Singapore offers support to strengthen AP edu system

Singapore home minister Shanmugam, state education minister Lokesh offer prayers at Tirumala

Hans News Service
Tirumala

SINGAPORE home minister K Shanmugam has offered to support Andhra Pradesh in strengthening its education system and adopting suitable practices from Singapore, while appreciating the reforms being pursued by the state government.

Shanmugam held discussions with education, IT and electronics minister Nara Lokesh at Tirumala on Tuesday on a range of issues, including education reforms, school dropouts, drug prevention, skill development and social security.

The Singapore minister said reducing school dropouts was crucial to protecting children from falling into drug abuse and other social problems.

He appreciated the steps being taken by the AP government to bring down the dropout rate and suggested that efforts should continue until it is reduced to zero.



Singapore home minister K Shanmugam, AP education minister N Lokesh and TTD additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary at Srivari temple in Tirumala on Tuesday

Lokesh explained the education reforms being introduced by the coalition government and the measures being taken to improve the government school system. He also briefed Shanmugam on efforts to encourage students to shift from private schools to government schools.

Expressing interest in the initiatives, Shanmugam said he would like to visit government schools in the state. He also assured that Singapore would extend cooperation in strengthening the state's education system and share relevant practices followed in the country.

Drug prevention was another key issue discussed by the two ministers. Shanmugam explained Singapore's approach to tackling drug abuse and stressed the importance of strict laws and penalties.

They explored the possibility of linking Andhra Pradesh's Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) with Singapore's Institute of Technical Education (ITE). Shanmugam explained how ITE provides industry-oriented training based on employment requirements.

Before the discussions, Shanmugam and Lokesh offered prayers at the Tirumala temple. Shanmugam arrived in Tirumala on Monday night and was received by Lokesh. On Tuesday morning, the two ministers participated in Suprabhata Seva, Thomala Seva and Archana Seva and had darshan of Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy.

TTD executive officer Muddada Ravichandra, additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary and temple priests welcomed the ministers. After darshan, priests performed Vedaseervachanam for Shanmugam and Lokesh at the Ranganayakula Mandapam. Shanmugam also praised the arrangements made by the TTD. Recalling an earlier visit to Tirumala, he referred to a saying he had seen at the Executive Officer's office — "It's not the darshan that you want, it's the darshan that he gives."

Centre launches new initiative to develop 50 model cities

New Delhi

THE Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has identified 50 model cities under the PRAGATI-50 initiative for demonstrating a higher benchmark of 'Swachhata' through targeted, KPI-based action and by leveraging intensive and technology-enabled monitoring within the framework of Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban 2.0.

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal, at the launch, stated, "These 50 cities across 24 states will emerge as clean role-model cities for the rest of the country, by going beyond their routine sanitation work to demonstrate sustained, high-performance parameters of visible cleanliness. We have ensured the inclusion of major cities, cities of cultural importance, high tourism destinations and economic centres.

The initiative aims to drive visible improvements in urban cleanliness, solid waste management, used water management, sanitation, and citizen participation through a structured framework of monitoring and review within a defined timeframe. Progress will be continuously reviewed through outcome-based assessments and tech-enabled monitoring. I will personally chair review meetings every other month to track the advancement of these cities."

Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu noted that over the past decade, Swachhata has evolved from a people's movement into a way of life. He said the new model cities initiative would assist cities in achieving the goal of Garbage Free Cities within a stipulated timeframe and help them become role models for other urban centres. He urged States and Urban Local Bodies to prepare micro-level action plans and ensure their swift and effective implementation.

Highlighting the role of youth and technology, Sahu remarked that India has become the world's third-largest startup ecosystem. He noted that the launch of the third cohort in collaboration with IIT Kanpur marks the achievement of the national target of onboarding and incubating 75 startups under the Mission.

Satendra Singh, Secretary of the Department of Urban Development, MoHUA, emphasised that efforts will focus on enhancing citizen experience and holistic service delivery.

India, China in talks over Xinjiang air route amid Pak airspace ban

NEW DELHI: India is in talks with China on allowing Indian airlines to fly through Xinjiang as Pakistan's airspace ban continues to make flights to Europe and the United States longer and more expensive, sources said.

The proposed route would pass near Hotan in western China. The Ministry of External Affairs has been discussing the possibility with Chinese officials for nearly a year, but no agreement has been reached.

Pakistan closed its airspace to Indian carriers after the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025. Airlines have since had to divert some westbound flights over the Arabian Sea, adding to flying time, fuel consumption and crew costs.Air India estimated last year that the ban could cost it about $600 million over 12 months if it remained in place. Its long-haul flights have been among the most affected. Higher aviation fuel prices amid the West Asia conflict have added to the pressure. A route through Xinjiang could offer Indian carriers another option, although any savings would depend on the route China permits and which flights can use it. For now, airlines continue to fly around Pakistani airspace. The talks are taking place as India-China ties improve after the tensions caused by the 2020 border standoff.

Naidu calls for continuous skilling, governance overhaul

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With advanced technologies, a talented youth population and growing aspirations, the country's key challenge was to strengthen governance institutions to translate these opportunities into better public services.

He urged government employees at every level, from the State headquarters to the grassroots, to continuously upgrade their skills through capacity-building programmes. He said the iGOT–Mission Karmayogi platform, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through the Capacity Building Commission, provided officials and employees with an avenue for regular online learning and skill enhancement.

Naidu congratulated the Andhra Pradesh government machinery for completing two crore courses through the iGOT Karmayogi portal, enabling the State to secure the first position nationally in capacity building.

He presented the national award to finance department principal secretary Piyush Kumar and AP development planning society executive director Alaparthi Venkateswara Rao. Karnataka and Odisha received the second and third positions respectively.

The Chief Minister stressed the need to integrate technology, administrative procedures and inter-departmental coordination to improve public service delivery. Regular information-sharing among departments, he said, could accelerate decision-making and help identify and resolve problems before they turned into crises.

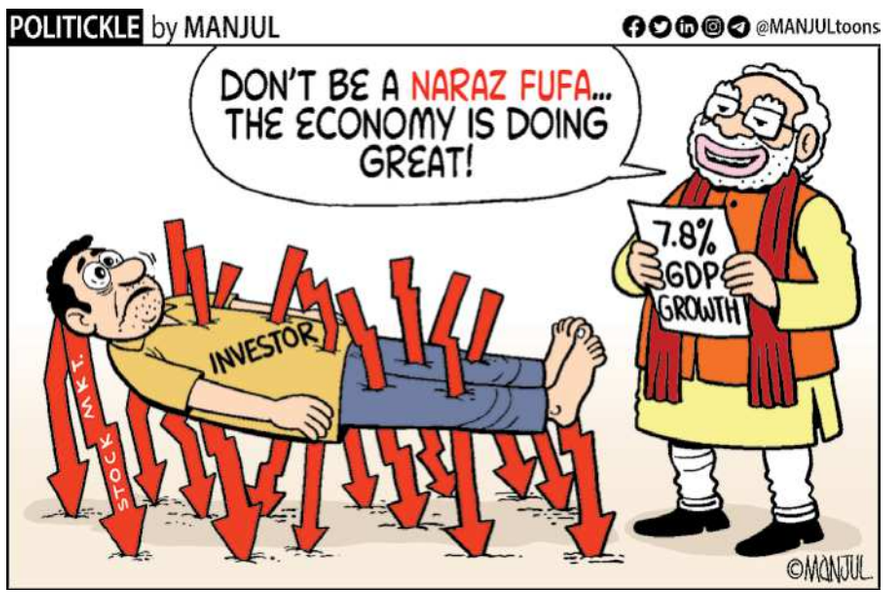
He highlighted the role of government employees in managing natural disasters, festivals and major public programmes, and appreciated their commitment to public service, often at the cost of time with their families.

Naidu cited Modi's journey from a tea vendor at a railway station to Prime Minister as an example of the potential of capacity building. Capacity Building Commission chairperson Radha Chouhan, member Alka and Secretary Jagdeep Gupta also addressed the workshop.

SC to hear plea seeking suspension of CEC next week

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear next week a petition seeking suspension of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and challenging the alleged manner in which decisions were taken by the Election Commission without the approval of other members of the poll panel. The matter was mentioned before a bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant and comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana. Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the petitioner, argued that decisions of the multi-member Election Commission are required to be taken unanimously or through a majority decision.

The petition, filed by Patna resident Rakesh Kumar Singh, seeks directions to prevent CEC Kumar from exercising the functions of the Chief Election Commissioner until the matter is decided. It also seeks a declaration that powers under Article 324 of the Constitution must be exercised collectively by the Election Commission. The plea comes amid controversy over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. It refers to reports claiming that Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi raised objections on several occasions regarding decisions allegedly taken without their approval. The Election Commission has maintained that differing views and observations are part of institutional deliberations and that all its decisions have legal validity. The petition has sought records, including meeting minutes, approval documents, file notes and digital access details, to examine whether procedures were followed in matters related to electoral rolls and other decisions of the Commission.



PM should resign for 'pressuring' CEC: Kharge

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Addressing a crucial meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) here, he said the Congress party would take to the streets and raise in Parliament issues pertaining to alleged irregularities in the electoral rolls and poll process.

Kharge put forth five major demands at the CWC, noting that all data on changes in electoral rolls be made public, all voters whose names have been deleted should get a chance to appeal and all political parties should be given electoral rolls in simple format in time. He also demanded that an independent time-bound probe should also be conducted where serious anomalies are found and the poll process should be made transparent so no one feels that information is being hidden.

"The two Election Commissioners have themselves termed the CEC's actions as 'arbitrary and unreasonable' and the entire nation now knows that he has been trying to help the ruling party. In such a situation, he does not have the right to be in his position and should be removed immediately," Kharge said.

"Together with this, the prime minister should also resign on moral grounds for 'pressuring' the CEC," the Congress chief said in his inaugural address at the CWC. "We should take a pledge at the CWC meeting that there should be transparency in electoral rolls and the poll process should be impartial. Institutions should be independent and the vote of every Indian should be protected," he said in his inaugural address. This, he said, is the core of our Constitution and the soul of our democracy and the Congress party would not be left behind in fulfilling this responsibility and will take to the streets and raise these issues in Parliament.

Implementing our promises at jet speed, says CM Naidu

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The Chief Minister alleged that villages had suffered during the previous government, citing pothole-ridden roads, inadequate street lighting and even shortages of basic sanitation materials such as bleaching powder.

He said Gram Sabhas were conducted simultaneously in all 13,326 villages to initiate development activities and around 10,000 Panchayat Raj employees in various cadres were given promotions after nearly two-and-a-half decades. He also referred to the release of Rs 4,136 crore under the 15th Finance Commission, the creation of more than one lakh farm ponds and construction of cattle water troughs.

Naidu said 15,500 km of BT and CC roads were being taken up under Palle Panduga - 3.0, including 6,000 km of CC roads at a cost of Rs 2,700 crore. He said the roads would improve connectivity and make travel easier for schoolchildren, farmers and villagers.

"People should be able to walk without getting mud on their feet. Better roads will ensure smooth movement and make it easier for children to go to school and farmers to reach their fields," he said.

He added that development works worth Rs 50,000 crore had been initiated in urban areas.

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan said strengthening villages was fundamental to the overall progress of the state. He said the government was working to make families economically stronger and villages more self-reliant by improving roads, drinking water, agriculture, employment, sanitation, infrastructure and tourism.

Pawan said the previous government had constructed 880 km of CC roads during its five-year tenure, while the coalition government had completed nearly 9,000 km in two years.

He said development works based on local needs were being taken up in all 13,326 gram panchayats through Palle Panduga programmes. Around 1.15 lakh farm ponds had been created and fruit orchards developed across two lakh acres, he added. Palle Panduga works worth nearly Rs 520 crore were being taken up in Nellore district, Pawan said.

Ministers Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, Ponguru Narayana, N.M.D. Farooq, Nimmala Ramanaidu, Gottipati Ravi Kumar and BC Janardhan Reddy, Nellore MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy, Rajya Sabha member Beeda Masthan Rao, Udayagiri MLA Kakarla Suresh, Nellore Collector Himanshu Shukla and others were present.

CEC front for diabolical PM-HM duo: Congress

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In his post on X, Ramesh said, "The ECI is Election Commission of India, not Establisher of Citizenship of Indians." "In an interview to a leading newspaper published this morning, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, who retired from the Supreme Court last year, has reaffirmed categorically that it is not the ECI's job or Constitutional responsibility to determine citizenship as it has been doing under SIR," he said. Ramesh further said citizenship is determined under the Citizenship Act, 1955, as amended by Parliament from time to time, he said.

A Constitutional functionary himself, the CEC has deliberately and clearly violated the Constitution in letter and spirit on the citizenship and other issues like illegally amending Form 6 to disenfranchise Gen Z voters, Ramesh said. "The first step in the long road to reclaiming our democracy is the resignation of the CEC who is both a front for the diabolical PM-HM (Narendra Modi-Amit Shah) duo and an affront to the Constitution of India," the Congress general secretary said.

His remarks come a day after the Congress said the EC's proposed measures related to SIR are an admission that the exercise has been a "disaster" and asserted that the "piecemeal" steps for deleted or at risk voters will do little to mitigate this "mass disenfranchisement".

Ramesh had said the press note issued by the Election Commission on Saturday (September 26, 2026) night has already been debunked and exposed for what it is — "a desperate attempt at damage control that hides all and reveals nothing". He said the proposed measures around the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls are an admission that it has been a "disaster".

Gangster Goldy Brar on FBI 10 most wanted list

WASHINGTON: Gangster Satinderjeet Singh alias Goldy Brar, the man accused of ordering the assassination of Khalistan separatist Harjit Singh Nijjar, has been added to the list of ten most wanted fugitives of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), with the probe agency announcing a reward of $1 million for information leading to his arrest.

According to the FBI, Brar is wanted for his role as the North American leader of the Lawrence Bishnoi Organised Crime Group, which has allegedly been linked to a string of violent crimes spanning the United States and Canada. "Satinderjeet Singh is wanted in the Lawrence Bishnoi Organised Crime Group, which is allegedly engaged in a variety of violent acts in Southern California and across the United States and Canada. A reward of up to USD 1,000,000 is offered for information leading to his arrest," the FBI said in a statement.

AP, Telangana impacted due to drought: Chouhan

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Karnataka has requested a central team, which is scheduled to visit the state on October 3.

The Chief Minister of Maharashtra has also requested a central assessment team, and a team will be sent there as well.

The Agriculture minister said that he would personally visit the affected states and remain in constant contact with their governments. "The immediate objective is to ensure that agricultural fields do not remain fallow," he added.

For the upcoming Rabi crop season, the minister said the Centre will assist the states in identifying suitable seeds and crop varieties that require less water, have a shorter maturity period, suitable for local soil and weather conditions. He also said the Centre will help farmers continue cultivation despite drought conditions. The Centre will also facilitate coordination and cooperation among the states and other stakeholders, he added.

Amaravati going green with ornamental plants!

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By producing plants locally, APCRDA aims to reduce dependence on external sources and create a sustainable plant resource for Amaravati, he added.

The Central Nursery has been developed with a production plan covering more than 60 native tree species. APCRDA has set an ambitious target of producing 1 lakh trees, 4 lakh ornamental shrubs and 10,000 indoor plants over the next two years. The nursery has already emerged as a significant plant resource, with around 1.15 lakh healthy plants currently available. The collection includes native tree varieties, flowering plants, roadside plantation species, ornamental plants and varieties suitable for landscaping.

These plants are expected to play an important role in both ongoing and future greening programmes in Amaravati, supporting the development of green corridors, landscaped public spaces, avenues and parks.

The initiative also incorporates renewable energy into nursery operations. Giving priority to environmental conservation, APCRDA has installed a 52.5-kilowatt solar power plant at the Central Nursery. Solar power is being used for lighting, water supply for plants and other operational requirements. Besides reducing dependence on conventional electricity, the solar facility is expected to help lower operating costs and carbon emissions. The development of these nurseries reflects an approach that combines urban development with environmental sustainability. Instead of treating greenery as an addition to infrastructure, APCRDA is creating an institutional system capable of supplying the plants required to sustain Amaravati's green landscape over the long term. With its large-scale plant production capacity, diverse collection of species and adoption of solar energy, the Central Nursery at Uddandarayunipalem is emerging as an important green asset for Amaravati.

As development activities gather pace, these nurseries are expected to provide the botanical backbone for transforming Amaravati into a greener, more pleasant and environmentally sustainable capital city.