

Collector Lakshmisha Urges Collective Effort for District Progress on Republic Day

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Vijayawada: In a stirring address at the 77th Republic Day celebrations held at Indira Gandhi Stadium here on Monday, NTR District Collector M. Lakshmish called for unity beyond caste, religion, caste, or regional divides to ensure the district's integrity, preservation, and progress. He urged every citizen to actively contribute to comprehensive development, emphasizing collective commitment to achieving Swarna Andhra-2047 goals.

The district administration is effectively implementing schemes and plans toward this vision, he added. Collector Lakshmish, the chief guest, was warmly

ly welcomed by Police Commissioner SV Rajshekhar Babu, Joint Collector Ilakkiya, DCP Krishna Kant Patel, DRO Lakshminarasimha, and RDO Kavuri Chaithanya. After hoisting the national flag and receiving guard of honor from various contingents, he paid tribute to luminaries like Dr. BR Ambedkar, national flag designer Pingali Venkayya, and Ayodhya Kaleshwar Rao.

Highlighting key initiatives, the Collector spotlighted Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's P4 scheme as a game-changer for poverty eradication. In the district, 98,408 golden families have been linked with 5,401 mentors. Innovative programs like the Time



Bank with Vasavya Mahila Mandali foster social responsibility among youth, while AI for She ensures self-help group products reach global markets.

The district is targeting 18.5% annual growth across sectors, driven by robust plans aligned with Swarna Andhra objectives. In agriculture, Polambadi initiatives, WhatsApp Governance, e-Panta, mechanization, and APAIMS app provide farmers with tech support. Last kharif season, 24,650 farmers sold 118,963 metric tons of paddy for Rs 431 crore. Industrial growth includes MSME parks and platted factory complexes in every constituency. Groundbreaking for Rs 42 crore facilities in Vi-

jayawada Central and Mylavaram segments has occurred. Education efforts aim for 100% Class 10 pass rates and a 75-day plan to boost foundational reading, writing, and math skills in primary students. Healthcare sees QR code systems in government hospitals for issue tracking. Under PM Surya-gar, 4,654 services with Rs 44.16 crore subsidies were provided; PM Kusun enabled 15.5 MW solar power for 6,289 farm services.

The Andhra Taxi app aids tourists, while Navodaya 2.0 offered alternative livelihoods worth Rs 96 lakh to 88 local liquor-dependent individuals across 26 villages. PGRSS resolved 99% of 54,000 applications on time. The event featured

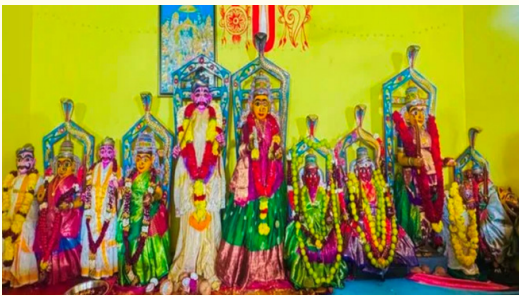
captivating parades, tableaux from departments like Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Devasthanam, P4, rural development, industries, tourism, education, excise, health, women & child welfare, forests, agriculture, panchayat raj, animal husbandry, horticulture, minor irrigation, animal health, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, transport, and fire services.

A transport skit on helmet safety, fire drills, water-themed flag colors, student dances, and kolatam enthralled the crowd. Attendees included 20-Point Programme Committee Chairman Lanka Dinakar, Urdu Academy Chairman Farooq Shubli, and several DCPs.

Penuganchiprolu Deities Prepare for Return Journey from Jaggayyapeta After Rangula Utsavam

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Penuganchiprolu Rural: The idols of Tirupatamma and her family deities, having completed the Rangula Utsavam, are gearing up for their return trip to the Penuganchiprolu temple. Temple authorities have made all arrangements to transport the vigrahas in palanquins from Jaggayyapeta to the shrine on January 28. This biennial festival saw the deities, including Tirupatamma and Gopayya Swamy, carried on farmer-built sledges to Jaggayyapeta on January 5. The return procession will pass through Chillakallu, Bhimavaram, and Lingagudem before reaching Penuganchiprolu.

A Tradition Rooted in Palanquin History: Placing the freshly painted, resplendent idols in palanquins for the return is an age-old custom. One palanquin each has been prepared from Penuganchiprolu, Subbay-gudem, Mundlapadu, and Anigandlapadu. These are maintained by descendants of the Regandla family, traditional barbers from Penuganchiprolu.



The palanquins are stored at their home year-round. After removing the idols from the temple, they carry them on their heads for a grand village procession, then load them onto sledges for the journey to Jaggayyapeta. The Regandla descendants handle the return leg as well, preparing the palanquins a week in advance. On January 27 night, they will travel to Jaggayyapeta, load the idols the next morning, and carry them over 20 kilometers. The temple provides Rs 25,000 per palanquin as financial aid. Regandla descendant Ravikumar noted that the current palanquins are decades old and urged the temple to procure new ones before the next festival in two years.

Devotees Brace for Intense Heat and Festivities Bhaktas from

Jaggayyapeta town, Chillakallu, Bhimavaram, and Lingagudem will receive the deities with devotion, offering prayers and fulfilling vows amid scorching heat. The palanquins depart Jaggayyapeta on January 28, reaching Chillakallu by evening and Bhimavaram by midnight. On January 29, they leave Bhimavaram at dawn, arrive at Lingagudem by evening, and halt there. Departing that night, they reach Penuganchiprolu's Rangula Vidi Mandapam. From there, the idols will be placed on a special chariot for a procession, arriving at the temple by early January 30, marking the festival's conclusion.

This vibrant tradition underscores the region's deep faith and community involvement in preserving cultural rituals.

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Nandigama Division, Krishna District: Despite ample sand stocks available at official yards for Rs 180 per tonne, demand remains low as builders and consumers opt for cheaper, illegally sourced alternatives. Free extraction from Krishna River and Muneti reaches using tractors has flooded the market with bargain sand, extending demand from Nandigama to Vijayawada.

Few buyers use tip-pers or lorries for official purchases, while low-cost supplies from Guntur district further depress local sales. Stacks at reaches and yards lie unused due to negligible demand. Compounding the issue, high demand in neighboring Telangana districts like Nalgonda, Suryapet, Khammam, and Hyderabad fuels rampant illegal transport. Under the guise of "free" extraction for personal use, smugglers deploy machines to excavate Krishna and Muneti riverbeds, especially during cash rains that aid operations.

With minimal checks from authorities, illegal miners thrive unchecked. Key hotspots in-



clude Vatsavayi Mandal's Polampalli, Kannevida, and Indugupalli villages, where Muneti sand is machine-dug and tractor-transported to Khammam daily in large volumes. In Kannevida, village committee members allegedly collect fees from tractors under the pretext of "village development. "Specific Mining

Sites: Penuganchiprolu and Sobbaigudem villages: Muneti sand illegally mined by two machines, dumped nearby, then loaded onto lorries and tippers for Telangana. Nandigama Mandal, Kanchel village: Two rival groups compete fiercely, sparking disputes over extraction and transport. Night-time loading feeds lorries to Hyderabad. Kan-

chikacherla Mandal, Gani Atkur: Excavators dig Krishna River sand; villagers halted operations briefly but mining resumes.

Telangana-registered lorries are loaded, claimed as "real estate murum" mixed with soil, though two lorries depart daily from nearby Chandralapadu Mandal's Kasarabad. Jaggayyapeta Mandal,

Malkapuram: Muneti depths ravaged by machines near Telangana border. Tractors haul to Khammam amid heavy noise; Chilakaluripet police seized nine on Monday.

Official inaction persists, enabling environmental damage and revenue loss. Local traders urge stricter patrols to curb smuggling and revive legitimate sales.

APSRTC Seeks Government Nod for 7,673 Regular Jobs to Boost Sthree Shakti Scheme

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Vijayawada: In a significant move to strengthen the implementation of the Mahila Shakti scheme, the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) is gearing up to fill thousands of vacant regular positions. The corporation has formally requested the state government to approve the recruitment for 7,673 regular posts, primarily to address staffing shortages that have hampered women's empowerment initiatives in public transport.

The decision emerged from a recent APSRTC Board meeting, where members passed a resolution urging swift government approval. Among the vacancies are 3,673 driver positions and 1,813 conductor roles, alongside openings for mechanics, laborers, and other depot-level staff. These hires aim to enhance service reliability, reduce reliance on contract workers, and



ensure smoother operations across the state's extensive bus network.

The Sthree Shakti scheme, a flagship program promoting women's participation in bus services, stands to benefit immensely, as regular staff will provide stable training and support for female conductors and drivers. Board sources revealed that the push for regularization addresses long-standing operation-

al challenges.

With APSRTC operating over 10,000 buses and serving millions daily, vacancies have led to overburdened employees and occasional service disruptions. Filling these posts will not only improve efficiency but also align with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's vision for a revamped transport sector under the TDP-led government's pro-employ-

ment agenda. In parallel, the board approved wage hikes for on-call and overtime staff to boost morale and retention.

On-call drivers' daily remuneration will rise from Rs 800 to Rs 1,000, while double-duty conductors will receive Rs 900 per shift up from previous rates. These enhancements, effective immediately pending formal notification, are expected to attract more applicants and curb absenteeism.

APSRTC Managing Director, V. Prasanthi, emphasized the urgency during the meeting, stating, "Regularizing these posts is crucial for sustainable growth and women's empowerment."

We anticipate government approval soon to kickstart the recruitment drive." Industry experts hail the initiative as a step toward modernizing public transport, potentially creating ripple effects in employment across districts like Ongole, Vijayawada, and Visakhapatnam. The

Minister Savit Blames Jagan's 'Mistakes' for Ongoing Cases, Vows BC Protection Laws

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Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh BC, EWS Welfare, Handlooms, and Textiles Minister S. Savit on Tuesday sharply criticized former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, asserting that the cases surfacing now stem directly from his government's "mistakes upon mistakes" during its five-year rule.

Speaking at a press meet after meeting BC Corporation chairpersons at Gollapudi BC Bhavan, she emphasized that the TDP-led coalition NDA government bears no responsibility for these probes. Savit recalled warning Jagan as opposition leader to correct irregularities, but he ignored the advice. "Your errors are now manifesting as legal cases. If you and your YSRC batch hadn't erred, why fear probes?" she questioned.

Ongoing investiga-



tions into Jagan-era scams will soon expose more "gadabouts," she revealed, citing instances like YSRC leader Jogi Ramesh's embarrassment over using a BC card amid the illicit liquor case. She accused the previous regime of humiliating CM N. Chandrababu Naidu's wife, Bhuvaneswari, in the Assembly; mentally harassing Dalit doctor Sudhakar to death for asking for a mask; and falsely implicating SC, ST, and BC individuals in cases to jail them.

"Caste-based excuses won't save them," Savita added. BC Welfare Push Under NDAShifting focus to NDA initiatives, Savit highlighted the gov-

ernment's commitment to uplifting backward classes with dignity. Promises like the BC Protection Act are nearing finalization, incorporating feedback from corporate chairpersons.

"We're refining the law for permanence," she said. Key schemes include Adarana 3.0 for sustainable financial security, providing modern tools to weavers, fishermen, Arya Vysyas, Gita workers, and Vadderas. All district centers will get BC Bhavans, while hostels and gurukuls offer quality food, health, and education.

BC Study Circles provide Civil Services and DSC coaching; the second phase of civil

services coaching is underway, with DSC coaching planned ahead of the notification. Savit gathered suggestions on the BC Protection Act and other programs, promising to forward them to CM Chandrababu Naidu.

Attendees included BC Welfare Secretary S. Satyanarayana, Director Mallikarjuna, BC Finance Corporation Chairman Reddy Anantakumar, and other chairpersons. Praising CM Naidu, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, and Minister Nara Lokesh for steering state development, Savit questioned critics: "Are we not working selflessly for progress?"