

Padmashri Nana Patekar Inaugurates AIU's 39th Inter-University Central Zone Youth Festival at MGM University

Veteran actor urges students to embrace struggle, self-reflection, and sincere artistry

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar

META AIU's 39th Inter-University Central Zone Youth Festival was inaugurated with grandeur at MGM University, marked by the inspiring presence of Padma Shri Nana Patekar. The ceremony, held amidst the traditional Gondhal performance and Deep Prajwalan, brought together over 1,100 students from 24 universities across Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Marathwada, and Vidarbha.

In his keynote address, Nana Patekar urged the youth to approach every art form with honesty and dedication, reminding them that true revolutions often begin on the stage. **"Rangmanch aasan nahi, yahi se kranti shuru hoti hai,"** he said, calling on students to perform with sincerity

rather than for applause. Reflecting on his five-decade journey in cinema and theatre, the veteran actor shared personal stories of hardship and learning, emphasizing self-awareness as the foundation of growth. **"Know your weaknesses, once you understand them, life becomes easier,"** he advised. He encouraged students not to chase excessive material gains and to allow

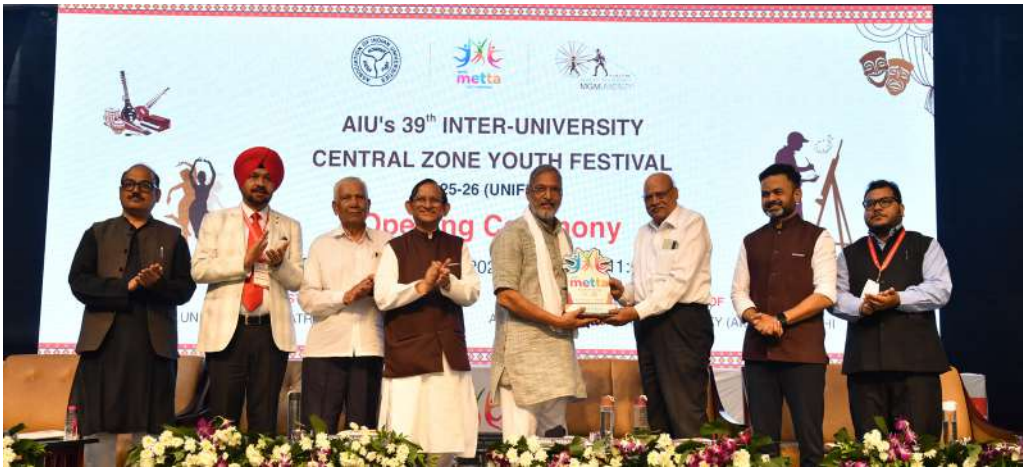
their craft not validation to define them.

In his remarks, Dr. Sapkal welcomed students from all participating states, highlighting the role of sports, research, and culture in holistic education. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Vice President of the MGM Trust Dr. P. M. Jadhav, Trustee Bhausaheb Rajale, MGM University Vice Chancellor

Dr. Vilas Sapkal, Registrar Dr. Ashish Gadekar, AIU officials Dr. Nirmal Jaura and Deepak Kumar Jha, Festival Organising Secretary Dr. Shiv Kadam, along with all deans, HODs, principals, and several dignitaries.

Dr. Nirmal Jaura described the event as a platform that connects youth to India's cultural identity. "Here, you will either win or learn, both are equally valuable," he said. The youth festival will feature competitions across five major art categories over the course of five days. The ceremony also included tributes to veteran actor Dharmendra and JNEC professor Sunil Kumar Jaiswal.

The inaugural event set an energetic tone for the festival, blending tradition, inspiration, and artistic excellence under one vibrant cultural umbrella.



Art with Purpose, Not Applause

- Nana urged the youth to perform with sincerity, not to chase praise or perfection: **"Don't perform just to say you participated. Live that kalakar."**
- Sharing memories from Prahar, he spoke about living with the Indian Army for three years, an experience that changed how he saw discipline, courage and sacrifice.
- He also warned against accumulating more than one needs: **"Excess destroys us. Keep your life simple."**



Campuses dancing with Culture and Purpose in the Procession



Universities Showcase Diverse Cultural and Social Themes

At the vibrant procession of the META AIU’s 39th University Central Zone Youth Festival, participating universities from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh showcased the rich diversity of their cultural, social, and regional identities. Each institution highlighted a unique theme, reflecting heritage, empowerment, and contemporary values.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, MH Theme: Women Empowerment BAMU presented a powerful message of women empowerment by featuring women dressed in various professional roles. They emphasised the growing presence and strength of women across sectors, symbolising equality, ambition, and progressive societal change.	Vikram University, Ujjain, MP Theme: Rajadhiraj Mahakal ki Sawari The university presented the divine and majestic tradition of Mahakal’s royal procession, inspired by the sacred Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga. Their performance showcased Ujjain’s spiritual legacy, devotion, and cultural grandeur.	Hemchand Yadav University Durg, Chhattisgarh Theme: Tribal Heritage Hemchand Yadav University highlighted the rich tribal heritage of Chhattisgarh through traditional attire, cultural motifs, and artistic expression. Their presentation honoured the legacy, identity, and vibrant customs of the region’s indigenous communities.	Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University Nagpur , MH Theme: Nagpur Meri Shaan Culture & Heritage The university highlighted Nagpur’s cultural pride through Bhajan, Ovi singing, and folk dance. The iconic marble dolls and teachings of Sant Tukadoji Maharaj enriched their cultural display.
Vasantrao Naik Marathwada Krishi Vidyapeeth Parbhani, MH Themes: Rich Culture of Marathwada The university showcased Marathwada’s vibrant cultural heritage, including ancient caves, forts, goddess traditions, lavani, and folk art forms like potraj. It highlighted the region’s agricultural richness, agrarian lifestyle and spiritual legacy.	Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya Khairagarh, Chhattisgarh Theme: Anushthan Parva & Chhattisgarhi Folk Festival The university showcased Dev Anushthan, Suwa Dance, Mandai, and Raut/Raudi Nacha representing ritualistic traditions and festive culture. Their performance reflected the depth of Chhattisgarh’s folk art and ancestral customs.	Pandit Ravishankar Shukla University Raipur, Chhattisgarh Theme: Chhattisgarh Tribal Tradition Representatives showcased traditional tribal outfits of Chhattisgarh along with folk dance forms rooted in Adivasi culture. The performances included Rilo and Karnach, both known for their rhythmic storytelling and deep cultural significance.	Laxmibai National Institute of Physical Education Gwalior, MP Theme: Youth in National Sports LNIPE Gwalior centred its presentation on “Youth in Sports,” celebrating strength, discipline, leadership, and fitness. The group emphasised the role of sports in shaping youth identity and promoting a culture of health, teamwork, and national pride.
MGM University, Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, Maharashtra Theme: Maharashtra Culture, Heritage Sites & SDGs MGM University showcased the rich culture of Maharashtra through Powada, Abhang, Pavli, Phugdi, and traditional Dindi. They highlighted iconic heritage sites of Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar such as Ajanta, Ellora, and Bibi-Ka-Maqbara. The presentation beautifully blended cultural pride with the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals, symbolizing a harmony of tradition and modern global values.			
Barkatullah University Bhopal, MP Theme: Nari Shakti The university highlighted the strength and dignity of women through symbolic cultural representation. Their presentation celebrated women’s empowerment and their societal contribution.	Rabindranath Tagore University Raisen, MP Theme: Narmada Aarti The university showcased a serene and devotional performance dedicated to the holy Narmada River. Their presentation emphasized spiritual reverence and cultural tradition.	Rani Durgavati University Jabalpur, MP Theme: Culture of Madhya Pradesh The university showcased traditional folk dances and cultural expressions of Madhya Pradesh. Their presentation reflected the state’s rich cultural identity and heritage.	Rajiv Gandhi Proudयोगiki Vishwavidyalaya Bhopal, MP Theme: Navratri Lok Geet The university performed traditional folk songs of Navratri reflecting festive energy and cultural celebration. Their presentation highlighted the musical heritage of Madhya Pradesh.
Raja Mansingh Tomar Music & Arts University Gwalior, MP Theme: Importance of Ardhanarishwar in Society The university highlighted the significance of Ardhanarishwar, the life journey and struggles of transgender individuals, emphasizing acceptance, identity, and equality.	AKS University Satn, MP Theme: Maihar Culture The university showcased the devotional and cultural heritage of Maihar, rooted in the worship of Goddess Sharda Mata. The presentation reflected the town’s spiritual traditions, classical music legacy, and rich folk art and aesthetics.	Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University Nanded, MH Theme: Tribal Heritage of Maharashtra The university presented traditional Adivasi dance forms showcasing Maharashtra’s indigenous culture. Their performance celebrated tribal rhythms, identity, and heritage.	Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University Amravati, MH Theme: Vitthalache Ringan Warkari Tradition The university performed the sacred Ringan ritual inspired by Warkari Sampraday. Their act narrated the legacy of Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram through traditional danc.

Students Speak: Stories from Every University

“Representing Hemchandh Vishwavidyalay at the zonal level is both exciting and nerve-racking, but it pushes me to perform at my best. I’m participating in Debate and Extempore events that really test clarity of thought and quick reasoning. The competition is intense, especially among peers from my own university, but I see it as a chance to grow, learn and strengthen my confidence, more than just a race to win.”

-Deepanshu Hemchandh Vishwavidyalay Chhattisgarh

“This is my first time performing at the zonal level, and it means a lot to me. Representing my university in Folk Dance feels like carrying forward the cultural spirit I truly love. The competition here is intense and inspiring, but instead of fear, it motivates me to give my absolute best. No matter the result, this is a big step in my artistic journey.”

-Sneha Raja Mansingh Tomar University of Music and Arts, Gwalior Madhya Pradesh