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PAPER WITH PASSION

North by Northeast

Internal strife, insurgency and a sense of alienation plague the Seven Sisters, much like the Kashmir of yore

India's Northeastern region has for long experienced insurgency, internal conflict and unrest and the challenges have often been exacerbated by its complex history, geographical isolation and perceived neglect by the Central Government. One of the most prominent facets of the restive Northeast is the internecine wars within its borders, fuelled by a variety of factors ranging from ethnic tensions to resource disputes, leading to cycles of violence and displacement. The region's strategic importance, owing to its proximity to China and Southeast Asia, has made it a battleground for competing geopolitical interests, thus complicating the situation. Traditionally, the conflict in the Northeast has been fuelled by a lack of identity with the Indian mainland, the role of external powers like China, Myanmar and Bangladesh, tribal/communal differences among its inhabitants and fault lines in the subdivision of Assam which led to the creation of other Northeastern states. Indeed, the region's woes stem from several factors, which are reflected in its turmoil. Economic underdevelopment and lack of infrastructure exacerbate feelings of marginalisation and deprivation, providing fertile ground for insurgent movements to recruit disaffected youth. Moreover, the region's porous borders, particularly with Myanmar and Bangladesh, help insurgent groups set up base and launch attacks on our security personnel. Cross-border infiltration and support to insurgent groups by external actors have been persistent challenges for India's security establishment.



The Army's long presence in the region Delhi's apathy has been a recurring theme in the Northeast. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), enacted in 1958 amidst the Naga Hills 'uprising', is a constant irritant that the locals feel reflects New Delhi's deliberate attempt to strip them of their rights and dignity. It is one of the most despised Acts in the region and stands between the Centre's goodwill and the Northeastern people. Currently, the AFSPA is enforced fully in 31 districts across four Northeastern states and partially in 12 districts. The alienation has manifested in various forms, including widespread boycott of elections, as communities express their disillusionment with the political process. The latest manifestation has been in Manipur, bordering Myanmar, where violence began on May 3 last year when hill tribal groups clashed with the ethnic majority Meitei over economic benefits and job and education quotas. Regrettably, since Independence, this area has not been fully integrated into the mainstream. Not only have many insurgent groups representing various communities been waging war against the Indian Union, internal strife and communal differences have also not been reconciled. The lack of inclusive approach to addressing the root causes of the unrest, coupled with sporadic attempts at peace talks and development initiatives, has led to instability that shows little sign of abating. Only through sustained efforts and genuine political will can the region hope to achieve peace and stability.

ed in 1958 amidst the Naga Hills 'uprising', is a constant irritant that the locals feel reflects New Delhi's deliberate attempt to strip them of their rights and dignity. It is one of the most despised Acts in the region and stands between the Centre's goodwill and the Northeastern people. Currently, the AFSPA is enforced fully in 31 districts across four Northeastern states and partially in 12 districts. The alienation has manifested in various forms, including widespread boycott of elections, as communities express their disillusionment with the political process. The latest manifestation has been in Manipur, bordering Myanmar, where violence began on May 3 last year when hill tribal groups clashed with the ethnic majority Meitei over economic benefits and job and education quotas. Regrettably, since Independence, this area has not been fully integrated into the mainstream. Not only have many insurgent groups representing various communities been waging war against the Indian Union, internal strife and communal differences have also not been reconciled. The lack of inclusive approach to addressing the root causes of the unrest, coupled with sporadic attempts at peace talks and development initiatives, has led to instability that shows little sign of abating. Only through sustained efforts and genuine political will can the region hope to achieve peace and stability.

Why are the young not joining politics?

A large number of voters belongs to the younger generation; their apathy towards the electoral process is a cause of concern



PRAFULL GORADIA

The country belongs more and more to its younger citizens. It is, therefore, all the more disturbing that the youth who have lately crossed the age of 18 and have registered themselves as voters in fewer numbers. The country belongs more to the younger ones who're 18, on an average, the country for say, sixty years more, or probably twelve general elections. To a fifty-year-old, in terms of time, he might get to see five, possibly six more general elections.

In Uttar Pradesh, our largest state only 25 per cent of the eligible youth have registered themselves as voters. What could be the reasons for this lack of desire to have a say in the running of their country? Do most young people expect Government representatives to approach them in the old maibaap fashion? Or do they feel that there isn't likely to be much competition among the political parties for their votes? Could it also be that the younger generation has come to nurse an indifference towards the entire political process and the institution of democracy itself? Over the years, a large body of the youth of the country has come to believe that whoever comes to power, won't make any difference to their lives, as the country's politicians are perceived to be a class that acts only in its interest. However, in this cynicism, the youth forget that by their indifference, they abdicate their right to have a say in the running of their nation.

At the other of the age spectrum, the necessary interest in entering the political arena and playing a meaningful role in the life of the country has not been there to the extent required. Public life of a political nature had existed for some fifty years before independence. It began with the founding of the Congress by a retired British bureaucrat, Allan Octavian Hume, in 1885. The Muslim League was founded in the year 1906, the Hindu Mahasabha in 1916 and the Communist Party in 1925. Indians, therefore had the opportunity to have a feel of political



public life. The motivation wasn't power, but an idealism-driven desire for the country's freedom. Soon thereafter, there might have been disillusion; the earlier idealism began declining rapidly. With the decline was seen a fall in ethical and social values in the country. Could the disillusionment have been due to disappointment with the quality of politicians? Not all parties indeed have members hailing from the most educated or knowledgeable sections of society. Although the current central Government is not a rough and tumble of the hitherto political dispensations that have ruled the country, it has still not been able to overcome the cynicism about politicians and politics in general, which continues to hold sway in the minds of a large section of the people. This is not to say that good people are disinterested in politics.

We have in recent years, seen many academically and professionally qualified people enter politics; some of them have even become ministers. But clearly, there is a long way to go in this regard.



ANOTHER REASON WHY WEALTHY CANDIDATES ARE ATTRACTED TO POLITICS IS THE TRADITIONAL BELIEF THAT ONCE ELECTED, THE CANDIDATE WOULD BE ABLE TO EARN BACK THE MONEY SPENT ON ELECTIONEERING AND THEREAFTER GENERATE MUCH MONEY

One great discouragement is the number of people in a constituency, as well as the high cost of electioneering. Hopefully, some answer to this problem should emerge from the delimitation of electoral constituencies, which would be set to increase, by (approximately) 50 per cent. Delimitation and increased seats alone will not solve the problem of election expenses. Another reason why wealthy candidates are attracted to politics is the traditional belief that once elected, the candidate would be able to earn back the money spent on electioneering and thereafter generate much money. Once the doors are closed to corruption, the attraction for opportunists to become candidates would be much diminished. This also applies equally to any new avenue for making money. Compulsory voting is a way of not only upgrading the system but also reducing the cost of electioneering. It would also eliminate the perpetuation of

vote-bank politics. For example, there was a time when the total voting used to be 50 per cent or less. Therefore, if the candidate had a secure vote bank, it wasn't difficult for him to win. With the rise in the percentage of voting, the power and effect of a committed vote-bank is reduced. For instance, in an electorate of a lakh people, a committed vote-bank of a particular candidate is say, 25 per cent, i.e., 25,000 voters out of a population of one lakh. If the normal voting is no more than 50 to 55 per cent for that seat, this captive vote bank is assured victory for that candidate. However, if the voting percentage is 100 per cent, such a vote-bank will be of no decisive advantage. The role of freebies has to be curbed for any meaningful participation in the political process. Freebies reduce the exercise of elections in a democracy to nothing more than bribing voters. It is then futile to talk of democracy, or why the young don't participate in it in greater numbers. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha; views are personal)

PICTALK



Members of a dance group perform on a road on International Dance Day, in Nadia

PTI

Reflections on rituals from around the world

From the tranquil Nyepi Day in Bali to the vibrant street celebrations in Japan, rituals surrounding life's milestones offer glimpses into cultures

We had lunch in the resort restaurant during a vacation to Thailand a few months back. There was a slight drizzle as we walked along a narrow walkway hemmed in by walls and tastefully planted beds of flowers, vines and shrubs.

I remember a late evening in our beach resort in Bali a few years back. The day after our arrival was Nyepi Day, a public holiday. It is a day of silence, fasting and meditation. No lights are lit in the evening. It is believed that spirits roam in the evening on this day. Any loud sound or bright light may attract them to come down to explore and some of them may cause harm.

We had walked to the resort restaurant along walkways at the back, which were lit up with muted lamps placed along the path to guide the guests. Even the lighting in the restaurant was subdued. We were also caught up in the spirit of the local folklore and walked silently along the dimly lit narrow path, surrounded by flowers, vines and shrubs,



apprehensive of catching the fancy of an evil spirit. A few decades back, I was in Japan for a study tour. There was a public holiday, which was celebrated as the day of the ancestors. Groups of people were out dancing on the streets, moving from one house to the other. Each household had set up a table in the front, loaded with beer and other alcohol and savouries to be partaken by the dancing people. I also joined the celebrations. We have a fortnight-long annual ritual, called Pitru Paksha, to honour our

ancestors. Prayers are offered, followed by meals specially prepared. What surprises me, though, is the fact that these 15 days, in honour of our ancestors are considered inauspicious for any new purchases, or any other auspicious work, even though we are because they were. A very close Parsi friend passed away a few years back. The family invited us for a celebration of her life a few days later. There was laughter all around as we all recounted the happy times that we had spent with the lady over drinks and food.

The gracious hostess, her daughter, had prepared a special Parsi-style chicken dish, which had been both a speciality and a favourite of the departed soul. We also have the thirteenth-day ceremony in our Hindu religion which is formally the close of the mourning period. Guests are intimated to join prayers and then partake of our special food prepared for the occasion. Though sometimes teary-eyed, everyone remembers the time spent with the person who has joined the supreme being. Why mourn death, which is only the passing away to another life? When my time comes, I hope my near and dear ones remember me, not for my beliefs, but for the happiness that I gave them. A life led to spreading happiness all around is to be celebrated. Thomas Campbell rightly said, "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die!"

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PAKISTAN'S AFGHAN DEBACLE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Pakistan paying for its misplaced priorities," published on April 29, this is my response. Ambassador Asif Durrani's acknowledgement of Pakistan's failures in Afghanistan reveals a stark reality: the cost of tensions along the Durand Line surpasses all wars with India combined. The fixation on India as the primary adversary stems from historical wounds and institutional agendas. However, the Afghan debacle exposes the fallacy of such fixations and challenges the two-nation theory. The resurgence of Taliban attacks and Afghan nationals participating in strikes against Pakistan signal a seismic shift in regional dynamics. Pakistan's strategic ambitions in Afghanistan have backfired, eroding trust and isolating it on the global stage. Despite efforts to rewrite the narrative, Pakistan remains entangled in its past missteps, with Afghanistan looming as a permanent fixture in its regional calculus.

As the world watches with scepticism, Pakistan's plight underscores a fundamental truth: religion alone cannot sustain a nation. Bangladesh and Afghanistan stand as testaments to the folly of such notions. It's a sobering lesson for Pakistan to reassess its identity and recalibrate its foreign policy away from religious rhetoric towards pragmatic diplomacy.

Rohit Kapoor | Kolkata

ENVIRONMENTAL MANIFESTO

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Political parties must prioritise environmental preservation," published on April 29, this is my response. As an avid reader of daily news, it's disheartening to witness India's political landscape during election time fail to address pressing environmental concerns. Despite lip service in manifestos, concrete actions are conspicuously absent. The proliferation of plastic waste during political campaigns exacerbates the crisis. Plastic pollution poses a grave threat to ecosystems and human health, with marine life suffering the brunt.

Bihar on progress path



Apropos the news article, "Chronicle of Bihar, Beyond Elections," published on April 28, this is my response. Deepak Kumar Jha's narrative in The Pioneer paints a vivid picture of Bihar's rural landscape, where traditional thatched homes have given way to brick dwellings amidst agricultural abundance. Yet, glaring issues persist: healthcare and education

lag, despite decades of political promises. The narrative exposes the complexity of Bihar's socio-political fabric. While leaders tout progress, caste-driven politics remain entrenched. Migration continues, disillusioning locals with governance. Jha's storytelling captures the essence of Bihar's electoral fervour, where political discourse blends with everyday life. Amidst discussions over leaders, the grassroots yearns for tangible change. The article's depth extends beyond politics, delving into healthcare woes. The anecdote of the patient's struggle highlights systemic failures, contrasting with Bihar's rich cultural tapestry. Ultimately, Jha's piece is a poignant portrayal of Bihar's struggles and resilience. It underscores the urgent need for holistic development and the preservation of its cultural heritage amidst the political clamour.

Vishal Kumar | Delhi

Political parties wield considerable influence and should champion sustainable practices to combat plastic pollution. Yet the lack of urgency is alarming. With the planet reaching critical thresholds, we can't afford complacency. The need for immediate action to safeguard our only home, Earth, is paramount. It's high time political will transcended rhetoric to enact meaningful change. We must remember that there's no Plan B for our planet.

Aditya Mehta | Mumbai

CULINARY ESCAPADES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Feast of hot summer menus," published on April 27, this is my response. Reading through these descriptions feels like leafing through a gourmet guidebook. Each venue promises not just a meal but an experience, a journey through flavours and cultures. Olly offers a tranquil haven from urban chaos, serving up classics with a twist amidst a serene ambience. The China Kitchen tantalizes with its immersive dining experience, bringing Chinese culinary traditions to life. Viet: nom adds

a modern flair to Vietnamese classics, while L'Opera delights with French finesse, especially with its seasonal mango collection. Café Delhi Heights, ever-evolving, captures the essence of Delhi's vibrancy through its diverse offerings. The must-try dishes read like poetry, each a symphony of flavours designed to tantalize taste buds. From crispy sweet potato skins to succulent Peking duck, from vibrant summer rolls to creamy Alfredo pasta, there's something to suit every palate. Akanksha Dean's culinary journey adds a personal touch, showcasing a deep passion for food and an impressive resume. Her influence undoubtedly enhances the richness of each dining experience. As a regular newspaper reader, these culinary adventures beckon, promising not just a meal but a story to savour, making the dining experience more than just a necessity but a delightful escape.

Sneha Patel | Ahmedabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE POWER OF THE HUMAN MIND

Settle your mind and clear accumulated dust, only then it gets purged



RAVI VALLURI

Aeons ago lived, Suddhodana, chieftain of the Sakyan republics. He was captivated with the thought of perpetuating the dynasty. However, his battle fatigued son Siddhartha, was not ensnared by the Mara of trappings of power, carnal pleasures and a family life. Siddhartha eschewed violence, cast away royal clothing and adorned ochre robes in search of the quintessential truth and was to become Buddha after intense tapas. Upon attaining enlightenment, the Compassionate One dissected the bewildering characteristics of the human mind. He was soon to quantify in a plain sailing manner, "We are what we think and our thoughts shape our lives."

The human mind is not resplendent with ennobling thoughts if the prana levels are low. The prana level increases (through yoga, pranayama, meditation and Sudarshan Kriya) and at that moment an individual realises the magnetic potential of the human mind.

Once there was a Good Samaritan, Sudhakar. He happened to read the maiden effort of a civil servant called the Magic of the Mind. This gentleman, with trepidation, became a 'Facebook friend' of the mandarin and persuaded him to be interviewed by a few T.V. channels. However, the thought process of the public functionary- who was a recovered alcoholic- doubted the sincerity of the Facebook friend. In disgust, he 'blocked' and then 'unblocked' the gentleman, perhaps more to quell the pangs of his own conscience. Finally in sheer vexation he gave in to the entreaties of the 'Facebook friend'. Soon an amazing pattern emerged and the administrator was invited by several media houses and estimable institutions to deliver lectures as to how he combated and conquered the battle against the bottle. Only much later did he realise that Sudhakar had lost some close relatives to the perils of alcoholism.



The autarchic mind of the bureaucrat was ossified and looking at life through the prism of tunnel vision. One day, after a series of interviews, the functionary received a distress call from a lady, who had happened to listen to one of his interviews and was also reading the book penned by the bureaucrat, which captured his triumph over alcoholism. On receiving the call, he could empathise with the woman's husband who was fighting a grim battle against alcoholism. There was a sudden transmutation in the mind of the public servant and went on to guide the husband on how to attain sobriety.

Realisation and awareness are two iconic qualities that shine the light on the amazing power of the human mind. Several centuries ago, Gautama Buddha was travelling with a group of disciples. The Compassionate One felt thirsty and desired some water to quench his thirst. He asked a disciple to fetch some water from a nearby lake. The enthusiastic disciple rushed to the lake but was horrified to find the water turbid as a farmer had just crossed the lake on his bullock cart.

He returned back remorsefully as he could not fulfil the wish of the holy Master. Buddha sent the disciple a couple of times to fetch water to quench his thirst. But to the dismay of the tutee on each occasion the water remained dirty and turbid. While the devotees were fidgety and distraught, Buddha remained patient. Eventually, the devotee animatedly brought fresh water from the lake and offered it.

Buddha smiled and drank the water. He was to say, "You did nothing. The mud settled down and the water was purged of the impurities. Let your mind settle all the dust accumulated over a period of time." This is the amazing power of the human mind. Just let it settle down.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Challenges loom ahead of July Union Budget



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The incoming Government would face the uphill task of navigating through a myriad of fiscal hurdles to foster sustainable growth



Despite it being too early to discuss the union budget to be presented in July, it is certain whichever combination comes back to power it would have to majorly review the February interim budget given the debates generated during elections. The election is veering around more on economic issues than the religion or Ram temple, though in certain regions these remain a potent issue and so the brands Narendra Modi and Yogi Adityanath. A larger section is concerned with the core economy, unemployment, farmers' issues, irrationally high prices, medical and health care costs, school and university fees, shooting costs of houses, high toll-jacked inflation and similar other issues.

Even showcasing of Indian economy as the fifth largest economy is not being accepted by a large section as reality. The farmers and citizens wonder while cars and tractors are allowed to run for 40 years like aircraft across the world, why a pro-people Government should be in a hurry to send these to junkyards in India, particularly when household debts are skyrocketing. The rural wisdom calls it weird and tries to locate the linkages of Government functionaries with the car makers.

Questions are also raised on the Rs 16.87 lakh crore debt repayment in the 2024-25 budget. This effectively cuts the actual budget of Rs 47.65 lakh crore to about Rs 31 lakh crore. The repayment burden in 2025 is slated to be higher. The opposition's sharp angling on core economic issues is being rebutted by the ruling combine by charging that if the opposition gets to power it would sell "mangalsutras" and delve into divisive politics. The Election Commission has issued warnings to the ruling party for its wry comments.

Low voting in 190 constituencies in major States like UP, Bihar and Maharashtra raises concern among all parties. The voter is apathetic despite



THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO TAKE DRASTIC STEPS TO BRING DOWN THE PRICES OF EDIBLE OIL, FOOD GRAINS, VEGETABLES, POTATOES AND ONIONS, AS WELL AS SCHOOL FEES AND EXPENSIVE HEALTH CARE, MILK AND OTHER COMMODITIES.

many moves by the Election Commission. Is that a reflection on governance? This has not put the issues on the back burner. According to RBI, inflation rises at 5.5 per cent a year and has shot beyond 55 per cent in compounded terms causing a huge rise in prices. Nobody has got such a raise in their salaries, not even Government employees.

The new Government would have to take drastic steps to bring down the prices of edible oil, food grains, vegetables, potatoes and onions as well as school fees and expensive health care, milk and other commodities. People are unwilling to buy the argument that inflation is built into the system. They rather equate it with corporate electoral bond doles to parties. The Government accepts the petrol prices are high, cut it by Rs 2 just before the polls. It has no impact on the voters' psyche.

The voter is not happy with the so-called demonstrative developments like demolition and construction of large office buildings, rail stations and rampant construction of roads or metro. Constructions devastate the hills of Himachal, Kashmir, Uttarakhand and the North East. Kisans who became millionaires overnight with the acquisition of their land for roads are not happy about losing their livelihood. Most villagers rue the roads that divide their habitats and relationships for a road they can't use without paying a toll. It is a serious issue because the Kisan also pays Rs 30 per litre petrol cess toll introduced with the promise of ending the toll. All these benefit bulk profiteers and the least of jobs.

A new Government has to initiate drastic changes and reorient policies. The major reason for joblessness is attributed to ad hoc decisions. Such constructions erode Government finance and build little assets. Southeast Asia tried it in the late 1990s and got into trouble in 1997. It would be wise on the part of the new Government to revive PSUs and ask the private sector to compete with them. It would create jobs, add to the national economy and create a fair playground.

People question the rationale of parting a part of Indian Oil to a private giant or giving out ports to private players. At least one such port has become notorious for being a smugglers' den. The universities, IITs and Government institutions have been given a mandate to raise tuition fees every year. The private ones hike far more. Schools and universities need financing from the Government and education costs must be cut down. Congress promises apprenticeship to every graduate. Looks good but it is not practical. The scheme has failed several times. India's overall exports fell by 8.1 per cent and exports to its free trade partners shrank by 18 per cent in the first half of 2023. The country's trade deficit ballooned to \$78.2 billion in the last financial year. India's export values across all commodities declined to \$351 billion during April-January from \$366 billion a year ago, underlining the impact of the global economic slowdown and tightening of interest rates in Western countries. These numbers have emerged amid India's push to sign free trade deals with the UK and the European Union. The International Monetary Fund

says that the global slowdown is on. However India projects its march to a \$5 trillion economy and it is not easy. The West has become more protectionist and keen on imposing a carbon tax. The West needs to protect its bread.

Lower productivity can result in reduced job creation within the manufacturing sector, leading to unemployment or underemployment. The International Labour Organisation finds low pay and wages as serious challenges. When productivity declines, the incentives for firms to invest in research and development or adopt new technologies diminish, leading to a slower pace in the manufacturing sector. However, the challenge of rising household debt and falling savings could weigh on long-term growth sustainability.

The FDI flow is low at \$17.96 billion. Despite a supposed buzzing market, it has not risen much. The new Government also has the challenge to cut personal income-tax rates from 39 per cent to 22 per cent in tune with the corporate tax. High taxation hits the purchasing capacity and concomitant market problems.

In short, the new Government has to stress issues regarding taxes, education, health, livelihood, low tolls and better deal with farmers. Both manifestos of the BJP and Congress speak of too many doles and caste-related benefits. If the Government can address the basic issues and make it one of the most affordable economies, India's journey will be smooth. It is a dream, if comes true it will be the most liveable country.

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

Celebrating the universal language of dance

From traditional Indian classical dance forms to contemporary global dance phenomena, dance continues to inspire, heal and unite communities

On April 14 last year, history was made in Assam, India, as a Guinness World Record was set for the largest gathering of Bihu dancers. Over 11,000 dancers from different communities and backgrounds came together to perform the traditional dance of Assam, watched live by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It was a spectacular display of cultural diversity and unity. This event was a shining example of how cultural diversity can bring people together and foster a sense of emotional bonding and appreciation of one another's culture and traditions.

More recently as part of the 'Raag Seva' in a breathtaking display of timeless grace and unwavering passion, the 90-year-old actor-dancer and



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Padma Vibhushan awardee Vyjayanthimala Bali, enchanted spectators with her ethereal Bharatanatyam performance in Ayodhya. In this rich mosaic of human expression, dance emerges as a timeless gem, casting its spell across generations and captivating hearts through the ages. Beyond mere movement, it embodies a symphony of creativity, infusing the soul with unbridled joy. A graceful interplay of rhythm

and emotion, it offers solace from the burdens of modern life, intertwining threads of happiness into the fabric of existence.

Welcome to the rhythm of life, as we celebrate the 'International Dance Day' on April 29th every year, since 1982. Dance helps to change lives. The 'Navras', which is used to express joy, sadness, love, anger and many other emotions, is a way of celebrating life and creating a sense of community.

This Day serves as a platform aimed at fostering awareness regarding the intrinsic value of dance and facilitating the widespread promotion of the dance community's endeavours. Central to its mission is the aspiration that Governments and influential figures will

recognize the significance of dance and extend support towards its cultivation. We are all aware of Yo-Yo Ma's 'Silk Road Ensemble', a musical group founded by the cellist Yo-Yo Ma, where musicians from China, Iran, India and Spain come together and use their music to create a bridge between cultures and promote understanding between people from different backgrounds. Through cultural collaboration, this is a forum for the exchange of ideas, tradition and innovation across borders.

Also, the 'OneBeat' initiative, which brings together musicians from around the world to collaborate and create new music - was funded by the U.S. Department of State - aims to promote cultural exchange

and create a global community of musicians. 'OneBeat' has brought together musicians from countries such as Syria, Russia and Cuba, to name a few, not only providing a platform for musicians to share their music but also creating new collaborations that transcend cultural and linguistic barriers.

Dance also helps in promoting intercultural dialogue. Dance companies worldwide come together to create new works that reflect their cultural traditions and explore common themes. One such example is the 'Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater', which has been promoting diversity and inclusion through dance for over 60 years. The company's performances celebrate the African-American cultural

experience and explore universal themes such as love, loss and identity.

Not only this, the 'National Ballet of Cuba' is a dance company that promotes intercultural dialogue through its performances. Founded in 1948 by Alicia Alonso, one of the most famous ballerinas of the 20th century, it is known for its unique style that combines elements of classical ballet with Afro-Cuban and Spanish dance traditions.

Back in India, 'The Kalakshetra Foundation', - of the many foundations and institutions that exist to popularize Indian classical dance forms - Chennai-based dance school, founded by Rukmini Devi Arundale in 1936, sought to revive and promote Indian classical dance forms and is

today a leading institution that trains students in various forms of Indian classical dance, including Bharatanatyam, Kathakali and Kuchipudi. Similarly, the 'Nrityagram Dance Village', near Bangalore, which was founded in 1990 by Protima Gauri, a renowned Indian classical dancer, is a unique institution that offers a holistic approach to dance training, focusing not only on dance techniques, but also on aspects such as yoga, meditation and Indian mythology. The institute has gained global recognition and has collaborated with many international dance companies to create new works that blend Indian classical dance with contemporary dance forms. We cannot miss Bollywood dance, which has become a

global phenomenon and has created a platform for people from different backgrounds to come together and celebrate India's vibrant culture. Using different dance styles from Indian classical forms to ballet; to cabaret; to hip-hop, break dance and so on - each step encompasses a unique rhythm and style involving different generations tap to the beats.

As we celebrate the universal language of dance and its ability to unite people, it is also important to acknowledge the Guru-Shishya Parampara and celebrate the beauty of dance and its ability to create a better world for all.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Birlasoft posts 60.5 pc rise in profit to Rs 180 cr

T company Birlasoft on Monday reported a 60.55 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 180.08 crore during the March quarter...



Gold drops Rs 130; silver remains flat

Gold prices dropped Rs 130 to Rs 72,750 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday in line with weak trends in the overseas markets...



Poonawalla Fincorp profit jumps to Rs 332 cr

Poonawalla Fincorp on Monday reported a 67 per cent jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 332 crore in the March quarter...



India needs stable govt to achieve goal of Viksit Bharat

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday underscored the need for a stable government to achieve the goal of becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047...

We need investment, services to grow, educational institutions, and money for people to buy houses, start businesses... She also criticised former...

Sitharaman said the India economy, during the UPA regime, suffered a lot and languished as supposed to the NDA rule where it reached the top 5 and now is on the way to become the world's 3rd largest economy in the coming years...



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Travel, tourism sector expected to add 5.82 cr jobs

With a continued growth momentum, the travel and tourism sector is all set to add 5.82 crore jobs across the country by 2033, a top executive of global technology and digital talent solutions provider NLS Services said on Monday...

Follow fair practices, refund excess charges to customers

Concerned over some banks and lenders resorting to unfair practices in charging of interest, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday directed them to take corrective action and refund excess charges to customers...

During onsite examinations of REs, the RBI said it observed charging of interest from the date of sanction of loan or date of execution of loan agreement and not from the date of actual disbursement of funds to the customer...



Sensex rebounds by 941 pts, Nifty closes above 22,600

Benchmark BSE Sensex rebounded sharply by 941 points while NSE Nifty closed above the 22,600 level on Monday on the back of buying in banking and infra shares and a rally in global markets...

UltraTech Cement rose by 2.7 per cent after the cement maker reported around 36 per cent jump in profit after tax for the last quarter of 2023-24...

The construction sector entities' revenues are likely to grow by 12-15 per cent in the current financial year, while margins will expand by 25-50 bps, rating agency ICRA said on Monday...



Construction sector entities' revenues to see 12-15% growth

The construction sector entities' revenues are likely to grow by 12-15 per cent in the current financial year, while margins will expand by 25-50 bps, rating agency ICRA said on Monday...

Sebi comes out with directive on regulatory fee for BSE

Leading stock exchange BSE is expected to shell out more regulatory fee after the markets watchdog Sebi asked the bourse to pay the fee based on the "notional value" of its options contracts rather than on the premium value...

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies soared to an all-time high of Rs 406.52 lakh crore on Monday thanks to a rally in equities where the BSE Sensex climbed over 1 per cent...



generated a lot of enthusiasm amongst the investors, Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said...

Ola Mobility CEO Hemant Bakshi quits

Ride-hailing company Ola Mobility CEO Hemant Bakshi has resigned from the company within four months of joining it, according to sources privy to the development...

Bakshi had joined the company in January, 2024. Another source said the company had around 900 people in the Ola Cabs division in January and the lay-off might impact 90-140 people...

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies soared to an all-time high of Rs 406.52 lakh crore on Monday thanks to a rally in equities where the BSE Sensex climbed over 1 per cent...



Mcap of BSE-listed companies soar to all-time high of Rs 406.52 lakh cr

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generated a lot of enthusiasm amongst the investors, Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said...

China gives all clear nod for Tesla cars

In a big relief for Tesla, its vehicles passed the key test of compliance with China's data security rules as its billionaire CEO Elon Musk who air dished to Beijing on Sunday met Premier Li Qiang to press for all clear approval for his cars which faced stiff competition from local rivals...

Automobile Manufacturers and the National Computer Network Emergency Response Technical Team/Coordination Centre of China on Monday published a list of 76 models of intelligent connected vehicles that meet the country's auto data security requirements...

The tests were carried out according to related laws and standards, and the carmakers submitted their models voluntarily, according to the association...



Increasing global uncertainties may impact demand, exports: FIEO

The escalating geopolitical tension may have implications for the country's exports in the first quarter of 2024-25 as it is likely to impact global demand, apex exporters body FIEO said...

If the global situation continues to be like this, it will impact global demand. In the first quarter numbers, the demand slowdown may be visible, FIEO Director General Ajay Sahai said...

'DEADPOOL AND WOLVERINE BUILT FOR ENTERTAINMENT, NO OBLIGATION TO COME PREPARED'



Director Shawn Levy claims that fans do not need to be familiar with the prior Marvel films or the current MCU knowledge in order to enjoy the highly anticipated movie of the year, *Deadpool and Wolverine*. Levy recently said that moviegoers have no need to arrive at the movie already having done their homework. He emphasised that the purpose of the film is to entertain rather than gauge viewers' familiarity with the Marvel universe. He declared, "I did well in school. As a grownup, I'll complete my schoolwork. But when I go to the movies, it's obviously not my intention to do my homework. The mythology and lore of these characters and this world are so well-known to their ardent fan base that I made this short with a great deal of

respect and thanks. I didn't want to assume that, though. There is no requirement to watch this film beforehand; it is meant to be enjoyed." Additionally, the director talked about how the players' friendships off-set gave them the freedom to try new things without fear. "The true advantage of having friends off-set is that you can try crazy things without worrying about falling," Shawn stated. "Because part of it won't work, which will be unpleasant for a little while, but if you're among friends, it's acceptable to look foolish while doing something novel and unexpected. There are a lot of unexpected funny and character-based moments in this film that arise from the freedom that comes from friendship." The movie, which will be the first in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and the third in the *Deadpool* franchise, will be released on July 26.



AFTAB SHIVDASANI REUNITES WITH AKSHAY AFTER 16 YEARS IN WELCOME 3

In *Welcome To The Jungle*, Aftab Shivdasani and Akshay Kumar reunite after 16 years apart. Their last on-screen collaboration was in *Awara Paagal Deewana*. Aftab shared a funny before-and-after picture of herself with the celebrity to reveal the same. *Welcome To The Jungle* features Aftab Shivdasani. Among the several celebrities involved in the production is the actor. Along with the announcement, he shared a silly before and after picture of himself with Akshay Kumar on social media. Sixteen years after *Awara Paagal Deewana*, the stars have reunited. He posted the image along with the caption, "First photo taken 16 years apart (2008 and 2024). It's evident that nothing has changed. I appreciate *Awara* extending a warm *Welcome* to this *Deewana* in this *Paagal* jungle. *Welcome 3* was initially announced in September 2023 via an 'A capella'. The third movie in the *Welcome* franchise is called *Welcome 3*, also known as *Welcome To The Jungle*. Starring in the movie with him are Paresh Rawal, Raveena Tandon, Lara Dutta, Sanjay Dutt, Arshad Warsi, and Disha Patani. Along with numerous others, including Shreyas Talpade, the clip features 24 actors.

Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha to release on July 5, 2024

Acclaimed writer and director Neeraj Pandey's *Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha* will theatrically release on 5th July 2024. Featuring the blockbuster duo Ajay Devgn and Tabu, the film is an epic musical romantic drama spanning across 23 years, set between 2000 and 2023. The film also features a stellar ensemble of Jimmy Shergill, Saiee Manjrekar and Shantanu Maheshwari. The film is set for a theatrical release on 5th July 2024.

Rohit Saraf, Sanya Malhotra to play pivotal role in SSKTK



Rohit Saraf and Sanya Malhotra are on a signing spree. The actors, who have often proven their acting prowess, have reportedly joined the Shashank Khaitan's upcoming directorial, *Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari*, which will feature Janhvi Kapoor and Varun Dhawan in the lead role. As per the reports, the two will be seen playing a pivotal role in the film, which is being described as a pure family entertainer with romance in its backdrop. "The premise of *SSKTK* is very close to the kind of films that Dharma is known for as it celebrates love with colour, music, scale, and a strong star cast," revealed a source close to the development. The source further informed that both Sanya and Rohit will share a very interesting dynamic with Varun and Janhvi in *Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari*. Interestingly, the project also marks the two actors' first project together! "The makers are all set to take the film on floors in a fortnight. Apart from some international shoots, the journey on *SSKTK* begins with a schedule in Mumbai, followed by Rajasthan," the source further stated, adding that the makers will be shooting for the film until the end of this year. On the work front, while Rohit is looking forward to the release of his OTT project *Mismatched 3*. He will also be seen in *Ishq Vishk Rebound*, which is set to have a theatrical release. Sanya, on the other hand, will be seen in *Mrs. Which* which was showcased at the Hawaii International Film Festival 2024, Palm Springs International Film Festival 2024, and Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival.

Meryl Streep reveals interesting secrets about Nicole Kidman



Meryl Streep and Nicole Kidman have carved out incredible careers for themselves. Many of the actresses' admirers continue to give them high marks for their performances in *Big Little Lies*. Some interesting secrets about Kidman were revealed by Streep during the AFI Life Achievement Award Gala. Later, at the Los Angeles presentation, Streep expressed her admiration for Kidman's outstanding effort. Apparently, this secret about Nicole Kidman was shared with Meryl Streep by Reese Witherspoon. During the event, *The Devil Wears Prada* actress said, "Reese (Witherspoon) told me the very first night we were up in Monterey, before we started shooting, she said, 'You know what she does?'" To which Streep answered, "I said, 'No,

Nicole?'. The *Legally Blonde* actress goes on to share that Kidman "goes out at 5, before dawn," and skinny dips in the ocean behind the hotel. Meryl Streep shockingly reacts while looking at Kidman and says that the Pacific Ocean is 48 degrees in the month of March. Kidman expresses that she loves it. At the ceremony, Nicole Kidman received the Lifetime Achievement Award. Streep showed no hesitation in praising Kidman. "You're like a mustang, a workhorse, and a champion racer all in one, but one whose spirit, they'll never break," Streep remarked to Kidman in a moving speech. Streep also discussed Kidman's incredible body of work. She claimed that a typical individual would need three lifetimes to accomplish Kidman's list of accomplishments and good actions.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



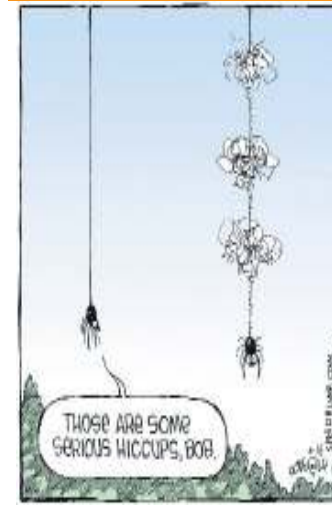
GINGER MEGGS



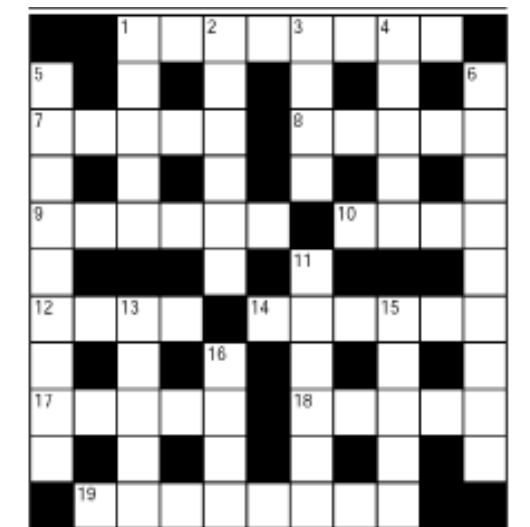
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

6								1	9
3		2	4		9				
	8		5						7
		3	1	5					
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				8	3	2			
7					6			4	
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Yesterday's solution

6	5	4	3	2	7	6	9	1
9	1	2	8	6	4	3	5	7
7	6	3	9	1	5	2	4	8
1	3	7	5	4	9	8	6	2
5	2	8	7	3	6	9	1	4
6	4	9	2	8	1	7	3	5
2	9	1	6	5	8	4	7	3
3	7	5	4	9	2	1	8	6
4	8	6	1	7	3	5	2	9

Rules
 • Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
 • The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS

- 1 Fish tank
- 7 Fewest
- 8 Narrow shelf
- 9 Ottawa is the capital of this country
- 10 Journey
- 12 Slightly hot
- 14 Thief
- 17 Sweeten a drink with this
- 18 A feeling of rage
- 19 Obstinate

DOWN

- 1 Once more
- 2 Messy, disorganised
- 3 Tumble over and over
- 4 Beneath
- 5 A watch's hands move in this direction
- 6 Not permanent
- 11 A red fruit used in salads
- 13 Correct
- 15 Start
- 16 A creature with nippers



Rhythmic escape with veteran maestros in Hyd

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Recently, the Jadavpur University Alumni Association Hyderabad Chapter (JUAAH) arranged a captivating musical event to highlight the nation's rich cultural diversity in our city.

Ravindra Bharati auditorium served as the setting for the rhythmic mastery of tabla player Bickram Ghosh and his critically acclaimed group, Rhythmscape.

This occasion was merely one part of the yearly custom maintained by JUAAH, in which charity and music were well matched. They organise a music event with renowned classical virtuosos every year with the goal of raising money for charitable organisations! Renowned artists like Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, Vidushi Kaushiki Chakraborty, flutist Rakesh Chaurasia, and Santoor player Rahul Sharma collaborated with great success on this esteemed event, entrancing audiences with their spiritual performances throughout the twin cities.

Abhishek Mallick on sitar, S Pranav Dath on drums, Pulack Sarkar on keyboard, Nirmalya Roy on vocals, V Suresh demonstrating his skill on the ghatam, and Bickram Ghosh himself on tabla comprised the ensemble Rhythmscape. They created a tapestry of sound together that captivated the crowd and gave the music life!

There was a sense of awe and expectancy in the air as the evening's cultural spectacular came to an end. The distinguished chief guest, Jayesh Ranjan, chief secretary of the Telangana Government's Department of Industries and Commerce and

Department of Information Technology, Electronics, and Communications (ITE&C), was positioned in the front. He was accompanied by Aniruddha Sengupta, President of JUAAH, who both carried the honour and humility befitting their distinguished positions.

The master of the tabla, Bickram Ghosh, took some time before each performance to explain the complex web of ragas, taking the listeners on a voyage of musical discovery. The evening's symphony opened with a mesmerising performance of the "Shiv Dance" (*Tandav*), a devotional and dynamic work. This performance, which had its roots in the *Jog Raga's* deepest regions, was more than just a musical arrangement; it was a spiritual voyage that evoked Lord Shiva's cosmic dance.

Bickram Ghosh provided an insight into the creation of the second piece, "Zinc," by narrating a story about how the busy streets of New York City served as inspiration. He tells us confidentially, "There's this iconic Zinc Bar in New York. I had the amazing good fortune to hear some of the greatest jazz musicians of all time there. I called our performance "Zinc" in honour of it because of this. We included a little jazz because we wanted to convey the spirit of those special jazz evenings."

The musicians in this musical composition expertly captured the sounds of nature with their instruments, creating a lovely ode to rain. They gave the impression that they were in the middle of a stormy symphony by mimicking the pattern of rainfall and the roar of thunder. Later in the show, the group's next piece, "Little Krishna," took them into the world of classical music. This composition, which made its premiere in 1999, was a masterpiece embellished with the imposing *Charukeshi Raga*, a melody that arouses strong feel-



ings. The musicians integrated the complex rhythms of the *Matt Taal* into its elaborate structure, giving the musical story more nuance and complexity.

Suresh on the ghatam and Ghosh on the tabla performed an amazing duet. Speaking more with Jadavpur University alumnus and tabla player Bickram Ghosh about the worlds of classical and fusion music, he says, "I find myself navigating through contrasting landscapes like a blind man when I delve into the realms of classical and fusion music. Indian classical music has its ragas, talas, and rules to follow, just like a clearly defined road. It's similar to walking forward, albeit symbolically blind, with a feeling of direction. However, fusion is akin to navigating new waters without a guidebook. I let my sense of aesthetics guide me through this huge expanse. Our goal with Rhythmscape is to remain faithful to rhythm. We don't perform the protracted *alaaps* that are a defining feature of the classical tradition, but we do embrace the heartfelt and enjoyable elements of Indian classical music. Rather, we concentrate on the subtle rhythmic elements that propel our work along. I've always had a tendency to try new things, even if it meant receiving criticism in the beginning. I've taken chances that weren't always well appreciated, like tossing my tabla into the air and using other practices that seemed out of the ordinary. But as time has gone on, I've seen a change in perspective. Irony and introspection creep into my path when I realised that what was formerly criticised is now hailed as iconic."

Ghosh also discusses his background in music, who started out as a tabla player, sharing the stage with legends like Ravi Shankar Ji and Shiv Kumar Sharma Ji. "Engrossed in the opulent customs of Indian classical music, I worked closely with Carnatic musicians, refining my

EVENT COVERAGE

technique and broadening my repertoire. After studying under and performing with these legends for years, I finally dabbled in fusion in my mid-30s. As I thought back on my experiences, I realised that a deep comprehension of the musical elements being blended is necessary for true fusion. Many artists jump into fusion too quickly, failing to understand the core of both traditions. This strategy looked foolish to me. Rather, I decided to start my fusion efforts with a solid classical music background. I conducted a thorough investigation and searched to find a middle ground where various musical genres could co-exist. This method was made clear by works like "Zinc," which skillfully combined aspects from several traditions to produce something wholly original."

He is now working on three film projects. The first is a Hindi movie called *Band Of Maharajas*, which is helmed by Girish Malik. "This is my first acting role in almost 20 years. I play an Afghan in the movie, which is different from any of my prior roles. The film's main subject matter is music and *fatwas*. I'm also writing the soundtrack for the movie. Among other things, I'm working on *Devi Chowdhurani*, a Bengali movie. In addition to movies, I celebrated a wonderful milestone by releasing *Hanuman Chalisa* on Hanuman Jayanti to a warm reception. In addition, I founded my own music label, a large-scale endeavour with backers, putting out 200 tracks a year on average across Bollywood, religious, classical, and collaborative genres," he exclusively shares with *The Pioneer*.



RAISING AWARENESS OF SOCIAL PROGRESSIVISM IN SOCIETY

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Mahashatavadhani Pujya Ganivarya Shri Ajitchandra Sagar ji Maharaj, the renowned disciple of Acharyashri Nayachandrasagar Suriji Maharaj, has attracted attention worldwide by showcasing his extraordinary skills in *Shatavdhan* (memorising 100 things), *Mahashatavadhan* (memorising 200 questions), and 500 *Avadhan* (memorising 500 things) in front of thousands of spectators. He is now ready to begin the incredible and historic *Sahasravadhan-1000 Avadhan* project!

We learned a lot of fascinating information in an exclusive interview we had with this saint in order to learn more about him! For instance, when he said, "I want to achieve such remarkable feats, my memory power has improved through consistent study of *Agams* (Jain holy scriptures), moments of silence, *Saraswati Sadhana*, and ongoing penance, which helped me reach such significant milestones."

Sahasravadhan's next historical program will feature a variety of questions, including difficult mathematics problems, quotations, and poetry, all of which Munishree will thoroughly address. "While the normal person occasionally finds it difficult to focus and concentrate, people who have achieved mental stability find that this kind of concentration comes naturally to them. All questions must be focused on in order to be permanently retained in memory. The upcoming obstacles presented by these 1000 questions require both memory and concentration to overcome," the Jain saint discusses an interesting concept of combined attention.

This event's joint attention feature, in which 15 processes happen all at once all around him, is fascinating. These procedures include *Dhant* games, puzzle presentations, visual displays, letter transfers between bowls, and math question presentations. Furthermore, he educates us by stating, "The conscious and subconscious minds are the two components of the human mind. Therefore, people who have more control over their subconscious minds are able to process up to fifteen things at once. Nowadays, those who want to maintain their cognitive ability, memory, and mental sharpness can practice *Saraswati Sadhana* in order to improve their whole mental and spiritual health."

At the age of twelve, in Unjha and Kumud Bhai, he took up the life of renunciation. After being initiated, he also attained the rank of *Maharaj*. Under the tutelage of *Gurumaharaj*, he set off on a voyage of profound experience, starting his ascetic journey with *Diksha* at the age of 12. He had remembered 350 *gathas* and fortnightly *sutras* in one day in the early phases. And for us, what else was in store? As it happens, "*Saraswati Sadhana* provides practical

answers to the various problems that kids encounter; these include raising IQ, improving memory, and improving focus. Under the direction of renowned neurologists, physicians, and scientists from ISRO, this research has been carried out. Given the growth of dentist clinics over the past ten years, it is likely that growth in psychiatrist clinics will stagnate as well. Therefore, if humans are to fully utilise the potential of the brain, we must embrace meditation, which is the only route to inner peace."

Following his mastery of *sutras* that promote self-control, he quickly became proficient at memorising more than 27,000 verses from 23 of the 45 *Agamas* in the style of Prabhuvir's speech. Munishree was silent for eight years straight! "I am a monk first, and I only attained these *Siddhis* through the path of *Sadhana* after my monastic journey began," he continued. "From now on, my continued spiritual activities will also contribute to any future successes I achieve. It would therefore be pointless for me to ignore and forget the lessons and *Sadhana* that I have acquired throughout my monastic life. Religion and science have always been compared to railroad tracks—they never converge, they go parallel. Though it was frequently observed that religion always leaned toward science, this is changing, with science increasingly leaning toward religion. As soon as feasible, I want to provide *Saraswati Sadhana* to 500,000 youngsters. I want to raise awareness of social progressivism and take society to new heights through my personal *sadhana*."



Mahashatavadhani Pujya Ganivarya Shri Ajitchandra Sagar ji Maharaj, who is now ready to begin the incredible and historic *Sahasravadhan-1000 Avadhan* project, speaks exclusively with *The Pioneer* about reaching significant milestones in his life, practicing *Saraswati Sadhana*, and more.

Is sleep deprivation sabotaging your health?

It could be the late-night work, assignment submission, your new bundle of joy, a fun night out, just the heat wave or even those pesky mosquitoes keeping you up at ungodly hours of the night. The next day is a punishment. Your concentration wavers, head gets heavy, eye strains to keep up, fatigue sets in, and productivity dips to an all time low. Sleep deprivation is a common issue, and while an occasional sleepless night might not cause lasting harm, chronic sleep loss can significantly impact your physical and mental health.

One of the first consequences of sleep deprivation is impaired cognitive function. When you're sleep-deprived, your attention span suffers, making it difficult to concentrate, reason, and solve problems effectively. This can have a negative impact on daily activities, from driving, working, and studying, leading to decreased productivity and increased risk of accidents. Lack of sleep can also affect mood and emotional regulation. Persistent lack of sleep is linked with heightened irritability, mood fluctuations, anxiety, and depression. These emotional disturbances can strain relationships and decrease overall quality of life.

One of the first consequences of sleep deprivation is impaired cognitive function. When you're sleep-deprived, your attention span suffers, making it difficult to concentrate, reason, and solve problems effectively. This can severely hinder everyday tasks such as driving, working, and studying, heightening the risk of accidents, and diminishing productivity. These emotional disruptions strain relationships and detract from overall life satisfaction.

Sleep is important in maintaining physical health. Repeatedly being sleep deprived is linked to an increased risk of various health problems, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and weakened immune function. Over time, these conditions can significantly impact longevity and overall well-being.

Here's how sleep deprivation disrupts your body's delicate hormonal balance: It throws off the production of key hormones like cortisol (stress hormone), insulin (blood sugar regulation), and growth hormone (important for tissue repair and muscle growth). These hormonal imbalances can contribute to weight gain, difficulty managing blood sugar levels, and impaired immune function. Additionally, research suggests a link between chronic sleep deprivation and an increased risk of developing chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer. Poor sleep can also worsen existing health conditions, making them more challenging to manage.

Adequate sleep is essential for a healthy immune system. Chronic sleep deprivation can weaken the immune response, making individuals more susceptible to infections and delaying recovery from illness. Long-term sleep deprivation has been linked to a shortened lifespan. Individuals who consistently get less sleep than recommended have a higher mortality risk compared to those who get sufficient sleep.

WHAT IS THE REQUIRED AMOUNT OF SLEEP, THEN?

At least six to seven hours of sleep are required for the body to support various vital functions and to promote optimal physical and mental performance. During sleep, the body engages in crucial restorative processes such as tissue repair and muscle growth. Additionally, adequate sleep is essential for maintaining hormonal balance, supporting immune function, and regulating metabolism.

Even a single day of sleep deprivation, though seemingly harmless in the long term, can give rise to a host of short-term challenges. These include difficulties with concentration, heightened irritability, drowsiness, and decreased productivity. The resulting fatigue can compromise coordination and reaction time, elevating the risk of accidents and injuries. Furthermore, diminished performance at work or school can exacerbate the adverse effects of sleep deprivation.

TIPS FOR GETTING THROUGH A SLEEP-DEPRIVED DAY:

If you find yourself facing a day after a restless night, here are some tips to help you cope:

- **Staying hydrated:** Drinking plenty of water can help improve alertness and combat fatigue.
- **Avoiding strenuous activity:** Opt for light exercise or stretching instead of pushing yourself physically. Also avoid activities like driving or lifting heavy weights or operating machinery.
- **Take breaks:** Give your mind and body short breaks throughout the day to help you stay focused.
- **Skip caffeine in the afternoon:** While a morning cup of coffee might be helpful, avoid caffeine later in the day as it can disrupt nighttime sleep.
- **Power nap (if possible):** If you have the opportunity, a short 20-minute nap can significantly improve alertness and cognitive function.
- **Avoid making important decisions:** When sleep-deprived, your judgment might be clouded. Wait to make important decisions until you've had a chance to rest and recharge.



The recommended amount of sleep varies by age group. For adults aged 18 years and older, it's generally advised to aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night, although individual needs may vary. Infants need the most sleep, with 14-17 hours recommended for those aged 0-3 months, gradually decreasing as they grow older. For children and teenagers, the recommended sleep duration ranges from 12-15 hours for babies aged 4-11 months to 8-10 hours for teenagers aged 13-18 years. Following this will ensure you have a productive day, and your body and mind are well-rested.

(The author, Dr. Suchismitha Rajamanya, is a Lead Consultant & HOD - Internal Medicine, at Aster Whitefield Hospital.)



FOCUS ON RAHUL DURING LSG, MI CLASH

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

With T20 World Cup selection round the corner, KL Rahul will have one final chance to stake claim on the second wicketkeeper's spot in the Indian team when Lucknow Super Giants host Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League here on Tuesday.



field restrictions not only to strengthen his Indian team selection prospects but also to help his side score in in excess of 200 runs, which has become a norm in this edition.

match-winning totals as the race for the playoff heats. They will fancy their chances against a struggling Mumbai bowling unit which was carted all over the park by the Delhi Capitals batters the other day.

skipper Hardik Pandya were pummeled into submission. They would look to do better. Mumbai Indians find themselves in a precarious position sitting ninth on the points table.

consistent performances ahead of the World Cup. All-rounder Pandya has flopped with the bat and ball this season.

SQUADS: Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai, Nehal Wadhwa, Luke Wood.



Gaikwad is one step ahead of bowlers more often than not: Hussey

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The ability to remain one step ahead of the bowlers has allowed Rituraj Gaikwad to flourish in this Indian Premier League, reckons CSK batting coach Michael Hussey.

batting averages in the T20 format but at CSK, that aspect of the game is not discussed much. "We don't talk about it (S/R) much at all. We talk about each player since they need to assess the conditions out in the middle as quickly as they can.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

T20 format has always favoured the batters and that has gone to a 'whole new level' in this Indian Premier League, feels Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper Pat Cummins.

T20 has always been a batters game and that has gone to a new level this IPL: Cummins

around. There's not much sideways movement, and there's not much on the wicket either. "So, a lot of times, the best way to get a wicket is to try and defend. Batters are getting better at finding the ball out and even getting confident. It challenges you as a bowler.



hasn't really come off yet. So yeah, it is something (we need) to work on," Cummins reckoned. "There was definitely need there; haven't seen so much at any other venue across the country.

"Different batters have stepped up throughout the tournament, and you need two or three guys to make an impact. But tonight, we never really got going, unfortunately.

OTHER SPORTS

Video reviews have changed face of European soccer

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

As the Swedish league got underway this spring, yellow-and-black-clad supporters of Stockholm club AIK held up an enormous banner containing a long, vivid story about the dark forces of modern soccer conquering the world.

controlled by members — essentially, supporters — under a regulation that states members should control at least 50% of their club's shares, plus one.

imperfections. In the English Premier League, a communications mix-up between the official running the video review and the on-field referee cost Liverpool a valid goal in a loss at Tottenham in October.

Silva to leave Chelsea at end of season

AP ■ LONDON

Brazil defender Thiago Silva will leave Chelsea at the end of the season after four years at the club. The 39-year-old Silva made the announcement on Monday, saying he is leaving the door open for a return to Chelsea "in another role."

Chelsea has five league games left this season but is languishing in ninth place after an inconsistent campaign under first-year coach Mauricio Pochettino.



right of the cup to end it, with Lowry lifting a laughing McIlroy off the ground with a bear hug on the green.

think about where we met and where we've come from, to be on this stage and do this together — really, really cool journey that we've been a part of.

Bayer Leverkusen late escapes are keeping Xabi Alonso team unbeaten this season

AP ■ BERLIN

Just call him Xabi Houdini. Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso has seen his team pull off several scarcely believable escapes from defeat this season as it remains unbeaten across all competitions.

unbeaten record. The previous weekend, Josip Stanišić scored in the seventh minute of stoppage time for a 1-1 draw at Borussia Dortmund.

unbeaten this season. Leverkusen, which has already secured the Bundesliga title, is on a 46-game run without a loss — a record across Europe's "big five" leagues.

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for us." Those late goals helped Leverkusen clinch the Bundesliga title ahead of 11-time defending champion Bayern Munich with five rounds to spare.

"We've already reached our main target — to be champions — but we want to keep going, we don't want to stop. There are still three games (in the Bundesliga). We want to stay unbeaten for the rest of the season," Alonso said.

TWO OUT OF FOUR OF NARESH'S FILMS PUSHED BACK!

'HE WENT AHEAD WITH AA OKKATI ADAKKU'

PNS| HYDERABAD

A *Okkati Adakku* is a new film that is creating a lot of excitement and buzz lately.

With a strong creative team led by actors Allari Naresh and Faria Abdullah, this upcoming comedy project is expected to be a welcome change of pace for the genre with its premiere on May 3.

With the production skills of Rajiv Chilaka and the innovative directing of Malli Ankam, the film is being presented by Chilaka Productions and promises a look into the intricacies of contemporary relationships in addition to humour. As the film is nearing its release, director Malli Ankam speaks to the media here, sharing interesting tidbits about the film.

"The title of this story is rather fitting. *Aa Okkati Adakku*," says the director on a brighter note. "It was Naresh's idea to give this title as well. We have only taken the title; this story has no relation to that movie. What feelings are associated with the wedding? How are those feelings felt by some? We have made a strong emotional connection by presenting these subjects in a fun manner. Everyone may relate to this concept. It is a fun family entertainer that will keep everyone entertained." The film, he says, is inspired by social events in the community. "A few of my friends are single. If they inquire as to why they don't go on stage at events, they all inquire about marriage. They claimed they were unsure of how to respond. That startled me a lot. I experienced their suffering. Moreover, some of the news in the media and occurrences pertaining to marriage are unexpected. All of this is combined with fiction to create this story."

The lead actor, Allari Naresh, has already got four films in his kitty. However, there was something about *Aa Okkati Adakku* that made him get on board. What is it? Let's hear from the filmmaker. As he says, "Naresh has four flicks on his plate. I wasn't initially all that excited about the story because it was a comedy. I commenced narrating the tale. 'Let's do this tale,' he urged, shaking hands after hearing the first part. Two of the four films were pushed back, while this one was moved forward. He was very fond of this story. It's humorous and has a nice emotional depth. Naresh's portrayal and acting will provide the audience with endless entertainment."

He also adds, "Naresh was ecstatic to view the first draft. Their father holds this title. More accountability, without a doubt. He believed that he had maintained his faith after seeing the film. The crew as a whole is thrilled and optimistic about the results. The movie has been edited. The censors were pleased with themselves since they had a valid point. I appreciate that a lot of people are expressing ignorance."

With the buzz all around *Aa Okkati Adakku*, director Malli Ankam speaks to the Hyderabad media here, sharing some interesting insights about the upcoming film, all set to hit theaters on May 3.

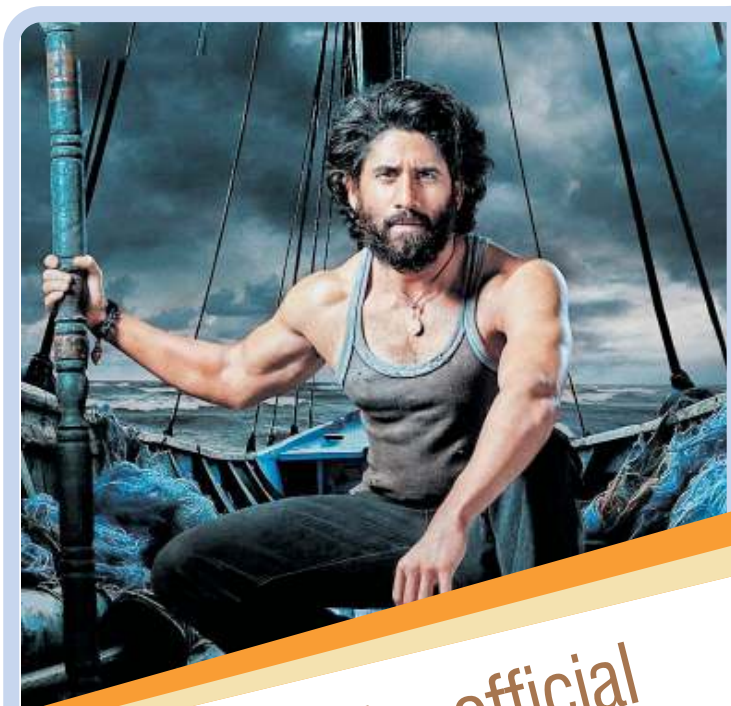

Biggest digi-deal for Naga Chaitanya's Thandel

Naga Chaitanya and Chandoo Mondeti joined forces for the third time for the beautiful rural backdrop love story *Thandel* which is progressing with its shoot. Sai Pallavi is the female lead opposite Naga Chaitanya in the movie produced ambitiously by Bunny Vasu, with Allu Aravind presenting it under the Geetha Arts banner.

The movie has been carrying a strong buzz ever since it was announced. The first look, teaser, and other promos were also well-received. Meanwhile, the film's business started on a massive note. The leading OTT platform Netflix obtained the digital rights of *Thandel* for all South Indian and Hindi languages for a staggering price of Rs 40 Cr. This is the biggest digital deal for Naga Chaitanya.

While Naga Chaitanya is one of the most bankable stars, Chandoo Mondeti delivered the biggest hit of his career to date with *Karthikeya 2*, and Geetha Arts is one of the biggest production houses in India. All these factors impacted *Thandel* to get such a fancy offer.

Apart from a beautiful love story, *Thandel* will also have patriotic elements, as shown in the teaser, which has set high expectations for the movie. Shmadat cranks the camera, while rockstar Devi Sri Prasad provides the music. Srinagendra Tangala is the art director.



Polimera 2 is the official selection at 14th Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival

Maa Oori *Polimera 2*, the sequel to the hugely popular *Maa Polimera* on OTT, debuted in theaters in November of last year to a rousing reception. The film, which stars Satyam Rajesh, Deviyani Sharma, and Getup Srinu in the key parts, is receiving attention once more.

The film has been officially selected for the esteemed 14th Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival - 2024, which takes place on April 30, 2024, in New Delhi, India. The entire team is pleased about this distinction. Shree Krishna Creations is the proud home of Gowri Krishna's spine-tingling horror film, directed by Anil Vishwanath. The director of music is Gyaani. Kamakshi Bhaskarla, Baladitya, Chitram Seenu, Ravi Varma, Rakendu Mouli, and Sahiti Dasari are among the ensemble cast members.



Kanguva filmed in seven different nations at actual locations

Since the much-sought teaser for *Kanguva*, a magnum opus, was released by Studio Green and Suriya Sivakumar, it has caused pandemonium everywhere. This outstanding teaser has everything that puts it at the level of a Hollywood production: the expertise, the creative thinking, the originality of the content, the exciting background score, and the execution. Everyone is intrigued by the teaser and eager to witness the epic battle between Bobby Deol, who plays the opponent, and Suriya, who portrays a Mighty Warrior. Apart from this, you might not be aware that the movie was shot at several actual locations by the makers!

Kanguva is undoubtedly one of the most ambitious films coming this year, and to bring a cinematic marvel to audiences, the makers have given everything required to make it a film to be remembered. As it is known, the film presents the story of two eras, historic and present, and keeping this in mind, the makers have filmed it in several real-life locations and across the globe. To keep the uniqueness and theme of the film, the makers have shot it in exotic locations in Goa, Europe, and a major schedule, including war sequences, was shot in Sri Lanka for 60 days.

Touted as the film of the budget worth 350 crores, the makers canned some major sequences in the outskirts of Chennai and even in the Pondicherry. An important sequence featuring Suriya was filmed recently in Kerala and the Kodaikanal forests. Last year, around October, a three-week marathon schedule with the cast and crew was shot in Bangkok, and the makers used the Alexa Super 35 and Alexa LF camera versions for a better output of the action sequences.

The film shows the story of two different eras—the prehistoric and present eras—and covers the story of 1000 years, and the makers have ensured the scale and execution in these two timelines come as a visual delight for the audiences. Director Siva and Studio Green jointly gave the project a global feel and elevated it to the level of Hollywood. Studio.

The release of the film is planned for the second half of 2024.

Nagarjuna on the hop with multi-starrers

As an actor, King Nagarjuna has a demanding schedule. Setting *Bigg Boss* aside, he has a number of other ventures in the works. He is now filming *Kubera*, which stars Dhanush in the title role. Soon, Sekhar Kammula's film will go on floors. Additionally, Nagarjuna is in talks to star in Rajinikanth's upcoming *Lokesh Kanagaraj* film in a major capacity. Nag's part will be revealed, and the filming will soon get underway. Additionally, Nagarjuna has approved one more multi-star film. Naveen, a newbie, is directing this big-budget movie starring Nagarjuna and Akshay Kumar together. This massively expensive movie, which will be produced by Studio Green, will be released throughout India the following year. The majority of the filming will be done in London. Nag is in negotiations for two more movies, both of which will feature him as the sole lead, in addition to these three multi-starrers. Film director Vijay Binni, of Naa Saami Ranga fame, is in advanced talks to helm a project shortly. Additionally, he approved of one more movie helmed by Subbu, a debutant. Nag is working on five projects overall!



Ranveer Singh and Prasanth Varma's next titled Rakshas

According to recent reports, Ranveer Singh and *Hanuman* director Prasanth Varma are in negotiations for a hugely expensive period picture that will be set against the backdrop of Indian mythology. The producers also stated that they were in talks with other studios to include them in the project and that a formal announcement will be made after the finances were established. With confidence, we can now say that Prasanth Varma, Ranveer Singh, and Mythri have joined forces as producers and are prepared to begin production on the film. People with knowledge of the development

claim that *Rakshas* is the working title for the upcoming movie starring Prasanth Varma and Ranveer Singh. This scene takes place in the Prasanth Varma Cinematic Universe, where the director introduces a lot of characters before bringing them all together in the finale. A source close to the production claims that Ranveer is amazed by his director's long-term vision and hopes for the aspirations, and he is excited to embark on the journey of *Rakshas* shortly. After completing the pre-visualisation stage of the screenplay and script, the creators are currently planning the shooting schedule. According to the insider, "Ranveer has already performed a pooja for the film on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti in Hyderabad and has met Prasanth Varma and the team multiple times over the last few weeks."



Telugu trailer of Tamannaah Bhatia and Raashi Khanna's BAAK UNVEILED

Aranmanai 4, starring Sundar C, Tamannaah Bhatia, and Raashi Khanna from the highly successful horror comedy series *Aranmanai*, is all set for theatrical release on May 3rd. This film, coming in Telugu with the title *Baak*, is directed by Sundar C. Kushboo Sundar and ACS Arun Kumar. Produced under the Avni Cinemax P Ltd. banner. The makers launched the theatrical trailer at a grand pre-release event.

The trailer begins with a family of four living happily together and unfortunately, one person loses his life under suspicious circumstances. The husband, who had a fight with his wife and went to the forest and died, will face charges in the trial. As a lawyer, Sundar C takes action against the police. The trailer also showed other characters, including Raashi, living in the haunted house. Heroine Raashi Khanna, speaking at the grand pre-release event,

shared, "Director Sundar C. Garu is the backbone of this movie. He makes films with a very clear vision. I like horror movies very much! But it is very difficult to get them. This time, the glamour of *Baak* has increased. Tamanna is going to be seen in a new role, which she has not played till now. Already, the songs are going viral. The beautiful women characters are beautifully crafted. It is a pleasure to be a part of this film. This is the perfect summer treat! Thanks to Suresh Productions for releasing it in Telugu."

Meanwhile, the other leading lady, Tamannaah Bhatia, says, "*Baak* is a film that gives a very new experience. The trailer is an example to show that Sundar is such a good director. He celebrates women's power. It is a great pleasure to have Kushboo present on his behalf at this celebration. I would like to see more simple women in Telugu movies."

STANDALONE

As everyone celebrated International Dance Day, Regina Cassandra remembered and paid tribute to Mrinalini Sarabhai.

