

డబ్బా నుంచి ప్లాస్మాకి మారారు... మరి మీరు చూసే వార్తలూ మారాలి కదా...



నిఖార్సేన
వార్తల కోసం...



చూస్తున్నే ఉండండి... స్వతంత్ర సూపర్ ఛానల్

SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2023

SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2023

SUNPLAY

pioneer

Heralding change
through folk music
p. 8&9

TIME TO LEGALLY LIMIT KIDS'
ACCESS TO SOCIAL MEDIA?

US laws open
new vistas

p. 3&4

BREWERS
DOING WHAT
THEY DO BEST
p. 11

'Wherever music is required,
I am happy to contribute'

P. 5

PERSON

RAHUL GANDHI

A day after he was convicted in a defamation case by a Surat court for his alleged remarks on the 'Modi' surname, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was disqualified from the Lok Sabha on Friday, March 24. The Lok Sabha secretariat issued a notification saying the Wayanad MP was disqualified with effect from March 23, 2023.



VIDEO

URVASHI RAUTELA STEPS OUT WEARING A FACE MASK

Bollywood actress and former beauty queen Urvashi Rautela has done it Again! This time Urvashi hit the street in her night dress but the face pack of the actress caught everyone's attention. She was spotted wearing a 24k gold face mask and sunglasses as she posed for paparazzi. She posed amid her shooting schedule. The actress was seen clad in a printed co-ord set.



SONG

YEH YAARA KABHI HARA NAHI

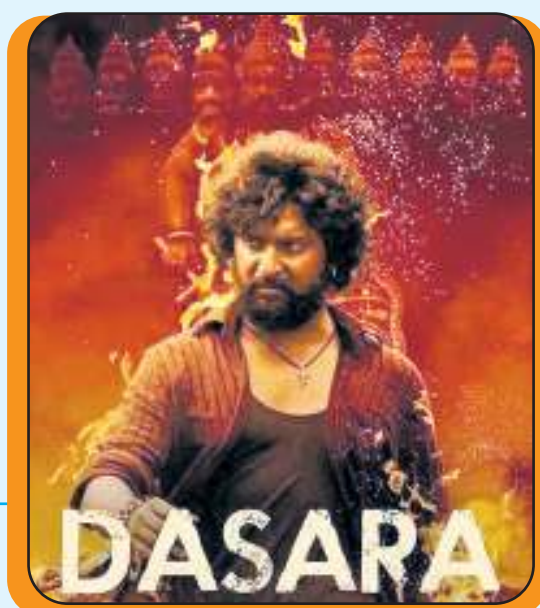
Bhojpuri actress Akanksha Dubey died by suicide on Sunday. The actress was found at a hotel in Varanasi and just a few hours later, her last song titled *Yeh Yaara Kabhi Hara Nahi* was released on Youtube. The song also features actor Pawan Singh.



MOVIE

DASARA

One of the most awaited films *Dasara* hit the theaters on Thursday (March 30). For the first time in his film career, Natural Star Nani has played an out-and-out mass role in *Dasara*. The debut directorial film of Srikanth Odela hit the screens amid exceptional hype and opened to positive response.



PICTURE

HAVAN IN DELHI HOSPITAL

A photograph showing a havan being conducted inside a Delhi hospital has gone viral on social media on Sunday, drawing criticism from several users. The photo shows a group of four priests performing a havan at what appears to be the lobby of a hospital, as wheelchairs can be seen at the entrance gates. "God save us. Inside the centrally air conditioned @ManipalHealth Hospital in Dwarka, accompanying a patient with breathing trouble," the tweet read.



TIME TO LEGALLY LIMIT KIDS' ACCESS TO SOCIAL MEDIA?

US laws open new vistas

Big Tech behemoths like Facebook and Google have grown enormously over the years, despite widespread concerns over the lack of appropriate pieces of legislation in various countries to make them accountable for user privacy, hate speech, misinformation, and harmful effects on teens' mental health. Fortunately, winds of change are blowing now.

On March 23, Governor of the US' State of Utah Spencer J. Cox signed

into law a bill that could significantly limit children and teenagers from accessing social media apps like Tik Tok, Instagram, and Facebook. The law, scheduled to come into effect from March 1st, 2024, requires users under 18 to obtain explicit consent from their parents or guardians to gain access to social media apps.

Social media platforms have been enjoined to block minors from using their apps from 10:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., with only parents or guardians being given access to modify this default setting. Besides, the measure requires social media apps to give parents access to all the posts, messages, and responses of their children. Another law signed on the same day prohibits companies from employing features or design techniques that could drive a minor to form an addiction to their platform. Apart from Utah, lawmakers in Arkansas, Texas, Ohio, Louisiana, and New Jersey, among others, are advancing similar

proposals. Last year California enacted a law requiring tech companies to put kids' safety first by barring them from profiling children or using personal information in ways that could harm children physically or mentally.

The foregoing pieces of legislation have the potential to radically change how children and teenagers use social media in several states and cities of the US. These laws also impinge on the relationships between children and parents in the context of their respective rights and obligations. *The Pioneer's Amartya Smaran*, while tracking the initial reactions to these pioneering pieces of legislation concerning children's safe access to social media, spoke to parents, legal experts, influencers, and other stakeholders in India about the prospects of enacting similar or better laws across the country.

As soon as we shared the gist of the Utah law, most of the parents welcomed the measure and endorsed it whole-heartedly for replication in India. Ajay Singh Chauhan and Shilpa Chauhan, residents of Secunderabad, exclaimed: "Wow! That's good." Both added with a smile: "It'd be nice to see something like that here." They are proud parents of two kids: Akshath(14) and Aanchal(19). "Normally, you can have control in the daytime," observes Ajay Singh, enthusiastically sharing his opinions on the Utah measure. "Especially in the evening, you don't have control or governance where you can see what's happening. These things would definitely help growing children who don't have the ability to understand what's right and wrong." The Utah bill also states that parents shall have access to their child's messages and posts! So, we posited: "Won't that mean you're intruding into your child's space in disregard of their privacy?" The couple conceded: "To an extent, yes! Not that we're not. There are good and bad things on social media platforms. It's not always wrong. This generation has multiple sources to get the information they want - something unheard-of back in our times. On the negative side, there are other things where children might be exposed to wrong information. Again, as parents, we would not like to invade their privacy, but if there's something wrong, definitely we can." Pallavi, a former assistant professor, and mother of a 14-year-old son is of a slightly different opinion: "I don't think it's a good idea to impose such harsh restrictions on children. I don't

believe in seeing their content without their approval. I feel we should teach them the right values instead. My opinion is they see what's good and bad. They'll only understand things when they experience them. I trust my son and I've seen him on a couple of occasions where he refrained from indulging in things that were not appropriate on social media." Pallavi's son, Suhaas(14) comments: "No need to take this into consideration. On one hand, I feel like, they can have some amount of control, but not so much that they get possessive about what we're doing on the apps. They can keep a check on it, but not so much. What Utah lawmakers have done is that they've taken away freedom completely. I would say, it should not be implemented." Civil liberties advocates as well as lobbyists and experts in tech industries have also expressed their concerns over the matter. Some of them have opposed the nature of the measure that the Utah legislature passed this month. Content creation by talented, self-directed youngsters might also go for a toss here as a result of these restrictive laws. There are several young content creators who might not be able to do things that they usually do and have the irresistible urge to do. The autonomy they enjoy at the moment to let their creative juices flow would be entirely lost. It is all good if the accounts are managed by parents/guardian of the talented person, but what if teens want to flourish on their own, and have little to no moral support? This is another area that the Utah lawmakers should look into.

Continued on Page 4...



Continued from Page 3...

Singer Ritesh G Rao, who recently sang *Ek sher ho tum* in the Hindi dubbed version of Kamal Haasan's *Vikram*, told us that he partly credits his success as a singer to the social media boom. As a budding singer, it was the right time for him to sign-up for Facebook when he was in his early teens. "As a singer, I would want that freedom to post with a good amount of creative autonomy. For me, the Facebook thing helped a lot because I've gotten the opportunity to sing a song called *Bullet la (Sammatham)* through social media. Music composer Shekar Chandra spotted me on Facebook. If you ask me personally, I would like to post content that is good. There are negative aspects to social media but there are a lot of positives as well. However, it is entirely subjective, and it depends on how you use social media," the singer opines.

The up-and-coming singer had the platform and the guidance of his parents to navigate through his career. He was fortunate enough that such restrictive laws weren't imposed at the time (2012) when he was just letting the world know that he has some talent. He managed to build a good following and now he is going to sing on a huge scale for Pan-Indian films. This is one prime example of what one can become by proper exposure in social media.

In 2021, the United Kingdom enacted protections for kids. Originally it was called, Age-appropriate Design Code, and now it's simply referred to as Children's Code. As per ico.org (Information Commissioner's Office), the Children's Code is a data protection code of practice for online services, such as apps, online games, and web and social media sites, likely to be accessed by children. This pushed companies to create features and designs that are age appropriate. Around the same time, YouTube set all the accounts of users falling in the age bracket of 13-17 to private by default.

Based on the UK Children's Code, on August 30th, 2022, The California Legislature enacted the California Age-Appropriate Design Code Act (A.B. 2273), which will come into effect from July 1, 2024. The bill requires a business that provides an online service, product, or feature likely to be accessed by children to comply with specified requirements, including a requirement to configure all default privacy settings offered by the online service, product, or feature to the settings that offer a high level of privacy, unless the business can demonstrate a compelling reason that a different setting is in the best interests of children, and to provide privacy information, terms of service, policies, and community standards concisely, prominently, and using clear language suited to the age of children likely to access that online service, product, or feature, according to California Legislative Information.

Therefore, different states are trying to adopt various methods to protect children from the adverse effects of social media. Taking California Age-Appropriate Design Code Act and the UK Children's Code as an inspiration - states like New York, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Maryland introduced similar laws. However, Arkansas adopted laws similar to that of Utah. And a state like Texas went the extra mile and proposed a bill that would ban all social media accounts of minors.

"Arkansas and Utah are very orthodox and regressive in their views about tech in my opinion," says Srinivas O - a data scientist based in Boston, who's associated with one of the top tech companies. "Utah is a very different state with a unique cultural mix - a majority of people follow Mormonism. Don't think the tech industry should be concerned about what is happening in Utah or Arkansas. I believe the tech industry might lobby its way out in Utah and Arkansas or maybe they'd create extra safety/security features in their apps that would disallow kids from accessing certain kinds of content."

Activists are of the opinion that the bills undermine the constitutional and human rights of young people in Utah. One such activist - Evan Greer, Director, Fight for the Future, questions: "What about situations where there is a custody battle or allegations of abuse, and an abusive parent is attempting to obtain access to a child's social media messages?"

To which the Gov. replied, "There are legitimate concerns, and we will be working through those."



These bills don't go into effect for a little over a year, which gives us time to work through all of those questions; making sure that we're protecting the data privacy of the citizens of Utah. Again, making sure that we're figuring out how these will work. In any custody battle, you have issues surrounding kids and their online activity and what they're doing. So, those things are already being worked through in lots of contexts and we will continue to work through, but this is about empowering families and parents and holding these social media companies accountable. For what we know, this is a data-driven approach." Gov. Spencer Cox shared in a recent interview that his team has been working with Prof. Jonathan Haidt (social psychologist at New York University's Stern School of Business), who's been looking at the implications of social media on children over many years and collecting data pertaining to it from around the world.

In an opinion piece titled 'Social media is riskier for kids than screen time' published in The Washington Post on February 16, 2022, Prof. Jonathan Haidt, Jean Twenge, and Kevin Cummins suggested, "Instead of being faced with the nearly impossible task of controlling all of our children's technology use, we can zero in on the activities that appear to be the most harmful, especially social media."

In the wake of issues surrounding the laws that Utah has passed, *The Pioneer* looked at the prospects of a similar piece of legislation being implemented in India. Richa Joshua, an advocate who has been practicing before Trial Courts and the High Court for the State of Telangana since 2017, says: "The IT Act, 2000 was enacted for the purpose of regulating e-commerce, promoting IT Industry, enabling e-governance and prevention of cyber-crime. In 2021, the Government of India introduced the IT (Intermediaries Guidelines and Social Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 inter alia to regulate the workings of social media companies. However, with the constant increase in the use of social media by children below the age of 18 years, it has been observed that the provisions of the Act and the prescribed rules are grossly insufficient to address vital concerns relating to such use by children."

A proposed version of the Digital India Act 2023 was formally outlined by the Union Government of India on March 16. This legislative framework is expected to replace the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000. Elaborating on the proposed Digital India Act, 2023, Richa continues: "The proposed Digital India Act, 2023 is an attempt to address and reduce some of these concerns by enabling the Government to not only regulate the content on social media that has become part and parcel of the lives of the nation's young children but also to tackle the issues of cyber-attacks, pornography, ad-targeting, propaganda, etc." Overall, the provisions contained in the IT Act 2000 have to be comprehensive and must have the interests of all citizens, including minors, at its center by adopting a mechanism to identify and remove harmful content on social media whilst ensuring the privacy of individuals within the fabric of constitutional rights, according to Richa Joshua.

One major problem with the Utah law is that parents have access to everything that a child does: right from who they text to what they post. On the contrary, if and when these laws are introduced in India, would they prove counterproductive?

According to Siddharth Gadugu, Associate, Vakils Associated Secunderabad: "The proposal for requiring parental consent for all online activity of older

adolescent children has to be reconsidered as they have a more comprehensive understanding of their activities in the digital space, and it would be unfair to place every child under the age of 18 in the same bracket. As children grow, there is an increase in their capabilities and desire for autonomy. Further, the need for access to information about identity, religion, sexuality, and health has to be recognized. It is vital that laws do not restrict our country's children from tapping the full potential of the available resources as the same would be counterproductive in the long term."

While the positive aspects of social media apps entail expanding one's knowledge, learning pertinent real-world skills, and improving one's sense of community among teenagers. The negatives constitute the risks of depression, addiction, insomnia, exposure to pornography at a young age, and anxiety. The aforementioned law could put limitations on the information and cut off access to social media content that's protected by the First Amendment to the United States' Constitution.

The High Court advocate feels the circumstances that led to the passing of the legislation in Utah are also present in the Indian scenario to some extent. "Social Media companies qualifying as 'intermediaries' under the Information Technology Act, 2000 enjoy safe harbour under Section 79 of the Act and are accordingly exempted from liability for content that is created and uploaded by other users as long as they do not have 'actual knowledge' of such content. Such a position of law was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court of India in Shreya Singhal's case and has been further crystallized under the Information Technology Rules, 2021 as amended."

The issue with any law that is too rigid in its entirety is that people find ways to circumvent it. For instance, when the US imposed a blanket ban on the sale and import of alcoholic beverages from 1920-1933, it led to the rise of organized crime. Or the ban on 827 porn websites in India following the Uttarakhand High Court order in 2018 witnessed a 400% increase in VPN (Virtual Private Network) usage.

The legal expert too is of the opinion that such restrictive laws increase the risk of such children (who perceive a threat to their privacy) turning to VPNs to mask their identity, and attempting to exploit other loopholes in such laws is a likely possibility.

Suggesting a possible alternative to the proposed Utah law, Siddharth Gadugu says: "Instead of a blanket ban on access to social media during specified hours by minors or violating their fundamental right to privacy, a policy aimed at increasing accountability and transparency as also regulating and enforcing compliance by social media companies all the while promoting digital literacy and discipline amongst children and parents alike so as to balance the rights of all stakeholders is the need of the hour."

There is a substantial amount of research pointing at the risks of depression, anxiety, predation by strangers, cyberbullying, and insomnia among teenage social media users.

According to a report published by the Centers for Disease Control, a high amount of depression was found among younger girls. And suicidal thoughts were found to be higher among young women than men. In line with the Centers for Disease Control report, Utah Senator Michael McKell, who was the sponsor of this particular Utah law, reportedly said he feels that social media is playing a vital role in exacerbating the findings of CDC reports.

According to child development experts, sometimes social media could be one of the last resorts for teens or students who are in distress. One can talk about identity issues or emotional issues and experience a sense of community. If an individual comes from oppressive family background and the parents/guardians are not okay with the way they think or behave, these experts argue that it could stifle the voices of these children.

Dr. Krishma Jain, a counselling psychologist based in the city, opines: "These communities are a great way to give a sense of belonging. In my view, this is the first step towards any solution. In its entirety, it is not a solution. Who are these people whom you're talking to in the community? Are they somebody who will not misuse or use your data? You're going to these platforms for a solution but many a time, the personalities of these people who are providing you the solution are very different from yours."

"I noticed that teens lose hope that this problem would ever be solved," says Dr. Krishma Jain. "Because they've been dealing with the eyes of somebody else. They are trying things that worked for somebody else which doesn't guarantee that it would work for them as well. I have seen this leads to a lot of teens losing out on hope and indulging themselves in self-harming activities. I would like to present the point that had it been somebody else wherein they'd have had a personal one-to-one conversation so that the other person would know what this person is coming in from (set of values, beliefs, ideas, and personality). That would give him/her a better hand at dealing with the situation."

The counselling psychologist suggests that teens could get the right guidance from teachers, mentors, parents/guardians, or even relatives. All it requires is a person to sit down and have a conversation and be able to express oneself. These communities are taking teens out of that scenario and presenting them on a global platform, says Dr. Krishma.

From a psychological standpoint, she feels it'd be a great initiative for something similar like the Utah law to come in place. "Parents are struggling to get their teens out of their rooms and screens," she explains. "These laws would help teens nurture a family atmosphere and create real long-lasting friendships with everyone around. Also, I'd understand that parents need to be equipped to handle this kind of scenario because till now parents and kids have lived independent life. They've been occupied in their own lives. Now, when they will have time to interact with each other, there is scope for providing parents with the right equipment to understand the right techniques to handle this scenario. The moment we get that validation and nurturing environment, kids will open up and seek validation internally and amongst their parents rather than searching for it outside."

It's too early to predict the outcomes of the proposed law that would come into effect initially in Utah on March 1, 2024. However, the package of bills proposed should be thoroughly examined with great care. A rigid law would only make things worse.

Therefore, striking the right balance considering all the stakeholders of society would be wise. Coming to India, we are a diverse nation. The reality of each household reflects a different situation and if something like the Utah measure is going to come into effect soon, our lawmakers should be extra careful because firstly we have an extraordinarily huge population and there's a huge digital divide with more than 800 million people living in the rural areas. This gap is going to increase further if such laws are implemented as it cuts the youth from vital information. Instead, we could adopt the UK Children's Code which deals with the design and features employed by social media apps. Let kids use these apps but proper age verification should be done at any cost. Going too harsh would mean teens will certainly find ways to get round the law.

Whether we limit children's access to social media apps or bar social media companies from using design features for enabling improper access to the products on their platforms, the overriding objectives are clear: total safety for children who access these apps and fiduciary responsibility for those providing or handling social media platforms. Towards this end, we need to fuse the best elements of all pioneering pieces of legislation in this crucial area.

‘Wherever music is required, I am happy to contribute’

Music is like a magic key that opens up a smeared heart. In fact, the best musicians are those who reach the depths of your heart with a gleaming note. Amit Trivedi is one of the best musicians we have in the industry and has mastered the craft of transforming people's lives with his melodic music.

Looking back at his track-by-track discography, right from his debut with *Aamir* to his recent blockbusters including *Dosti* in *RRR*, *Qala*, *Badhaai do*, *Doctor G*, and *Mrs. Chatterjee Vs. Norway*, to name a few, the graph has just gone up and up, bringing to us marvellous hits for a perfect playlist that strikes the right chords for us. Another recent song of the *Naina da Kasoor* artiste that definitely needs a special mention and has received tremendous praise is *Halla Bol*, the anthem song for Rajasthan Royals, and why not? The IPL fever has lead-off. The *Love You Zindagi* tunesmith had collaborated once again with his ‘Chaudhary’ folk singer Mame Khan.

We couldn't hold on to our excitement as we connected with the connoisseur to know more about the collaboration, his musical creativity, his desire to work down south, and more.

“I've had a wonderful working relationship with Mame Khan,” remarked the *Namo Namu* singer, who has known the folk singer for more than 10 years now. “I have had the privilege of working with such a great artist in the past. It was once again my pleasure to collaborate with him on this Rajasthan Royals anthem, and when I was told that it was me and Mame Khan, I was very happy to know about that, and the song was created keeping him and Rajasthan Royal in mind,” zealously shared the award-winning singer.

It is no surprise that he is one of the most industrious musicians in the industry. His work surely speaks much of it! He doesn't confine himself to a particular musical genre. We're not saying it for the sake of saying it. This can be seen from his recent association with Royal Stag Boombox. Enunciating about what according to him makes the combination of Bollywood and hip-hop such a good one, he shared, “Well, indifference to music, I can say it's an amalgamation of voices and the ‘desi tadka’ and ‘masala Bollywood’ and when they meet the hip-hop world, it is all about poetry, rapping, rhythm embroidery, and melodic masala music of Bollywood.”

Creativity doesn't wait for the perfect moment. As an artist, it's up to you to bring that perfect moment to life through your creativity. Looking at the creativity with which the *Meethi Boliyaan* vocalist makes his music and is tremendously loved by the audience, including us (wink), we asked him about how he relates his creativity to the director's vision and the genre of the film. “A lot of research, thoughts, discussions, and back-end work goes through, and a lot of work happens back and forth,”

he gleefully shared. He further continued, “Depending on the views, they may set it in some period era or in some separate location like Bengal or Rajasthan. Depending on genre-wise, if it's a romance, action, or drama. And if it's a biopic, these factors come into play, and that really defines how the music will be approached. And of course, filmmaking has always been a director's medium. So whatever direction they take me, I just flow in that direction. I've always done that. And this flow makes a decision: if he says, I'm good at the east, I'll go east; or if he says, Go to the west, I'll do that, of course, with my expertise.”

Apart from being one of the musicians who's very much adored in Bollywood, he is also on a quest to make a strong mark down the south. Oh, a correction! It's all over — North, South, East, and West. In 2019, he made his Telugu debut in the Chiranjeevi starrer *Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy*. After his debut with the film, he's looking forward to working on more projects down south. But

“Somehow it is not happening. Maybe they didn't like what I'd done. Or I don't know what the reason is for why I would love to do more because I did collaborate on *RRR* with Rajamouli, but as a composer, I would like to do more because I genuinely love that industry. I love the people, their work ethics, and the films there. Everything I love a lot. There's a lot to learn about the South Indian film industry, whether it's in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, or Malayalam. So I'm looking forward to doing more if that happens in the future. Music has no such language. There is no such boundary there. Be it south, north, east, or west, wherever the music is required, I am happy to contribute.”

The music industry is evolving faster than ever. Each year, new platforms and mediums skyrocket to prominence, minting household names and reshaping the way audiences connect with artists. The landscape for commercial Hindi music has changed drastically with the focus on streams and YouTube views. While some songs find popularity through short-form videos, the number of reels made using a

song is a barometer of its success. The virtuoso couldn't agree much, as he said, “Unfortunately, yes.” While the number game has been a trend, it eventually happened to a lot of his songs too. “Fortunately, both my old and new catalogues have a lot of old and new songs that I've just seen go viral on reels.” And when I check on my streams, the numbers jump like crazy. That is the reality that is there, good or bad; I don't know about that. We are just flowing with the times. The nature of time is offering us this point; maybe in the future, they'll do something else. So we have to embrace it and keep going.”

Looking at the other side of the coin, with the number of views and a particular song being a big ‘social media trend’, there are also songs that go underrated.

Expressing his sitch during those bad days, he said, “It's not just one song or two songs. There are so many things that I do and so

many songs that I make hardly anything work. That really

things to stand out, there are a lot of factors that are going to come into play these days. Social media and reels are the factors in which one will go viral. What will happen? We have no idea. I have seen the best of the songs — musically, lyrically, and arrangement-wise, they're just highly superior songs. But nobody knows about it. And there are very mediocre songs; I'm just wondering why this song is a hit. So it's very rare. There is no way to test a song where you can see it — is it good or bad? Or is it a hit or a flop? It's a very strange world that we have entered, and it can be highly demotivating at times. When my songs work or any artist works at that point, it gives happiness to them. I think it's a gamble. What will work with whom and where? Nobody knows.”

Going ahead, he is once again going to collaborate with the talented filmmaker Vikramaditya Motwane for Amazon Prime's *Jubilee*, after *Udaan* and *Lootera*.

“As a solo, I had a blast doing that. I always love working with Vikram; he is my favourite director and human being. I'm a little proud of *Jubilee* and a little proud of another project, *Ghoomar*, by my other favourite composer, R. Madhavan,” wrapped the proficient musician.

Be it *Naina da Kasoor*, *Halla Bol*, or the recent *Dosti* in *RRR*, Amit Trivedi, who is one of the best musicians we have in the industry right now, has mastered the craft of transforming people to a different world with his melodic music. *The Pioneer's* TEJAL SINHA connects with him for an exclusive tete-a-tete about music, life, and more.

breaks my heart, and I don't know why or where I went wrong? And that is when you go into that self-doubt mode, questioning yourself, Am I good enough? Is it good? Not good, wise enough? We live in a very different world. There's a lot of content out there. There is way too much competition out there. Way too much content has been released on a regular basis. For



YOUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON YOUR DREAMS; SO, GO TO SLEEP

With some personal experience, we can tell you if you are unable to sleep, it is affecting your immune system for sure. There are some proteins, it seems, and they are called cytokines. They actually promote sleep in your body. So if you are under stress, these cytokines will decrease, and your body won't let you sleep. It just doesn't end here; we have also heard that antibodies also decrease during this time. So how do we fight sleep deprivation? The answers to our questions were given by a few of the medical experts, again for our special health talk and tell all on how to bolster the immune system!

Dr. Aabid Amin, consultant internal medicine at Sanjeev Bansal Cygnus Hospital, filled in the blanks for us. "Sleep is a rapidly reversible condition of decreased motor activity. This phenomenon is found in all animals in some form. This universality suggests that sleep likely has some evolutionary relevance. Humans spend approximately one-third of their lifespan, or about eight hours per night, sleeping. Multiple theories exist for the purpose of sleeping. These theories include restoration, energy conservation, and memory consolidation." A sufficient amount of sleep is important for optimal physical health, immune function, mental health, and cognition. Insufficient sleep is a public health problem; nearly 30 percent of adults are affected. Short sleep duration has been associated with a variety of adverse health outcomes, including lower performance on the job or at school, slowed reaction, higher risk of accidents, mental health disorders, or drug abuse, increased risk of chronic diseases such as hypertension and cardiovascular disease, pregnancy complications and all-cause mortality. Repercussions? "Insomnia can lead to psychosocial disturbances. Which in turn can lead to difficulties in maintaining interpersonal relation-

ships! Unfavourable workplace atmosphere and diminished productivity. This can lead to workplace anxiety. Your slowed reaction time could lead to roadside, workplace, and domestic accidents, which in turn increase the risk of significant trauma, disability, and death. Mental health disorders are major health problems. Psychiatric disorders have a bidirectional relationship, and concomitant treatment for both disorders is often necessary to hasten recovery and increase the likelihood of a sustained response to both disorders. Drug abuse is also linked with insomnia. Patients with chronic insomnia and a substance use disorder may have "forgotten" how to initiate sleep without a sedative. Consistent poor sleep increases your risk for heart problems such as irregular heartbeat, heart failure, and coronary heart disease. It increases the likelihood of uncontrolled blood pressure and diabetes, which in turn can lead to chronic organ damage. Decreased immunity due to decreased sleep can lead to recurrent infections and poor recovery. It can lead to the risk of preterm birth, a C-section, worse labour pain, pregnancy-related depression, and a low birth weight baby. It is rightly said, Your future depends on your dreams, so go to sleep."

Another expert opinion by Dr. Keni Ravish Rajiv who is a neurologist and epileptologist suggest, "Sleepiness while driving is responsible for serious car crash injuries and death. In older adults, sleep deficiency may be linked to a higher chance of falls and broken bones! Sleep deficiency has also played a role in human mistakes linked to nuclear reactor melt-downs, the grounding of large ships, and plane crashes. Can you imagine? Chronic insomnia is usually a result of stress, life events or habits that disrupt sleep. Treating the under-

lying cause can resolve the insomnia, but sometimes it can last for years. Concerns about work, school, health, finances, or family can keep your mind active at night, making it difficult to sleep. Your circadian rhythms act as an internal clock, guiding such things as your sleep-wake cycle, metabolism and body temperature. Disrupting your body's circadian rhythms can lead to insomnia. Causes include jet lag from travelling across multiple time zones, working a late or early shift, or frequently changing shifts. Poor sleep habits include an irregular bedtime schedule, naps, stimulating activities before bed, an uncomfortable sleep environment, and using your bed for work, eating, or watching television. Eating too much late in the evening or having a light snack before bedtime is OK, but eating too much may cause you to feel physically uncomfortable while lying down. Many people also experience heartburn, a backflow of acid and food from the stomach into the oesophagus after eating, which may keep you awake. Many prescription drugs can interfere with sleep, such as certain antidepressants and medications for asthma or blood pressure. Many over-the-counter medications, such as some pain medications, allergy and cold medications, and weight-loss products, contain caffeine and other stimulants that can disrupt sleep. Sleep apnea also causes you to stop breathing periodically throughout the night, interrupting your sleep. Restless legs syndrome causes unpleasant sensations in your legs and an almost irresistible desire to move them, which may prevent you from falling asleep. Coffee, tea, cola, and other caffeinated drinks are stimulants.

Drinking them in the late afternoon or evening can keep you from falling asleep at night. Nicotine in tobacco products is another stimulant that can interfere with sleep. Alcohol may help you fall asleep, but it prevents deeper stages of sleep and often causes awakening in the middle of the night."

So how can we sleep better becomes our next question, gradually. Dr. Viswesvaran Balasubramanian, consultant in interventional sleep medicine at Yashoda Hospitals in Hyderabad, feels getting enough high-quality sleep is essential for maintaining good health and well-being. He gives our readers some tips to help them sleep better:

Stick to a consistent sleep schedule: Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends.

Create a sleep-conducive environment: Your bedroom should be cool, dark, and quiet. Use comfortable pillows and a supportive mattress.

Limit daytime naps: If you have trouble sleeping at night, avoid taking naps during the day.

Be mindful of what you eat and drink: Avoid eating heavy meals, spicy foods, or drinking caffeine or alcohol close to bedtime.

Get regular exercise: Regular exercise can help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.

Manage stress: Practise relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or meditation to help you manage stress and improve your sleep quality.

Avoid using electronic devices before bedtime: The blue light emitted by electronic devices can interfere with your sleep.

Try to avoid using them at least an hour before bed.

In this week's Health Talk, *The Pioneer's* **SHIKHA DUGGAL** speaks to experts and brings to you a detailed report on how one's sleep pattern can affect their overall immune system with tips to fight sleep deprivation.



Plastic: easy to use, tough to dispose of!

I am omni present, I'm omni potent

You try to burn me, I'll spoil your environment
You try to bury me, I'll be lurking to haunt
You try to destroy me, I'll destroy your intent
My target is not only this but the next planet!
I'm plastic, I'm ubiquitous"

— Aadhvi, NSM School, Vijayawada.

These words by a schoolgirl seem so obvious about the nature of plastic, which is so pervasive in our society. Avoiding it is next to impossible with the level of inroads plastic has made into human life. You try to discard it in one form, but it reappears in another. The day starts with plastic and ends with it, be it toothbrushes, shampoo bottles, meal plates, carry bags, pens, packing material, water bottles, and so on. Just for instance, if we had to list the number of plastic items we see or use on a daily basis, no wonder the list runs into the hundreds.

The first synthetic modern plastic was invented in 1907 by Dr. Leo Bakeland and called it 'Bakelite'. Since then, the production and consumption of plastic have grown exponentially. The greatest advantage of plastic is that it is durable, chemically stable, light weight, malleable, pliable, rust resistant, electric resistant, has low thermal conductivity, and is cheap. Unfortunately, the same traits have become the greatest disadvantage for the environment.

Its versatile physical property makes it more convenient to use it as an alternative to all possible daily utilities, both for domestic and industrial purposes. Hence, it is easy to use but tough to dispose of! Plastic is not biodegradable and can remain in the environment for hundreds of years. Physical degradation of plastic gives out microplastic (<5mm) particles and harmful chemicals that contaminate soil, water, and air, which makes it much worse for the environment.

Daunting plastic footprint:

In 2018, the average per capita plastic waste generation in the world was 0.17 kg per day per person. The environmental and societal cost of plastic is at least ten times its market value (WWF 2021). Since 1950, the world has produced about 9.3 billion metric tonnes of plastic, and 79% of this plastic is in our environment as plastic waste. India alone produces about 33,60,043 metric tonnes of plastic waste per annum (CPCB 2019), which amounts to a whopping 9205 metric tonnes per day! The need to reduce our plastic footprint, an indicator of how much plastic we contribute to the world's plastic waste, on our environment is more paramount now than ever before owing to increasing environmental fragility and health concerns.

The plastic's potential to endanger ecological equilibrium is much greater than what the human mind can imagine. The innocent animals, including the avian and aquatic life, are at the receiving end of none of their mistakes.

Ocean benthic, sea ice, hilltops, and pristine forests are not free from plastic. As per an estimate, about 46,000 plastic pieces are present per square mile of ocean, which is higher than the number of fish in that extent. Plastic is a threat multiplier that may aggravate the climate change impact. This poses a severe challenge to marine biodiversity. The regular maintenance of plastic-gutted drains and waterways is a huge burden on the exchequer in all the cities.

The recent research establishes that the discarded plastic has found its way into mothers'

milk in the form of microplastic. Harmful chemicals and toxic substances like bisphenol-A (BPA) released from plastic are known to disrupt endocrine function.

Styrene and vinyl chlorides are carcinogenic to animals. Such chemical monomers leached from plastic dumps are contaminating groundwater and causing health complications.

A study by Newcastle University, Australia, reveals that people are ingesting about 2000 tiny pieces of plastic each week. Such plastic elements seeping into the food chain are becoming a major public health issue. The societal efforts in the direction of shredding this wonder material are abysmally insufficient. Society as a whole needs to squelch a long way away from the morass of plastic. Hence, it is the moral responsibility of humanity to keep the plastic checked immediately to protect posterity from its peril.

Concerns and efforts:

In 1972, global concerns were raised about the hazardous impact of plastic on the environment and ecology when a research team found plastic pieces amidst the Sargasso Sea in the Atlantic Ocean. Subsequently, the 1996 discovery of the *Great Pacific Garbage Patch* by Captain Charles Moore sounded the global alarm about the plastic threat to the environment.

The plastic pollution treaty, titled *End Plastic Pollution: Towards an Internationally Legally Binding Instrument*, being endorsed by 175 countries in the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA-5) in March 2022 at Nairobi, is an essential step forward towards tackling global plastic pollution by focusing on plastic recycling through a circular economy model and reducing plastic waste. Through this, the countries are resolved to enter legally binding international agreements by 2024 in line with the historic world climate laws like the Montreal Protocol. India, in its draught resolution, calls for voluntary action by the countries to mitigate the plastic menace.

India's landmark initiatives like Swachh Bharath, Swachh Survekshan, and Garbage Free City essentially have a plastic use augmentation strategy based mainly on reducing, reusing, and recycling the plastic waste. The plastic waste (management and handling) rules of 2011 and subsequent amendments in 2016 and 2022 aim to phase out single-use plastics from society by banning them and insisting on more than 120-

micron-thick carry bags to foster reuse and recycling.

These guidelines mandate the local bodies for segregation, recycling, and safe disposal of the plastic waste.

Under these rules, the plastic manufacturers are bound by extended producer responsibility (EPR), which is the responsibility of the (plastic) producer for environmentally sound management of the product until the end of its life. It is the upstream shifting of the onus on the manufacturer to ensure safe management of produced plastic, keeping environmental safety at its core. The state pollution control board at the state level, the Deputy Commissioners at the District level, and the Gram Panchayats at the grass-roots level are the competent authorities to enforce the provisions of these rules.

However, recycling the plastic is not a permanent solution since it involves the high-pressure, thermal, and physical transformation of used plastic into other products. After two or three recyclings, it becomes even more dangerous to the biota. Further, permanent fixing options like blending in bituminous roads, brickmaking, unaltered use as decorative material, pots, park display items, etc., are the only remaining safe recycling options. Even in this case, the monster still stays in the environment, which hits back sooner or later. The ultimate solution for weaning out of plastic addiction needs a much larger perspective beyond recyclability. Hence, the focus should be on reducing and saying no to plastic.

India's natural way forward:

India has an ecological way forward, as we have scope to dovetail the rural and urban economies to encourage small-scale industries that produce natural alternatives to plastic items. In this respect, we need to embark on a vibrant civil society and its affiliation with an eco-friendly lifestyle ingrained in the Indian psyche. We are pioneers in organic farming, which keeps all chemicals, including plastic, away from the food chain. We cherish banana leaf for meals over plates; prefer tender coconut over carbonated drinks; prefer jute bags over poly bags; and prefer spending vacations in gardens than in concrete jungles. This indicates that Indians arguably have a natural bent of mind towards an eco-friendly lifestyle. That needs to be rekindled and reinforced through constructive policy advocacy. For instance, mandating leaf plates rather than plastic coated

or plastic plates in all hotels revives the entire leaf plate manufacturing backlinkages, which are mainly in rural and semi urban areas.

Mandating paper bags over poly bags restore the newspaper-based paper pouch makers, who are largely in the unorganised sector.

In recent days, many Indian states and cities have voluntarily come forward to stage a war against single-use plastic items, which are the main component of city garbage and drain blocks. For instance, the Andhra Pradesh government has banned single-use plastic banners and promoted the traditional artists who write on cloth banners. The Indoor City has set up Jhola (cloth bag) banks to promote cloth bags in place of plastic bags at market places. Tamil Nadu launched the popular manjapai (yellow bag) campaign to urge citizens to discard the plastic bags. In Visakhapatnam, eco-bazaars were opened to make available natural products. In Delhi municipality, the 'borrow a bag' initiative through Vikalp stores has been a great success in this direction.

A pilot scheme in Visakhapatnam to replace the plastic plates, plastic bags, and plastic spoons has yielded surprising results. The thriving business of leaf plates, which sources the leaves from tribal areas, resumed in a span of one month after the plastic ban by the civic body. Bundles of banana leaves started appearing in the market as an alternative to polybags to pack fish and meat. The leaves of Addaku (*Bauhinia vahlii*) and Vistraku (*Butea monosperma*), collected far from the tribal areas of Araku, found their way to the city markets. The chat centres started using cut pieces of toddy palm leaves (*Borassus flabellifer*) in place of plastic spoons. The juice shops, including roadside coconut-tenderizer vendors, replaced plastic straws with paper straws. The petty shops started using pouches made from newspaper for packing items. Glass and steel bottles replaced the plastic bottles on the meeting tables.

The benign effort of cloth bag promotion and responsible garbage disposal at the household level in Tirumala Nagar colony of Vizag city has bagged a national award.

The schoolchildren's effort to educate the parents to make cloth bags from waste cloth gained the acclaim of the hon'ble Prime Minister of India. Examples of such successful initiatives involving community involvement to find eco-friendly alternatives to plastic have been proven over time, but in small pockets.

Voluntarily determined efforts by the governments, dedicated policies, series of daily awareness campaigns by NGOs, clean up drives at public places and beaches by nonprofit organisations, PSUs, private agencies, and spirited individuals across the country are a sign of renewed enthusiasm portraying the collective determination of the society to fight back at plastic. 'Think global, act local' is an apt model for tackling the challenges thrown by plastic.

Credible policy measures, demonstrative regulation, an effective monitoring framework, persistent institutional support, spirited individuals, political will, and most importantly, respect for the environment are the keys to finding liberation from plastic addiction.

(THE WRITER,
DR. G. LAKSHMISHA,
IS AN IAS)



Songsmith Shankar Mahadevan has been the voice behind many classics, fusion melodies, and blockbuster hits in the Indian music industry. Known for his phenomenal musical journey, with memorable milestones in *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Taare Zameen Par*, *Wake up Sid*, *Uff Teri Adaa*, *Ik Junoon*, and *Iski Uski*, his performances never fail to wow audiences transcending borders. His 1998 Indi-pop album *Breathless*, made in collaboration with lyricist Akhtar, in which the title track goes on for a little over three minutes without a break, stanzas, verse, or apparently even a pause for breath, is special not just for him, but the entire nation for its breath-taking creative elements. As an Indi-pop star, Mahadevan has scaled great heights with his fusion of Carnatic, Hindustani and Jazz music variants. In a conversation with *The Pioneer's* TEJAL SINHA, the maestro, a living legend, shares how he grew up listening to songs from different genres, the chemistry of the 'Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy' trio, and more.

TRIO THAT NEVER FAILS TO IMPRESS

SWITCH FROM ENGINEERING TO MUSICAL PATH

I hail from a very simple middle-class south Indian household. I am an engineer by training and academics. As a 'good boy' in south India, where families believe in education, I had got into engineering. But the strong calling from inside was: 'It is now or never'. And that's how I gave up my engineering career. I was a very successful engineer before jumping into a different career path and trying my luck with music. Well now, I think I was very fortunate to follow my instincts and happy to be at the right moment and with the right people and doing the right kind of music. All that brings me here for this interview.

STRUGGLE THAT REACHES PEOPLE

Nowadays it is a different kind of struggle; it is not like how artistes used to go and queue up outside music companies or would try to meet music producers or directors to get a chance. You know Indian films at that time were the only source to get your voice out. Whereas now the times have changed drastically. An artiste can create a song and put it up on social media or any public platform and connect with the audience. But it is a different kind of struggle that reaches the people: they hear it, like it, comment on it, and all of that is what determines success of the song and the artist who put their soul in the music.

INDIAN FOLK MUSIC IN A MODERN ATMOSPHERE

We tend to underestimate the modern youth of our country. We say just because they put western beats or some dubstep or something. Oh! this is youth oriented. Our youth is very intelligent as their thought process is quite deep, they understand music, and they understand the nuances of music which is why they have an interest in classical and folk music. Even though they use a modern palette or modern backdrop for any form of music to be presented today, they are inclined towards presenting our classical music, our Indian folk music in a modern atmosphere which is fabulous. This eventually brings in something new to the table.



DESIRE TO WORK WITH A RAP ARTISTE

Rap is a very serious form of music, rhythm, and poetry and a rap artiste knows where you are going to convey it. Normally rap is also done as a source of expressing your views in a rebellious, romantic, or particular situation in one's own manner. Rap is a very strong medium; it's not the way how we perceive it—it's a very strong medium and form of music. A lot of extempore expression and creativity is involved when you meet a rap artiste who is really authentic and true to their genre. So, I would really be very excited to be work with any of the rap artistes in the future. This will certainly bring in a different level of creativity to our work.



GRATIFICATION OF WORK THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is the current logical way in which you can gauge the success and popularity of your music piece. One should evolve with the change and just can't say I will only be selling CDs or records for the matter because those things don't exist anymore. You have to move ahead with the trend as Gulzar Saab says: "You have to hold hands with moving times and go ahead otherwise you would remain where you are and everyone else will move forward". So, the current trend of social media is the way forward and with this, you can gauge one's popularity, success and connect with the fans. Interaction with fans and gratification of your work comes through social media now.

ON REMIXING TRACKS

As for the current practice of remixing tracks, I think it is becoming a little predictable and boring now because in every film you are finding the remix track of some old song. It was a novelty when there used to be one song amongst 100 songs. But now every film has got one remix song; so, it becomes predictable, boring, and non-creative.

MUSIC THAT EXPRESSES AND EDUCATES

I think music is a very important song of expression and communication. I use music not only to perform or record but also as a way of communicating things which is why I had opened Shankar Mahadevan Academy. It is the first online academy of this magnitude, and we are present in 88 countries. Through music we aim to bring a change in humanity. We perform for terminally ill patients, cancer patients, various people who are in trouble, lonely, senior citizens. There is a program called SM Nirvana, in which we raise money for musicians who are in really bad shape. SM Muskurahat is another program where we teach children from economically backward strata; Inspire India and many such programs. So, it's not only about learning and performing. We use music also as a medium to bring a change in people's life in whatever little way we could do.

TREASURE CHEST OF OUR COUNTRY

Our country has got music for every purpose, for every occasion, starting from birth of child to their marriage or from harvesting of crops to some celebrations—everything is celebrated through music. I strongly feel folk music of our country is much more natural form of music than classical music because in Hindi they say *Mitti Di Khushboo*, you can literally smell the soil of that particular region or culture when you hear the folk music from any specific part of the country; it is because of the voice, because it is in their DNA. Bringing light back to the folk music by Canara HSBC Life Insurance's *Me For My City* initiative is a one step ahead for taking folk music seriously and giving it due importance amidst the hush-bush of urban cities. For me personally the treasure chest of our country lies in the folk music of our country. I am really happy being part of the Canara HSBC Life Insurance's *Me For My City* initiative. I have been part of many musical events of the corporate, but this is really special because the emphasis is on folk music and selecting raw talent from various cities and states of the country representing different genres and its beauty. The hunt for singers was divided into 4 zones so each zone had a winner which was beyond any comparison as folk music is incomparable since it brings in the uniqueness of its culture and also an individual. The whole concept was very unique, and we could see the happiness of the young talent when they got an opportunity to perform with some of the musical maestros who were there at the event. All in all, it was a fantastic platform.



THE GANESHA IDOL BY THE 'QUEEN OF MELODY'

Well, if you want to define the sound of the Indian film industry, one word would be Lata Mangeshkarji. She is the definition of music in our film industry, her loss is a huge loss, but the fact is such masterpieces never die, their music lingers around till humans exist on this planet. I have had a wonderful relationship with her. She appreciated and respected my music. We were always in touch through WhatsApp, and she used to send me beautiful songs and pictures including some rare songs that she had sung. I used to share with her my work and what better than receiving an acknowledgment from Maa Saraswati herself? She used to immediately reply giving me blessings and good wishes for the work. I still remember, when I celebrated my 50th birthday she gifted me a Ganesha idol, which is there in the altar of my house, and with this, she is always going to be there in our hearts and part of the universe till we exist.



Dil Se

Heralding change through folk music





How to build a career in the hairstyling industry

As in any profession, hair styling too requires practitioners to be a cut above the rest. Take the story of Vidal Sassoon CBE, a British hairstylist who built an entire empire on the back of minimal, geometric hairstyle called the 'bob cut' which was then mainstreamed by the likes of Mia Farrow and Goldie Hawn and even decades later by Cameron Diaz and Nastassja Kinski. And of course, who can forget Raymond Bessone, the man who trained Sassoon, and was once flown to the U.S. from the U.K. by actor Diana Dors, for a shampoo and set! The cost of the trip? Nearly £2,500 in 1956! While designing my first signature

barber shop, I smiled wryly as I recalled how Besoone's salon was decorated with ornate mirrors, chandeliers, and even champagne fountains! He also popularized the four principles of colour, line, youth, and softness in hair styling. So yes, as a stylist, you have to create a legacy or at least strive to.

In India, the hair styling industry has evolved tremendously over the last 15 or 20 years even though it took us a while to consider hair styling as an aspirational profession. When I started my career, I was often met with cynicism as hair styling was still a bit of a risk-laden vocation for a small-town boy who was supposed to choose something more 'stable' and 'acceptable'. When I decided to be a hairstylist like my mom, most of my friends were joining engineering, medicine, or some academic stream. When I decided to go to Pune to join a professional hairstyling course, I was mocked about how I was going to become a 'Hajjam'! We have come a long way from that point. Today, the field is packed with growth opportunities for anyone who has the

passion and the resilience to learn and evolve constantly.

People are realising that hairstyling as a career can be immensely rewarding in every sense and is not just limited to barber shops and salons. This is a very good time to join the industry because now there are academies that teach you the basics and help you specialise in the field that interests you. You can specialise in barbering, be a great hairstylist or a colourist or be all three at once! The learning process is much more systematic and structured than when I was starting out. At an academy, you will be guided from A to Z in the format you want to master. Look for an academy that offers you value for money and gives you the exposure and expertise you need.

Once you're done with your course, don't try to jump the gun and instantly expect to land a top-tier job because, in this field, your job is to keep absorbing something new every day. Learning does not begin or end with a specialisation course. The major chunk of my learning has come from the day-to-day experience of working in the field, studying international techniques and adapting them for Indian hair, and relentlessly striving for excellence no matter how big or small the job was. It is important to learn about the latest inventions and products, know various colouring techniques, master processes like hair pumping, straightening, and blow drying to mention a few, and stay abreast with new trends.

Remember hair styling does not work like a desk job in a corporation with promotions and appraisals. It is an art, and it is very important to learn from a master of this art. This means you must apprentice

with a hair styling guru or in a salon where you can see the practical implementation of ideas and also learn how a successful solo career or a business is managed. Spend two to five years in one place trying to master execution and formats that have succeeded and clicked. In the end, you would have not just learnt how to cut hair but what ingredients go into creating a brand. Once you have sorted the nitty-gritty of business, you can even open your own salon a few years down the line.

If you want to work alone, take diverse courses every few years to become a true all-rounder because as a successful stylist, you will be dealing with a new challenge every day ranging from creating a look for a star in a film, or to a red carpet, or an editorial. You may also need to be comfortable with makeup techniques and coordinating with costume designers, film directors, and editors to create a comprehensive style for a celebrity. The point is that even as a celebrity hair designer, you never really arrive and are constantly going to the next challenge and the next. And that is the most fulfilling aspect of this profession.



BREWERS DOING WHAT THEY DO BEST



SHIKHA DUGGAL

Amongst the IT HUB, a brewery named Red Rhino is the best place to sit back and relax with your associates and more. Surrounded by the global centres of infrastructure, it felt like a special environment has been created keeping industrialists in mind too. Smart move! Giving the vibe of a luxurious craft brewery, they have reserved cabanas outside, layered with some lush foliage. You set your foot in — and what do you see? A crafted brewery centre is being flaunted inside a glasshouse. In fact, some of the best premium wines in the world were placed for a wine enthusiast. It was exhibited so well! The beer-centric eatery was filled with a good crowd. Disruptive business, we tell you! Not one, but four inns were waiting for us. Getting respect for a new trend. Moving ahead, an exceptional Vietnamese

platter was hanging some fire! Made with classic caprese salad, sliced mozzarella, and a tempting creamy basil sauce, it struck the right chords with our taste buds. No, not just thrust with global cuisines — keeping the South Indian legacy alive, we tried some fish vepudu too. And let us tell you, it was spicy with a strong flavour. They stir-fried it with some karam and served it to us in the Andhra style. No, we weren't just devouring on a-la carte menu! Tried their best mocktails, suggested by one of the mains on the team — a super cooler, a tropical burp, and a Guntur margarita. Sipping these nice, not-so juvenile drinks, when an apple was blended left us all refreshed. But what immersed us totally in their craft bar was the guntur margarita. All of you must have tried the classic nominees, but this one charmed us from its inception. On inquiry, we get to hear the southern variation of it. One sip, and we couldn't release its grip. Honest to god, I was feeling a little tipsy too. It succeeds where there is the involvement of guntur chilli! Because, they know the party culture in Hyderabad has risen to ten folds — they didn't forget to adept to a smoking zone that clearly shows the open parking arena as their view. A smoky affair, we tell you. Giving its own street food a makeover was another interesting detail from the brewery.



Served up in a bun, the glazed chicken burger was gluten-free with lettuce wrapped all around it. Then the soul food arrived — tofu spring rolls from the special Vietnamese platter. Such fresh filling and loaded with flavour, it didn't make us feel crap afterwards at all! In reality, we were served a healthy treat. As soon as you start climbing the stairs to the upper floor of the brewery, that's where the real hubbub was going on. An open brunch, with outdoor Japanese food station was waiting for us. Though it lacks any inspiration, the central part of the floor is totally instagrammable. You know what the twist is here? With an unmatched culinary experience tailored by celebrity chef Sabyasachi and aesthetic interiors that give off a downtown vibe, they now have their freshly crafted brews on tap and also have an extensive selection of artisanal cocktails. A live musician playing the guitar for you was the centre of the trend at Red Rhino. Two major outdoor settings with bar inns proved that the team was in hope of inspiring the maximum number of photos. Led by a team of celebrity chefs and a reputed brewmaster, they strive to take experiential fine dining



to the next level. Concocting avant-garde cocktails that replenish your soul and are always an innovative spin outside their beverage head's comfort zone, Dellip Kumar and his team left no stone unturned in transforming your spirits. Bringing together the expertise for creating an experience that transcends a simple meal, from age-old recipes to family secret combinations, the culinary team crafted dishes with ingredients sourced authentically to complement each cuisine. Whenever you are coming to the end of a restaurant review, you just cannot fail to recall the customised desserts. Yes, they were specially made for us by the chef, who included his own twists into their signature tres leches. And the famous Kunafa was also served. Already aware that it's a Turkish dessert, made with seviya dough and layered with cream was an exclusivity. Wasn't the first time that we were trying a tres leches though, but what Red Rhino did was not to make it overly sweet and that's what made it stand out. Bringing media to the brewery was a courteous move, The Pioneer suggests our readers to check-out this airy brewery once and don't forget to recall our review.

What: RED RHINO-CRAFT BREWERY
Where: HI-TECH CITY
Our recommendations: MOCKTAILS DIRECTLY FROM THE CRAFT BAR
Rating: 3/5
Verdict: A FINE PLACE TO GO



The taste of culture

The Haleem season is here, and we've had the great fortune of tasting the famous Paradise Haleem. The world's favourite biryani house has come up with chicken haleem for the first time ever. Hyderabadis own the dish with such pride during the Ramzan season because it is truly unique to our city. First things first, let's cover the mutton haleem. Some say, Why do you even have chicken haleem on the menu? It's not haleem when there's no

mutton. Well! It is for those who don't like the fatty texture of mutton. The mutton haleem that was served was spicy to begin with. Paradise's trademark haleem boasts of high quality, and you can feel that when you have a mouthful. The pure ghee melts in your mouth, and the colour of the haleem reeks of quality too. All told, it is important to note that, for some reason, the extra spice takes away the punch in the end. A coke would help you ease the sweating after four spoons. Is it the best mutton haleem in the city? Nah! But is it the worst? Also, no! The taste might not satisfy that hunger for haleem, but you can make do with the quality.

The chicken haleem that Paradise is so proud of is fairly good. It isn't as spicy as the mutton haleem. I was wondering if Paradise could oddly be your best choice for chicken haleem. The taste lies somewhere between low-mid range spicy. Not so much that you'd keep gulping down glasses of water, but maybe a couple of times. When the fried onions and cashew nuts are mixed with the fatty pure ghee. It's perfect. Sadly, you don't get that with Mutton Haleem. Go ahead with Paradise for its quality, but you might find other outlets that do a better job with the taste. Simple because food shouldn't be sophisticated.



Sheer khurma ice cream is here

NIC Honestly Crafted Ice Creams announced the launch of its latest flavor, NIC Sheer Khurma, which is just in time for the holy month of Ramzan. Sheer Khurma is a traditional sweet dish that is popularly consumed during Ramzan. This ice cream flavor is an innovative take on the classic dessert, allowing people to indulge in the traditional taste of Sheer Khurma in a refreshing and modern way.

Freshly prepared Sheer Khurma is turned into an ice cream which is enriched with ghee-roasted dry fruits such as raisins, cashews, almonds, pistachios, and dry dates. It is then prepared with milk, sugar, vermicelli. The ice cream is then enhanced with coconut, rose petals, and saffron, providing a sweet cardamom flavor that is sure to tantalize the taste buds.

With this Sheer Khurma Ice Cream, customers can now enjoy this traditional dessert flavor as an ice cream. NIC Sheer Khurma Ice Cream is available at all major food delivery platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, Swiggy Instamart, BlinkIt, Zepto along with select stores in over 100 cities across India.



The Yellow Dwelling introduces their aromatic candle collection

This Easter, lighten up your abode with beautiful aromatic candles from The Yellow Dwelling. Their curated range of candles will not only give a beautiful glow to your home but also leave it smelling heavenly. Made from cent percent natural material like soy wax with cotton wax wicks, these scented candles are a must-buy, they are not just a beautiful decor element, they also help

in bringing positive energy into your space and also help you feel relaxed, calm and energized.

The aromatic collection includes Rejuvenate — which has an earthy scent that is perfect for a self-care routine, Celebration — a sweet decadent scent that is a true celebration when lit, Indulgence — a tea-scented candle for that feeling of freshness, Palatial Pearls — a floury scented

candle that takes you to your childhood, Apple Strudel - for a delicious sweet fragrance, and Forest Walk — a musk-scented candle for an escape from reality.

So, visit the nearest store or place your orders online at <https://www.theyellowdwelling.com/> and choose the fragrance that best suits you and your home.

Price starts from: Rs 600



Aroma of freshness

A heady and sensual blend of rich, night blooming jasmine, warm tuberose and voluptuous red rose is here. Invigorate your mood with the refreshing scent of this White Jasmine Scented Reed Diffuser. Sporting a perpetual aroma of white jasmine, it lends your living space a delightful fragrance. This is undeniably one of the most prevalent scents because of the genius cocktail of appealing ingredients that make it smell so divine like a blossoming flower. It is symbolic to the subtlety of the first blossom and the addictive lushness of it in full blossom. It is a good idea for offices, home, hotels and most set-

tings where candles aren't allowable. Generally, one reed diffuser will be ample for an average room of 150 - 200 sq. ft. For large rooms and open areas, you can improve it with another reed diffuser, or set out potpourri or oil burners from our collection.



Elegance in budget

Shobitam is a D2C ethnic fashion brand making Indian handlooms both affordable and elegant globally. Vegan sarees are the fabric derived from the edible parts of many plants that are harvested, the agro residue remains which usually end in landfills. This residue is rich in biopolymers that make robust textile fabrics, which are then woven into yarns and then eventually used to make sarees.



Shobitam's vegan sarees are lightweight, easy-to-drape, and available in attractive color combinations!

New product launch by Gargee Designer's

1. The Chalk Corduroy Shacket Top from the PIUOMO collection of Gargee Designer's, available on gargee.com, is a trendy and lightweight shirt-jacket that is perfect for the summer season. It is made from soft corduroy fabric in a beautiful chalk color and features a button-front design with two flap pockets at the chest. This versatile top can be worn as a standalone piece or layered over a t-shirt for a relaxed and casual look. Its breathable fabric ensures comfort even on warmer days.

Price: Rs 13,500

2. The Indigo Denim Shacket Top from the PIUOMO collection of Gargee Designer's, available on gargee.com, is a timeless and versatile shirt-jacket that can be worn all year round. It is made from high-quality denim fabric in a classic indigo wash and features a button-front design with two flap pockets at the chest. This stylish top is perfect for the summer season as it can be paired with shorts or trousers for a casual and comfortable look.

Price: Rs 13,500



3. The Grey Zipper Casual Shacket from the PIUOMO collection of Gargee Designer's, available on gargee.com, is a modern and functional shirt-jacket that is ideal for the summer season. It is made from a soft and durable fabric in a sleek grey color and features a zip-front design with two side pockets. This top is perfect for everyday wear and can be easily layered over a t-shirt for a stylish and comfortable look. Its lightweight fabric ensures breathability even on hot summer days.

Price: 14,500

4. The Tan Down Vest from the PIUOMO collection of Gargee Designer's, available on gargee.com, is a stylish and cozy layering piece that is perfect for cool summer evenings. It is made from a soft and comfortable knit fabric in a beautiful tan color and features a zip-front design with two side pockets. Added with warmth and comfort and can be worn over a shirt or t-shirt for a polished and relaxed look. Its lightweight and breathable fabric makes it perfect for summer evenings.

Price: Rs 9,500

Music on!

Cellecor, a fast-growing mobile handset entity has announced the launch of its latest product, the CLB-21 soundbar. A soundbar that boasts state-of-the-art features and exceptional sound quality. The CLB-21 is equipped with 3D surround sound, LED disco lights, and a non-stop playback time of up to ten hours, ensuring an unparalleled audio experience that will enhance the way people listen to music. Plus, the CLB-21 soundbar is available at an affordable price of INR 3499, making it accessible to more people.



Hook you ball pen

ITC Classmate has launched an all-new innovative Ball Pen called 'Classmate Hook'. The pen's uniquely designed clip enables its users to hook it to any lanyard, pouch, zip, or loop. ITC Classmate is one of the first brands in the country to launch a pen with this kind of design functionality. It is already amongst the top players in the gel segment with its Octane Gel range of pens and the new launch will see it making higher inroads in the ball segment as well. The pen has a 0.7mm tip offering a smooth writing experience and comes in two ink shade variants - Blue & Black. 'Classmate Hook' Ball Pens are available at all stationery outlets across the country and popular e-commerce platforms like Flipkart and Amazon.



Keep your home squeaky clean in style

Samsung has launched its premium range of vacuum cleaners in India — The Bespoke Jet™, a stick-type cordless vacuum, and the powerful and intuitive Robotic Jet Bot+. The new upgraded line-up of vacuum cleaners is customized for Indian consumers that not only offers effortless cleaning solutions but also comes in stunning designs that complement the indoors of every living space. Designed and developed to fit right into the living rooms of modern households, the new range ensures 99.999% dust-free cleaning* with a Multi-layered Filtration System.

Priced INR 65,900 onwards, the new line-up will be available on Samsung.com, Samsung Exclusive Stores, and the new Samsung Shop App in addition to leading online store — Amazon.



10 smart money-management tips for college students

College students often prioritize spending over saving, and may not be diligent about tracking their income and expenses, particularly if they receive financial support from their parents or work part-time jobs. However, it is important for students to develop good financial habits early on, as this can lead to larger savings over time. In order to manage their finances more effectively, college students can take several steps.

Make a budget

It is crucial to keep track of both income and expenses in order to manage finances effectively. Creating a budget can provide a clear overview of where money is being spent and enable adjustments as needed. Regardless of whether income is from pocket money or part-time work, it is important to develop the habit of budgeting.

Curb non-essential expenses

One way to manage expenses is by cutting back on discretionary spendings, such as eating out, entertainment, or shopping. College students can look for free or low-cost alternatives to the activities they enjoy, such as exploring local parks, attending campus events, or cooking meals at home. By making these small changes, students can save money and build better financial habits for the future.

Avail student discounts

College students can save money by taking advantage of student discounts offered by stores, restaurants, and online services. Many companies provide special discounts or promotions exclusively for students with valid

college ID. Students can also look for discounted rates on textbooks and other necessary supplies. By taking advantage of these opportunities, students can reduce their expenses and make the most of their limited budgets.

Start working part-time

One way for college students to earn extra money is by taking on a part-time job, especially if they have free time. Working part-time not only provides additional income but also helps students gain valuable work experience and develop important skills. Students can consider a variety of part-time job options, such as tutoring, babysitting, or working in retail or hospitality. However, it is important to balance work and studies, so students should ensure that their job schedules do not interfere with their academic commitments.

Don't fall for the credit card trap

College students should be careful about using credit cards and avoid accumulating debt. Credit cards should be reserved for emergencies only, and students should aim to pay off the full balance each month to avoid interest charges and fees. It is important to keep track of credit card spending and set a realistic budget to avoid overspending. Developing responsible credit card habits early on can help students build good credit scores and avoid financial problems in the future.

Save for rainy and stormy days

Having an emergency fund is crucial for unexpected expenses that may arise, and it

is recommended that everyone, including college students, build up a contingency fund. Students can start by saving a small amount each month, and gradually increase it as they are able to. Ideally, the emergency fund should cover at least three to six months of living expenses. This can provide a safety net in case of unexpected financial challenges such as a medical emergency or job loss. By building up an emergency fund, college students can have greater financial security and peace of mind.

Be careful when applying for student loans

Before taking out a student loan, it is crucial to comprehend the terms and conditions involved. Although student loans can provide valuable assistance, it is important to be aware of the interest rate and repayment options. Additionally, it is recommended to only borrow the necessary amount.

Invest thoroughly in education

Investing in education is a wise decision, as it can provide numerous benefits. To make the most of their educational experience, students should avail themselves of opportunities to gain practical experience, build networks, and expand their skill set. This includes participating in internships, joining clubs, and attending networking events.

Apply for debt only when necessary

College students should avoid taking on debt for leisure or discretionary expenses because such expenses are not essential or necessary for one's basic needs or well-being.

Examples of discretionary expenses include vacations, luxury goods, entertainment, and hobbies.

Taking on debt to finance discretionary or non-essential expenses can lead to a cycle of debt and financial stress. It can be challenging to repay debt incurred for non-essential purchases, as the interest and fees on the debt can accumulate over time, making it more difficult for the students to pay off the debt in full.

Start investing early

Starting to invest from your college days allows you to take more risks and earn better returns. When you practice investing from your heydays, you have the opportunity to recover from erroneous decisions without impacting long-standing financial goals as financial responsibilities are usually low in this stage of life.

Conclusion

As a student, managing finances can prove to be a daunting task, but it is crucial to develop good financial habits from the outset. Whether you receive your money from a part-time job or a scholarship, keeping track of your spending is essential. It is essential to avoid spending your money on non-essential items. Remember, saving should be your first lesson when you begin to handle money. This habit will not only help you manage your finances independently, but it will also prepare you for handling money in your professional life later.

(The writer, Rohit Garg, is the CEO and co-founder of SmartCoin)



Hanuman Jayanti: worshipping the symbol of strength and utmost devotion

Did you know that Lord Hanuman is one of the most beloved figures in Hindu mythology? He is revered as a symbol of strength, devotion, and perseverance. He is a central character in the ancient Indian epic, the Ramayana, which tells the story of Lord Rama's journey to rescue his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana. The epic tale describes Lord Hanuman as a loyal and faithful companion to Lord Rama.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Lord Hanuman is his unique appearance. He is often depicted as a muscular, monkey-like figure with a long tail and a bright orange complexion. Some say that his orange hue is a symbol of his unwavering devotion to Lord Rama, while others believe it represents his fiery spirit and energy. But Lord Hanuman's physical appearance is just the beginning when it comes to his incredible qualities. He is known for his immense strength, performing amazing feats such as lifting mountains and crossing oceans. He is also believed to be incredibly intelligent and wise, with a deep understanding of Hindu scriptures and philosophy.

Devotees connect with Lord Hanuman through chanting his name or reciting his prayers such as the Hanuman Chalisa. Many Hindus believe that doing so can help to invoke his strength, wisdom, and devotion in their own lives.

What is Hanuman Jayanti?

The celebration of Hanuman Jayanti honours the birth of Lord Hanuman. Devotees observe a fast on this day. Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated every year on the full moon day of the Hindu month Chaitra. Hanuman Jayanti is also observed on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight in the Hindu month of Kartik in some regions.

Although it is well widely recognized that Lord Hanuman, also known as Rudra, is the son of Kesari and Anjana, it is also indicated that Vayu Deva (also known as Pavan Deva or God of Wind) also played a significant part in his birth. Hence Lord Hanuman is also referred to as Pavan Putra, the son of Vayu.

In 2023, Hanuman Jayanti will be celebrated on Thursday, April 06, 2023.

Fasting and worship ritual

There are some common events and festivities that are conducted across the nation, even though the Hanuman Jayanti celebrations vary from state to state. Let's look at some of the typical celebrations for Hanuman Jayanti.

Offerings of sweets and fruits, particularly bananas are made to Lord Hanuman also known as Mahaveer. Monkeys are also worshipped and served on Hanuman Jayanti since Lord Hanuman is also known as the Vanara (Monkey) God.

The devotees recite and hear the Hanuman Chalisa.


Men also observe a fast on Hanuman Jayanti.














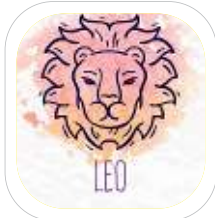







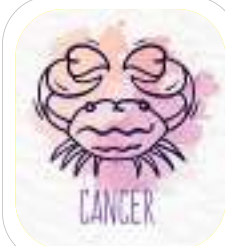

On Hanuman Jayanti, special plays that portray the bravery and courage of Lord Hanuman or Mahavira are also organised.

Boxers and wrestlers organise special games and competitions.

Puja rituals

To achieve the most blessings from a deity it is important to follow appropriate worship rituals. The list of ingredients for the puja include Lord Hanuman's idol or picture, vermilion, betel nut, jaggery, red cloth, rice, flowers, water, and Panchamrit (a mixture of milk, honey,



           				
 <p>ARIES</p> <p>You will develop strong feelings for a person close to you. Avoid critical and argumentative nature. Maintaining a distance from yourself will do good.</p>	 <p>LEO</p> <p>There may be an utter change in your life. Success will be your hallmark in your career. You will be the central figure in parties and public gatherings.</p>	 <p>SAGITTARIUS</p> <p>You will find yourself very restless. You will love to be swept off your feet by a deliciously seductive soul. Time is apt to try out the changes you desire.</p>	 <p>CAPRICORN</p> <p>Your tastes may undergo a drastic change. You are generous to achieve anything beautiful. Apt time for a job change. There will be joy in family life.</p>	 <p>VRGO</p> <p>Life will be turbulent and unpleasant for a short while. There will be moments of joy in life. Take a few days off and spend them with your family.</p>
 <p>TAURUS</p> <p>You are prone to nervousness. Self-improvement will be your self-imposed motto. There may be a financial crisis or some other issue of self-esteem.</p>		<p>YOUR WEEK AHEAD</p>		
 <p>GEMINI</p> <p>You may get attracted to any new person you see. Pending problems need to be solved. Be grateful to the people close to you. Communicate openly.</p>	 <p>AQUARIUS</p> <p>Your support will help others and be positive for you also. React normally even if the situation gets dire. Time is good to reconsider shelved projects.</p>	 <p>SCORPIO</p> <p>You will rise above the stress of routine existence. You need someone to boost your energy. Though you act tough, your delicate nature will blossom.</p>	 <p>CANCER</p> <p>For the time being, just sit down and relax. You need to remain calm and unbiased, no matter what the situation is. Don't be afraid to seek help.</p>	<p>Siblings will contribute to making your dreams come true. Be gentle with yourself and your loved ones. It may be difficult to manage relationships.</p>  <p>PISCES</p>

yoghurt, sugar, and Ghee).

Place the idol of Lord Hanuman on a puja pedestal and adorn the idol with a red cloth. Apply vermilion paste on the idol as well as on the devotee's forehead. Incense sticks and diyas are then lit and the idol is offered holy water and panchamrit.

Prayers are then offered with deep devotion and purity to appease Lord Hanuman and attain his divine blessings. One should worship the Lord with a pure mind and good thoughts.

The rituals are completed by offering flowers, rice, betel nut, jaggery, to the Lord. The devotees then recite the Hanuman Chalisa and other mantras.

The reddish orange idol of Lord Hanuman

Have you ever wondered why the idols of Lord Hanuman in the temples are always reddish orange in colour? Here's why. Rudra is

said to have been born in the Vanara (monkey) tribe with a body that is reddish orange in hue. As a result, the colour of Lord Hanuman's idols is constant.

Other beliefs hold that Goddess Sita was once applying vermilion and Lord Hanuman inquired as to the rationale behind it. She informed him that she is doing this to ensure her husband's longevity. Additionally, she assured Lord Hanuman that Lord Rama's life would be prolonged by the amount of vermilion she applied. Since Lord Hanuman was such a devout follower of Lord Rama, he covered his whole body in vermilion to grant Lord Rama immortality.

Hanuman Jayanti celebrations across India

This day is observed with great fervour. Prayers are offered and Lord Hanuman is worshipped before sunrise

since He was born at sunrise. Let's learn how Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated across India.

In Maharashtra, Hanuman Jayanti is observed in the month of Chaitra where devotees worship Lord Hanuman with pure mind and soul. In southern India in the state of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated for forty one days commencing from ChaitraPurnima and concluding during the Krishna Paksha on the DashamiTithi of Vaisakha month.

In Tamil Nadu and Kerala it is celebrated as Hanumath Jayanti in the month of Margazhi or Margashirsha Amavasya during the months of December-January. Karnataka celebrates Hanuman vratam on Shukla Paksha Trayodashi in the month of Margashirsha.

Worshipping Lord Hanuman to reduce

effects of sade sati

It is often said worshipping Lord Hanuman helps to overcome the malefic effects of Sade Sati in one's horoscope. Here are some of the rituals that can help mitigate the Sade Sati effects.

Pour oil in a bowl and immerse 14 grains of black urad dal. The devotee must then see the reflection of their face in the oil and the oil is then offered to Lord Hanuman. It is considered that the oil absorbs the entire negative energies which are then destroyed by Lord Hanuman when it is offered to Him.

We wish all our readers a Happy Hanuman Jayanti!

Hanuman Jayanti dates from 2023 to 2028

2023:	April 6	Thursday
2024:	April 23	Tuesday
2025:	April 12	Saturday
2026:	April 2	Thursday
2027:	April 20	Tuesday
2028:	April 9	Sunday

GLOBE TROT

Message in a bottle drifts from Canary Islands to Bermuda

A message in a bottle thrown into the water near the Canary Islands was returned to one of its authors after washing up on a Bermuda beach.

Peter Wood, third engineer aboard a sailing yacht called The Pearl, said he and two shipmates wrote the message in November 2019 as a tribute to Fred Rothwell, their recently-deceased shipmate and close friend.

The bottle, which also carried a photo of Rothwell and contact information for the message's authors, washed up about 3,000 miles away on Bermuda's Windsor Beach, where it was found by Gina Ingham and her husband while they were walking their dogs.

Wood made his first ever visit to



Bermuda during the weekend to meet Ingham and retrieve the message and photo. He said it was poetic that the bottle reached Bermuda, as it had been one of Rothwell's favorite places.

Wood said the tribute to Rothwell will now be given to his late friend's sister.

Boy sleeps in tent for 3 years, raises \$860,000 for hospice

A young British boy who slept in a tent in his family's yard for three years to raise money for charity is headed back inside after raising more than \$860,000 for a hospice and breaking a Guinness World Record.

Max Woosey was 10 years old when he started his "Boy in the Tent" project in the yard of his family's Devon, England, home on March 28, 2020, and he spent his last night outdoors Tuesday, exactly three years later.

Woosey started the project as a fundraiser for North Devon Hospice, the facility that cared for his neighbor, Rick Abbot, who died of cancer in 2020.

"Before my neighbor died of cancer, he gave me a tent and told me to 'have an adventure,'" Woosey told Guinness World Records.



Woosey, whose nights in the tent were chronicled on social media, raised more than \$860,000 with his project, earning the world record for most money raised by camping (individual), GWR said.

New UPI rules triggers meme fest

In India, UPI (Unified Payments Interface) is the most preferred payment system for users to transfer money between bank accounts instantly, using their mobile phones, at least after demonetisation. That is why, many were confused and full of questions after The National Payments Corporation of India announced an interchange fee on UPI transactions of over ₹ 2,000 made through Prepaid Payment Instruments from April 1.

As soon as the news was announced, social media users took to their accounts to vent and express their displeasure. However, the NPCI soon clarified that the new fee is only applicable to merchant transactions made through prepaid payment instruments.

The fee will not apply for person-to-



person transactions or person-to-merchant transactions between a bank and the prepaid wallet. Some examples of wallets include Paytm Wallet, PhonePe Wallet, Amazon Pay, Freecharge Wallet, etc. Simply put, customers won't have to pay any additional fees for using UPI.

Religion, politics, State, and the majesty of hate speech

The Supreme Court said quite graphically on Wednesday that hate speech "is happening because the State is impotent, State is powerless, State doesn't act in time" ... and that hate speech will stop "the moment politics and religion are segregated". The SC bench comprising Justice K M Joseph and Justice B V Nagarathna, also wondered, "Why do we have a State at all when all this is happening?"

The SC's studied observations spring from the exchanges in the courtroom that vividly mirror rising incidents of hate speeches and acts of violence, amid growing concerns and feelings of insecurity among minority communities in a country where majoritarian agenda has assumed centre-stage in an insidious manner. The SC made these remarks while hearing a plea by Shaheen Abdullah, a journalist from Kerala, seeking contempt proceedings against the Maharashtra Police for not acting to restrain inflammatory speeches at rallies organised by some Hindu outfits despite the court's previous direction. The bench had passed a slew of directions in connection with the processions undertaken by Sakal Hindu Samaj. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, however, maintained that the Centre was not silent, though states like Kerala were silent when genocidal calls were made against Hindus and Christians at a PFI rally in May 2022. Besides, in Tamil Nadu, "a spokesperson of DMK" said "whatever Periyar says should have been done... if you want equality, you must butcher all Brahmins," Mehta told the Court.

In October 2022, the apex court had directed the police chiefs of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand to take "immediate" *suo motu* action against the offenders of hate speeches by lodging criminal cases without waiting for formal complaints. The court had in fact warned that "any hesitation to act in accordance with this direction will be viewed as contempt of court and appropriate action shall be taken against the erring officers". Apparently, nothing solid and reflecting the potency of the apex court has happened till date. If anything, the majesty of law has made way for the power of hate speeches.

The petitioner had cited media reports that 50 rallies spurring hate had taken place in Maharashtra over the past four months. Earlier, in a plea alleging 600-plus attacks against Christians, the apex court had directed the Union Ministry of Home Affairs to collate a report on States' compliance with the directions issued in the judgment of *Tehseen Poonawalla v. Union of India* against mob violence. The matter, heard by a bench comprising CJI DY Chandrachud, Justice PS Narasimha, and Justice JB Pardiwala, is now listed for 14th April 2023. As per the PIL petition, filed by Archbishop of Bangalore Diocese Dr. Peter Machado, the National Solidarity Forum, and the Evangelical Fellowship of India, there is "sinister phenomena of violence" and "targeted hate speech" against the Christian community of the country by vigilante groups and members of right-wing organisations. The petitioner submitted that such violence has been rising owing to the failure of the State machinery to protect its own citizens. The petition argues that there is failure

by the Central and State governments and other organs of State machinery in taking immediate and necessary action against groups that have caused widespread violence and indulged in hate speech against the Christian community, including attacks at their places of worship and other institutions run by them. The Centre, in its counter-affidavit, stated that the claim of "Christian persecution" in India is false and alleged that the petitioners had relied upon certain "biased and one-sided reports".

Likewise, sections of the Muslim community have also begun to feel insecure. Understandably, some Muslim intellectuals wrote to Sangh Parivar chief Mohan Bhagwat expressing their anguish that hate speeches and anti-Muslim meetings are continuing

unabated. They cited the 'love jihad' rallies in Maharashtra and pointed out that there was little intervention on part of the RSS to stem these rallies. The letter was reportedly signed by former Lt Governor of Delhi Najeeb Jung, former Election Commissioner S Y Quraishi, ex-Rajya Sabha member Shahid Siddiqui, Lt General (retd) Z U Shah and Saeed Shervani, who are founding members of the Alliance for Economic and Educational

Empowerment of the Underprivileged. The forum placed it on record, apparently after interacting with the RSS in vain to bridge the divide between the two communities.

When it comes to hate speech, usually Sections 153A and 295A of the Indian Penal Code are invoked. Section 295A of the IPC reads: "Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of citizens of India by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise, insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to [three years], or with fine, or with both."

Section 295A is a key provision in the IPC chapter to penalise religious offences. The chapter includes offences to penalise damage or defilement of a place of worship with intent to insult the religion (Section 295); trespassing in a place of sepulchre (Section 297); uttering, words, etc, with deliberate intent to wound the religious feelings of any person (Section 298); and disturbing a religious assembly (Section 296).

The State often invokes Section 295A along with Section 153A, which penalises promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc, and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony and Section 505 of the IPC that punishes statements conducing to public mischief. Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, which punishes sending offensive messages through communication services, is often added when such speech is made online. The accent of all the foregoing provisions is on enabling the state to step in and restore public order. There are no clear-cut provisions to protect free speech and punish hate speech pronto. Potency lies in enacting proper provisions and having the guts to implement them in letter and spirit.



MURALI RAMASWAMY
Senior Journalist

**LIGHT
THEESKO**