

TDP MLA slams previous govt over TIDCO housing scheme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Government Chief Whip and Vinukonda MLA GV Anjaneyulu criticised the YSRCP government for allegedly betraying low-income families through the TIDCO housing scheme. He accused Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy of living in luxury while the poor struggle for homes on one-cent plots.

Speaking in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Saturday, Anjaneyulu claimed the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) had initiated efforts to provide housing for the underprivileged, but the YSRCP government dismantled these plans. He alleged that the Jagan administration, which had promised to construct 25 lakh houses at five lakh houses per year, failed to complete 90% of homes initiated by the TDP.



In Vinukonda, he said, 4,096 TIDCO houses were promised, but construction of 1,200 houses—80% complete under the previous government—remains unfinished. Anjaneyulu criticised the government for misleading the public with promises of one-cent housing plots, calling it a betrayal of the poor.

He urged Minister P Narayana to ensure the completion and distribution of TIDCO houses to the needy within the next two years, emphasising the importance of fulfilling commitments to the state's most vulnerable citizens.



AP's first 'container hospital' for remote healthcare rolls on

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

As part of its initiative to ensure healthcare access in remote tribal hamlets and hill-top areas, the state government has developed its first prefabricated health sub-centre, termed a 'container hospital.' This innovative medical facility, constructed from shipping containers, is set to address healthcare challenges in inaccessible regions.

The first-of-its-kind container hospital has been established at Karadavalasa panchayat, nestled in the hillsops under the Tonam Primary

Health Centre (PHC) in Saluru mandal, Parvathipuram Manyam district. Scheduled to be inaugurated later this month, this facility will serve as a pilot project designed to assess its impact on local healthcare delivery.

"This container hospital is a significant step forward for the healthcare needs of over 2,000 residents from surrounding villages, including Bellapaka Boddapadu, Narinjapadu, Karadavalasa, and Karadakottavalasa in Saluru mandal, as well as Chakirevulavasa, Kankanapalli, Ajuru, and Kumbivalasa in Pachipenta mandal," explained a government spokesperson.

2 children drowned in irrigation canal



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In a tragic incident, two children drowned in an irrigation canal at Yeruru village in Chillakuru mandal on Saturday. According to the police, the victims, Kudemula Nagendramma (11) and Kandukuru Chintalaiah (10), had gone to the Sona irrigation canal to wash clothes. While near the canal, they reportedly slipped and fell into the water.

The bodies were later retrieved from the canal by rescue teams. The police have registered a case and sent the bodies to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for postmortem.

Authorities are investigating the incident further.



Collector inaugurates free DSC training in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad inaugurated free DSC training classes at the MVP Colony BC Study Circle, urging candidates to focus on consistent preparation and hard work to succeed in competitive exams.

Organised by the District BC Welfare Department, the training is aimed at candidates from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes (BC), and Economically Backward Classes (EBC). The Collector announced a stipend of ₹1,500 per month and ₹1,000 for DSP materials for those maintaining at least 75% attendance during the programme.

He advised aspirants to avoid distractions like social media and to prioritise systematic study. "Set clear goals and stay dedicated. Preparation should continue even when notifications are not issued. Staying updated with current affairs is crucial," he said. He also encouraged managing stress through yoga, meditation, and physical exercise.

The Collector interacted with candidates during his visit to the BC Study Circle and described the programme as a valuable opportunity provided by the State Government. "Make the most of this platform and work towards your goals," he told the students.

BC Welfare Officer Sridevi, Social Welfare Department DD Rama Rao, and other officials were present, offering guidance and support to the participants.

RENOVATION OF KAMAKSHI TEMPLE
Sringeri Peetham Seer, Anam perform 'Bhoomi Pooja'

In his spiritual address, Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Vidhushekara Bharati Mahaswamiji reflected on the efforts of Adi Shankaracharya, who revitalised Hinduism 1,200 years ago, and called upon people to follow his teachings and protect Hindu dharma. He emphasised that the essence of Hinduism, which includes devotion and selfless service, should be embraced by all.



Temple was conducted here on Saturday. Minister for Endowments Anam Ramanarayana Reddy and Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Vidhushekara Bharati Mahaswamiji of the Sringeri Peetham performed the ritual at the temple in Somasila, located in the Atmakur constituency.

The renovation of the Kamakshi Sameta Someswarayam Temple is being undertaken at an estimated cost of Rs 8.40 crore. Both the Minister and the Seer unveiled a plaque during the ceremony, which was accompanied by Vedic hymns recited by priests.

In his spiritual address, Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Vidhu

shekhara Bharati Mahaswamiji reflected on the efforts of Adi Shankaracharya, who revitalised Hinduism 1,200 years ago, and called upon people to follow his teachings and protect Hindu dharma. He emphasised that the essence of Hinduism, which includes devotion and selfless service, should be embraced by all. The Seer also appreciated Minister Ramanarayana Reddy's efforts in initiating the temple's renovation.

Minister Ramanarayana Reddy, in his address, stated that the Kamakshi Sameta Someswarayam Temple had been damaged during floods, and the previous YSRCP government had not undertaken renovation efforts. However, after bringing the matter to the attention of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, immediate approval was granted for the renovation. The temple will be reconstructed using traditional Agameshstra methods and granite stone to make it a grand structure, the Minister revealed.



Trivial issue drives Inter girl to suicide

PNS ■ NARASARAOPT

A trivial dispute over a 'pen' with a co-student, forced an Intermediate girl student to commit suicide by jumping off from the hostel building here on Saturday.

Police said that the deceased girl Jetti Anusha (17) was studying Intermediate first year at a private institution and she was staying in the hostel. Anusha had a dispute with her friend over pen and they quarrelled on the issue.

Disgusted with a dispute with her friend over a pen, Anusha jumped off from the fourth floor of the hostel building. She was immediately taken to a hospital where the doctors declared her brought dead.

Narasaraopet RDO Hemalatha and Tahsildar Venugopal visited the college and the hostel and inquired with the principal and faculty members. The Narasaraopet rural police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH for postmortem. The deceased girl belonged to Vellaturu village in Bollapalli mandal of the district.

Meanwhile, the parents of the deceased girl, along with a large number of family members, friends and students staged a dharna on the main road in front of the hostel. The parents raised doubts over the death of their daughter. The parents alleged that the college management did not respond properly to the suspicious death of a female student.

RINL trade unions begin postcard movement

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The trade unions of RINL-Visakhapatnam Steel Plant have launched a massive postcard movement to draw attention to their long-pending demands and protest against the government's indifference. The campaign, spearheaded by various unions, aims to highlight the pressing issues faced by the iconic steel plant and urge immediate intervention from the

central government. J Ayodhyaram, a prominent trade union leader affiliated with CITU-Visakhapatnam, revealed that the unions are sending postcards to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, appealing for action to safeguard the future of the steel plant. "We aim to send 10 lakh postcards to the Prime Minister, emphasising the urgency of protecting Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, which stands as

a symbol of self-reliance and the pride of Andhra Pradesh," he said. The unions have been advocating for financial restructuring, procurement of captive mines, and safeguarding jobs at the plant. They accuse the government of failing to address these critical issues, pushing the steel plant towards a precarious situation.

The postcard movement has garnered significant attention, with employees,

local communities, and political leaders extending support. "This is not just a fight for the workers but for the economic stability of the region," Ayodhyaram added, calling for solidarity from all stakeholders. As the movement gains momentum, the unions hope to compel the central government to prioritize the issues of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant and ensure its revival and sustainability.



Naidu went back on poll promises: Ex-MP Margani

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Former MP Margani Bharat has strongly criticised TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu for going back on his election promises and imposing additional financial burdens on the public, particularly through surcharges.

Speaking to the media on Saturday, Bharat pointed out that there was no budgetary allocation for the much-touted "Super Six" schemes, which were promised during the election campaign. In contrast, he praised Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for his timely welfare measures, citing the government's "welfare calendar" that ensured payments



were made promptly to benefit various sections of society, Bharthi alleged that while the social welfare pension amount had been increased, the number of beneficiaries had been reduced, and there had been no proper allocation for other welfare schemes, indicating the government's lack of sincerity in fulfilling its election commitments.

He further pointed out that several schemes, such as free

bus services, were not mentioned in the budget, and the government seemed to be covering up these failures by engaging in social media activism. "Some of the social media posts were highly demeaning and sought to tarnish the image of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's family," Bharat remarked, adding that despite the allegations, no action had been taken against those spreading such posts.

The former MP also criticized the imposition of a one percent surcharge for flood relief in Vijayawada, which, according to him, was putting an additional strain on the common people already burdened by rising prices of essential commodities.

Vizag cops intensify vigil, target crime hotspots

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a proactive initiative aimed at improving public safety, Visakhapatnam Police are intensifying surveillance around the city following the results of a recent survey that identified nearly 500 "dark spots"—areas plagued by poor lighting and limited CCTV coverage. These zones have unfortunately become hotspots for various criminal activities, prompting urgent action from law enforcement.

In an exclusive interview with The Pioneer, Police Commissioner Dr. Shankhabrata Bagchi provided insights into the police's strategic response. "We have divided these hotspots into two categories: law and order and crime," he explained. "One

team will concentrate on combating anti-social activities, while the other will focus on property crimes."

Bagchi expressed concern over the alarming rise in crimes within these areas, particularly relating to drug abuse and prostitution. "We're concerned about the increasing number of crimes in these areas," he stated. "By increasing surveillance and improving lighting, we can significantly reduce crime rates."

To promote community involvement in these safety



efforts, the police are encouraging residents and business owners to install CCTV cameras under the Public Safety Act. Bagchi noted, "We're also working closely with the GVMC to improve street lighting and increase CCTV installations." Emphasizing the use of modern technology, Bagchi added, "We're planning to use modern technology like facial recognition and number plate recognition to enhance our surveillance capabilities. We believe that this will help us identify and apprehend criminals more efficiently."

The collaboration between the police and local government is evident, as the police commissioner has met with the GVMC commissioner to discuss strategies for bolstering

public safety infrastructure. Regarding funding, Bagchi mentioned the possibility of utilizing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions for CCTV installations, stating, "We're committed to working with the local government and community to make Visakhapatnam a safer city."

With the New Year fast approaching, the police have prioritized the improvement of lighting, especially on busy thoroughfares such as Beach Road, which are critical in deterring criminal activity and fostering a safer atmosphere for both residents and tourists alike. "By taking these proactive steps, we aim to make the city a safer place and send a strong message to criminals that their actions will not be tolerated," Bagchi emphasised.

Chef Pillai takes you to experience Kerala's rich flavours with modern twists at his first-ever North India pop-up at The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi, writes ABHI SINGHAL

SAVOURING KERALA'S RICH FLAVOURS



Dispelling the long-held notion that South Indian cuisine revolves solely around idli, dosa, and sambar, 21 Michelin-star Chef Suresh Pillai brought a culinary extravaganza to North India with his first-ever pop-up at The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi. The experience was a symphony of Kerala's authentic flavours, masterfully infused with Chef Pillai's signature modern tweaks and twists. From the aromatic embrace of the South spices to the delicate finesse of seafood delicacies, the pop-up menu was an ode to South India's rich gastronomic heritage taste. The extraordinary culinary journey took the eaters through the vibrant flavours of Kerala, in collaboration with renowned Restaurant Chef Pillai (RCP). The mouth-watering dishes were a presentation through an exclusive 10-course tasting menu curated by Chef Pillai. It all started with the welcome drink of the season, *Aarambam*, a bit of a sour drink. The meticulously curated vegetarian and non-vegetarian menus transported guests straight to the heart of Kerala, offering a true taste of the region's culinary treasures. Each dish was crafted with precision and passion, showcasing the soul of Kerala's



“ THE METICULOUSLY CURATED VEGETARIAN AND NON-VEGETARIAN MENUS TRANSPORTED GUESTS STRAIGHT TO THE HEART OF KERALA, OFFERING A TRUE TASTE OF THE REGION'S CULINARY TREASURES ”

cuisine, from its spices blending to its delicate yet robust flavours. For the Hors d'oeuvres, there was the mouth watery *Sambharam Kadumanga*, blending the Kerala summer butter milk & pickled mango inside paani poori. One sitting in North India would never imagine blending paani poori with a South Indian twist, which stole the show. “We created a menu from the Kerala essence, for example, our paani poori, one of the starters, actually, it's a North Indian paani poori out of it's a buttermilk we used to serve in Kerala along with a mango pickle. So the puri, we stuff with the mango and the cold buttermilk generally you say chach,” explained Chef Suresh Pillai, excited about his first pop up in the north side. As guests savoured the thoughtfully crafted hors d'oeuvres, the starters gracefully took center stage, led by the *Pazham Pori Chaat*. This Kerala-inspired masterpiece featured golden, batter-fried banana fritters a bit crispy on the outside, tender within, elevated by a drizzle of honey-yogurt blend that perfectly balanced sweetness and creaminess. Following this, guests were treated to *Cauliflower Porippu*, a dish that beautifully showcased Kerala's rich spicy taste. Crispy, marinated cauliflower florets were deep-fried to golden perfection and then stir-fried with *thenga porippu*—an aromatic blend of grated coconut, fragrant curry leaves, and a hint of chili powder. The starters in both the vegetarian and the non-vegetarian segments were a delightful interplay of textures and flavours, with the crunch of the cauliflower perfectly complementing the earthy, spicy-sweet coconut mixture. The main course featured Chef Suresh Pillai's signature dishes recommended by himself, offering both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options that embodied the essence of Kerala's culinary artistry. For vegetarians, there was *Paneer Nirvana*: tender marinated cottage cheese, pan-fried to perfection, and then slow-cooked in creamy coconut milk. The dish was elevated with the earthy flavours of ginger, green chilies, and aromatic curry leaves, all beautifully encased in a banana leaf for a touch of traditional authenticity. For non-



Coconut Pudding, a light and fluffy treat infused with the delicate flavour and soft flesh of the tender coconut, alongside the *Coco Nutty Choco Brownie*, a decadent eggless chocolate dessert enriched with crunchy nuts and fragrant coconut, served with a scoop of creamy ice cream. Non-vegetarian diners were treated to the *Palada Cheesecake*, a unique fusion dessert layering the traditional *Kerala Palada* (rice flakes) flavour atop a crisp, crusty base, offering a delightful blend of tradition and sophistication to end the meal on a sweet note. The evening was further elevated by a curated selection of handcrafted cocktails, each a testament to artistry in mixology. Highlights included the refreshing *Toki Highball*, blending Toki Suntory Whisky with soda water and a grapefruit twist, and the zesty *Toki Orchard Sour*, featuring green apple, lemon, and a silky egg white foam. Gin enthusiasts indulged in the crisp *Roku Gin & Tonic* with ginger accents and the floral *Roku Hibiscus Highball* with hibiscus cordial and fizz. Whiskey lovers relished the bold *Jim Beam Orange Fashioned* with aromatic bitters, while the indulgent *Haku Caramel Espresso Martini*, combining Haku Japanese Craft Vodka with caramel and espresso, provided a decadent finish to the cocktail lineup. Chef Suresh Pillai's pop-up at The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi was an experience that will redefine the perception of South Indian cuisine. With his signature modern twists on Kerala's rich culinary traditions, Chef Pillai transported guests on a culinary journey that celebrated both the simplicity and complexity of Kerala's vibrant flavours.

The Vibrant Flavours OF KOREA

Le Meridien brings Korea's rich flavours, authentic dishes, and timeless traditions to the heart of New Delhi

TEAM AGENDA

Korean food is a vibrant and flavourful cuisine celebrated for its unique balance of colors, textures, and tastes. Rooted in centuries-old traditions, it emphasises fresh, seasonal ingredients, often fermented, to create deep, savoury flavours and nutritional richness. The Korean dining experience is distinctive, with meals commonly featuring a variety of side dishes, or *banchan*, that range from spicy kimchi to delicate pickled vegetables. Key staples like rice, vegetables, and meats are skilfully combined with ingredients like gochujang (a spicy-sweet red pepper paste) and doenjang (fermented soybean paste) to create dishes that are as visually stunning as they are delicious. From the sizzling sounds of bulgogi on a grill to the comforting warmth of a bubbling *jjigae* stew, Korean food offers a sensory journey into a culture that values harmony, balance, and bold, memorable flavours. Food lovers in New Delhi had a culinary treat from Korea right in New Delhi as Le Meridien celebrated the unique flavours of Korean cuisine with its much-anticipated Korean Food Festival. Running till November 17th, 2024, this gastronomic event was an immersive dining experience, highlighting traditional and contemporary Korean dishes at its 'The One' restaurant. The festival is a feature of Le Meridien New Delhi's annual '+1 Celebrating Flavours of the Globe' initiative under the '+1 for the Leap Year' campaign, bringing exotic, authentic global flavours to the heart of India. The Korean Food Festival's dinner buffet had been meticulously curated by Chef Young-Hwan Jang, Chef de Partie at AC Hotel by Marriott Seoul Gangnam. With over two decades of culinary expertise and a deep-rooted passion for Korean cuisine, Chef Jang has flown in from Seoul to offer guests an authentic taste of his homeland, blending



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traditional Korean staples with innovative techniques to appeal to a global palate. “We are thrilled to showcase the diverse and flavourful cuisine of Korea through this festival,” said Meena Bhatia, Vice President and General Manager of Le Meridien New Delhi. “This event aligns perfectly with our +1 Celebrating Flavours of the Globe initiative, a highlight of our annual '+1 for the Leap Year' initiative, and we believe it will offer our guests a truly unforgettable dining experience,” she added. The menu showcased a range of traditional Korean dishes, crafted to deliver the distinctive flavours and textures that define this cuisine. Guests can look forward to sampling dishes like *Acorn Salad*, a refreshing and nutritious delicacy; *Gimbap Avocado*, Korea's beloved seaweed rice rolls with a modern twist; *Spring Onion Pancake*, a savoury delight that's perfect for

sharing; the spicy and comforting *Stir-fried Rice Cake (Tteokbokki)*; and a cooling *Chilled Seafood Salad*, perfect for Delhi's warm evenings. Each dish on the buffet spread has been carefully prepared by Chef Jang to ensure an authentic taste of Korea. “I am excited to bring the vibrant flavours of Korea to Le Meridien New Delhi,” shared Chef Young-Hwan Jang. “Through this festival, we aim to introduce guests to the diverse range of Korean dishes, from classic comfort foods to innovative culinary creations,” he quips with a smile. This unique dining experience went beyond just food—it invited guests to embark on a journey through Korea's rich culinary heritage. From the spicy and savoury flavours that Korean cuisine is known for, to innovative twists on traditional dishes, the festival offers a deep and delicious dive into Korean culture and flavours.



A Meal Worth Revisiting

Located in Sector 66, Gurugram, Poiz is an inviting dining destination that combines a vibrant atmosphere with a diverse menu. After three visits, it's evident that Poiz offers a delightful experience for food enthusiasts and social diners alike, writes PAWAN SONI

It's rare for me to visit a restaurant multiple times before writing a review, but Poiz, a beautiful new addition to the dining scene, compelled me to return three times to fully capture its essence. Poiz boasts an artistic, expansive interior, blending elegant indoor seating with a spacious patio featuring its own bar and an inviting open dining area. While many restaurants of this size tend to cater heavily to the nightlife crowd, Poiz strikes a perfect balance: a well-curated bar selection with inventive cocktails for the social set, and a menu that delights families and party goers alike. Certain dishes have become my go-to orders, each offering something special. The *Lychee Chaat*, a Thai-inspired creation, is an absolute must-try. Bits of lychee and avocado sit atop a crispy rice puff base, accompanied by a flavourful *Nam Jim* sauce - one bite, and you won't want to stop. The *Chicken Chilli Dim Sum* features a delicate wrapper and pairs perfectly with the accompanying sauces. Another standout is the *Taiwanese Mushrooms*, crisp-coated and served with pickled chilli and a sweet-sour



sauce, accented by crunchy peanuts for extra texture. Not every dish was flawless. The nachos were slightly too salty for my taste. However, the ramen from their global menu made up for it with its rich, layered flavours. It's a generous portion, perfect for a hearty appetite or sharing with friends. My companions thoroughly enjoyed the *Lamb Adana Kebab* as much as they did the sushi. While Poiz has a wide range of Indian dishes, I found myself drawn to the global offerings, including their expertly crafted *Neapolitan pizza*. A meal here would be incomplete without the *Belgian Nutella Chocolate*. This dessert not only excels in taste but also impresses in presentation. The smooth *Belgian chocolate* and *Nutella sweetness* are cleverly balanced with blueberries and hazelnuts, creating a perfect finale. For those in the area, Poiz is well worth a visit. Ratings: (Out of 5) Food: 4.25 Ambience: 4.25 Service: 4.0 Drinks: 4.0 Overall: 4.25 Address: Poiz, 2nd Floor, AIPL Joy Street, Sector 66, Gurugram



A SPIRITUAL GETAWAY

Kurukshetra, one of Hinduism's most revered pilgrimage destinations, is where ancient spirituality converges with modern comforts, writes **SANTANU GANGULY**

Though Kurukshetra is a significant pilgrimage site for Hindus and is located close to Delhi, it has not always attracted large numbers of visitors. Mentioned in various Hindu scriptures, particularly the Mahabharata, Kurukshetra holds great spiritual importance. According to Acharya Some Nath Gautam, priest at the Katyayani Temple, visiting all the ancient temples here would require at least a year. This journey, known as the Kurukshetra 84 Kos Parikrama, encompasses numerous sacred and historical sites. However, modern pilgrims often focus on the most important temples, holy places, and archaeological monuments due to time constraints.

The city offers a variety of accommodation options, from budget-friendly 2- and 3- star hotels to numerous dharamshalas. For those seeking luxury, the Noormahal Palace in Karnal stands out as Haryana's only 5-star hotel, offering exceptional amenities such as a spa, jacuzzi, modern gym, and fine dining. Blending heritage with modern comforts, this ultra-luxurious hotel features the Frontier Mail restaurant, housed in a life-sized train compartment from the historic Frontier Mail. The restaurant's ambience evokes the 19th century, with interiors reflecting the Mumbai-Peshawar route.

A visit to Kurukshetra typically begins at Brahma Sarovar, Asia's largest man-made water body, stretching 3,600 feet long, 1,500 feet wide, and 45 feet deep. According to Hindu mythology, the lake was created by Lord Brahma at the dawn of the universe. Brahma Sarovar, along with the nearby Sannihit Sarovar, is fed by underground channels from the Bhakra Nangal Dam. The ancient Shiva Temple here is believed to have been established by Lord Shiva himself. Between the two lakes lies the



A VISIT TO KURUKSHETRA TYPICALLY BEGINS AT BRAHMA SAROVAR, ASIA'S LARGEST MAN-MADE WATER BODY, STRETCHING 3,600 FEET LONG, 1,500 FEET WIDE, AND 45 FEET DEEP. ACCORDING TO HINDU MYTHOLOGY, THE LAKE WAS CREATED BY LORD BRAHMA AT THE DAWN OF THE UNIVERSE.

Mata Katyayani Temple, which features an impressive bronze sculpture of Arjuna and Lord Krishna on a chariot, crafted by renowned sculptor Ram Vanji Sutar. This sculpture has become a popular photography spot. Another notable site is the ancient Chandra Kup, a well where, according to legend, water turns into milk during a lunar eclipse. It is also said to be the place where Draupadi washed her hair after the infamous bloodshed by

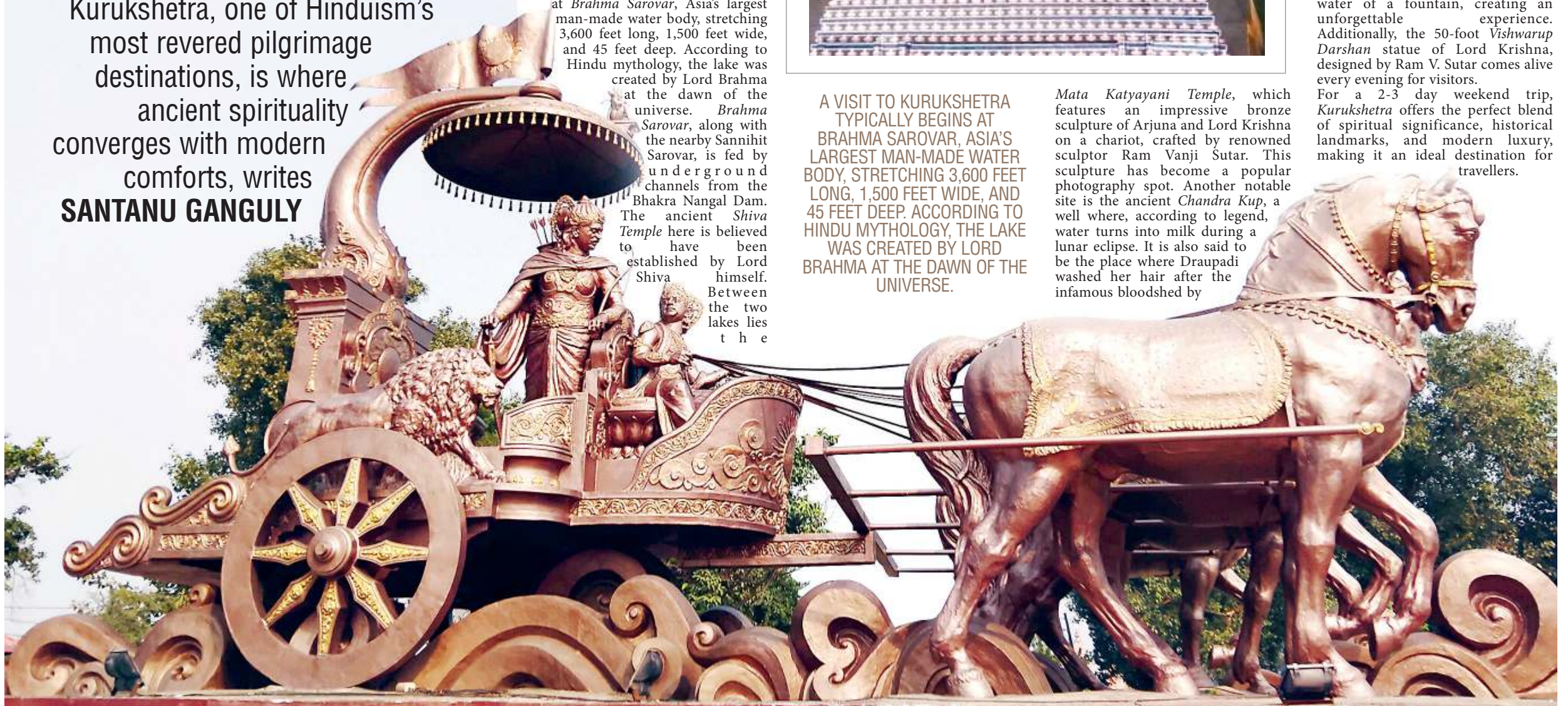
Dushasana. The Kali Kamli Temple, built by Kali Kamli Baba of Bengal in the 19th century, is a siddha peeth located near Brahma Sarovar. Devi Kup, also known as the BhadraKali Temple, is one of the 51 Shakti Peethas and Haryana's only such temple. Pandit Satpal Sharma explains that the temple holds significance for Lord Krishna and Balarama, who visited before the Kurukshetra War. Devotees continue to donate clay, ceramic, or silver horses here, a tradition rooted in sacred history. Special pujas for Maa Kali and Lord Shani are held every Saturday.

The Sthanu Mahadev Temple is another important site, where Lord Krishna and the Pandavas sought Lord Shiva's blessings before the war. Nearby, the historical Harsh ka Tilla and Sheikh Chilli's Tomb offer fascinating insights into the region's past. History enthusiasts can also explore the Sri Krishna Museum and Kurukshetra Panorama, which showcases key artifacts. For children and astronomy lovers, the Kalpana Chawla Planetarium provides a fun and educational experience.

In the coming years, the ISKCON Temple, currently under construction and expected to be completed by 2026, will be a must-visit site. At Jyotisar, where Lord Krishna delivered the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna, visitors can enjoy an impressive light and sound show, which reflects on the water of a fountain, creating an unforgettable experience.

Additionally, the 50-foot Vishwarup Darshan statue of Lord Krishna, designed by Ram V. Sutar comes alive every evening for visitors.

For a 2-3 day weekend trip, Kurukshetra offers the perfect blend of spiritual significance, historical landmarks, and modern luxury, making it an ideal destination for travellers.



EXPLORING DAMAN

A Coastal Escape with Cultural Riches

Nestled between Gujarat and Maharashtra, Daman enchants travellers with its unique blend of colonial allure, scenic beaches, and relaxed vibe, writes **NEETA LAL**

The lovely city of Daman, an erstwhile Portuguese colony, offers a unique blend of colonial charm with a laid-back vibe. The administrative capital of the union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, it is located between Gujarat and Maharashtra and attracts high footfall from a diverse set of travellers. Peppered with colonial buildings showcasing a rich syncretic culture, the city's stately Nani Daman Fort and the Church of Bom Jesus give one a taste of history, while Jampore Beach and Devka Beach make for Instagram-friendly settings for a day of relaxation.

But perhaps what makes Daman such a terrific destination for weekend getaways is its tourism infrastructure, including smooth interconnecting motorways, buzzy restaurants, and good hotels. Our abode for a staycation is the award-winning The Deltin Daman, the city's only five-star hotel. Known for its stellar service and facilities, it mercifully comes without the high tariff of upscale hotels in Mumbai and other metros. A world-class spa, gourmet cuisine at its multiple restaurants, a large swimming pool, health club, gym, and plush accommodation ticked all the boxes for a fabulous and memorable stay. For business travellers, the hotel houses 30,000 sq ft of business space catering to large events such as corporate conferences and weddings. The hotel's sustainability efforts are also commendable, with strict



into flavour-packed laal maas, piping hot breads, gobi and bhindi sabzi, raita, and salad. Dessert was the creamiest ras malai on this side of the Daman Ganga river, garnished with a silver varq and date syrup! Semi-comatose from so much good food, we pledged to skip dinner. But that was not to be, as we were informed that the chefs had prepared choice delicacies for us at the poolside Mediterranean-inspired BBQ and grill restaurant, Sky High. After eyeing the selection of inventive dips with Middle Eastern snacks, empanadas, and pizzas with innovative toppings, our pledge to "go easy" on food went out the window!

To slake our thirst, we visited Whiskys Bar, which offers an exclusive collection of single malts. The Poolside Bar and Juice Bar kept us refreshed with health drinks and fresh juices. There's no shortage of entertainment at the hotel either. The Den – an atmospheric indoor family space – features foosball, billiards, carom, chess, and more. There's even a creche for young parents who want to leave their little ones under supervised care while they unwind. The property's three azure swimming pools (including a kids' pool) are a major attraction. After a quick swim on day two, we headed to the spa, where a rejuvenating body massage and

facial left us feeling reborn!

After spending three wonderful days at The Deltin Daman, we're led to wonder how, in today's fiercely competitive hospitality landscape, the hotel consistently maintains such high standards. "As ours is the only five-star hotel in Daman, our top-notch service and facilities are unmatched by any other hotel in the area," says the hotel's dynamic general manager, Akarsh Mathur. "We cater to all requirements, whether it's a weekend getaway or an ideal wedding, by customising our services to suit all needs. Our spacious rooms are the largest in their category, and our ample indoor and outdoor event spaces, as well as our large river-shaped swimming pool, are among the features that make our hotel a top choice for discerning guests. Our F&B has also received rave reviews."

Mathur believes that with higher disposable incomes and "revenge travel," Indian guests are prepared to pay competitive rates for excellent services. "The demand for upscale local tourism destinations has grown exponentially, and hotels no longer have to rely on foreign tourists from overseas to fill their rooms. If you provide great service and pay attention to guests' needs, the property will always be buzzing," he adds. Indeed, who can fault that flawless logic?

Neeta Lal is an international award-nominated, Delhi-based editor and senior journalist.

ART, CULTURE AND NATURE RECOALESCE AT JEHANGIR ART GALLERY



AARTI SREENATH
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Art, culture and the whispers of a river older than the Ganga flow through the REVA exhibition, where four artists, Anurag Jadia, Trapti Gupta, Vandita Shrivastava and Praveen Khare, have come together to celebrate the life and legacy of the sacred Narmada River. This exhibition, held at the Jehangir Art Gallery, showcased works that delved into the personal, cultural and spiritual connections these artists hold with Madhya Pradesh and its timeless river, the Narmada.

While each artist is united by a deep-rooted connection to Madhya Pradesh, not all have painted the Narmada directly on canvas before. "The theme of the Narmada felt natural and fitting for our collective work," says Anurag Jadia, whose previous pieces were inspired by landscapes more broadly but now channel the essence of the Narmada's flow and presence.

Anurag's work is inspired by landscapes where mountains and rivers coalesce, such as those in Uttarakhand. These landscapes reveal shapes hidden in the stones and clouds—a face here, an animal's outline there. He captures this interplay of imagination and natural beauty in his paintings, combining recognisable landscapes with scenes drawn from his mind's eye. His art is both familiar and ethereal, a testimony to his journeys into the wild, where nature and creativity meet. For Anurag, REVA has been a unique chance to honour the Narmada and the civilisations that thrived along its banks, despite it not being a direct subject in his previous works.

Vandita Shrivastava, an artist from Indore, brings a different but equally profound approach with her creation of "Mandita," a form blending Indian folk traditions and her own artistic signature. A fusion of the traditional 'Mandna' style with her name, Vandita's Mandita features bold line work and textures inspired by folk art and a harmonious palette that draws



from daily life—birds, nature and even the changing moods of the moon. In her pieces, the moon takes on various personas, embodying the richness of Indian folklore and spirituality.

"The Narmada, as an ancestral river, carries with it generations of our stories," Vandita explains. While she had previously painted broader themes of folklore and culture, the Narmada has become a new focal point in this exhibition, giving her work fresh layers of cultural depth. Her pieces invite viewers to reconnect with heritage and tradition, encouraging a sense of belonging that feels increasingly rare today.

Praveen Khare, a botanical artist with a background in science, brought a unique lens to REVA, bridging botany and narrative art. Known for his precise line work, his ink-and-paper pieces are a tribute to Kalidasa, the legendary poet of Ujjain, whose tales also draw from the inspiration of rivers. Though his art has long celebrated nature, she acknowledges that working on a Narmada-inspired theme was a fresh exploration. His pieces reflect the river's cultural essence but also embrace ecological and mythological themes that connect deeply with Indian history.

Trapti Gupta, captures the innocence and camaraderie of youth in her work, with scenes depicting friends and siblings in black and white. "The theme of continuity is central to my work, as it is with the Narmada," Trapti says, describing her evolving journey as an artist. Her previous work hadn't directly focused on the Narmada, but for REVA, she used the river as a metaphor for the purity and joy of childhood, bringing a fresh angle to her usual ink-and-pencil depictions.

For these artists, REVA is not just an exhibition; it's a mission to remind future generations of their roots. "In cities, we've become so detached from our soil, our seeds," Vandita reflects. "Through art, we can reconnect with the values and traditions that are embedded in our past." Each artist feels the urgency to preserve this cultural wealth, with this exhibition serving as a bridge for viewers, especially young visitors, to rediscover India's ancient heritage.

The timeless spirit of the Narmada River, flowing through the heart of Madhya Pradesh, is brought to life in the REVA exhibition at Jehangir Art Gallery. Curated by four talented artists—Anurag Jadia, Trapti Gupta, Vandita Shrivastava and Praveen Khare—the exhibition explored their deep-rooted personal, cultural and spiritual connections with the sacred river. Through diverse artistic expressions, the artists celebrated the Narmada's profound influence on landscape, folklore, spirituality and daily life, inviting viewers on a journey to reconnect with an ancient heritage that continues to shape India's identity today. With each piece, the exhibition not only honoured the river's legacy but also spoke to the urgent need to preserve our cultural roots for future generations

INTERNATIONAL MEN'S DAY SPECIAL

Every year on November 19th, International Men's Day is observed to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments, contributions and general well-being of men worldwide. What better way to express gratitude than with a well-considered gift? This year, let's honour the men who motivate us by selecting presents that highlight their accomplishments, speak to their passions and promote their wellbeing!

CELEBRATE MEN'S DAY WITH STYLE

As International Men's Day approaches, it's the perfect opportunity to celebrate the men who inspire us. For the pair that loves thrill and precision, the Pitstop Collection is a unique gift choice. Inspired by the energy of motorsports, it includes India's first racing chronograph, powered by the Seiko Mecaquartz VK63—a blend of quartz accuracy with mechanical chronograph features.

Starting at Rs. 15,900



PERFECT POUR FOR INTERNATIONAL MEN'S DAY

For a standout gift this International Men's Day, Nicobar Gin brings both craftsmanship and distinct flavour, making it perfect for gin enthusiasts and connoisseurs alike. This premium gin balances floral notes of elderflower and hibiscus with the spice of grains of paradise, while the infusion of three distinct types of juniper gives it a robust, layered profile. It is ideal for savouring neat or in refined cocktails, making it a memorable gift that celebrates the artistry of fine spirits.

Available for INR 2,360

GIVE HIM GIFT OF CARE

Whether it's the brother who's been your lifelong confidant, the husband who fills your days with love and companionship, or the father whose wisdom has guided you, this day is a chance to celebrate their unique qualities and unwavering presence. The O3+ D-tan pack makes an ideal choice for your friends, brothers, husband, or any loved ones who enjoy looking and feeling their best.

This innovative skincare solution is expertly crafted to remove tan and reveal a brighter, healthier complexion. Packed with natural ingredients, it gently fades sunspots and evens out skin tone, helping to restore a natural, vibrant glow.

Price: Rs. 830

TRAVEL WITH PURPOSE

This International Men's Day, upperscale empowers today's modern man to travel with purpose, combining style, sustainability and functionality. It is redefining the travel gear experience by offering a range of eco-friendly products designed for the conscious traveller! From GRS-certified laptop bags to versatile backpacks and durable duffels, each product is thoughtfully crafted with high-performance materials that support a greener planet without compromising on style or durability.

GIFT ESSENCE OF ADVENTURE THIS MEN'S DAY

This Men's Day, surprise the special men in your life with the Mamaearth perfume gift set for men – a perfect duo for those who seek both elegance and adventure. Into the Woods offers a rich, earthy blend of geranium, rose and oud wood, capturing the essence of nature's allure. Into the Waves infuses invigorating notes of bergamot, aqua and musk, bringing the freshness of the ocean to every day. Safe for skin and clothes, this set is a meaningful way to remind the men in your life to embrace their unique journey, wherever it takes them.

PERFECT GIFT FOR SPECIAL MEN IN YOUR LIFE

Show your appreciation with a thoughtful gift from thinKitchen®. Elevate Men's day with the Dartington Wine Bar White Wine Glasses Set of 2. Celebrated for their exquisite British craftsmanship since 1967, its elegant design and exceptional artistry make these glasses a perfect gift. Handcrafted in the picturesque North Devon hills, this set embodies sophistication and warmth, making it an ideal addition to gatherings or a thoughtful gesture for loved ones.

INR 3,699

GIVE HIS WARDROBE WINTER MAKEOVER



Give your partner wardrobe a fashion makeover with timeless pieces from AGTHEXCEPTIONAL AW'24 winter collection *Glint*. The collection embraces a new experience with a diverse range of hoodies and jackets with rich autumn earthy hues that compliments Indian winter. The impeccable tailoring, timeless styles and plush fabrics of design pieces make a perfect gift choice for the men you adore.

MIX IT UP THIS MEN'S DAY

Elevate his mixology skills with the BarCraft 6 Pc Cocktail Set. This set includes six essential cocktail tools and a recipe booklet, perfect for making gourmet cocktails at home. With a stylish wood and brass look, it adds a vintage touch to any home bar. Packaged in an attractive gift box, it's an ideal Men's Day gift for any cocktail enthusiast.

Price: INR 7,799



HOROSCOPE

ARIES



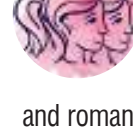
Your ambition will be boosted by supportive siblings and favourable conditions. Face family issues with resilience and thoughtful planning to ensure success. Focus on growth.

TAURUS



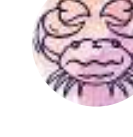
Your humour and energy will win hearts. Love shines brightly and family brings happiness. Embrace travel, relaxation and new challenges to enhance vitality and ease uncertainty.

GEMINI



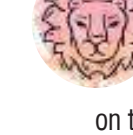
You may develop a deep bond with a close someone. Family and romance bring happiness, but busy schedules might get in the way. Be gentle with loved ones, and do not be arrogant.

CANCER



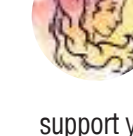
Manage emotions thoughtfully. Balance professional and personal risks with priority to the family. Use your energy well, and welcome positive changes and joyful moments in life.

LEO



Your drive and resilience power your success. Rely on trusted friends and seek support when making decisions. Family ties may seem distant. So make sure to balance work with family.

VIRGO



Stay optimistic and focused to enhance success. Siblings will support you to reach your goals. Avoid being overly critical to prevent delays and be open to changes and new projects.

LIBRA



Balance family time with relationship challenges. Embrace loyalty and collaboration, avoiding pride and laziness. Stay open to unexpected connections. New experiences await.

SCORPIO



Maintain a positive impression. Cherish promising love prospects and embrace family time for renewal. Balance reliability with your eccentricities and face challenges calmly.

SAGITTARIUS



Embrace charm and confidence as you tackle challenges, but avoid pride. Seek security guidance, and focus your energy on work and family harmony. Sibling clashes may occur.

CAPRICORN



Balance humility with pride for personal growth. Loyalty and generosity will strengthen friendships. Nurture family bonds and be open to heartfelt pleas. Unexpected expenses may arise.

AQUARIUS



Rely on trusted support and stay calm under pressure. Joy will come through introspection. Encourage discipline for personal growth, balance drive with patience, and offer support to family.

PISCES



Focus on health and studies during this crucial time. Manage your emotions, and embrace your confident nature. Stay calm under pressure. Nostalgia abounds as siblings reconcile.

the pioneer agenda

"Hum Dono" was accepted in a very big way. It was the official entry at the 1962 Berlin Film Festival
— Dev Anand



In the enchanting Coastal city of Goa, where the sea whispers the dream and the sand carries the tale, the grand curtains would be raised for the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) for the world. The IFFI is the only South Asian festival accredited by the International Federation of Film Producers' Associations (FIAPF).

Now, being held in Goa since 2004, IFFI is not only the grand festival for the films showcase but it's a platform, where Indian cinema interacts with world cinema, where filmmakers connect with audiences, and where the magic of storytelling is truly celebrated.

This year, IFFI has received 1,676 submissions from 101 countries, highlighting its expanding global influence after all these years. The International Film Festival of India 2024 will showcase over 180 international films from 81 countries, including 15 world premieres, 3 international premieres, 40 Asian premieres, and 106 Indian premieres. Featuring celebrated titles and award-winning films from around the world, this year's festival promises to make a powerful impression on audiences and on the world of cinema.

Talking about the past, the journey of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) dates back to 1952 when India was struggling to find its cinematic voice post-independence. The Government of India had organised the first IFFI which was held in Mumbai, and it showcased 40 films from 23 countries. The IFFI 1952 marked the first time India had its own international film festival, bringing global cinema to Indian shores. The initial editions of IFFI were held across various Indian cities, including Delhi, Chennai, and Kolkata, with the festival traveling from one city to another to reach a broader audience. The past 20 years spent by IFFI in Goa, contributed to Goa being the official place for the IFFI keeping in mind the advantage of its cultural vibrancy and scenic beauty. IFFI is a unique one distinct from other film festivals worldwide. Known as the "Film Festival of Goa," IFFI blends seamlessly with Goa's local culture, attracting an international audience to India's favourite tourist destination.

Goa's vibrant art scene, beach culture, and heritage architecture complement the festival's spirit, creating an inviting space where cinema lovers from all corners of the world can gather for a shared celebration. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in collaboration with the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG), is set to host the 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa from 20th to 28th November 2024.

With IFFI continuously taking place in Goa, has helped the state develop a thriving ecosystem that supports film tourism. Local businesses, artists, and artisans benefit from the influx of visitors, and the festival has become a key driver of economic and cultural growth in the region. During the curtain raiser event for the IFFI in New Delhi, Dr. L. Murugan, highlighted the festival's prestigious role on the global stage. He said, "IFFI has become a landmark event, not just for India but internationally, comparable to global festivals such as Cannes."

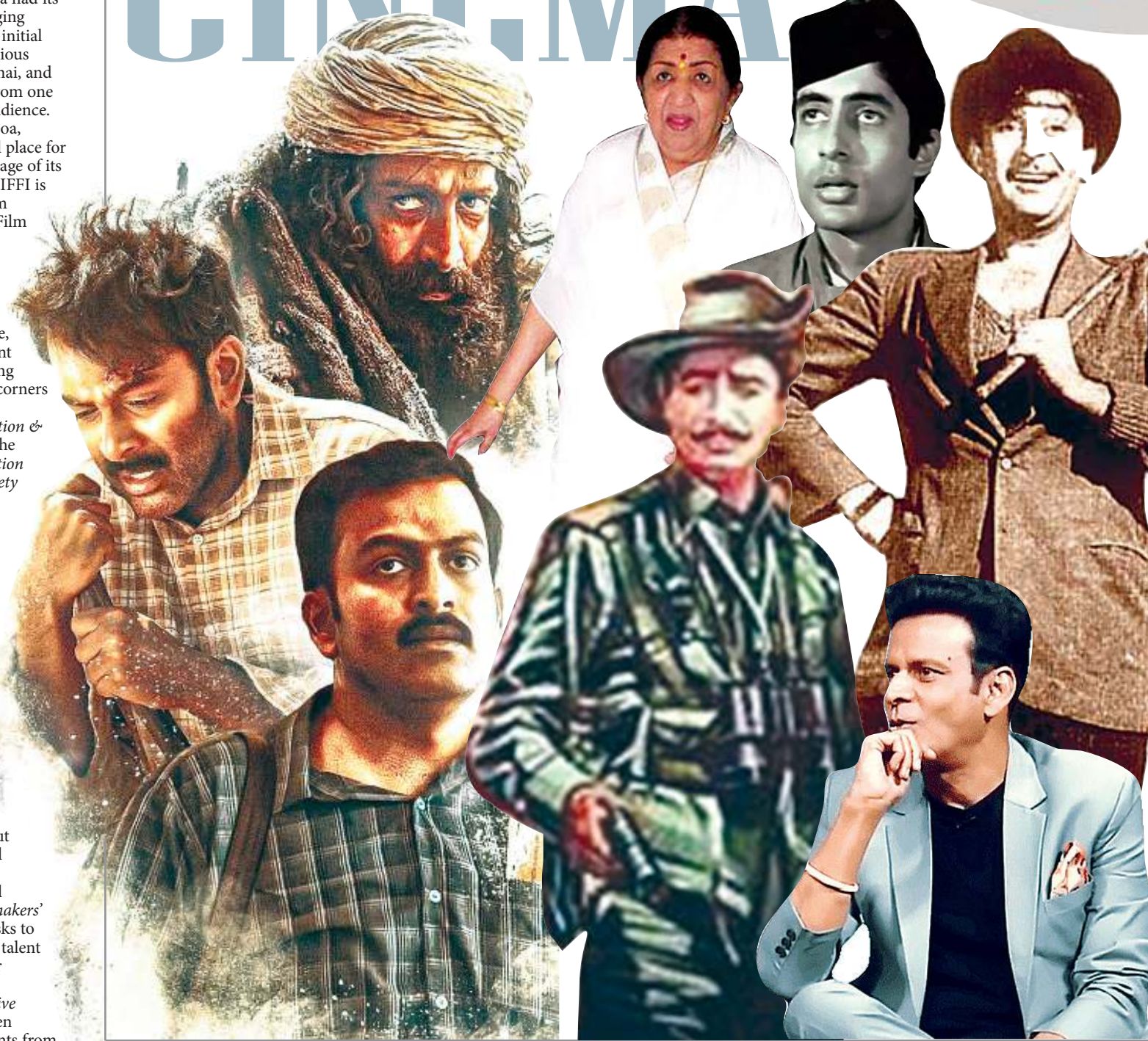
The 55th edition of IFFI in 2024 will showcase the theme of 'Young Filmmakers' - "The Future is Now". The theme asks to embrace the timeless and the young talent in our country and recognising their potential in shaping the future of creativity. The initiative of the Creative Minds of Tomorrow platform has been enhanced to support 100 young talents from 75 in the previous editions. 400 young film students, from Film Schools across the country, are being facilitated by the Ministry to attend IFFI.

The festival will give tributes to cinema legends, and retrospectives on iconic careers. The Country Focus section will allow viewers to experience the best of international cinema, linking to cultural exchange. The Country of Focus for IFFI 2024 will be Australia. This will be made sure by a dedicated package of Australian films giving a strong presence at the festival. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed between Screen Australia & NFDC, for participation by leading Australian filmmakers in the festival and the Film Bazaar, and a showcase by AusFilm, promoting Australia's unique filming locations & co-productions.

Apart from Australia, in partnership with the British Film Institute, the United Kingdom will be showcased as the "Treaty Country", presenting British cinema through a carefully crafted package. Celebration of the pioneers is very important to lead the way, give examples, and keep the generations inspired by looking over to the people who have done it no others. Like every other year, the stars of the cinema, keeping up with the entertainment industry would be facilitated by awards at the IFFI 2024. The IFFI's prestigious Golden Peacock Award,

As every year, uniting global storytellers, the International Film Festival of India 2024, is an allure and will transform Goa into a vibrant heaven for film enthusiasts, cinema pioneers, and aspiring young talents, writes ABHI SINGHAL

GRAND CELEBRATION OF CINEMA



Also, through workshops, masterclasses, panel discussions, and networking events, IFFI 2024 will provide a learning platform for aspiring filmmakers, creating an inclusive space for cinematic celebration and growth.

Panel Discussions like *Women Safety and Cinema* with renowned panelists Imtiaz Ali, Suhasini Manirathnam, Kushboo Sundar, Bhumi Pednekar; *Stories that Travel*, a panel that would explore the art of storytelling that travels beyond its origins, addressing the themes, techniques, and emotional core that allow films to reach and impact diverse audiences worldwide with Farrukh Dhondy, Anna Saura, Tanishtha Chatterjee, Vani Tripathi Tikoo and Lucy Walker. Each panel discussion would be a new learning for all present at the festival. *Culture As Context for Cinematic Storytelling* with panelist Dr. Sachchidanad Joshi, Anish Tripathi, Bharat Bala will be a major learning experience for the audience.

Mastering the Unseen with Manoj Bajpayee, Sunil Srinivasan; *Centenary Special: ANR - Celebrating the Life and Works of Akkineni Nageswara Rao*. This centenary special will celebrate the legendary actor & producer Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR), whose contributions to Indian cinema have been unparalleled, with celebrated actor and his son Nagarjuna being the speaker; *From Big Screen to Streaming* in conversation with Manisha Koirala and Vikramaditya Motwane; *Celebrating the Life and Works of Raj Kapoor - 'The Greatest Showman'* with Ranbir Kapoor; *Empowering Change: Women Leading the Way in Cinema* with giving women led hits Kriti Sanon and Rudrani Chatteraj. Addition will be *Lata Mangeskar Memorial Talk: Musical Theatre in India* with A R Rahman.

Masterclasses by the pioneers in the cinema industry, giving insights about the highs and lows will be conducted every year on all the days of the 7-day festival. *Power of Failure, a masterclass by Anupam Kher* will be sharing his journey, highlighting how failures acted as the catalyst for his growth and success. Another one by Philip Noyce on *How to Succeed in New Hollywood*. To all this will be the addition of Stephen Woolley an English filmmaker giving a masterclass on *Film Production and its Stages* will be valuable. The National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) will also be hosting the much-anticipated *Film Bazaar* from November 20 to 24, transforming Goa into a bustling hub for filmmakers, producers, distributors, and cinema enthusiasts from across the globe. Since its inception, *Film Bazaar* has established itself as South Asia's premier film market, providing a platform for fresh voices and unique cinematic narratives from the region to take the global stage.

The *Film Bazaar* has since grown to become the international film market for South Asia. It serves as a meeting place for prospective creative and financial cooperation between South Asian and foreign filmmakers, producers, sales representatives, and festival programmers. From November 20 to 24, 2024, the 18th *Film Bazaar* at IFFI 2024 will take place at the Marriott Resort in Goa. This year, the IFFI promises not just a cinematic showcase but a festival brimming with cultural exchange, artistic celebration, and an unwavering commitment to the future of films in the country and globally. From illuminating conversations to inspiring mentorship and unforgettable screenings, IFFI 2024 is set to transcend expectations, offering a truly transformative experience for film lovers worldwide.

granted for Best Film will remain one of the most revered honours, while the Silver Peacock Awards for Best Director, Actor, and Actress highlight individual excellence. In recent years, IFFI has expanded its awards to reflect evolving cinematic trends. A new award of Best Debut Indian Director has been an addition this year to recognise young filmmaking talent across India. The ICFT UNESCO Gandhi Medal honours films promoting peace and tolerance, and the Special Jury Award highlights outstanding narrative and technical achievements, often bringing unique works into the spotlight.

The festival's commitment to fresh talent shines through the Best Debut Feature Film award, which encourages bold new voices, while the Indian Panorama section fosters Indian cinematic diversity. To embrace modern storytelling forms, IFFI introduced awards for animation, VR, and documentaries, alongside the "Excellence in Film Craft" award for behind-the-scenes talent. The Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award will be awarded to the Philip Noyce of Australia.

This year, new categories—such as the "Innovative Use of Technology" and a sustainability-focused award—honour advancements like CGI and address global issues, positioning IFFI as a festival at the



RESTORED CLASSICS OF THEIR ICONIC FILMS, INCLUDING AWARA (1951), HUM DONO (1961), DEVADASU (1953), DADASAHEB PHALKE'S KALIYA MARDAN (1919), AMITABH BACHCHAN'S DEBUT MOVIE SAAT HINDUSTANI (1969), AND SEEMABADDHA (1971) WILL BE SCREENED AT THE FESTIVAL.



forefront of positive change. Screenings, as usual, will remain a core attraction, with highly anticipated films like the world premiere of *Zero Se Restart* on 21st November 2024 in INOX Panjim, *Jab Khuli Kitaab* by Saurabh Shukla on 26th November 2024 in INOX Panjim, Asia premiere of *Hazaar Vela Sholay Pehlila Manus* on 24th November 2024 in INOX Panjim, Asia premiere of *The Mehta Boys*, directed by Boman Irani on 25th November 2024 in INOX Panjim.

Michael Gracey's Better Man, an Australian film that provides an engrossing look at the life of music artist Robbie Williams, who is played as a chimpanzee by Jonno Davies in a ground-breaking motion-capture performance, will have its Asia premiere to kick off the festival. The honours of the opening feature film of the 55th edition of the IFFI will be done by *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar*, directed by Randeep Hooda, a powerful portrayal of a revolutionary figure. Adding to that the opening non-feature film will be *Ghar Jaisa Kuch* directed by Harsh Sangani. Restored classics of their iconic films, including *Awaraz* (1951), *Hum Dono* (1961), *Devadasu* (1953), *Dadasaheb Phalke's Kaliya Mardan* (1919), *Amitabh Bachchan's debut movie Saat Hindustani* (1969), and *Seemabaddha* (1971) will be screened at the

EXTENDING YOUTHFUL ACTIVISM CREATIVELY FOR BIG SCREEN

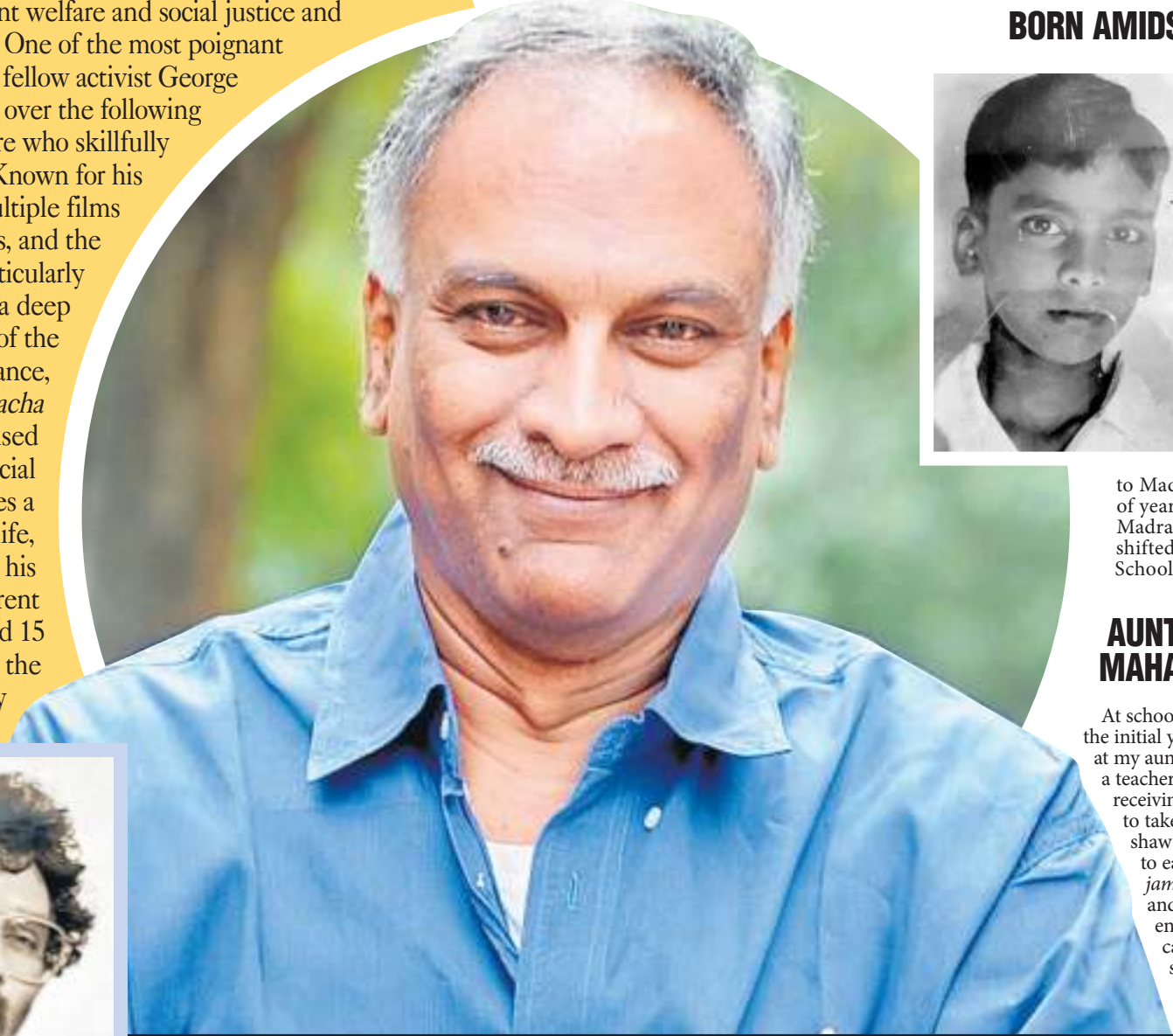
BORN AMIDST TURMOIL



I was born in 1948 in the aftermath of the (1934 British) ban on the Communist Party of India (and repression of its affiliated organisations). Since my father was a Communist leader, the police and government authorities put pressure on my mother to know his whereabouts! There was no maternity hospital nearby at that time and my mother told me that she had to run from one place to another when she was carrying me. After I was born, we lived at Vidyavanam, near Vijayawada and then went to Madras (now Chennai) for a couple of years. I studied till second class in Madras (now called Chennai) and then shifted to Hyderabad and joined Wesley School for studies.

AUNT'S LOVE AND TAJ MAHAL HOTEL TREATS

At school, I was a bright student. During the initial years in Hyderabad, I used to stay at my aunt's house. She was then working as a teacher near the Paradise circle. Upon receiving her salary every month, she used to take us to the Taj Mahal Hotel by rickshaw for treats. On those days we used to eat *dosa, idli* and sweet such as *gulab jamun*. She used to iron our clothes and guided us in many ways. When I entered the sixth grade, my mother came to Hyderabad and then we shifted to Yellareddyguda. From 1955 to 2022, we lived there; it is only now that I have shifted to Movie Towers.



Thammareddy Bharadwaj's life reflects a saga of activism and resilience that had a profound impact on the political and cultural landscapes of his community during his formative years. Born in 1948, amid the tumultuous period following the then British ban on the Communist Party, his childhood was turbulent with his mother shielding him from the political turmoil surrounding his father's activism. A gifted student with an early fascination for cinema, Bharadwaj's connection to the industry deepened as he witnessed his father's work in production at the Sarathi Studios. While doing engineering from Osmania University, his leadership traits drew him to student politics, as part of which he championed causes with lasting benefits for the student community. In a conversation with *The Pioneer's* SURESH KAVIRAYANI, he shares vignettes of his efforts for student welfare and social justice and how he got involved in the initial Telangana movement. One of the most poignant events in his life was the murder of his close friend and fellow activist George Reddy in 1972. His contributions to academia and cinema over the following years has cemented Bharadwaj's legacy as an influential figure who skillfully blended art and activism with dedication for the big screen. Known for his meaningful storytelling in Tollywood, he has produced multiple films covering diverse themes such as human values, societal issues, and the complexity of human relationships. His productions, particularly *Alajadi* (1990) and *Pacha Thoranam* (1994), reflect a deep engagement with social issues and explore the struggles of the common man in a rapidly evolving world. *Alajadi*, for instance, sheds light on caste dynamics and social injustice, while *Pacha Thoranam* dives into the challenges of marginalised communities, advocating the need for empathy and social reforms. His film *Pellaina Kothalo* (2006), which takes a lighter, comedic look at the intricacies of married life, adds diversity to his portfolio, showing his versatility in producing films across different genres. He is known to have produced 15 films and directed 20 films in the industry.

GROWING UP IN SECUNDERABAD'S CINEMA HUB

I have always liked watching movies since my childhood. I don't know how many times I watched *Lavakusa*. Tivoli, Dreamland, Plaza, Minerva, Manohar, Alankar, Ajanta, Rajeshwari and Kalpana theaters were among the popular theatres in Secunderabad at that time. I still remember *Rojulu Marayi* ran for 100 days in Rajeshwari theatre and they arranged a big function there. My father was the production manager for that film. He was the general manager for Sarathi Studios that was built at Ameerpet later. We are talking about 1955!

FIGHTING FOR UNIVERSITY'S AUTONOMY

When I was studying at Osmania University, the then government removed Vice-Chancellor DS Reddy. They appointed a person from Andhra and then we protested the government's decision and sought autonomy for universities. We asked the government not to get involved in university affairs and saw to it that DS Reddy was reinstated as Vice Chancellor. Before that, we had gone on a nearly 15- to 20-day strike. We had closed the two approach roads to Osmania University. We barricaded the entire university, staying up at nights and sleeping on the Arts College steps. The government bowed down and re-instated DS Reddy as Vice-Chancellor and later we called off our strike.

'JAILED' IN 1969 DURING TELANGANA MOVEMENT

In 1969, during the peak of the initial Telangana movement, many students participated and I, along with some others, fought for integration and we all attacked the Secretariat and demanded the then Chief Minister's resignation. The police arrested us and put us in a jail of sorts. At that time, the jails were completely full, so they put us in a government school near SR Nagar! We (both Telangana agitators and those fight for integration) used to sing songs and play games in the 'jail'. Nearly 500 people were there in that school and our batch comprised 20 students. My mother used to get breakfast and lunch for all of us.



USHERING SEMESTER SYSTEM IN OSMANIA UNIVERSITY

While I was in college, I joined the Hyderabad Students Union and became its vice president. I was also active in the Students Federation of India. They used to call me *naib-sadr* (vice president) in Urdu! Because of my laziness and overconfidence, I failed in my first year. They gave me paper carrying 100 marks, but I only wrote for 50 marks. So, I completed my exam in just half an hour and went to the movies. At that time, engineering was five years' term. Louis Thomas was the Secretary of the university then. I told him that it was very difficult to write all the examinations at once; so, I gave the idea that exams should be held as per the semester system elsewhere, two times in one year. He liked the idea, but when it took time to implement, we announced an immediate strike; so, they adopted the semester and also the carry-on system. The semester system is still continuing and I can proudly say that I actually started the idea at Osmania University!



DARK CONNECTION BEHIND GEORGE REDDY'S MURDER

George Reddy, student leader and social activist, was a friend of mine and he was a gold medalist. George Reddy was a science student; his brother Cyril Reddy was my classmate. When George Reddy was debarred for three months, he stayed in my house only! There is a Dhoolpet connection to George Reddy's murder. There was Lakhani Singh, who was a very close friend of George and his brother Cyril. He introduced Lakhani to me and at that time they put Lakhani Singh in my hostel room. I don't know what happened among Lakhani, George and Cyril, but Lakhani became enemies with the brothers. Thereafter, the rivalry started and they stabbed George once, but he survived at that time! Lakhani Singh happened to be from Dhoolpet; so, unofficially he kept nearly 30 people from Dhoolpet in the hostel (I too was in the hostel at that time). I started my campaign and went to all the classrooms and these 30 people also followed me. I don't know why, but that day I kept silent and did my campaign, though these 30 people indirectly commented on me. This happened on the last day of the campaign. That day I still remember, after the campaign ended, the next day I met George at college and he took a big class. 'Why did you campaign alone last night; you should have called me,' George told me. After some chitchat, I was hungry and told the same to George, but he wanted me to drop him off at the library. So, I dropped him off and I went to Taj for lunch and then went for the *Somariyothu* movie, which was released on that day. Cyril Reddy, Mahipal, Kooru Rajanna and their batch went somewhere. The movie was not good, so I came out in the interval and came towards OU. At Andhra Mahila Sabha, students were running in a hurry. I asked them what happened. "George ni vesesaru, ninnu kuda vesestaru, vellaku (They have murdered George and they will target you also; don't go to the university). But I went to the university, though by then they had shifted his body to Gandhi Hospital. I went to the hospital, saw the body and I roughed up a police official there and told him, 'George ni mere champaru'. This was the first murder in OU. Lakhani Singh and nine others were arrested, but later, I think the case was not proved and they were freed. George used the knuckle duster at that time and he easily managed 10 people. He was just five feet six inches, but he was a fighter! Had Cyril or Mahipal been with him during the attack, George might have survived. The University remained closed for four months and there were no elections for a few years.



UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES SHOOTING KOTHALARAYUDU WITH CHIRANJEEVI

In 1975, my father made a film *Chimnanati Kalalu* with Krishnam Raju in my name and the shooting happened one month in Mysore. Many other Telugu films, like Dasari Narayana Rao's *Tirupathi*, Kranthi Kumar's *Sarada* and *Yashoda Krishna* in which Sridevi plays young Krishna, were also shot there. Apart from Telugu films, stars from other industries like MGR, Akkibhargava and Vishnuvardhan also shot their films at the same location. The reason for many films shooting in Mysore was that they announced some subsidies! So everyone stayed in the guest houses and spoke to one another. I got close to producer Kranthi Kumar at that time. In 1979, I watched a Malayalam film and wanted to remake it in Telugu. He asked me to produce myself with Chiranjeevi as the lead actor. Kranthi Kumar made two films *Pranam Khareedu* and *Punadirallu* with Chiranjeevi at that time. So, it was easy for me to get Chiranjeevi. My first film as producer was *Kothalarayudu*; it became a huge success and it also gave Chiranjeevi the first commercial hit as a solo lead actor! My next film was *Mogudu Kavali* which was another blockbuster for Chiranjeevi. I shot all those films in Hyderabad.



CRASHED HER ENGAGEMENT, STOLE HER HEART

I got married to Vani when I was 21. Vani used to live next to our house at Yellareddyguda and her brother was doing medicine. He was my close friend. Her father was a retired executive engineer and she had graduated from Reddy College, Narayanaguda. Her engagement was going on and I did the arrangements! Her friends came and told me, 'Vani is crying'. Then I went to her father and told him that I wanted to marry her. A nice gentleman, he told me that I should have told him before the engagement was fixed. He then cancelled the engagement and we got married in 1972 at Shapurvadi function hall, opposite the Secretariat. Now, there is a hospital in that place. Many of the film personalities, politicians, ministers and governors attended the marriage. I took leave and worked for films, but after some time, I left my job in 1985 and concentrated on films thereafter.



Employees Federation. People should join as members in these federations and they can only work as employees for any film. At that time, Shyamprasad Reddy, Suresh Babu, Akkineni Venkat and I went to Madras and stayed there for almost a month and coordinated with people there! Dasari Narayana Rao coordinated and he actually arranged meetings with the then Chief Minister. I, along with a few others, worked and got recognition for the Andhra Pradesh Film Employees Federation from the All India Film Employees Federation from the All India Film Employees Confederation. Earlier, they gave recognition to Madras (now Chennai), Karnataka, West Bengal, and Bombay. Today I can proudly say that our Telugu employees are getting more than other industry employees. I, along with a few others, set the wages and timings for all the employees and today we have corrected the system because we did a lot of work at that time. At that time, 18 unions were there and now there are 24 unions. I not only got recognition but also became the president of the All India Film Employees Confederation. This was definitely a landmark for the Telugu film industry. Today, the Telugu film employees like choreographers and action directors are working in Chennai, Mumbai, Kannada and everywhere. Our people have now won National Awards too, for which I felt very proud of myself.

UNITED TFI

Actor Prabhakar Reddy made me the president of the Directors Association and secretary of the Film Federation of Employees. After the film industry shifted to Hyderabad, in 1993 there was big agitation from the South Indian Film Employees Federation (SIFE). In Hyderabad, we started the Andhra Pradesh Film Employees Federation and we took on board dance directors, assistants, action choreographers and many others. But the SIFE's objection was that our federation was not recognised by the All India Film Employees Federation from the All India Film Employees Confederation. Earlier, they gave recognition to Madras (now Chennai), Karnataka, West Bengal, and Bombay. Today I can proudly say that our Telugu employees are getting more than other industry employees. I, along with a few others, set the wages and timings for all the employees and today we have corrected the system because we did a lot of work at that time. At that time, 18 unions were there and now there are 24 unions. I not only got recognition but also became the president of the All India Film Employees Confederation. This was definitely a landmark for the Telugu film industry. Today, the Telugu film employees like choreographers and action directors are working in Chennai, Mumbai, Kannada and everywhere. Our people have now won National Awards too, for which I felt very proud of myself.



RAPID FIRE

- YOUR PINCH ME MOMENT OF LIFE:** When Hyderabad film industry shifted here
- THE LATEST THING YOU'VE DISCOVERED ABOUT YOURSELF:** I don't fit into present situation
- A SINGER WHO INSPIRES YOU:** Mohammed Rafi and Ghantasala
- PRODEST MOMENT OF YOUR CAREER:** Getting semester system in college
- FAVOURITE CITY/COUNTRY TO STAY IN:** Hyderabad

