

Dasara festivities conclude with Teppotsavam

DASARI SRINIVASA RAO
VIJAYAWADA

THE 10-day Dasara Saranavaratri festivities at Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri concluded on Tuesday with the traditional Teppotsavam (float festival) on Krishna river, marking the culmination of the annual celebrations. Maha Purnahuthi marked the culmination of the religious rituals associated with Saranavaratri celebrations.

On the final day, Goddess Kanaka Durga appeared as Sri Rajarajeswari Devi, adorned in a green saree and traditional jewellery. Devotees thronged the hill shrine to have darshan of the presiding deity, while Bhavani devotees arrived in large numbers, adding to the spiritual fervour.



Teppotsavam of Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam aboard Hamsa Vahanam on Krishna river in Vijayawada on Tuesday

As part of Teppotsavam, the processional deities of Goddess Kanaka Durga and Lord Malleswara Swamy were taken on a ceremonial ride aboard the illuminated Hamsa Vahanam on Krishna river. The float festival resumed this year after a two-

year interruption caused by high flood levels in the river during 2024 and 2025.

Meanwhile, Governor S Abdul Nazeer visited the temple on Tuesday and offered special prayers to Goddess Kanaka Durga. Temple officials and Vedic scholars

welcomed him with traditional honours. After darshan, the Governor received Vedic blessings at the Ashirvachana Mandapam.

Endowments Secretary K Kannababu, Commissioner K Ramachandra Mohan, temple chairman Borra Radhakrishna (Gandhi) and Executive Officer VK Seena Naik presented the Governor with the deity's sacred garments, prasadam and a portrait of the Goddess.

The temple authorities, district administration, police and other departments coordinated efforts to manage the heavy pilgrim turnout, with a focus on drinking water, sanitation, queue management and security. Police personnel, expert swimmers and officials from the Endowments and Irrigation departments were deployed along the riverfront

and at bathing ghats to ensure devotees' safety during the float festival.

NTR district Collector Dr G Lakshmisha and Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu supervised the arrangements and ensured coordination among the departments concerned. On the final day, the police regulated traffic across Vijayawada to facilitate the smooth movement of devotees and prevent congestion. The celebrations concluded smoothly, with temple authorities expressing gratitude to all departments and personnel who contributed to the successful conduct of the annual festivities. Temple authorities thanked the departments and personnel who coordinated the arrangements throughout the festivities, which also witnessed a large influx of Bhavani devotees.

77.34% of MBBS seats allotted to SC, ST, BC students: NTR health varsity

1,213 open-category seats allotted to meritorious reserved-category students

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

Dr NTR University of Health Sciences has clarified here that 3,543 of the 4,581 MBBS convenor quota seats, accounting for 77.34 per cent, have been allotted to students belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Backward Classes (BC) after the completion of three rounds of counselling for the current academic year.

In a press release on Wednesday, university registrar Dr T Sai Sudheer explained the admission procedures and seat-allocation details, strongly refuting what he described as misleading propaganda regarding the allocation of MBBS seats to students from reserved categories.

He said there had been a significant increase in the number of meritorious reserved-category students securing seats under the open category in the 2026-27 academic year through NEET-UG.

Of the 2,026 seats available under the open category, 1,213 seats, or 59.87 per cent, were allotted to meritorious students from reserved categories after three rounds of counselling. In comparison, the corresponding figure for the 2025-26 academic year was 981 seats, accounting for 51.57 per cent.



Against this backdrop, the Registrar rejected claims that Government Order 102 issued this year had disadvantaged reserved-category students in MBBS admissions.

He explained that seats secured by meritorious reserved-category candidates under the open category and subsequently relinquished must be filled by candidates from the respective reserved categories in accordance with the prescribed rules. He added that admissions under the constitutional reservation provisions for SC, ST and BC communities were being implemented separately as required.

Dr Sai Sudheer clarified that merit-based seat allotments under the Meritorious Reserved Category (MRC) system were made in accordance with the web op-

tions submitted by reserved-category candidates and the applicable admission rules.

He said the university had also presented its position on the matter before the Andhra Pradesh High Court recently. Expressing concern over continued misinformation while the issue was under the consideration of the High Court, he urged those making such claims to refrain from spreading misleading information.

The registrar said the university was conducting MBBS admissions transparently and strictly in accordance with established rules and regulations. He regretted attempts to create confusion among students, parents and the public through what he termed deliberate misinformation, and appealed to all concerned to avoid such practices.

Bhavani devotees throng Durga temple

DASARI SRINIVASA RAO
VIJAYAWADA

VIJAYAWADA and Indrakeeladri hill turned into a sea of red as thousands of devotees observing Bhavani Deeksha thronged Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam on Wednesday, the first day after the conclusion of Dasara Sharannavaratri festivities.

Clad in their traditional red robes, Bhavani devotees arrived from various places to have darshan of Goddess Kanaka Durga, who appeared as Sri Rajarajeswari Devi on the hill shrine. The influx of pilgrims kept Indrakeeladri and One Town area bustling with activity from the early hours.

Devotees moved in an orderly manner through queue lines to reach the hilltop temple. The three holding areas, Seethamma Vari Padalu and the Municipal Corporation Office area also witnessed a heavy congregation of pilgrims dressed in red, creating a striking sight across the city.

Temple Executive Officer

VK Seena Naik inspected the arrangements from the early morning and coordinated with police personnel to regulate the rush and ensure the smooth movement of devotees.

All darshan queue lines were kept open, including the VIP route from the small Raja Gopuram, to accommodate the large number of Bhavani devotees, the EO said. Arrangements were also made to ensure the uninterrupted supply of free annaprasadam to pilgrims throughout the day.

The Bhavani Deeksha is a traditional spiritual observance dedicated to Goddess Kanaka Durga. Devotees wear red attire and undertake religious vows before visiting the temple to offer prayers and conclude their Deeksha through the customary Deeksha Viramana rituals.

With the completion of Dasara celebrations and the traditional Teppotsavam on the Krishna river, the temple continues to receive large numbers of Bhavani devotees, requiring close coordination among temple officials and the police to manage the rush.

VMC sets up model polling stations to educate voters



VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra inspecting the model polling station set up at Varalakshmi Nagar in Vijayawada on Wednesday

DASARI SRINIVASA RAO
VIJAYAWADA

VIJAYAWADA Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra on Wednesday inspected a model polling station set up at Varalakshmi Nagar and the vote-counting centre at Andhra Loyola College to review preparations for the second ordinary municipal elections-2026.

The model polling station has been designed to familiarise voters with voting process, including procedures to be followed at polling stations, duties of presiding officers and polling personnel, marking their choice on ballot papers and dropping the papers into ballot boxes.

Dhyanaachandra said one

model polling station had been established in each constituency within the VMC limits to create awareness among voters about the voting procedure.

He urged people to visit these centres and familiarise themselves with the process before casting their votes.

Later, the Commissioner inspected the counting centre at Andhra Loyola College and reviewed arrangements for transporting ballot boxes from polling stations, their secure storage, the placement of counting tables, the conduct of counting rounds and the deployment of personnel. He also reviewed the infrastructure and logistical arrangements required to ensure that counting was conducted smoothly and transparently in accord-

ance with the directions and timelines prescribed by the Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission.

The Commissioner instructed officials to coordinate in advance on staff deployment, allocation of duties, seating arrangements, ballot box security and other counting-related requirements. He directed them to monitor every stage of the election process and complete all necessary arrangements in time to ensure the smooth conduct of polling and counting.

Chief City Planner Sanjay Ratna Kumar, Chief Engineer P Satya Kumari, Superintending Engineer Chandrasekhar, Assistant City Planner Mohan Babu and other officials accompanied him.

ABV promises corruption-free administration

DASARI SRINIVASA RAO
VIJAYAWADA

RETIRED IPS officer AB Venkateswara Rao, an independent candidate for the Vijayawada Mayor's post backed by CPI, CPM and Congress, promised transparent governance, improved civic amenities and a corruption-free administration if elected.

Addressing a press conference at Vijayawada Press Club on Wednesday, alongside CPM NTR district secretary DV Krishna and APCC vice-president Kolanukonda Shivaji, he appealed to voters to rise above party affiliations and caste considerations and choose their representatives based on their commitment to public service. Venkateswara Rao alleged that money was being demanded for corporator seats, with prices ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 70 lakh. He said he would not distribute money to secure votes and would instead seek public support based on his vision for the city.

He promised to keep property tax rates at existing levels for three years, halt annual 15% hikes and ensure regular drinking water supply despite the Krishna River and Prakasam Barrage being nearby. He also pledged to protect wholesale and retail traders, small shopkeepers and street vendors by earmarking suitable vending zones without obstructing traffic. The independent candidate said he would work to rescue children living on the streets and those forced into begging, provide them with medical care and rehabilitate them through child-



Retired IPS officer and independent Mayor candidate AB Venkateswara Rao addressing a press conference at Vijayawada Press Club on Wednesday

care institutions. He set a target of making Vijayawada free of children living on the streets within three years.

Questioning the incomplete underground drainage works, he alleged that around Rs 200 crore had been spent while the project remained unfinished and that the remaining funds had been diverted elsewhere. He also demanded an account of the Rs 600 crore in public donations reportedly received during the floods and details of permanent flood-mitigation measures.

Expressing concern over alleged personal attacks on social media and the limited time available to reach voters, Venkateswara Rao criticised the State Election Commission's handling of the election process.

He lamented that the Commission had not allotted him an election symbol so far and questioned how he could complete his campaign within six days without a symbol.

Expenditure limits fixed to ensure level playing field

DEEKSHITULA
SUBRAHMANYAM
KAKINADA

THE State Election Commission has prescribed expenditure limits for candidates contesting local body elections to curb the influence of money and muscle power and ensure a level playing field for all contestants, Kakinada District Election Expenditure Observer Garud Sanket Sunil said.

Addressing a training programme for expenditure observers, Flying Squad Teams (FSTs) and Static Surveillance Teams (SSTs) at the Collectorate on Wednesday, he stressed the need for strict monitoring of election related expenditure to ensure transparency and impartiality in the electoral process. He directed the teams to coordinate with one another and ensure that candidates strictly adhere to the prescribed expenditure limits and election rules. Explaining the limits for various posts, Sunil said ZPTC candidates could spend up to Rs 8 lakh and MPTC candidates up to



Election Expenditure Observer Garud Sanket Sunil

Rs 4 lakh. The expenditure limit for sarpanch candidates was fixed at Rs 4 lakh in major gram panchayats and Rs 2.50 lakh in minor gram panchayats. Ward member candidates could spend up to Rs 1 lakh in major gram panchayats and Rs 60,000 in minor gram panchayats. For urban local body elections, the expenditure limit was Rs 20 lakh for municipal chairperson candidates, Rs 10 lakh for Nagar panchayat chairperson candidates and Rs 5 lakh for Nagar panchayat ward member candidates. He said candidates must open a separate bank account for election-related expenditure at the time of filing nominations.

Sacrifices of police personnel will remain immortal, asserts SP

KURNOOL/NANDYAL

POLICE Commemoration Day was observed with deep solemnity across Kurnool and Nandyal districts on Wednesday as officials paid rich tributes to brave hearts who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty.

At the District Police Office parade grounds in Kurnool, Superintendent of Police Vikrant Patil received the ceremonial salute and paid floral tributes at the martyrs' memorial.

SP Patil stated that the sacrifices made by police personnel to protect public life and property will remain immortal in public memory. Recalling the historical significance of October 21, he noted that the day honors ten Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel martyred fighting Chinese troops at Hot Springs in Aksai Chin, Ladakh, in 1959.

He revealed that 154 police personnel across India



Collector Rajakumari paying floral tributes to martyrs' statue in Nandyal on Wednesday

attained martyrdom between September 1, 2025, and August 31, 2026. Additional SP (Administration) Hussain Peera read out the roll of honor, followed by a two-minute silence.

Meanwhile, in Nandyal, District Collector G Rajakumari Gania attended as chief guest at the DPO pa-



SP Vikrant Patil paying floral tributes to the statue of police martyrs in Kurnool on Wednesday

rade grounds alongside Additional SP (Administration) S Khader Basha.

Collector Rajakumari stated that the police uniform symbolizes immense responsibility, courage, and selfless sacrifice. Urging officers to practice people-friendly policing, she highlighted the police force's vital role in tackling cybercrime, curbing drug abuse, and protecting vulnerable citi-

zens while remaining away from families during major festivals like Dasara and Diwali.

In both districts, the administration reaffirmed its unwavering support for the families of fallen officers.

In Kurnool, SP Patil felicitated the surviving families of martyrs YD Venkateswarlu, Abdul Kareem, and K Ramudu with shawls, garlands, and mementoes.

'Iodised salt essential to prevent iodine deficiency disorders'



Nandyal DMHO Dr M Sharadabai participating in the awareness rally on Wednesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NANDYAL

DISTRICT Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) Dr M Sharadabai has called upon citizens to consume iodised salt regularly to prevent iodine deficiency disorders and build a healthier society.

Marking World Iodine Deficiency Prevention Day on Wednesday, Dr Sharadabai led an awareness rally organized alongside officials and staff from the District Immediate Treatment Centre (DICE).

Speaking at the rally, she explained that iodine deficiency adversely affects thyroid function, particularly among pregnant women and young children. It can

result in severe health complications, including goitre, impaired mental growth, intellectual disabilities, and hearing impairments in children.

She emphasized that these disorders can be effectively prevented simply by using quality iodised salt in daily meals while keeping overall daily salt intake below five grams.

The DMHO instructed ASHA workers, health personnel, and Anganwadi staff to intensify field-level awareness campaigns across Nandyal district. She stressed the need to educate mothers, students, and cooking staff at educational institutions and hostels regarding the health risks of using non-iodised salt.