive substances, the Air India incident led to calls for more stringent drug testing protocol and stricter disciplinary action

in proven instances of drug abuse. Even as consultations for revising the rules were on, the regulator decided to put all airline pilots through a one-time drug test over the course of nearly 12 months.

An Air India Airbus A320 aircraft — VT-EXO — operating from Phuket to Delhi on August 4 encountered a sudden 300-feet altitude drop, causing injuries to 20 passengers and four cabin crew members, and 17 of the 24 had to be hospitalised. The aircraft had 137 passengers, six cabin crew members, and two pilots on board. In its prelimi-

nary investigation report, Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) flagged a sudden and brief triple hydraulic failure and the 34-year-old pilot-in-command's non-negative drug test result.

The AAIB also issued a recommendation to regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to take actions deemed fit to prevent abuse of psychoactive substances, although it did not say whether or not the purported use of drugs by the pilot-in-command was directly linked to the incident.

Turn district resources into wealth, CM tells Collectors

Continued from P1

Officials said Andhra Pradesh has 23.85 lakh MSMEs across manufacturing, services and trade. Of 175 proposed MSME parks, 138 have been approved, with 22 operational and 116 under construction.

These parks are expected to attract Rs 2,036 crore and create 31,163 jobs.

Investment conferences will be held in Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Amaravati, Anantapur and Tirupati, with regional meets planned in October and a partnership summit in November. Naidu also directed officials to notify existing helipads and link them with tourism, besides preparing proposals for night-landing facilities at district headquarters with Central approval. He ordered an action plan for Road Over Bridges and Road under Bridges and called for coordinated progress in development, investment and infrastructure across districts.

India pushes Global South priorities amid trade tensions

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As global trade disputes and geopolitical realignments create economic headwinds, India is looking at addressing critical vulnerabilities in food security, energy stability and resilient supply chains, they said. The summit in New Delhi is taking place against the backdrop of a global economy facing the adverse impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war, the West Asia crisis, especially the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, and the Trump administration's trade and tariff policies.

With just a day left before the summit, it remains unclear whether the member nations of the grouping

have reached a consensus on a joint statement, as differences between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over the West Asia crisis persist. The grouping operates under a framework of consensus.

BRICS, originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, expanded in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, with Indonesia joining in 2025.

Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam became BRICS partner countries last year.

BRICS has emerged as

an influential grouping as it brings together 11 major emerging economies of the world, representing around 49.5 per cent of the global population, around 40 per cent of the global GDP and around 26 per cent of global trade.

India's chairship of the grouping is centred on four pillars: resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability. In addition to these areas, the leaders will exchange views on strengthening intra-BRICS cooperation on common priorities and share perspectives on global and regional matters of mutual importance, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Court frames charges against Lalu, family under PMLA act

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The court also said that the land transferred at Patna is proceeds of crime. "The proceeds of crime were enjoyed by the Lalu Family," Special Judge Vishal Gogne directed that charges be framed against the accused persons under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. The court has directed the accused persons to appear before the Rouse Avenue court on October 3 before Special Judge Prashant Kumar. The court has discharged the accused persons, namely: Gaurav Gupta, Nath Mal Kakrania, Rahul Yadav, Vijay Tripathi, Deoki Nandan Tulshyan, Rajiv Kumar Relan, Abhishek Finance Private Limited. While framing the charges, the court said that Lalu Prasad Yadav, the then Railway Minister, fixed a tender of an IRCTC hotel in favour of his favourite company in lieu of a land Parcel. The Land at Patna was described as proceeds of crime by the ED. The court also said that it did not find that the investigation against Lalu Prasad Yadav was motivated by political vendetta.

S-400, BrahMos on table at Modi-Putin meet

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India signed a \$5.43 billion (Rs 40,000 crore) deal with Russia in October 2018 for five S-400 Triumf regiments. Four have already been delivered and are operational. Three squadrons are deployed in Punjab, Rajasthan and the Jammu sector against Pakistan, while one is deployed in the north against China.

The S-400 was credited with a 300+ km intercept -- the longest-ever kill in Operation Sindoor in May 2025 -- taking up a Pakistani AEW&C aircraft and helping establish air dominance. The fifth and final squadron was delayed due to the Russia-Ukraine war. It is now assured for delivery by November 2026.

Peskov also said the two countries were jointly produc-

ing BrahMos missiles and that it was time to consider upgrading them. "We are jointly producing the BrahMos missiles, and it is time to think about improving those missiles, adding some additional characteristics, making them more competitive in the market and more effective," he said.

The BrahMos-NG (Next Generation) is a lighter 1.3-tonne missile compared with the 2.9-tonne BrahMos. It is smaller, has a speed of Mach 3.5 and a range of 400 km-plus, and can be carried by Tejas and MiG-29 fighter jets -- allowing six to seven missiles per fighter compared with one on the Su-30MKI at present.

Russia still accounts for 40% of India's arms imports from the 2021-25 period, down from 51%.

IT'S CERTAIN: Xi to visit India for BRICS Summit

Continued from P1

"I have no information to provide regarding the question you raised," Guo Jiankun replied to a question on if the Chinese leader will be travelling to India this weekend to attend the BRICS leaders' meeting. The high-stakes visit marks Xi's first visit to India in seven years, following a chill in bilateral relations after the 2020 Galwan Valley border clashes that killed 20 Indians and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers. The last time Xi visited India was in 2019 for an informal summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Mamallapuram near Chennai.

Xi had first come to India in September 2014 when it was the first terms of both the leaders in office and had later visited Goa in 2016 to attend the BRICS summit. Bilateral ties between the two nations have improved in recent years, especially since PM Modi visited China last year and as both nations grapple with volatile relationships with the US. New Delhi has since then eased some of the restrictions on Chinese investment that it imposed following the 2020 clashes, focusing on electronics, capital goods, and solar cell sectors.

