



Tourism, Culture and Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh speaking to the media in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday

National conference to focus on ‘India–The World’s Next Tourism Opportunity’

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VISAKHAPATNAM is set to host a national conference ‘41st Indian Association of Tour Operators’ (IATO), with key discussions on the use of artificial intelligence and advanced technology in tourism along with carbon audit registration.

Tourism, Culture and Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh announced that the prestigious conference will be held in Visakhapatnam from September 10 to 12.

Addressing a media conference in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday, the minister unveiled the details of the three-day conference and highlighted its significance for Andhra Pradesh’s tourism sector being held for the first time.

Minister Kandula Durgesh said the IATO is organising the national conference with the objective of accelerating the growth of inbound tourism in India. More than 1,000 representatives from the tourism sector, including leading tour operators, policymakers and industry leaders from across the country, are expected to participate in the conference, which is being organised under the theme ‘India – The World’s Next Tourism Opportunity’.

The minister said it was a matter of great pride for Visakhapatnam to host the IATO, one of the country’s leading organisations promoting inbound tourism that has a strong network of

more than 2,068 members and delegates associated with the tourism industry.

He said the conference would provide Andhra Pradesh with an important platform to showcase its enormous tourism potential before national and international stakeholders.

The event would help place the state’s coastline stretching over 1,000 kilometres, rich spiritual heritage, scenic Araku Valley, vibrant tribal culture, historic Buddhist sites and abundant natural beauty prominently on the global tourism map.

Expressing confidence in the outcome of the conference, Minister Kandula Durgesh said IATO representatives would play a crucial role as a bridge between Andhra Pradesh and international tourists.

Through stronger partnerships with leading tour operators and tourism stakeholders, the state would be able to attract greater international tourist arrivals, investments and employment opportunities.

The minister said the state had attracted tourism investments worth around Rs.20,000 crore during the last two years. In Visakhapatnam alone, permissions have been granted for 16 tourism projects involving investments of Rs.5,529 crore. These projects are expected to add around 950 new rooms and generate direct employment opportunities for nearly 10,000 people. The Andhra Pradesh government is

working towards creating an additional 50,000 rooms across the state by 2029 to encourage tourists to extend their stay and improve accommodation facilities at major tourist destinations, he informed.

Minister Kandula Durgesh stated that the government is giving utmost importance to the upcoming Godavari Pushkaram and is preparing to organise the massive spiritual event in an eco-friendly and plastic-free manner across six districts, drawing inspiration from the large-scale arrangements made for the Kumbh Mela.

Special tent cities and homestay facilities are developed to accommodate devotees.

He said that a major Buddhist tourism circuit was being developed by connecting Amaravati, Thotlakonda, Bojjanakonda and Nagarjunakonda. The initiative is aimed at attracting the global Buddhist population, estimated at around 600 million, and positioning Andhra Pradesh as a major destination for international Buddhist tourism. He said a special Cabinet Sub-Committee had also been constituted to ensure the speedy resolution of issues related to land allocation and statutory permissions involving departments such as endowments, forest, irrigation and roads and buildings. Several long-pending issues concerning tourism development have already been resolved through coordinated action, he added.

A tech-driven system to ease mobilisation of crop loans for farmers

- Developed in partnership with the Central government’s AgriStack digital ecosystem, the initiative aims to mobilise agricultural credit faster
- The initiative is expected to mark a major transformation in agricultural credit delivery in Anakapalli district by reducing paperwork and improving transparency

VASU POTNURU
ANAKAPALLI

IN a concrete step towards strengthening digital agriculture and ensuring faster access to institutional credit for farmers, a pilot initiative of a digital Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loan disbursement system was flagged off in Anakapalli.

The innovative initiative, developed in partnership with the Central Government’s AgriStack digital ecosystem, aims to mobilise agricultural credit faster, more transparently, and without unnecessary delays. Under the new digital system, eligible farmers can have their KCC loan applications processed and the sanctioned loan amount credited directly to

their bank accounts in less than 10 minutes.

As part of the pilot project, data relating to nearly 3 lakh farmers in Anakapalli district was examined through the AgriStack-based digital filtration process. Of them, around 80,000 farmers were initially identified as eligible for Kisan Credit Card loans.

Launching the project, District Collector Vijaya Krishnan informed that specific targets had been fixed for branches of nationalised banks with each branch expected to sanction loans to at least 100 eligible farmers. Targets have been allocated mandal-wise and branch-wise to ensure the effective implementation of the programme across the district.

One of the major advantages of the new system is that once a farmer’s application is uploaded, the loan approval process is carried out digitally based on the information available in the integrated system, reducing the scope for delays and unnecessary human intervention.

Following the completion of the required verification process, the sanctioned amount can be credited directly to the farmer’s account in 10 minutes.

Officials will organise meetings with bank

branch managers and loan-disbursing officers at Rythu Seva Kendras (RSKs) in villages, in coordination with Agriculture Department officials. Farmers will be educated about the new digital process through live demonstrations and guided on how to submit their applications online.

The initiative assumes greater significance at a time when farmers are reeling under the impact of inadequate rainfall and prevailing El Nino conditions. With irrigation support strengthened through various projects and increased water availability, the speedy disbursement of crop loans is expected to provide much-needed financial assistance to farmers and help them meet their agricultural requirements during the coming months.

The Andhra Pradesh government’s rythu digital register will play a key role in the process by integrating farmers’ land records, crop details and ownership information into the digital ecosystem. The Jan Samarth portal, which already facilitates access to several government-supported financial schemes, has now been made available for the digital processing of Kisan Credit Card loans.

The initiative adds

another important digital service to the existing ecosystem of financial and development schemes available to citizens.

Under the new system, authorities and banks can digitally verify whether agricultural land has any existing loan liabilities, liens or mortgage-related issues through online records.

The system can also examine the farmer’s eligibility for interest subsidies and review the history of timely loan repayments using Aadhaar-linked information.

To apply for a digital Kisan Credit Card loan, a farmer must first create an account on the Jan Samarth portal using a registered mobile number and provide digital consent for the required information to be shared with the portal and participating banks.

The digital Kisan Credit Card Crop Loan application and onboarding process requires farmers to log in through OTP authentication and select the KCC Crop Loan scheme, along with their respective state and district details.

Along with other details, the geo-coordinates of agricultural land are also verified with details of existing KCC and other

agricultural loans, as well as land-related liabilities, to prevent duplicate or multiple financing.

The digital platform further verifies whether the farmer’s bank account has active KYC status, whether the required UPI and other account mappings are maintained and whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria prescribed by the respective bank.

After completing the verification process, the farmer’s land records are digitally collected and analysed. The final loan amount is then determined based on factors such as the extent of land and the crops being cultivated.

The agriculture department, bank managers and a Central government team from Delhi are coordinating with farmers and organising meetings at Rythu Seva Kendras across the district to ensure smooth implementation of the pilot project and help farmers complete the digital loan application process.

The technology-driven system is expected to mark a major transformation in agricultural credit delivery in Anakapalli district by reducing paperwork, improving transparency and ensuring that eligible farmers receive timely financial assistance.



AP’s first-ever slum redevelopment project launched at Velampeta

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IN a historic first for Andhra Pradesh, Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Ponguru Narayana on Wednesday launched the prestigious ‘in-situ slum redevelopment’ project at Lakshmi Nagar in Velampeta, Visakhapatnam.

Laying the foundation stone for the Rs.28.44-crore modern multi-storeyed housing project, Narayana said, “As part of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu’s vision to transform Visakhapatnam into a slum-free city, a modern residential complex for 177 families will be built at Lakshmi Nagar in Velampeta under the GVMC south zone.

The state government is committed not merely to providing houses to the urban poor, but also to ensuring safe and dignified living conditions, improved quality of life and essential civic infrastructure.”

Expressing satisfaction that families who have been living for many years in congested conditions at Lakshmi Nagar would now be provided modern housing at the same location, the minister explained that conventional slum redevelopment often involves relocating residents to other areas, which may affect their livelihoods, children’s education and established social networks.

The unique project, however, lies in redeveloping the existing slum at the same location without permanently shifting beneficiary families elsewhere, he reiterated, directing officials to make



A model of the slum redevelopment project at Lakshmi Nagar in Velampeta in Visakhapatnam



Minister P Narayana, at the foundation-stone laying ceremony of the slum redevelopment project in Visakhapatnam

the state’s first such project a model initiative and ensure that its successful implementation serves as a template for redeveloping other slums in the future.

During the foundation-laying programme, the minister interacted with the director of Nagarjuna Construction Company and directed the agency to accelerate construction so that beneficiary families would not have to remain in alternative accommodation for an extended period.

He instructed the construction agency to complete the project in nine months and hand over the houses to beneficiaries by June 2027, to which the company representatives agreed.

Presiding over the programme, south constituency MLA CH. Vamsi Krishna Srinivas stated the project would fulfil the long-cherished aspiration of underprivileged families residing at Lakshmi Nagar.

The MLA said that when the concerns of residents were brought to the government’s attention, Minister Narayana responded positively and took

special initiative to bring the project to fruition.

Visakhapatnam District Collector M Abhisikh Kishore said that in-situ slum redevelopment involves several challenges compared with a conventional housing project. Planning within a limited site, arranging alternative accommodation for existing residents, mobilising financial resources and ensuring coordination among various departments were among the major issues that had to be addressed, he emphasised.

GVMC Commissioner Ketan Garg mentioned that the foundation-laying of the Lakshmi Nagar slum redevelopment project marked the beginning of a new chapter in Visakhapatnam’s urban development history.

He said the project, being taken up for the first time in the state under the ‘in-situ slum redevelopment’ model, an approach with relatively few examples across the country, would create history. The modern residential complex will be constructed

over 2,691 square yards at a project cost of Rs.28.44 crore, benefiting 177 families. There will be 15 units on each floor from the first to the 11th floor and 12 units on the 12th floor, making a total of 177 units.

The cost of each unit is Rs.16.07 lakh. Of this, Rs.1.50 lakh will be provided under PMAY, Rs.1 lakh by the government of Andhra Pradesh, and Rs.3.50 lakh will be the beneficiary contribution. The rest of the Rs.10.07 lakh will be taken through viability gap funding in the form of TDR.

To facilitate alternative rented accommodation for beneficiaries during the construction of the housing complex, a total of Rs.31.86 lakh was provided as rental assistance, calculated at Rs.3,000 per month.

Following the meeting, the Minister, Collector, Commissioner and MLA handed over assurance letters for the proposed new houses to several beneficiaries.

NTR Vaidya Seva chairman Seethamraju Sudhakar, Swachh Andhra Corporation director B Ramireddy, among others, participated.

‘Kopparapu’ national award presented to Samavedam Shanmukha Sarma

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RENOWNED spiritual orator Samavedam Shanmukha Sarma received the prestigious Kopparapu Kavulu National Talent Award-2026. The award presentation took place on Wednesday evening at the Kalabharathi Auditorium in Visakhapatnam during the 24th anniversary celebrations of the Kopparapu Kavala Kalapeetham.

The awards were presented by distinguished guests, including Andhra Pradesh High Court Judge Justice B. Krishna Mohan, retired Judge Justice Durga Prasad, Professors Viswanatha Gopalakrishna Sastry and Tadepalli Patanjali Sastry and renowned US-based cardiologist Alla Srinivasa Reddy.

Betavolu Rama Brahman presided over the event. Machavaram Venkata Chenchurama Maruti Subbaraya Sarma, known as MAA Sarma, the founder-president of the ‘Kopparapu Kavula Kalapeetham’, delivered the inaugural address.

He detailed how these grand annual festivals have been celebrated with great distinction across the Telugu states for the past 24 years

to honour the Kopparapu Brothers (Kopparapu Venkata Subbaraya Kavi: 1885–1932, Kopparapu Venkata Ramana Kavi: 1887–1942), the pioneers and supreme masters of the unique Telugu literary art form known as Avadhanam.

He highlighted that Dr Alla Srinivasa Reddy, renowned US-based cardiologist, receiving the first copy of ‘Sri Kopparapu Sodara Kavula Shatavadhana Soundaryam’ authored by the Kopparapu Brothers, during the book launch was a special gesture.

The event featured presentation of the ‘Kopparapu National Talent Award’ to Brahmasri Samavedam Shanmukha Sarma, followed by his captivating one-hour discourse on the theme of ‘Daiva Sankalpam’ (divine will), which impressed the audience.

Earlier, the proceedings featured an enthralling musical treat, a rendition of ‘Tarangams’ by Narayana Tirtha performed by Ghorakavi Sampath Kumar, followed by a recital of verses composed by the Kopparapu Kavulu such as ‘Nilambujarama Keli Maralamai’ by Alamuru Radhakumari. ‘Bharati Bhushana’ Rambhatha Narasimha Sharma, among others, were present.



Officials launching the book ‘Sri Kopparapu Sodara Kavula Shatavadhana Soundaryam’ at Kalabharathi Auditorium in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday

‘Teachers have a huge responsibility in preparing students to face challenges’

VISAKHAPATNAM: Teachers have a huge responsibility in preparing students to face the challenges and opportunities of modern society, stressed SP Ravindra, chairman of READ Group of Educational Institutions.

Speaking about the upcoming alumni reunion programme, ‘APS Homecoming-2026’, organised by Alwar Das Public School, Ravindra said the primary objective of the event is to bring together alumni from different generations on a common platform and strengthen their lifelong association with the institution.

A teaser for the ‘APS Homecoming-2026’ programme and a logo were released on the occasion. An exclusive alumni web portal was launched to facilitate greater interaction and participation

among former students. Alwar Das Public School director Divya Das stated that the institution has been providing education under the ICSE and ISC curriculum while maintaining international standards. She said the institution, which began as a public school nearly four and a half decades ago, evolved into Alwar Das Public School and has continuously strived for the overall development of students by combining quality education with strong values and discipline. The organisers appealed to the alumni and former students to actively participate and make ‘APS Homecoming-2026’, scheduled to be held at the school premises in December 2026, a grand success. Programme coordinators M Vinila and D Gowri Shankar were present on the occasion.



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