

# BANKING ON THE DIVINE



## For A Better Tomorrow

**ICICI NON-EXEC CHAIRMAN KV KAMATH AND RIL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PMS PRASAD** (in white shirt) seeking the blessings of Sathya Sai Baba in Mumbai on Sunday. With the economy and markets coming out of the woods, India Inc's honchos, political leaders & the aam aadmi sought the Baba's healing touch **PAGE 16**

# The world at his feet

## Top Guns Line Up For Shri Sathya Sai Baba's Blessings

Our Bureau  
MUMBAI

TEMPORAL and spiritual power intermingled in Mumbai on Sunday as devotees — both top guns as well as the masses — of the spiritual leader Shri Sathya Sai Baba lined up to receive his blessings.

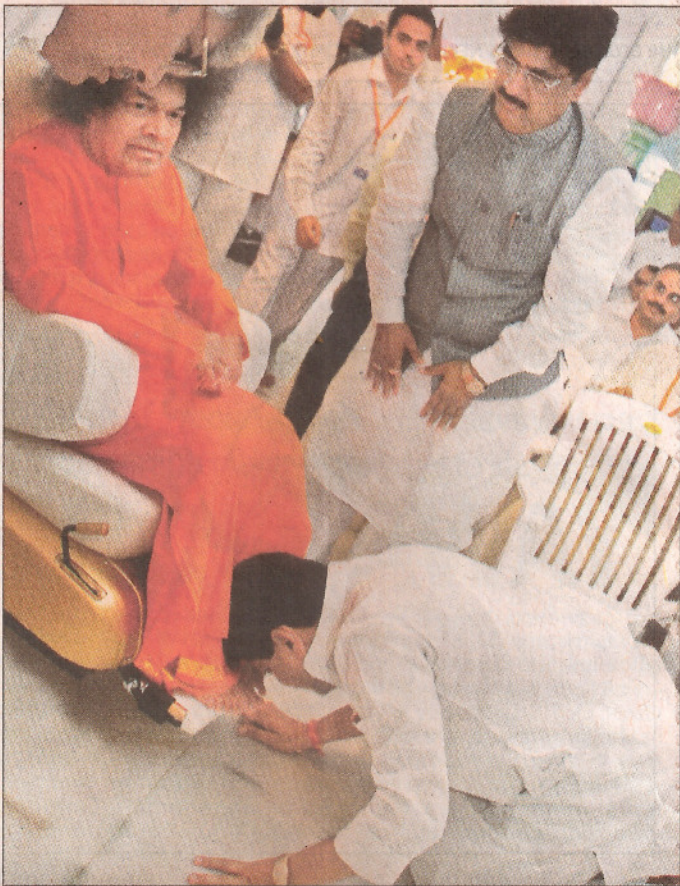
Big chiefs of the financial sector and India Inc turned out in large numbers to seek the Baba's blessings. The morning prayer in the Mumbai suburb of Andheri was attended by an eclectic collection of dignitaries. These included ICICI Bank chairman KV Kamath, Union Bank of India chairman and MD MV Nair, Kotak Bank vice-chairman and managing director Uday Kotak, Deutsche Bank's India operations head Gunit Chadha, Reliance Industries (RIL) director PMS Prasad, and Meera Sanyal, a banker and an independent candidate from the South Mumbai parliamentary constituency.

At a prayer meeting on Sunday, Maharashtra chief minister Ashok Chavan, BJP leader Gopinath Munde and many other dignitaries sought the Swami's blessings at a darshan organised in Mahakali Caves, Andheri.

Chief minister Ashok Chavan prayed for his new administration. "The government needs the Swamiji's touch and his blessings. We hope to run the government according to his principles," Mr Chavan said on Sunday morning.

The CM wasn't the only dignitary queuing up for a sprinkling of the spiritual stardust. A clutch of serving and former judges, including former Supreme Court judge BM Srikrishna (of the Srikrishna Commission fame) and a number of prominent lawyers and doctors were also present.

Mr Kamath, who spoke on the occasion, referred to the insights thrown up in the course of a two-day conference on the 'Ethics and the world of finance' held in August 2009 at the Sathya Sai Baba University at Puttaparthi in Andhra Pradesh. That conference was attended by two RBI governors, the incumbent Duvvuri Subbarao and his predecessor YV Reddy.



Besides the assorted dignitaries, thousands lined up for a darshan, first at Andheri and later at Worli.

Later in the day, the chief minister and his family hosted the Sathya Sai Baba at Varsha, the Maharashtra CM's residence in Mumbai's Malabar Hill. Predictably, some of this attracted criticism from people of a rationalist bent of mind who said that the CM's actions were not in consonance with the state's secular traditions. Pictures of Mr Chavan paying obeisance to the Sathya Sai Baba were flashed by some Hindi and Marathi television channels.

That's unlikely to deter the CM, who recalled his family's three decade-long relationship with the spiritual leader. His father SB Chavan,

two times Maharashtra CM and former Union finance minister under Rajiv Gandhi, had been similarly criticised in 1975. But the media critics of that era had later realised their error, Chavan Jr said.

Both Mr Chavan and Mr Kamath praised the selflessness of the volunteers, many from affluent backgrounds, working at various hospitals and educational institutions run by the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation.

Shri Sathya Sai Baba is on five-day visit to Maharashtra. The Sathya Sai Seva Organisation runs a number of schools and four hospitals. The organisation was recently in the forefront of relief work for cyclone victims in Orissa and flood victims in West Bengal.