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on the India-US trade deal hours. **On Pages 7** energy security.

SHORT TAKES

NELLORE BUYS
BENGAL GRAM AT
₹5,875 PER QUINTALDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 20

The Nellore district administration has begun the procurement of rabi Bengal gram from farmers at a minimum support price (MSP) of ₹5,875 per quintal through designated purchase centres, with registration open until March 2.

Joint collector Mogili Venkateswarlu said on Friday that procurement would be carried out through centres established by MARKFED and the NCOF in areas where market prices are below the MSP. Bengal gram has been cultivated over 8,473 acres in the district during the current rabi season.

He said farmers must register in advance based on their e-crop details by contacting village agriculture assistants. Registration will remain open until March 2. Procurement will initially be taken up from small and marginal farmers, followed by other farmers.

According to the joint collector, a maximum of 40 quintals per farmer will be procured per day. Farmers were advised to bring well-dried produce meeting the prescribed quality standards to the procurement centre on the date allotted to them. Dates will be communicated in advance based on registration. The produce will be cleaned and tested for moisture and other parameters before acceptance. Payment for accepted stock will be credited to farmers' Aadhaar-linked bank accounts within five days of warehouse confirmation.

PIPELINE WORKS
UNDERWAY TO
SAVE 400 ACRESDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 20

Pipeline works are being taken up on a war footing to prevent crop losses in more than 400 acres affected by water scarcity in Kagitalapur and Jatakonduru villages of Manubolu mandal in Nellore district.

Sarvepalli M.L.A. Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy, who inspected the ongoing works and the Pottella Kalava check dam on Friday, said water was being drawn through a pipeline from the check dam to supply fields and a local tank to stabilise irrigation. The project involves pumping water using 10 HP and 7.5 HP motors and conveying it to the tank to save crops in the ayacut. He said the check dam constructed across Pottella Kalava during 2014-19 was now benefiting farmers, covering nearly 2,000 acres of paddy cultivation, besides aiding aquaculture.

THREE HELD FOR
ROOM FRAUD
USING FAKE
AADHAAR CARDSDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 20

Tirumala Two Town police have arrested three persons for allegedly securing accommodation in Tirumala using fake Aadhaar cards and reselling the rooms to pilgrims at rates higher than those fixed by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

Police said the accused exploited the heavy demand for accommodation in Tirumala by creating forged Aadhaar cards after morphing photographs and Aadhaar numbers on mobile phones. Using these fake identity cards, they allegedly obtained rooms at the Central Reception Office (CRO) by paying the official tariff of ₹50 or ₹100 and later resold the rooms to pilgrims for ₹1,000 to ₹3,000.

In some instances, the same room was reportedly allotted to two or three different pilgrims, leading to cheating.

OFFICIAL IN ACB
NET FOR TAKING
₹20,000 BRIBEDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 20

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Ongole, on Friday caught a Mandal Agricultural Officer of Cumbum red-handed while demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹20,000 from a fertiliser dealer.

The accused officer, Sk. Mohammed, was arrested and will be produced before the Special Judge for ACB cases, Nellore.

According to officials, the case was registered based on a complaint lodged by Radharapu Ravindra Kumar, a resident of Turimella village in Cumbum mandal, who has been running a fertiliser, pesticide and seed business since 2022 after obtaining the required licences.

Officials said the complainant used to inform the Mandal Agricultural Officer whenever fresh stock arrived so that samples could be drawn as per rules.

India returns to helm
of IONS after 16 years

Naval Chief calls for regional maritime cooperation

ARUNA | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 20

The Indian Navy has officially taken over the chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) from Thailand during the 9th Conclave of Chiefs held in Visakhapatnam. This marks India's return to the leadership of the forum after a 16-year gap.

Making the announcement, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti highlighted that India, as the founding nation of IONS, originally chaired the initiative in 2008. It is now resuming this role with renewed commitment.

Vice Admiral Sobti highlighted India's readiness to take on greater responsibility in strengthening maritime cooperation and ensuring peace and security in the Indian Ocean Region. He pointed out that challenges, such as piracy, illegal activities, and broader security threats are common to all nations. As such, they require coordinated responses.

The Deputy Chief of Naval Staff's comments reflect the increasing acknowledgement that the Indian Ocean is a strategic space, where collective action is essential.

Launched in 2008 under Indian leadership, IONS has evolved into a vital platform for dialogue and collaboration among the navies of the Indian Ocean Region. Currently, it comprises 25 member navies, including India, Australia, Bangladesh, France, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates.

IONS has 9 observer countries, including Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The symposium serves as a forum for naval leaders to discuss maritime issues and develop cooperative solutions.

Its agenda covers maritime security, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and information sharing, thereby enhancing preparedness and coordination among member states. The chairmanship rotates every two years, with each term featuring a Conclave of Chiefs and preparatory workshops at the staff level. Chief of Naval

Foreign Navy women delegates visit Sankalpa kala gramam near Pinagadi village in Visakhapatnam on Friday
— P. NARASIMHA MURTHYForeign delegates go on
heritage tour in VizagK.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 20

Delegates from foreign navies, who are here to participate in International Fleet Review and MILAN 2026, had a glimpse of the rich heritage of Visakhapatnam and suburbs during the last five days.

The specially curated heritage and cultural tours from February 16 to February 20 showcased the city's iconic destinations, including Kailasagiri, Thotlakonda Buddhist site, Sankalpa arts village in Pinagadi in Pendurthi and maritime museums, to promote local culture.

Around 50 foreign delegates accompanied by Shashi Tripathi, wife of chief of naval staff Dinesh K. Tripathi and Priya Bhalla, wife of Eastern Naval Command

A foreign navy delegate seen with traditional Indian utensils in Pinagadi village in Visakhapatnam on Friday.
— BY ARRANGEMENT

Chief Sanjay Bhalla visited the Pinagadi Sankalpa arts village where they were shown the folk arts, use of natural dyes in handlooms, traditional grinding of pulses and domestic utensils made of brass and other alloys

Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi has described the Indian Ocean Region as central to global geopolitics and trade in the 21st Century. He stated, "The 21st Century is the Indian Ocean Century. It is a shared strategic space. We will

● THE FIVE-DAY sea phase of MILAN 2026 will commence on Saturday in the Bay of Bengal off Visakhapatnam, marking the operational core of the Indian Navy's flagship multilateral exercise involving friendly foreign navies.

under use for centuries.

The delegates also witnessed folk dances performed by the villagers. The tour to this village was organized by Navy Welfare and Wellness Association of Eastern Region.

Activists Chalapati Rao Akula, Jamilya Akula and JV Ratnam coordinated the event. Rest of the tour was organized by Visakhapatnam Metro Regional Development authority led by its chairman Pranav Gopal.

reinforce IONS' core principles more than ever before, with cooperation, operational awareness, resilience, and sustained engagement."

He reaffirmed India's commitment to maintaining safe, secure, and open seas.

2 held for fraud, ₹2 cr assets seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 20

Balaji Nagar police on Friday arrested two persons for allegedly cheating a Nellore resident of ₹53 lakh in the guise of high-return investments and for running an online cricket betting racket.

Cash, bank deposits and electronic devices worth over ₹2 crore were seized. The accused were identified as K. Venu Gopal (23) and B. Venkata Ramana (31), both resi-

dents of Buchireddipalem.

Police said a resident of NTR Nagar lodged a complaint on Thursday, stating that Venu Gopal had lured him into investing money with promises of high returns and introduced him to another contact.

The victim allegedly transferred about ₹53 lakh but received no returns and was threatened when he sought repayment.

On the directions of Nellore district SP Dr

Ajeeth Vajndla, special teams led by Nellore Town ASP Deeksha and Balaji Nagar CI K. Sambasiva Rao traced and arrested the accused at Buchireddipalem.

During probe, police found that the duo was operating online cricket betting through the link r777.us and the Radhee Exchange (R777) application. Venu Gopal allegedly acted as the organiser, while Venkata Ramana managed cash collections and payments to other organisers.

Police said the accused also used knives to intimidate bettors during disputes. The police seized ₹34,65,800 in cash, froze ₹1,64,74,600 in bank accounts, and recovered 13 mobile phones, an HP laptop, an Acer monitor, a Samsung television and two knives. Police said further arrests were likely and urged the public to remain cautious of online investment and betting scams and report such activities through Dial 112 or the nearest police station.

KfW shows interest in climate
resilient Tirupati urban projectAVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, FEB. 20

Tirupati is set to receive international support for the restoration of its tanks and improvement of drainage systems, with Germany's KfW Development Bank expressing its readiness to back a climate-resilient urban development project for the city.

The proposal was discussed during a reconnaissance mission organised on Friday by the Tirupati Urban Development Authority (TUDA) under the Indo-German Development Cooperation framework for sustainable urban development. Officials said the initiative aligns with the state government's plan to develop Tirupati as a "city of tanks and lakes" through the revival and interlinking of traditional water bodies.

KfW Senior Sector Specialist Kiran Kumar

Avadhanula said the proposed project, titled Climate-Resilient Urban Development in Tirupati Agglomeration, would focus on the rejuvenation of tanks along with modern stormwater management to address urban flooding. He said the plan envisages the integration of blue-green-grey infrastructure and nature-based solutions to improve water retention, drainage efficiency and the city's climate resilience.

ICLEI South Asia representatives Sowmya Chathurvedula and Emani Kumar said they would prepare a concept note and a detailed project report based on scientific hydrological surveys, along with the environmental and social impact assessments required for KfW support. They said the studies would assess drainage patterns, link-

pressures in the Tirupati region.

During technical discussions, retired irrigation department chief engineer P. V. Subbarao stressed the need for modern water-harvesting structures and the scientific restoration of tanks with technical support from IIT institutions. IIT experts Prof. Krishna Prabhu and Dr. Roshan, along with Municipal Corporation superintendent engineer Syam Sundar and irrigation executive engineers P. V. Prasad and Siva Reddy, explained the present status of water bodies, wastewater infrastructure and ongoing drainage works.

TUDA secretary N. V. Sreekanth Babu said the KfW-ICLEI-IIT team would undertake three days of field visits to major tanks, drainage channels and proposed intervention sites in and around Tirupati before finalising its recommendations.

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NO HUMAN CASES OF BIRD FLU IN CHITTOOR,
ANNAMAYYA, SAYS HEALTH COMMISSIONERDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 20

Health Commissioner G. Veerapandian on Friday ruled out any human cases of bird flu in Chittoor, Annamayya and other districts of Andhra Pradesh.

In a statement, he said rumours about a youth from Chittoor district being infected were false. Samples

collected from the individual were tested at a virology laboratory and found to be negative for bird flu. He appealed to the public not to panic. Referring to bird flu detected among poultry in parts of Chittoor and Annamayya districts, the commissioner said all necessary measures were taken to prevent transmission from birds to humans.

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भर्ती अधिसूचना / RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION
Teaching Posts (Direct Recruitment)
(Advt.No.NSKTU/Admn./T/2025/04 dated 18-02-2026)
National Sanskrit University, Tirupati invites online applications from
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S. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Posts Vacant	No. of Posts & Reserved categories	Academic Pay Level (PA CPC)	
			SC ST OBC PwBD EWS UR		
1.	Associate Professor in Yoga Vijnana	01	- - - 01*	- - -	13A
2.	Associate Professor in Agama	01	- - - - -	01	13A

* Backlog vacancies
The last date for submission of online applications for teaching positions is 15-03-2026. For details of posts, educational qualification, experience and other criteria, please visit the University website <http://www.nsktu.ac.in>.
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