

# Efforts will be taken to make India healthier: Soumya Swaminathan

She said focus will be on addressing nutrient deficiency through agriculture and the omnipresence of chemicals in air, water, and food. She also spoke about her family, policy advocacy, and her role in the World Health Organization

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

**T**here is still a gender imbalance in the upper echelon of government committees and private institutions, but the younger generation of women is better at getting their voice heard, said Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), in a conversation with Vanitha Venugopal, FLO Chennai Skilling Head and Head of Incubation, Startup Tamil Nadu, on Saturday.

Addressing a gathering of women at an event organised by Raji Raju, chairperson of FICCI FLO, Ms. Swaminathan spoke about her family, policy advocacy, and her role in the World Health Organization (WHO).

For women, it could be difficult to get a point across a room full of senior males, but Dr. Swaminathan said that persistence was important. When she



Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson, MSSRF, in a conversation with Vanitha Venugopal, FLO Chennai Skilling Head and Head of Incubation, Startup Tamil Nadu. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

was appointed as the Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research, she advocated a vaccine against the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is one of the primary reasons for cervical

cancer in women, amid resistance. "The government finally rolled out one this year," she said.

## 'Champion of gender'

Ms. Swaminathan said her father, the late M.S. Swami-

nathan, was a champion of gender equality. When he was the vice chair of the planning commission in 1980, a chapter on environment and gender was included.

Recounting the lives of

the women in her family, Dr. Swaminathan said her grandmother, Madhuram, was a self-taught woman who wrote books in English and Tamil for children and on art, architecture, and spirituality despite her hearing inability.

"She addressed gender and sexuality in the 1960s in a Brahmin household at a time when it was considered taboo," she said. Minna Swaminathan, her mother, she added, was an equally accomplished professional and had a huge role to play in bringing gender into the agricultural curriculum.

## 'Food is best vaccine'

About future ventures, she said efforts will be made to try to get India to be healthier by focusing on addressing nutrient deficiency through agriculture and the omnipresence of chemicals in air, water, and food. "Food is the best vaccine against a number of diseases," she said.

## Dasara festivities, a blend of history, culture, and tradition, to kick off today

**R. Krishna Kumar**  
MYSURU

A slice of the royal orient will unfold to a sea of humanity as the famous Mysuru Dasara, to be held from October 15 to 24, will display the rich heritage of Karnataka with its seamless blend of history, culture, and tradition.

A custom that spans centuries and extends to the days of the Vijayanagar empire whose reign spanned nearly 300 years from the 14th to the mid-17th centuries, the mantle was inherited by the Wadiyars of Mysuru who carried forward the cultural practices.



**Sparkling grandeur:** The Mysuru palace continues to be the main attraction during the Dasara celebrations. M.A. SRIRAM

For the Wadiyars were the feudatories of the Vijayanagar rulers and after the decline and fall of the latter, Raja Wadiyar assumed kingship at Srirangapatana as the capital in 1610 CE and proclaimed that Navaratri be celebrated on a grand scale. The shifting of the capital from Srirangapatana to Mysuru

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after the 4th Anglo-Mysore war in 1799, resulted in Dasara being held in the city with Mummadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar continuing the legacy.

Fast forward to the present times, the event is officially designated the State festival or *Naada Habba*. Mysuru Dasara draws visitors from far and wide.

While Mysuru palace continues to be the main attraction during Dasara, the government has now extended the illumination to cover major roads and heritage buildings.

The festival will be inaugurated at Chamundi Hills between 10.15 a.m. and 10.36 a.m. on Sunday.



# Red Fort to host India's maiden art, architecture and design biennale

**Sreeparna Chakrabarty**  
NEW DELHI

Come December, the national capital's iconic Red Fort will house for a week, replicas of some landmark Indian buildings and structures such as the new Indian Parliament, the Velankanni railway station and Shalimar Bagh in Srinagar as part of the country's maiden art, architecture and design biennale.

The India Art, Architecture and Design Biennale, 2023 (IAADB), being organised by the Union Culture Ministry from December 9 to 15, is likely to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The week-long festival will see each day built around a uniquely conceptualised theme which will



**Grand venue:** A view of the Red Fort in New Delhi where the India Art, Architecture & Design Biennale will be held. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

be complemented by exclusively curated exhibitions.

The exhibitions have been designed in both physical and digital forms for an immersive experience accompanied by interactive installations.

A coffee table book would be brought out on each theme with 75 items each marking the 75 years of Indian Independence, sources in the Culture Ministry told *The Hindu*.

The themes are Doors of India, Gardens of India,

Baolis (step-wells) of India, Temples of India, Architectural Wonders of Independent India, Indigenous Design and Women in Architecture and Design.

Apart from the exhibition, panel discussions and interactive sessions with audiences to make them aware of India's built heritage will be held.

The entire exhibition is being curated by the National Gallery of Modern Art along with the National Council of Science Museums, Archaeological Survey of India, Lalit Kala Akademi, Council of Architecture and the outreach department of the Ministry of Education.

The biennale will also be an introduction to the cultural space at the Red Fort.

## Egypt is racing to eliminate hepatitis C

### The Hindu Bureau

On October 9, WHO announced that Egypt had made “unprecedented progress” towards eliminating hepatitis C. According to the WHO, Egypt became the first country to achieve “gold tier” status on the path to elimination of hepatitis C as per the global health body criteria. The “gold tier” status to reach the stated goal of eliminating hepatitis C includes meeting specific criteria such as ensuring 100% blood and injection safety, maintaining a minimum of 150 needles/syringes per year for people who inject drugs (PWID), diagnosis of over 80% of people living with chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV), treating of over 70% of individuals diagnosed with HCV, and the establishing of a sentinel surveillance programme for hepatitis sequelae, including liver cancer.

Egypt has diagnosed 87% of people living with hepatitis C and has provided 93% of those

diagnosed with curative treatment, exceeding the WHO gold tier targets of diagnosing at least 80% of people living with hepatitis C and providing treatment to at least 70% of diagnosed people, the WHO said. Egypt had undertaken the “100 Million Healthy Lives” initiative. Through this initiative, Egypt “significantly reduced the prevalence of hepatitis C from 10% in 2016 to 5% in 2018 and an estimated less than 1% in 2019”, the Africa CDC said.

“Egypt’s journey from having one of the world’s highest rates of hepatitis C infection to being on the path to elimination in less than 10 years is nothing short of astounding,” Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General said in a statement. “Egypt is an example to the world of what can be achieved with modern tools, and political commitment at the highest level to use those tools to prevent infections and save lives. Egypt’s success must give all



**Infection route:** The most common route of hepatitis C virus spread is injection drug use. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

of us hope and motivation to eliminate hepatitis C everywhere.”

“With its commitment to eliminate hepatitis C, Egypt has succeeded in testing virtually the whole of the eligible population and has treated almost all those who are living with the virus. This represents one third of the 12 million people living with hepatitis C in the Eastern Mediterranean Region,” Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean said in a statement.

According to the Africa CDC, Egypt was able to achieve huge success with hepatitis C due to key interventions undertaken including population-based surveys to understand the hepatitis C epidemic (who is affected and where) and developing an investment case to highlight the economic burden of HCV. Egypt also customised the elimination programme by involving generalist doctors to community healthcare workers and using telemedicine for hard-to-reach areas. But the

biggest boost came from reducing the cost of medical treatment per patient to less than \$50 through local manufacturing.

Hepatitis C infection is unevenly distributed globally, with these regions accounting for the most – European (22%), South-East Asia (20%) and the Eastern Mediterranean (17%). According to a 2023 WHO document, in 2019, there were 1.5 million new infections, with one third of new HCV infections occurring in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The prevalence of hepatitis C across the world in 2019 was 58 million. Though unscreened blood and blood products and inadequate sterilisation of medical equipment in health-care settings are two important routes of virus transmission, the most common route of virus spread is through unsafe injection practices. The use of safe injections has however reduced new hepatitis C infections.

# PM confirms India's bid to host 2036 Olympics

## IOC SESSION

**Abhinav Deshpande**  
MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday articulated India's aspiration to host the 2036 Summer Olympics and become the only the fourth Asian country to host the Games.

He said that the country is enthusiastic about organising the Olympics and is fully committed to making this dream a reality.

"India eagerly anticipates hosting the Olympics and the country will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to organise the 2036 Olympic Games, it's a dream and aspiration of 140 crore Indians," he said ahead of the 141st session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) here.

However, he did not

mention which city would host the Games.

Mr. Modi also conveyed the country's willingness to host the 2029 Youth Olympics and expressed confidence in receiving constant support from the IOC.

The Prime Minister underlined the significance of the IOC session taking place in the country after 40 years and also informed the audience about India's victory against Pakistan in the World Cup in Ahmedabad on Saturday.

"I congratulate Team Bharat and every Indian on this historic victory", he said.

### Part of Indian culture

Stating that sports have been an important aspect of Indian culture and lifestyle, Mr. Modi said: "When you go to the villages of India, one can find that any

festival remains incomplete without sports. Indians are not just sports lovers, but we also live it."

### Development

Mr. Modi also listed recent measures for the development of sports in India mentioning events like Khelo India Games, Khelo India Youth Games, Khelo India Winter Games and the upcoming Khelo India Para Games.

He also said that "sports is not just for winning medals but is a medium to win hearts and it belongs to all for all. It not only prepares champions but also promotes peace, progress and wellness. Therefore, sports is another medium of uniting the world".

Mr. Modi declared the session open in the presence of the IOC president Thomas Bach and member Nita Mukesh Ambani.