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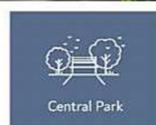
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is undergoing a renaissance as a key node in Andhra's port-led industrial corridor. The government has unveiled plans for eight mega clusters, with Kakinada anchoring one focused on petrochemicals, refining, automobiles, electric vehicles, and renewables. Investments include LNG terminals valued at Rs 110 billion and Rs 19.6 billion, alongside port expansions to handle increased cargo.

Additionally, a Rs 1,310 crore desalination plant by Kakinada SEZ will ensure water security for industries, while a Rs 20 crore Skill Hub and Incubation Centre aims to equip youth with entrepreneurial skills. These initiatives are expected to generate over 50,000 direct jobs in the next five years, drawing skilled workers from across India.

The impact on surrounding areas is profound. Towns like Samalkota and Peddapuram, traditionally agrarian, are integrating into this industrial ecosystem through improved road and rail links. For instance, the Kakinada Smart City project includes infrastructure upgrades that extend to these peripheries.

Kakinada, often dubbed the 'Fertiliser City' is undergoing a renaissance as a key node in Andhra's port-led industrial corridor, anchoring megaclusters focused on petrochemicals, refining, automobiles, electric vehicles, and renewables

To illustrate the tangible opportunities, consider the anecdote of Ramesh, a 35-year-old engineer from Hyderabad who relocated to Kakinada in mid-2025. Drawn by a job at the new LNG terminal, he found affordable housing in a burgeoning residential complex near the port. "What started as a career move turned into a wise investment," Ramesh recounts. His two-bedroom flat, purchased for Rs 50 lakh, appreciated by 25% within six months due to rising demand from incoming professionals. This mirrors broader trends: Kakinada's real estate market has seen a 15-20% annual growth since 2023, fuelled by industrial influx and smart city amenities. Developers are launching gated communities with modern



THE PUSHKARAM EDGE

Rajahmundry, the cultural capital on the Godavari's banks, is similarly benefiting from the state's momentum. Preparations for the 2027 Godavari Pushkarams are accelerating developments, including eight flyovers, railway station redevelopment, and the formation of a Greater Rajahmundry Municipal Corporation by merging 35 panchayats. A Rs 5,000 crore drainage system and road widening projects will modernise the city, while the Rajamahendravaram Urban Development Authority (RUDA) master plan covers 3,156 sq km, prioritising sustainable urban expansion. Surrounding towns such as Kovvur and Nidadavole stand to gain from enhanced tourism and agro-processing. The Pushkarams alone are projected to attract millions, boosting hospitality and retail sectors.

facilities, attracting families seeking better quality of life.

In Rajahmundry, similar stories abound. Lakshmi, a teacher and single mother, invested in an under-construction apartment in Morampudi in 2024. With the announcement of RUDA's master plan and infrastructure projects, her property's value surged, enabling her to fund her daughter's education. "The city's transformation has opened doors we never imagined," she says. Real estate here remains competitively priced, with flats averaging Rs 4,000-5,000 per sq ft, but experts predict a 30% rise by 2028 as investments solidify. The East Godavari district, encompassing both cities, has witnessed heightened property investments near educational and business hubs, with demand for luxury homes and open plots soaring.

This investment-led growth is constructive, emphasising sustainability and equity. By prioritising renewables and skill development, Andhra Pradesh mitigates environmental risks while empowering locals.

Growth in the Godavari heartland

Strategic developments are transforming Kakinada, Rajahmundry, and surrounding areas into economic hotspots, giving the real estate sector a push

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Andhra Pradesh has emerged as India's premier investment destination, capturing a staggering 25.3% of all proposed capital inflows in the first nine months of FY26.

This remarkable achievement is not merely a statistic but a catalyst for transformative growth across the state. Particularly in the Godavari delta region, cities such as Kakinada and Rajahmundry are poised to reap substantial benefits, with ripple effects extending to surrounding towns like Samalkota, Peddapuram, and Kovvur.

These developments promise enhanced infrastructure, job creation, and a booming real estate sector,

fostering sustainable prosperity for local communities.

The state's front-runner status in attracting investments stems from a multifaceted strategy emphasising renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and port-led industrial clusters. With commitments exceeding Rs. 6.73 lakh crore, Andhra Pradesh has secured deals in solar, wind, biofuels, and green hydrogen, alongside IT and manufacturing hubs.

The influx is strategically channelled to leverage the region's natural advantages, such as Kakinada's deep-water port and Rajahmundry's riverine connectivity, turning them into gateways for economic expansion. Kakinada, often dubbed the 'Fertiliser City' for its historical agro-industrial base,



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The evolving healthcare landscape

From a referral point, Rajahmundry is evolving into the role of a regional healthcare destination



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Over the past decade, Rajahmundry has recorded steady healthcare growth, broadly in line with other tier-2 cities. With the expansion of modern diagnostics, tech-enabled treatment facilities and specialty care, supported by improved infrastructure and services, the city is increasingly positioning itself as a preferred healthcare destination in the region.

At the heart of this transformation is the rapid expansion of diagnostic services. Advanced imaging centres offering MRI, CT scans, digital X-rays and comprehensive pathology testing have mushroomed across the city. What once required a trip to Visakhapatnam or Vijayawada can now be accessed locally, significantly reducing time and cost for patients. Many centres are equipped with high end machines and real time reporting, catering to the region's growing demand for preventive

and early-stage diagnosis.

"People are far more aware today," says Dr Srividhya Reddy, a senior house surgeon. "Routine health check-ups, cardiac screenings and diabetes monitoring are no longer limited to urban elites. Even patients from mandal towns are seeking timely diagnosis," she adds.

Government healthcare continues to play a significant role. The Government General Hospital (GGH), one of the largest public healthcare facilities in the region, caters to thousands of people daily. With schemes like Aarogyasri and Ayushman Bharat, better healthcare facilities are accessible to low-income families, particularly for emergency and tertiary care.

Medical education has further reinforced Rajahmundry's healthcare ecosystem. Teaching hospitals and nursing colleges have helped ensure a steady supply of trained doctors, nurses and paramedical staff. "Several specialists practising in the city have returned after training in metros, drawn by growing opportunities and a chance to serve their home region," opines Dr Ramesh Babu, a physician from the city.

The city's strategic location, coupled with increasing private investment, is driving the expansion of its healthcare landscape. Well-connected by road, rail and air, Rajahmundry serves as a natural healthcare catchment for rural districts where advanced facilities remain limited. For patients, treatment closer to home means reduced travel stress and better post-operative follow-up.

Challenges remain. Healthcare professionals point to the need for more super-specialty services, advanced oncology care and medical research facilities. Affordability and staff retention also continue to test both public and private providers. Yet, the direction is clear. From diagnostics to treatment and infrastructure to investment, Rajahmundry's healthcare landscape is evolving rapidly. As awareness rises and facilities expand, the city is steadily shedding its image as a referral point and stepping into the role of a regional healthcare destination.

Well-connected by road, rail and air, Rajahmundry serves as a natural healthcare catchment for rural districts. For patients, treatment closer to home means reduced travel stress and better post-operative follow-up



GET IN TOUCH

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Sun, Soil, Sankranti

In the Godavari districts, Sankranti is not confined to calendars or rituals. It flows like the river itself, through homes, fields, temples and hearts

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As Makar Sankranti approaches, Godavari's districts undergo magical transformation. In East and West Godavari, the emerald paddy fields of villages and winding canals come alive with colour, sound and devotion. From Rajahmundry to Kakinada and Konaseema villages, Sankranti represents a deeply emotional homecoming.

For the agrarian heartland of the Godavari delta, Sankranti is thanksgiving, renewal and joy rolled into four unforgettable days, Bhogi, Makar Sankranti, Kanuma and Mukkanuma.

ROOTED IN THE SUN AND SOIL
Makar Sankranti marks a powerful celestial shift, the end of Dakshinayana, the Sun's southward journey, and the beginning of Uttarayana, symbolising the movement from darkness to light and ignorance to wisdom.

Archaeological findings from the Satavahana and Chalukya periods indicate that solar worship and harvest celebrations have been part of Andhra's cultural fabric for centuries.

In the Godavari districts, this spiritual transition aligns perfectly with the agricultural cycle. Fields stand freshly harvested, granaries are full, and the farmer pauses to celebrate prosperity.

BHOGI: BURNING THE OLD, WELCOMING THE NEW

The celebrations begin with Bhogi, a day of cleansing and renewal. At dawn, bonfires crackle in village streets as people discard old belongings, symbolically shedding the past year's hardships. "Bhogi means starting fresh. The fire reminds us to leave behind bad times. Homes are cleaned, fresh rangolis adorn entrances, and cow dung balls decorated with turmeric and flowers line village lanes," says Raju Rao, a senior accountant from Rajahmundry.

THE HEART OF THE HARVEST
The main Sankranti day is marked by rituals, temple visits and grand feasts. New clothes, especially silk sarees, shimmer.

PRABHALA THEERTHAM: FAITH ON A GRAND SCALE

One of the most spectacular Sankranti traditions unfolds on Kanuma day, Prabhala Theertham. This centuries-old ritual features towering, decorated poles called Prabhala, representing various forms of Lord Shiva. Villages converge at sacred spots like Jagganna Thota, where massive processions, rhythmic drums and devotional chants create a breathtaking spiritual atmosphere. Notably, the Andhra Pradesh government has decided to conduct Prabhala Theertham as a state festival.

Sankranti's soul shines through Haridasus, devotional minstrels, "slaves of Hari" (Lord Vishnu). They roam around streets in vibrant attire, singing kirtans and blessing homes during the four days

Farmers offer the first yield to the Sun God, expressing gratitude for a bountiful harvest.

Food takes centre stage. Special dishes include *ariselu*, *sakinalu*, *poornalu*, *pongali*, sesame laddoos and freshly churned butter. Each ingredient, rice, jaggery, sesame, symbolises abundance and warmth.

KANUMA: CATTLE, COUNTRYSIDE AND COMMUNITY

Kanuma is devoted to cattle, the backbone of agrarian life. Cows and bulls are bathed, decorated and worshipped. In rural Godavari, this day is also synonymous with outdoor celebrations. Traditional sports, folk performances and cockfighting draw massive crowds, especially in Konaseema and surrounding villages. While regulated and debated, the sport remains a deeply ingrained cultural practice.

"Kanuma is about village pride. People return from cities just for this day. This is why we call this festival a living one as it brings all together," Venkateshwar Rao, a civil engineer who stays in Hyderabad and visits Rajahmundry every Makar Sankranti. Apart from these three days, Mukkanuma serves as the final day, which is quieter but deeply personal.

KITES, CINEMA AND MODERN SANKRANTI JOYS

Despite changing times, kite flying remains a cherished Sankranti ritual for children. Rooftops in Rajahmundry and Kakinada fill with colourful kites, echoing laughter and friendly competition.

Sankranti has also become the biggest season for Telugu cinema. Every year, major film releases queue up for festive premieres. "Sankranti without a new movie feels incomplete. There are so many movies releasing during this time that it becomes confusing for us to decide which one to watch first," Shankar Srinivas, a college student.

Here's to a fresh start. Wishing our readers a happy Makara Sankranti.

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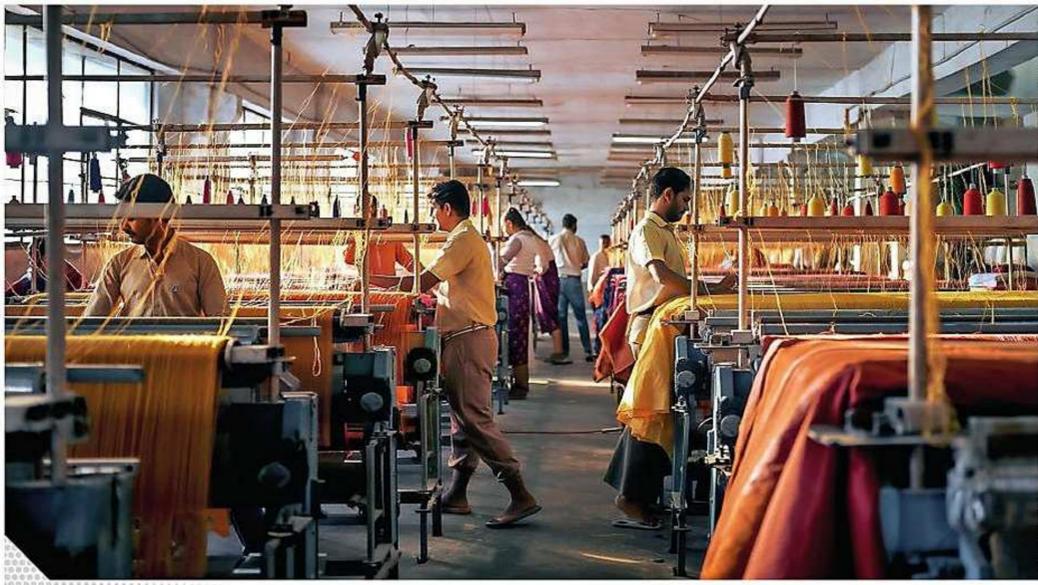


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lines the Main Road from Fort Gate to Syamala Centre.

The strength of Rajahmundry's cloth trade lies in trust. We have long banked on our process and quality more than anything else. Also, our credit system allows small traders to survive and grow, even with limited capital," divulges Sai Shree, a wholesaler with over 30 years in the business.

REAL ESTATE AND NEW GROWTH STORY

Beyond textiles, Rajahmundry has carved a niche in bullion trade, emerging as one of India's largest bullion markets. Gold, silver and platinum shops are scattered across the city, reinforcing its status as a financial hub in coastal Andhra.

"In recent years, real estate has added a new dimension to Rajahmundry's economic profile. After Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry has witnessed some of the most consistent real estate growth in the state. Industrial development, improved connectivity and urban expansion have driven demand," says Md

Rajahmundry draws its income from a strong industrial base, particularly paper and pulp, textiles, and oil and gas, and as a major commercial hub. It sustains economic growth by combining agriculture and trade with expanding industrial, real estate and service sectors

erate growth. These developments have strengthened the city's position as an industrial hub, hosting a mix of government and private enterprises.

"The real estate in Rajahmundry is rising due to its emerging status with a lower cost of living, attracting people seeking better lifestyles, coupled with growing economic activity in the state, infrastructure developments, and increasing demand for housing from a rising middle class, driving property values up as supply struggles to keep pace," opines Vijay Rajpatla, a real estate developer in Rajahmundry.

PROMISE OF INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT

One of the city's most significant in-



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A THRIVING GARMENT ECONOMY

Rajahmundry has served as a wholesale cloth centre since the 1970s, with synthetic fabric emerging as its signature product. Synthetic sarees dominate the market, catering primarily to middle-class consumers who seek affordability without compromising on aesthetics.

The synthetic fabric business alone accounts for a huge market value across East Godavari district, Rajahmundry and nearby Dwarapudi. Meanwhile, the rise of ready-made garments has added another layer to the city's textile economy.

The city currently houses over 2,000 retail cloth shops, supported by hundreds of wholesale merchants who cater to traders from coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. Cloth sourced from textile hubs such as Mumbai, Surat, Kanchipuram, Banaras and Dharmavaram finds its way into Rajahmundry's markets before being distributed further.

ustrial landmarks is The Andhra Pradesh Paper Mills Ltd, established on June 29, 1964. Founded with the backing of the Bangur family of Calcutta, the paper mill marked a turning point in Rajahmundry's industrial journey.

Today, the mill employs around 4,000 people directly and provides indirect livelihood to nearly 10,000 families. Its presence has had a multiplier effect on the local economy, supporting ancillary industries and services.

A CITY FLOWING INTO THE FUTURE

Rajahmundry's story is one of continuity rather than disruption. Its economic growth has not come at the cost of its cultural identity. Instead, commerce and culture have evolved together, much like the Godavari that flows steadily through the city, sometimes calm, sometimes forceful, but always forward.

From ancient trade routes to modern SEZs, from handloom sarees to synthetic fabrics, Rajahmundry remains a city that understands the value of balance.

Where Godavari carries commerce and culture

As Andhra Pradesh looks to strengthen its urban and industrial base, Rajahmundry stands ready, as a leader shaped by centuries of resilience and reinvention

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Perched gracefully on the banks of the mighty Godavari, Rajahmundry has been perceived more as an idea that has flowed through centuries. Often referred to as the cultural capital of the Godavari region, the city stands at the crossroads of tradition and trade, intellect and industry.

As the largest city spanning the East and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh, Rajahmundry has long played a pivotal role in shaping the economic and cultural identity of coastal Andhra.

Located nearly 400 kilometres east of Hyderabad, Rajahmundry is among the oldest cities established in India. Today, with a population nearing one million, it ranks as the fourth-largest city by area and the

eighth most populous in Andhra Pradesh, a testament to its steady and sustained growth.

"Rajahmundry has always been a city that thinks ahead, even while holding firmly onto its roots. That balance is what has kept it relevant for centuries," says Srinivasa Reddy, a senior historian based in the city.

TEXTILE BACKBONE OF GODAVARI TRADE

Rajahmundry's identity as a commercial powerhouse rests firmly on its textile industry. The city has been a major business hub in the Godavari districts for decades.

The heart of this trade beats loudly in the city's cloth markets. Rajahmundry houses one of India's largest cloth markets, with cooperative handloom centres that are renowned for fine-quality sarees and men's wear.

The Mahatma Gandhi Wholesale Cloth Market in Thadithota, home to around 300 shops, is the epicentre of this activity. In addition, a dense stretch of wholesale and retail stores

Salim, a real estate expert.

Planned Special Economic Zones (SEZs) between Rajahmundry and Kakinada along NH-5 and the ADB Road are expected to further accel-



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Beneath the ochre-hued arches of the Havelock Bridge, the Godavari's waters meander like a serpent of silver through emerald plains. Right there, Rajahmundry unfurls its timeless allure, attracting the young and old.

Once a whispered haven for pilgrims and poets, now pulses with a burgeoning tourism renaissance. In 2024-25, Andhra Pradesh welcomed approximately 25,000 foreign visitors, a harbinger of broader revival, yet it is Rajahmundry's intimate embrace of its ancient soul that captivates anew. Here, where colonial-era spires pierce the monsoon-misted skies, the old themes of spiritual sojourn and cultural reverence hold unyielding sway, drawing souls weary of the world's cacophony.

HERITAGE REBORN
Pushkar Ghat, with its labyrinthine



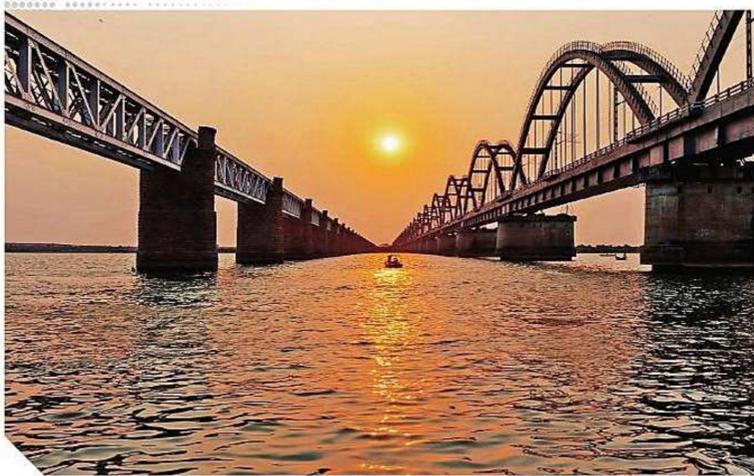
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"The Godavari's gentle lap against the ghats feels like a benediction from antiquity itself—unchanging, eternal."

— ANJALI RAO,
a devotee from Hyderabad,
lingering at dawn's first light

Weaving old charms with new allure

Sacred ghats, colonial landmarks and new tourism circuits are quietly reshaping the tourism landscape along the Godavari



thine steps etched by centuries of fervent feet, remains the epicentre of this sacred symphony. During the Pushkaralu festival, when the river swells with ritual immersion, over a million pilgrims converge, their chants mingling with the rustle of palm fronds. Rajahmahendravaram, the main site has begun making preparations to host millions of people.

The Markandeya Temple, perched on sun-baked bluffs, echoes with tales of divine interventions, its weathered granite walls a palimpsest of devotion. Nearby, the Dowleswaram Barrage—a British engineering marvel of sluice gates and rippling cascades—stands sentinel, irrigating dreams across 1.8 million acres while offering vistas that soothe the spirit.

These heritage bastions, augmented by the Godavari Arch

Bridge's cantilevered grace, have long lured the introspective traveller, fostering a quiet tourism that swelled domestic footfall by 15% in 2024, per state records.

LIVES ILLUMINATED BY WANDERLUST

This dual symphony—old charms entwined with novel enticements—illuminates Rajahmundry's socio-economic tapestry. The Akhanda initiative alone pledges 8,000 jobs, from ghatside guides to eco-craft weavers, empowering women artisans in Kondapalli toy-making and Kalamkari textiles that drape the soul in narrative finery. Its a case study in blending tourism with heritage seamlessly, building lives while celebrating culture.

Local voices resonate with quiet triumph: fisherman Ravi Kumar, his coracle now a tourist chariot,

muses, "The river that once fed my family now invites the world to our hearth—prosperity flows as freely as the waters." In the Archaeological Museum, the staff curates relics with renewed zeal, noting a 25% surge in school groups exploring Indus Valley echoes unearthed locally.

Challenges persist—the monsoon's capricious deluge and equitable access for remote hamlets demand vigilant stewardship—yet the horizon gleams. Andhra Pradesh's 2024-29 Tourism Policy, granting industry status to this sector, funnels Rs 12,000 crore in public-private synergies, positioning Rajahmundry as a nexus in the Akhanda circuit. Old temples toll their vespers while new lanterns flicker along the bund—a testament to a destination where antiquity and aspiration converge, inviting all to partake in its unfolding epic.

OF ECO-ADVENTURES AND RIVERFRONT REVERIES

Yet, as the Godavari's banks stir under the caress of innovation, new themes beckon like fireflies in the twilight—eco-adventures, experiential retreats, and curated riverfront idylls that blend sustainability with serendipity. The Akhanda Godavari project, inaugurated in June 2025 with a princely Rs 94.44 crore infusion, heralds this metamorphosis, transforming the Havelock Bridge into a multifunctional promenade of promenades, where history and hedonism entwine. Envision tented glamping enclaves sprawling across 120 acres of Bridge Lanka, their canvas flaps whispering against the breeze, offering nocturnal vigils over the luminous flow. Theme parks, artisan ateliers, and restored heritage vignettes along the riverine promenade promise immersive escapades, projected to lure 10-15 lakh visitors annually in its nascent phase, escalating to 35 lakh by 2035.

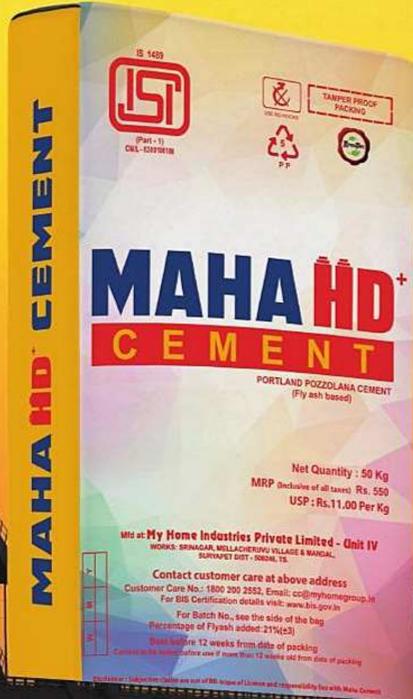
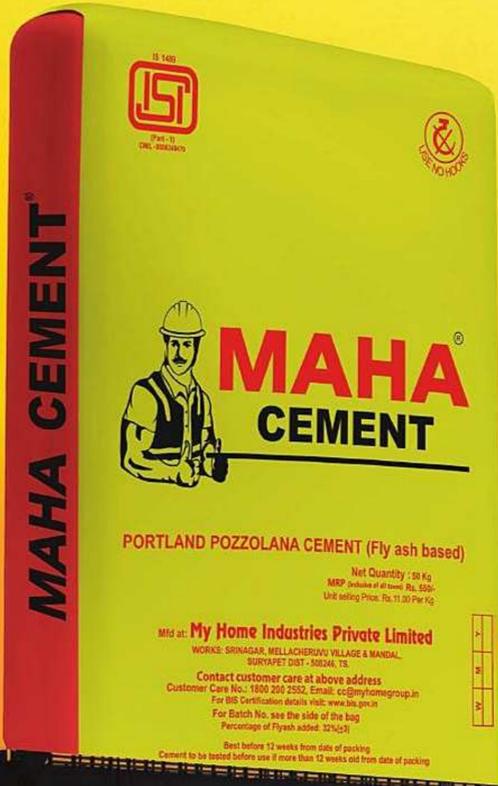
In the verdant embrace of Maredumilli, 70 kilometres upstream, eco-tourism flourishes amid bamboo groves and spice-scented air. This biosphere reserve, with its zip-lines slicing through the canopy and butterfly conservatories fluttering like living jewels, embodies the fresh narrative of regenerative travel. Papi Hills, those undulating sentinels of sandstone and scrub, now host coracle cruises and heritage walks, unearthing palaeolithic whispers in cave-sheltered alcoves. Hospitality industry has suitably pivoted, catering to the discerning wanderer seeking solace sans ostentation. Complementing this, the Rajahmundry Airport's expansion, slated for mid-2026, will usher in direct flights, trimming the pilgrimage from distant metros and amplifying arrivals by an anticipated 20%.



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One of the first questions you're asked after visiting a place is about the food. After a trip to Rajahmundry, you are rarely at a loss for answers. The city offers a rich spread of flavours that linger long after the journey ends.

Nourished by the mighty Godavari River and its fertile delta, Rajahmundry carries its history not only in its literature, music and rituals, but also on its plate. From the era of the Eastern Chalukyas and the colonial British period to the modern phase of globalisation, each chapter of history has shaped the city's culinary identity. At its core, Rajahmundry's cuisine remains deeply intertwined with the Godavari's fertile food bowl and enduring local traditions.

THE GODAVARI'S BOUNTIFUL BANKS

The Godavari's influence runs deep in Rajahmundry's cuisine. With vast expanse of its fertile delta, paddy cultivation is the soul of the region, and rice forms the backbone of most meals here. From freshwater fish and prawns to riverbank vegetables and coconut-based preparations, the region's food is accompanied by the lavish use of tamarind, green chillies, mustard seeds and aromatic spices.

VVVS Sairamkrishna, GM, Lahospin Hotel sees Godavari cuisine as simple, comforting and satisfying - much like a wholesome meal by the river. "With soft rice, dal, fresh river fish and gentle spices, the cuisine is



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Flavours that linger

Rajahmundry's cuisine is a rich, soulful spread shaped by the Godavari delta, immersed in flavours and steeped in tradition

rooted in freshness, with coconut and tamarind lending balance," he says.

THE SEASONAL TREASURE OF PULASA

Nothing says monsoon in Rajahmundry like Pulasa season. In homes and restaurants alike, the arrival of the seasonal Pulasa in Godavari marks the beginning of sumptuous fish meals. "At peak season, prices soar, sometimes into several thousand rupees per kilogram, and on rare occasions, individual fish have sold for tens of thousands," says Ch Srinivas, a restaurateur in

Rajahmundry.

"People joke that you'd sell your mangalasutram just to taste Pulasa," laughs Meena Kumari, a homemaker. Available typically between July and September, the fish is famed for its tender texture and rich, buttery flavour, a result of its arduous upstream migration from the Bay of Bengal to spawn. Locals say the flavour comes from the river itself, not heavy masalas.

"The iconic Pulasa Pulusu, a tangy, deeply flavoured fish curry is a must try," says Meena Kumari. Echoing the sentiment,

Sairamkrishna says, "If you're in Rajahmundry, Pulasa Pulusu is unmissable with its soft, rich river fish cooked with tamarind and perfectly balanced spices. Other celebrated dishes include Pulasa Vepudu and Pulasa Iguru." Beyond Pulasa, river prawns, crabs and local fish dominate local menus, with Royyala Iguru and Cherala Pulusu joining the list of enduring crowd favourites.

EVERYDAY CUISINE OF COMFORT

Beyond Pulasa, Rajahmundry's cuisine shines in its everyday dish-



From seafood to river-bank vegetables and coconut-based preparations, the regions food is accompanied by the lavish use of tamarind, green chillies, mustard seeds and aromatic spices

es. From tangy Pulihora and soft Pongalanu to the thick, earthy Ulavacharu, these dishes are both flavourful and nourishing. Staples such as Pappu Annam with Avakaya, Pappu Dappalam, Aritikaya Kura, Allam Vankaya, Kobbari Mamidikaya Pachadi, Gongura Pachadi, Chinna Ullipaya Pulusu and Miryala Rasam form the backbone of the region's food identity.

Sharing a renewed focus on tradition, Sairamkrishna says, "We're bringing back forgotten or lesser-known dishes like Gongura mutton, Kandippappu Pachadi, Kodiguddu Methadlu, Pachi Pulusu, Dosakaya Pappu and Kobbari Annam, simple, soulful flavours from old kitchens."

Non-vegetarian offerings are equally savoury. The locally loved chicken fry piece biryani, different from its Hyderabad counterpart, is a favourite at popular eateries. Bamboo Chicken, a tribal delicacy cooked inside bamboo shoots, reflects the region's link to indigenous cooking and forest produce, while Godavari chicken fry and Kodiguddu Methadlu remain fiery, aromatic crowd pleasers.



LOCAL FLAVOURS AND LITTLE JOYS

Some of Rajahmundry's most memorable flavours are found on its streets, where food is simple, comforting and deeply nostalgic. Tomato bajjis sizzling away in mobile carts, assorted bajji mixture snacks and piping hot punugulu are local legends, enjoyed with a good conversation.

To beat the heat, residents turn to rose milk, kova milk, refreshing majjiga and tender coconut water, all offering instant comfort between meals. The street experience is incomplete without its traditional sweets such as pure ghee kova, pala kova, crisp kaja, delicate putharekulu, festive ariselu and soft bobbatlu where each bite captures the region's love for rich flavours and age-old recipes.

Rajahmundry's cuisine is more than a collection of dishes, it is an expression of history, geography, community and traditions. Whether it's a simple plate of rice and pachadi, a bustling fish market, or a family lunch, food here binds people to place and time.



PHOTO: ISTOCK



Bridging Dreams & Destiny

As the optimal modern infrastructure falls in place, Rajahmundry rises, and so does the life of her people

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Beneath the languid flow of the Godavari River, Rajahmundry stirs with the hum of progress. Once a cultural jewel hemmed in by potholed roads and overburdened bridges, this historic city on the banks of India's third-longest river is undergoing a profound metamorphosis. A cascade of infrastructure projects - from gleaming airports to expansive highways - is not merely reshaping skylines but rewriting the rhythms of daily life for its 500,000 residents and surrounding hamlets.

THE ARTERIES OF RENEWAL
At the heart of Rajahmundry's re-

vival is a Rs 3,800 crore facelift for the 160-km NH-16 corridor linking Anakapalli to the city. Sanctioned in October 2025, this six-lane behemoth promises to slash travel times by 40%, easing the chokehold on a route that ferries over 10,000 vehicles daily. Preliminary surveys indicate a 25% uptick in local commerce, with small traders like Patel reporting brisker business from Kakinada's ports, just 60 km away.

The Havelock Bridge, a colonial-era icon spanning the Godavari, is another linchpin. Under the Rs 5,700 crore Godavari Pushkaralu 2027 preparations, tenders for its reinforcement were floated in August 2025. This 2.5-km marvel, once plagued by cracks and closures, will soon boast seismic-resis-

tant pylons and widened lanes. For fisherfolk in nearby Dowleswaram, the impact is visceral. "Floods used to isolate us for days," says 62-year-old fisherman Kondaiah, mending nets by the riverbank. "Now, with the bridge stronger and the proposed 30-km River Bund road, we can haul catches to Rajahmundry markets without fear."

An ambitious Outer Ring Road (ORR), announced in November 2025, encircles the city to decongest its core. Spanning 50 km at an estimated Rs 1,200 crore, it will divert heavy traffic, fostering peri-urban growth. Real estate values have surged 15-20% in adjacent areas, drawing young professionals like software engineer Priya Rao. "The ORR means I can live in quieter

Morumpudi and commute to the IT hub in 20 minutes," she shares, scrolling job alerts on her phone.

FROM CONGESTED LANES TO SEAMLESS HORIZONS

In the sweltering afternoon heat, auto-rickshaw driver Raju Rao navigates the freshly asphalted stretch of National Highway 16 (NH-16), a far cry from the rutted nightmare it was just a year ago. "Before, we'd lose half a day stuck in jams near the Havelock Bridge," he recalls, wiping sweat from his brow. "Now, with the upgrades, goods reach markets faster, and fares have stabilised." Patel's anecdote mirrors a broader narrative: infrastructure as the quiet architect of hope in East Godavari district.

ELEVATING CONNECTIVITY

Rajahmundry Airport's expansion, a Rs 350 crore endeavour, is set to transform the city into a regional aviation gateway by mid-2026. The new terminal will handle 1,000 passengers hourly, up from 200, with direct flights to Hyderabad and Bengaluru. Local entrepreneur Sunita Reddy, who runs a spice export firm, credits it for her 30% revenue jump. "Pre-expansion, shipments idled at Visakhapatnam Airport for days. Now, air cargo trials have halved logistics costs," she enthuses.

Parallely, the Rs 271 crore redevelopment of Rajamahendravaram Railway Station - a bustling junction generating Rs 50 crore annually - will introduce escalators, solar panels, and Wi-Fi by 2027. Commuters like daily-wage labourer Venkatesh applaud the shift. "The old station was a crush during peak hours. With eight flyovers and three rail-over-bridges in the pipeline, my train to Vijayawada won't crawl anymore."



RIPPLES OF BROADER PROSPERITY

The Akhanda Godavari tourism circuit, launched in June 2025, weaves heritage with modernity, promising 8,000 jobs by 2027. Enhanced ghats, eco-parks, and a Rs 430 crore waste-to-energy plant for the Kakinada-Rajahmundry cluster will curb pollution while powering 15 MW for local grids.

Once a cultural jewel hemmed in by potholed roads and overburdened bridges, Rajahmundry is undergoing a profound metamorphosis. A cascade of infrastructure projects - from gleaming airports to expansive highways - is not merely reshaping skylines but rewriting the rhythms of daily life for its 500,000 residents and surrounding hamlets

For residents like teacher Lakshmi Devi, these threads converge in tangible relief. "The 75% complete Rajahmundry-Kakinada road has eased school runs amid two engineering colleges' traffic," she notes, echoing sentiments from social media where students hail the "game-changer" for safer commutes.

Yet, challenges linger: land acquisition delays and monsoon disruptions test the resolve towards progress. In Rajahmundry's surroundings - from Mareduilli's forests to Bhadrachalam's hills - these advancements herald equity. A 2025 urban study projects a 12% GDP boost for East Godavari by 2030, with reduced migration as youth find opportunities at home.

As the Godavari whispers ancient tales, its banks now echo a modern chorus: of lives uplifted, futures bridged.



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PHOTO: SHODD

dian students will not only emerge as successful global professionals but also as enlightened contributors to humanity. In doing so, they will uphold India's timeless vision as Vishva Guru, the teacher of the world," Kumar adds.

HOW EDUCATORS HAVE EVOLVED WITH TIME

The shift towards global citizenship has also transformed the role of educators. Teachers are no longer mere transmitters of information; they are facilitators, mentors, and co-learners. Classrooms have become more interactive, project-based, and discussion-driven. Rote learning is giving way to inquiry, collaboration, and real-world problem solving.

Educators now integrate global case studies, encourage cross-cultural exchanges through virtual classrooms, and promote experiential learning. Technology plays a crucial role, students collaborate with peers across countries, attend international webinars, and access global knowledge platforms.

Shaping global minds

Education is evolving to shape global citizens through climate change, AI, cultural diversity, and ethical leadership discussions

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Walk into a modern classroom in India today and the change is unmistakable. Students are no longer learning only to clear exams or secure local jobs; they are being prepared to engage with the world. Following the same pattern, education in Rajahmundry is steadily moving towards shaping global citizens, individuals who think beyond borders, respect differences, and act responsibly in an interconnected world.

A global citizen is not defined by geography but by mindset. Such a learner understands global issues, values cultural diversity, thinks critically, collaborates across cultures, and contributes positively to society. For Rajahmundry students, this means blending strong local roots with a global outlook, being confident in their identity

while remaining open to learning from the world.

"Every sector has evolved rapidly and so has education. Nowadays, education is not just about knowing facts, but about understanding contexts and consequences. Thus, as an educator, our aim should be to help students see themselves as part of a global community where their choices matter," says Dr Radhika Menon, an educator from Rajahmundry.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR A SHARED FUTURE

According to a Dr Burugupalli Ravi Kumar, chairman, Sasi Group of Institutions, creativity, empathy, collaboration, and critical analysis are the skills necessary to solve real-world problems effectively. "Knowledge of AI has become essential for innovation in every field, from research and analysis to digital marketing and enterprise oper-

ations. Global Citizenship, in turn, inspires compassion and harmony, nurturing learners to become ambassadors of peace and understanding across cultures," he opines.

"When these values and skills are truly integrated into education, In-

THE FOUR PILLARS OF LEARNING

At the heart of this transformation lies a balanced approach built on four key pillars of learning:

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

This pillar focuses on knowledge,



In nurturing global citizens, Rajahmundry is not only preparing its students for international opportunities, it is shaping a generation ready to contribute to a more connected, inclusive, and better tomorrow



critical thinking, and problem-solving. Students are encouraged to question, analyse, and apply concepts rather than memorise them. Exposure to global issues, international perspectives, and interdisciplinary learning helps them develop a broader intellectual framework.

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Empathy, emotional intelligence, and respect for diversity are essential traits of a global citizen. Schools now actively promote teamwork, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity. Activities such as group projects, community service, and intercultural dialogues help students understand different viewpoints and build compassion.

"Socio-emotional learning has become central to any curriculum. When students learn to empathise and communicate respectfully, they become better humans, and better global citizens," says Maria Fernandes, a primary teacher.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS DRIVING THE SHIFT

Several factors have contributed to this transformation in Indian education:

Globalisation and workforce demands: Indian students are entering multinational workplaces where cultural intelligence, communication skills, and adaptability are as important as technical knowledge.

Technology and digital access: Online learning platforms, international curricula, and global exposure through the internet have widened students' horizons.

Policy and curriculum reforms: Initiatives under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasise holistic development, critical thinking, and multidisciplinary learning.

Parental aspirations: Parents increasingly value education that prepares children not just for exams, but for life in a globalised world.

Exposure to global challenges: Issues like climate change, pandemics, and sustainability have highlighted the need for globally aware and responsible citizens.

BEHAVIOURAL LEARNING

Knowledge and values must translate into action. Behavioural learning focuses on responsible decision-making, ethical conduct, and active participation in society. Students are encouraged to take initiative, lead projects, and practice sustainability in everyday life, from reducing waste to volunteering for social causes.

A STEP TOWARDS A BETTER TOMORROW

The demographic advantage lies in its youth, and educating them as global citizens is an investment in the future. As students learn to balance local values with global responsibilities, they become capable of addressing complex challenges with confidence and compassion.

The transformation is gradual but meaningful. From classrooms that encourage dialogue to curricula that promote global awareness, Indian education is redefining success. The goal is no longer just to produce high achievers, but thoughtful individuals who can collaborate, innovate, and lead in a shared world.

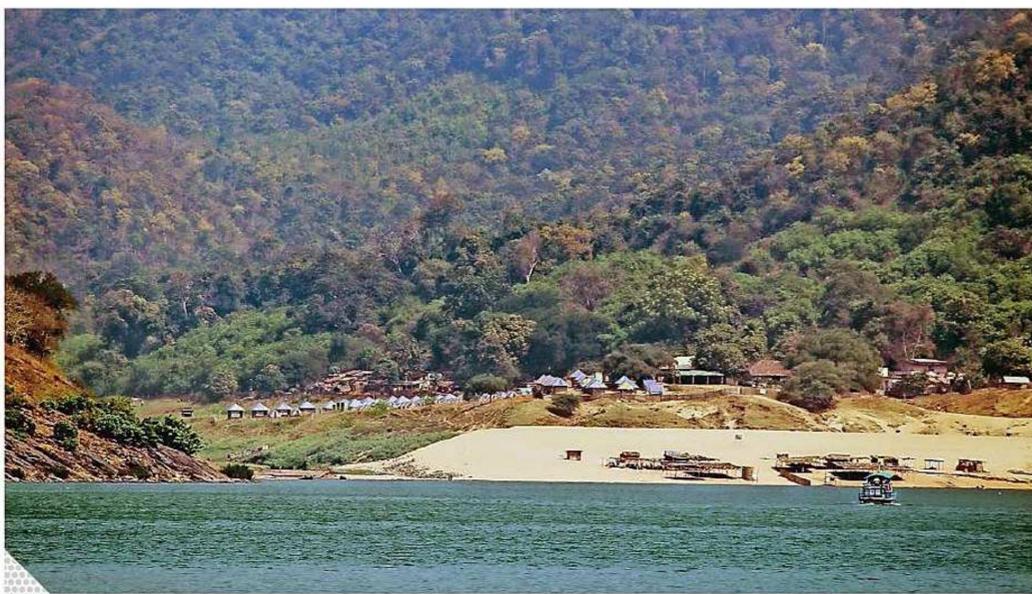


PHOTO: RAJU

Papikondalu's gift that keeps giving

The Papi hills captivate like none other, the boat ride from Rajahmundry will give you memories of a lifetime

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In the cradle of the Godavari's meandering arms, Rajahmundry hums with the cadence of riverine life and the Papikondalu boat ride unfolds as a pilgrimage of the senses.

For locals and wanderers alike, this serpentine odyssey through the Papi Hills—those sinuous sentinels of emerald and stone—embodies an eternal charm that defies the march of seasons.

The journey from Rajahmundry's bustling Pushkar Ghat remains a cherished rite, a gentle rebellion against the haste of modern days. Board a sturdy launch or the opulent AC cruiser,

and let the river carry you into a realm where hills converse with water.

DAWN'S GENTLE CALL

The adventure commences at the crack of dawn, when Rajahmun-



dry's ghats stir with the aroma of filter coffee and fresh idlis from roadside stalls. Amid the chorus of coracles bobbing like obedient ducks, passengers gather—families in starched veshtis, couples with whispered dreams, and solo souls seeking solace. "It's the anticipation that hooks you," shares Devi, a textile merchant from the city's labyrinthine markets. "As the engine purrs to life, the Godavari's vast sheet shrinks to a ribbon, and suddenly, you're adrift in possibility." The ride, spanning some 50 kilometres upstream, glides past dowry-fringed banks where paddy fields yield to the hills' abrupt rise. Early light gilds the water in molten gold, while herons stalk the shallows like feathered sentinels. For the surrounds' folk—from Kadiam's orchards to Polavaram's hamlets—this is no mere excursion; it's a homecoming, etched in the river's timeless flow.

THROUGH GORGE AND GROVE

As the vessel slices onward, Papikondalu reveals its beguiling heart: gorges that cinch the Godavari into flirtatious narrows, and cliffs plunge like lovers' embraces. The air thickens with the perfume of wild jasmine and vetiver, mingling with the faint tang of diesel—a humble reminder of the journey's earthy pulse. Monkeys chatter from teak perches, their silhouettes etched against ochre outcrops, while the boat's wake unfurls like silk.

Halts at hidden coves invite dips in crystalline pools, where the chill revives jaded limbs. Folklore swirls here too; guides intone tales of celestial damsels into these peaks. An anecdote from veteran skipper Mohan lingers: "Twenty years ago, during a monsoon swell, we ferried a bride to her wedding upstream.



The hills parted the storm just so, as if in blessing." Such lore, laced with the lilt of folk songs from onboard minstrels, transforms the ride into a narrative tapestry, binding rider to the land's ancient lore.

LEGACY ON THE WAVES

In an age of ephemeral thrills, the Papikondalu boat ride from Rajahmundry endures as a deliberate in-

ECHOES OF JOY AND REFLECTION

The true sorcery of the Papikondalu ride manifests in its capacity to cradle personal epiphanies amid the collective hum. Picture young Ravi, a software engineer from Rajahmundry's tech enclaves, who once fled a crushing deadline for this watery reprieve. "Stranded mid-river by a mechanical hitch, we picnicked on the deck—prawn curry steaming, laughter echoing off the rocks," he recounts, a grin creasing his face. "In that enforced pause, I rediscovered the boy who fished these waters, unburdened by screens." Or consider aunt Lakshmi from nearby Dowleswaram, whose annual solo voyage honours a lost sibling. Perched bow-side, she scatters marigold petals, murmuring, "The hills listen without judgement; they simply hold your story, letting the current carry the weight." These vignettes, shared over thali feasts of gongura pachadi and spicy catfish, underscore the ride's dual gift: communal revelry laced with intimate reverie. As the sun arcs westward, casting elongated shadows, the return leg feels less like reversal and more like renewal.



The ride, spanning some 50 kilometres upstream, glides past dowry-fringed banks where paddy fields yield to the hills' abrupt rise. Early light gilds the water in molten gold, while herons stalk the shallows like feathered sentinels

dulgence—a bridge to one's heritage for Godavari's progeny. Eco-cruises now emphasise sustainable sails, with solar panels glinting like promises against the hills' verdant sprawl.

"This river has borne our joys and jars for centuries," affirms elder fisherman Subba Rao, his callused hands tracing the rail. "It will cradle the next, unchanged." Whether savouring the AC comfort of panoramic lounges or the raw thrill of a bamboo raft, the voyage invites surrender to the eternal.

For the people of Rajahmundry and its verdant surrounds, Papikondalu is not a fleeting jaunt but a lifelong liaison: a drift where time bows to the river's rhythm, and the heart, forever enchanted, sails on.



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Kadiyam's green promise

Rooted in the fertile plains of the Godavari, the horticulture hub of Kadiyam is spreading greenery around the globe

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Just 15–20 km from Rajahmundry lies a small green paradise called Kadiyam. Rooted in the soil yet reaching for the sky, Kadiyam is widely known as a thriving horticulture hub. Fed by the fertile banks of the Godavari, it has emerged as the nursery heartland of India, supplying living trees and plants to regions in and beyond the country. From landscaping varieties to fruit-bearing and flowering plants, Kadiyam embodies the ecological, cultural and spiritual relationship people share with nature.

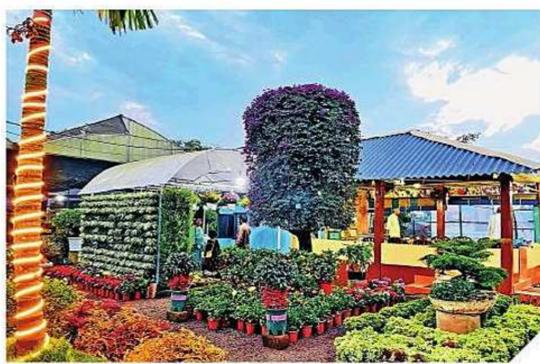
With estimates citing operations spanning about 3,000–3,500 acres, Kadiyam's nursery belt is centred around the villages of Kadiyam, Kadiyapulanka and Burrilanka. "Around 13 villages in the Kadiyam belt are engaged in nursery farming, with nearly 1,800 registered nurseries operating in the region," says Palla Venkatesh of Palla Venkanna Nursery, Kadiyam. This unique concentration has earned Kadiyam its widely used title- the 'Nursery Bowl of India'.

THE GROWTH OF KADIYAM

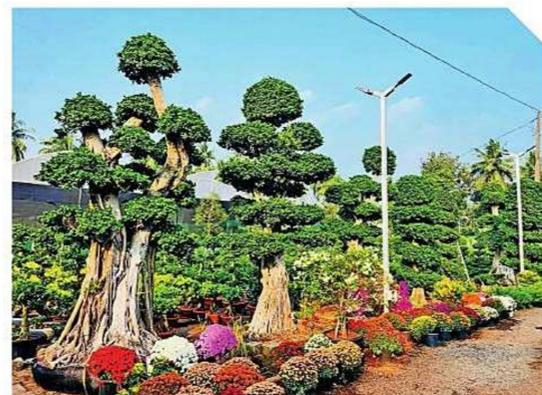
The story of Kadiyam's nurseries dates back to the early 20th century. Farmers living along the Godavari canals initially began growing flowering plants and saplings as a supplementary activity. The region's alluvial soil, steady water supply, and moderate climate proved exceptionally favourable for horticulture. Plants thrived with minimal intervention, and word spread quickly about their quality and resilience.

By the 1970s and 1980s, nursery cultivation had gained momentum. What was once a supplementary activity evolved into a structured business, driven by the commercial potential of horticulture. Over time, Kadiyam attracted traders, landscapers, horticulturists and exporters, gradually carving out a national identity rooted in greenery.

Today, Kadiyam produces thousands of plant varieties, from saplings



Around 13 villages in the Kadiyam belt are engaged in nursery farming, with nearly 1,800 registered nurseries operating in the region. This unique concentration has earned Kadiyam its title- the 'Nursery Bowl of India'



AN ECONOMIC LIFELINE FOR THE REGION

Beyond its green expanse, Kadiyam plays a critical economic role. "We are not businessmen; we are farmers. We grow plants and sell them to middlemen, who then supply markets in other regions," says Palla Venkatesh. The sector provides employment to nearly one lakh people," he adds. Employment opportunities extend from specialised skills such as grafting, pruning, potting and plant maintenance to managing, accounting, selling and transportation.

For generations of families, nurseries have been a steady source of income, ensuring livelihoods closely tied to the land. While larger nurseries record businesses worth crores, small and medium growers also earn sustainable incomes, making the sector inclusive. Industry estimates suggest that Kadiyam's combined nursery turnover runs into hundreds of crores annually. However, growers point out that it is difficult to estimate annual turnover, as the growing cycle stretches over more than a year.

meant for large-scale avenues and orchards to ornamental and decorative plants destined for urban homes, resorts and infrastructure projects.

FAR AND BEYOND

Kadiyam's influence stretches far beyond Andhra Pradesh. Plants grown here travel to cities across India and overseas. Zero mortality during transit is ensured through compliant packaging, phytosanitary certification, and carefully managed air and sea logistics, all handled by nursery exporters in Kadiyam.

"While we cater to domestic demand, our primary focus is on exports. We serve a global wholesale market, exporting live plants to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Maldives, with additional markets across the Middle East and Africa," says K. Muneendra Kumar, managing director, Rajasri Nursery Exports in Kadiyam.

CHALLENGES BENEATH THE GREEN CANOPY

Despite its success, Kadiyam's nursery industry faces several challenges. Export processes remain complex and costly, often

limiting direct access to international markets. "Many of us depend on intermediaries, which reduces margins and visibility," says C Rama Krishna, a nursery grower from Kadiyam. "Additionally, limited exposure to advanced research, new plant varieties and modern nursery technologies poses a hurdle in an increasingly competitive global landscape," he adds.

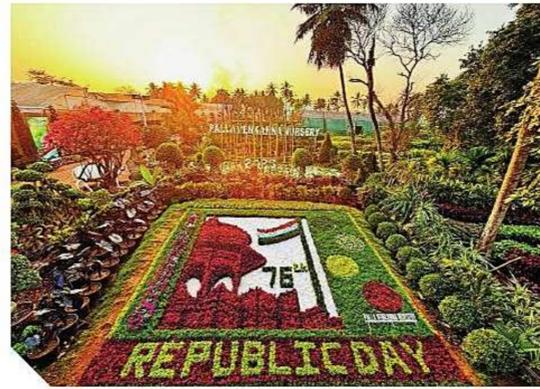
"Exporting plants comes with its own set of challenges, particularly in meeting varying international standards. For instance, soil is not permitted for export, so plants are shipped in sterile coco-peat packing. International specifications also require uniform root-ball sizes – typically 50 mm, 80 mm or 100 mm. Customs clearance can be another hurdle, as certain plant species are restricted or banned in some countries," adds Muneendra Kumar.

According to Palla Venkatesh, one of the biggest challenges is declining soil quality and the rising cost of fertilisers. "Unlike other agricultural activities, nursery farmers do not receive any government subsidy," he adds.

MORE THAN JUST PLANTS

Knowledge in Kadiyam is passed down through practice, from understanding a sapling's water needs to anticipating how plants respond to seasonal shifts and long-distance transport. "This lived understanding has helped Kadiyam remain relevant even as markets and tastes evolve," says Nagendra Godugu, a small grower from the region.

A journey through Kadiyam's horticulture belt is, ultimately, an immersion into a living ecosystem, one where tradition and innovation coexist, and where agriculture meets entrepreneurship.



The festive jewellery trends this year represent a diverse array of styles and preferences, catering to both elaborate and understated tastes

jewellery making. Additionally, pieces featuring lord Rama motif hold a special place in the hearts of jewellery enthusiasts, as they represent cultural and religious significance," he revealed.

According to Mohak Gupta, the proprietor at an elite store, Nakshi jewellery featuring motifs of the goddess Lakshmi has always been in vogue. "However, this year, there is a noticeable surge in the popularity of Lakshmi-themed pieces. Traditional mango malas, which boast a design that has persisted for a century, are in high demand. While plain mango motifs hold a timeless appeal, there is a growing trend toward mango designs adorned with uncut diamonds and intricate kundan work," Mohak divulged. This fusion of kundan craftsmanship with mango mala designs has captured the essence of contemporary fashion.

EMBRACING TRADITION

Vishwanath Basuthkar, store manager with a global jewellery brand discussed the trend of Bottu mala, the versatile necklace that can be worn as a haram (long necklace) or as part of a more extensive jewellery set, which has gained considerable popularity. Diverse multi-line necklaces, including 2-line, 3-line, and 5-line malas or the exquisite panchlada sets, now grace the necks of those who wish to make a statement with their jewellery.

"Moreover, it's the intricate and artistic 3-D sets with unique

The dazzling Sankranti look



It's the intricate and artistic 3-D sets with unique craftsmanship that are setting new trends. These sets, taking inspiration from temple jewellery, incorporate a three-step design approach, featuring elements such as a Lakshmi figure, intricate jaliwork, and stonework that adds an opulent touch

craftsmanship that are setting new trends. These sets, taking inspiration from temple jewellery, incorporate a three-step design approach, featuring elements such as a Lakshmi figure, intricate jaliwork, and stonework that adds an opulent touch," Basuthkar pointed out. Adding to the allure is the trend of Victorian-style jewellery,

and polki sets.

TIMELESS PEARLS, GEMS WITH A MODERN TWIST

Modern designs that combine pearls with diamonds, coloured gemstones, and intricate gold work have given classic pearl necklaces, earrings, and bracelets a fresh and versatile appeal. Additionally, seasoned stones like cubic zirconia are being incorporated for that extra sparkle.

ELEGANCE MEETS STYLE

"Among the younger crowd, it has become fashionable to wear only earrings, often paired with necklaces ranging from two to five lakhs in value," revealed Mahesh Kavra, a jeweller.

Vishwanath Basuthkar too echoed the same thought. "People these days are favouring lighter jewellery options, including diamond-studded pieces. Small pendants and delicate pendant chains have become popular choices. Bracelets, loose chain weighing around 5-6 grams are also gaining traction," he said.

"Every year, I invest quite a lot on diamond, kundan, and gold-based jewellery. This year, the polkis are in, so I bought a few polki jewellery too. These apart, I got myself a big diamond choker necklace which I can wear on different occasions," divulged Deepthi Reddy, a jewellery aficionado.

Despite rising metal prices, jewels remain a big draw. It's almost like the colours of the gems reflect the bright colours in the fields, both celebrating life.

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