



FIRST COLUMN

FROM RIFTS TO RESOLUTION

It is very important to recognise that the world shall change when I change



BY RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

We all know that conflicts are a part of our everyday life and they form in our close relations, at a societal level & on an international level. Very often we see conflicts leading to aggression, hostility and war. However, conflicts can also be a stepping stone leading to change and wisdom; if we learn to handle them constructively. Since relationship conflicts are inevitable, learning to deal with them healthily is extremely crucial because when a conflict is mismanaged, it can harm the relationship. But when handled respectfully and positively, it provides an opportunity for growth, ultimately strengthening the bond between two people.

Any kind of conflict has two dimensions, internal and external. Internal conflicts arise when the mind and intellect are moving in opposite directions and external conflicts are caused when people or situations confront us and we are not sure how to cope with them. Some people view conflicts as an opportunity for a change and some see it as a natural global phenomenon. But others feel that conflicts are avoidable through better communication but they are frightened of the process. Due to this fear, they hold themselves back and content themselves by making a peace contract or a deal. However, such solutions are very temporary and can be seen as a band-aid solution, which might be effective for the short term only. We all know that conflicts ought to be resolved by use of intellect or reasoning because when conflicts are allowed to develop unhindered without intervention or when the parties involved fuel the



conflict, it often happens that the conflict evolves negatively. And that is why people seek guru's or senior's advice when they are faced with conflicting decisions. But the irony is that with all the information and advice that is available to us, we are unable to resolve matters because there is an acute implementation paralysis. We must not forget about the fact that the best source of judgement is a person's intellect because nobody can understand his feelings, situations and capabilities to deal better than his self.

We may seek advice from an experienced person, however, the sense of joy or security that we feel on hearing good advice is only temporary because it is not real. Just like the feeling of joy derived from thinking of eating something delicious is unreal, real joy comes only after eating the thing. We too have to undergo an experience to make it real. Remember! Conflict triggers strong emotions and can lead to hurt feelings, disappointment, and discomfort. When handled in an unhealthy manner, it can cause irreparable rifts, resentments, and break-ups. But when it is resolved healthily, it increases our understanding of one another, builds trust, and strengthens our relationship bonds. A growing body of research has shown spirituality as a great antidote for all kinds of conflicts. Spirituality is like the medicine that heals the root of the disease and not just the symptoms. It is the only means that gives us complete solutions to conflicts. From a spiritual perspective, the most powerful value needed for conflict resolution is 'respect'. This is because most of the people don't wish to negotiate when they have material power. Therefore, there's an urgent need for those to realize and respect their inner powers. Similarly, faith is also a very important element in conflict resolution, it is the key to mutual understanding. For global conflicts, the solution lies with the leadership. The leaders can bring about the much-needed change and make it trickle down the societies. Leaders of today must remember that any kind of change can be termed 'real' only when it affects the grassroots. It is thus very important to recognize that the world shall change when I change. Hence, people should not wait to be told that they need to change, instead, they should realise it themselves.

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

Rupee's fall against dollar is a wake-up call for India



BRAJESH KUMAR TIWARI

As the rupee weakens and inflation rises, strategic economic reforms to boost domestic manufacturing and reduce import dependency are urgently needed

The rupee hit a record low against the US dollar on August 5th and was trading at 84.09 per dollar. This is the biggest fall ever seen in the rupee and the rupee has reached its all-time low. If the currency of any country is stronger than other currencies, then the country is considered strong. In this globalized world, the value of every country's currency against the US dollar not only impacts the economy of that country but also affects the prices of many things in the market.

Rupee has Fallen 20 Times since Independence: The rupee has fallen almost 20 times since independence; in 1948, 1 dollar was equal to 4 rupees. At that time there was no debt in the country, then when the first five-year plan was implemented in 1951, the government started taking loans from foreign countries and then the value of the rupee also started decreasing continuously.

The continuous outflow of foreign funds from financial markets and crude oil has increased pressure on the rupee. The economy around the world has seen two major shocks - the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine, Israel conflict. India is also not untouched by this. Today, the condition of currencies in major markets around the world is weak.

Dollar as King: According to the International Standard Organization list, there are a total of 180 currencies around the world, but among them, the American currency 'Dollar' has become a global currency. The price of most of the things exported is paid in dollars. Today the dollar is involved in 80 percent of the world's trade. The US dollar has the status of a global currency, which is why the value of the rupee against the dollar shows whether the Indian currency is strong or weak.

The falling value of the Rupee affects Common People: When the rupee becomes cheaper against the dollar, it has a direct impact on the economy.

The falling value of the rupee brings inflation. Rising prices could accelerate inflation, which is already high. In such a situation, everything from the life of the common man to businessmen and government will be affected by the value of the rupee. The decline in global activity, investors' decision to invest money in safe global markets and increasing tension in global politics are among the main reasons behind the fall of the rupee. Even if we do not take seriously the fall and rise of a few paise in the rupee, they have a big impact on our lives.

The fall in the rupee has a direct impact on the country's economy, due to which import of petroleum products will become expensive and freight transportation will become expensive. This will have a direct impact on the inflation of every essential item. There is a sudden increase in all loans taken in foreign currency and the interest paid on them. Studying abroad will also be expensive.

Why the Rupee is falling: The value of the rupee completely depends on its demand and supply and import and export also have a direct impact. A country that imports more than it exports has a higher demand for dollars. Like India imports more than it exports. India is one of the major importers of crude oil and imports about 80 per cent of the oil, undoubtedly the rising prices of crude oil



IF WE START USING INDIGENOUS GOODS THEN THE COST OF IMPORTING FOREIGN GOODS WILL BE SAVED. FOR INDIA TO BECOME A \$5 TRILLION ECONOMY BY 2025, WE NEED TO EXPORT AT LEAST \$2.5 TRILLION WORTH OF GOODS AND SERVICES, AS EXPORTS CURRENTLY CONTRIBUTE ABOUT 25% TO THE TOTAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

in the international market are the main reason for the fall in the value of the rupee. Things to do for the value of the Rupee: Although the Central Government has assured to make every possible effort to stop the fall of the Rupee, now the Government will have to take concrete and tough steps. If the government tries to change its economy dependent on oil, then we can save a huge part of the foreign reserves and for this, we all should consider alternatives to oil. There is a need to pay attention to electric vehicles. Effective steps will have to be taken to stop the fall in the value of the rupee and keep the foreign exchange reserves rich.

Government Steps: The government is indeed striving to create a competitive, dynamic environment to provide sustained economic growth and enhance its relevance in international trade, PM Gati Shakti, National Single Window Clearance, GIS-mapped Land Bank, Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) etc. The manufacturing sector is expected to benefit from the implementation of recent policies like the PLI scheme. Its results are also visible in some areas, the development of coronavirus vaccines by Indian companies is a vivid example of indigenous talent. India has rapidly made its place in the Ease of Doing Business index released by the World Bank. India's EDB rank was 134th in the year 2014, whereas in the year 2023, it has become 63rd. India is ranked 40th in the Global Competitiveness Report Index published by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum, where it was ranked 60th in 2014. But all these reforms in the ranks have also failed to revive the manufacturing sector and provide the desired support to the Make in India campaign.

Big Time for Make in India: The government will have to move strategically towards controlling imports and increasing exports. This is the time to effectively

implement the 'Make in India' program which even after nine years is far behind in its effective contribution. Despite being the fifth largest economy, India contributes barely 1.6% to world exports. A primary objective of the campaign was to increase the share of the manufacturing sector in the Indian GDP to 25 per cent by 2022 although it has remained between 14 to 16 per cent in the last 9 years. During the coronavirus pandemic, there was publicity that the companies leaving China were going to come to India, however, most of these companies have shifted their base to Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand etc. and only a few have come to India. Every year crores of laptops, desktops and servers are sold in India, in which motherboards memory models and chips are being imported. We are dependent on other countries for these components.

Even today, most of the items are not being produced but are being assembled. There is no justification for the import of Harmonized System products (HS-84, nuclear reactors, boilers, mechanical equipment and their parts), and HS-85 (electrical machinery) as most of these items can be produced locally. PLI schemes should be extended to MSMEs and emerging industries to increase exports.

The 15 per cent corporate tax rate for new investment in manufacturing should be extended to all industries including the service sector. The expansion and use of new-age technology applications such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT) and Machine Learning (ML) require tax incentives on capital or operational expenditure. The government should reduce the logistics cost to 6-8% of the GDP which is currently 14%, the good thing is that recently at the G-20 summit, there has been talk of setting up an economic corridor at the international level.

The manufacturing industry in

India remains flawed due to the poor infrastructure of the country. Compared to China, which spends 20% of its GDP on infrastructure development, our country spends only 3%. Way Forward: At a time when the value of the rupee has crossed Rs 84 per US dollar, the role of 'Make in India' becomes very important. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), India may face a shortage of about 29 million skilled workers by 2030.

The economy needs more than policy window dressing to increase manufacturing activity. We need to understand that just passing bills and organizing investor conferences will not be enough to promote industrialization.

The manufacturing sector is constrained by large amounts of paperwork, be it labour, land or environmental clearances, stringent regulations and policy. Taxation and customs policies are complex to such an extent that it is cheaper to import things like medical equipment rather than manufacture the equipment domestically. India can make itself the next 'global factory' in the future, which is already fed up with China and is looking for alternative manufacturing hubs. There is a need to free the manufacturing sector from cumbersome rules.

Certainly, the fall of the rupee against the dollar can be controlled through such effective steps. Also, if we start using indigenous goods then the cost of importing foreign goods will be saved. For India to become a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, we need to export at least \$2.5 trillion worth of goods and services, as exports currently contribute about 25% to the total gross domestic product (GDP). India has no time to rest. We have come a long way, but the journey is not over yet.

(The writer is an associate professor at JNU, New Delhi; views are personal)

The strength of sisterhood: How women's circles empower and change lives

Women groups foster empowerment, drive economic progress, and challenge societal stereotypes, proving that together, women can achieve anything

Humans are inherently social beings, and women, in particular, thrive on social connections. This insight struck me during a recent celebration of Hariyali Teej, a Hindu festival dedicated to women. On this day, women don traditional attire, enjoy special foods, and revel in music, reflecting the profound significance of women's gatherings in our cultural history. Hariyali Teej exemplifies the value our ancestors placed on women's circles. These gatherings not only provide joy but also reinforce the unique strength women possess. This power is deeply rooted in their ability to manage and share energy, which flourishes through communal interactions. Women need to connect with their feminine essence and the best way to nurture this strength is by bonding with other women. Such connections are crucial for self-discovery and empowerment.



SUGANDHA NAGAR

The concept of Shine Theory, coined by journalist Ann Friedman and business-woman Aminatou Sow, encapsulates this idea: exceptional women support each other to shine even brighter.

Historically, women have passed wisdom and experience through communal practices, whether through household chores or cultural rituals. For example, traditional activities like grinding spices together in Indian families or crafting quilts in Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple' symbolize unity and shared strength. Everyday interactions among women not only ease the burden of tasks but also preserve cultural traditions and create a space for emotional exchange. These interactions form a vessel of healing and transformation, extending beyond personal growth to effecting positive change in their communities. In modern settings, such as neighborhood gatherings or workplace environments, the same principles apply. Despite the often harsh competitive dynamics driven by stereotypes, supportive women's circles offer a vital source of relief and rejuvenation. Unfortunately, societal narratives and media perpetuate the myth that women are inherently competitive and unsupportive of one another. This stereotype undermines the historical practices of women uplifting each other and fosters unhealthy rivalry. Recent initiatives aim to counteract these negative dynamics by promoting women's economic empowerment. The Union Budget for 2024-25 proposes establishing working women hostels and supporting women-led self-help groups (SHGs). These



measures are designed to enhance financial stability and provide economic opportunities for women, particularly in rural areas. The goal is to transform women into 'Lakhpati Didis,' or those with an annual income exceeding INR 1,00,000, while also encouraging sustainable livelihoods and improved living standards. The emphasis on SHGs highlights the importance of collective unity and mutual support among women. These groups not only provide economic benefits but also foster a strong network of women who support each other's growth and success. By encouraging more women to

engage in such supportive environments, we can pave the way for greater economic prosperity and gender equality. Sheryl Sandberg, former COO of Meta Platforms, emphasizes the power of women supporting women in her book, 'Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead'. She dispels the myth that women don't support each other, arguing that collaboration among women is key to achieving remarkable success. Successful women often have the backing of other women who help them reach their goals.

To overcome systemic discrimination and internalized biases, women must challenge the societal pressures that pit them against each

other. By rejecting stereotypes and fostering genuine support, women can create spaces where they feel safe to express themselves, show vulnerability, and receive the support they need.

Ultimately, female friendships and communal support not only inspire personal and spiritual growth but also enhance collective strength and performance. Women's circles provide a crucial platform for sharing energy, ideas, and support, enabling women to achieve their full potential and contribute positively to their communities.

(The author is a writer, social worker, culture enthusiast, and former UN employee; views are personal)



MTV BOLSTERS ITS LINEUP WITH DARK SCROLL

MTV India announced India's only paranormal reality show, *MTV Dark Scroll* — *Muqabla Anjaan Se*. Pioneering a new avenue for youth entertainment, MTV's new show, hosted by actor Amit Sadh, promises thrill-seeking young audiences a pathbreaking blend of horror and reality genres. *MTV Dark Scroll*, in association with The Souled Store, is set to premiere on August 16, streaming every Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 7 PM on JioCinema and airing at 10 PM on MTV. Set against the backdrop of Uttarakhand's dense forests and misty mountains, *MTV Dark Scroll* brings together nine seekers in seven haunted locations. Guided by well-known paranormal investigator Sarbajeet Mohanty and psychic Pooja Vijay, the Seekers will investigate some chilling stories and face other-worldly challenges. The seekers will be tasked with a series of activities inside each haunted location using advanced entity-detection devices like infrared cameras, electromagnetic field (Measures) and paranormal investigation methods like the Estes Method. Horror content attracts 298 million viewers on TV annually, with 82 million tuning in every month, demonstrating the genre's widespread and consistent appeal. Of these viewers, 55% are youth, equally split between males and females, according to BARC India (April 23–March 24, horror genre on Hindi GEC and Hindi movies). This makes *MTV Dark Scroll* a significant addition to the genre, promising to captivate a substantial and engaged audience.

SUNNY TAKES ON AN ENTRANCING ROLE IN QUOTATION GANG

Fans are brimming with excitement as Sunny Leone-starrer *Quotation Gang* is gearing up to hit theatres on August 30. This highly anticipated movie promises to showcase the actress-entrepreneur in an intense avatar, diverging from her typical glamorous image. In *Quotation Gang*, Sunny Leone takes on the compelling role of Padma, a masterful assassin who is an integral part of a dangerous gang that specialises in contract killings. The film's trailer has already stirred up significant buzz, highlighting Sunny's shift to a dramatic and gritty portrayal that promises to keep audiences on the edge of their seats. *Quotation Gang* is a true-blue proof of Sunny's versatility and her sensibility to make careful choices in films. Previously, Sunny Leone thanked the filmmakers for offering her such a role in the film. She also spoke about how everything, from her eyebrows to her skin tone, had to undergo major changes to suit the part. Apart from *Quotation Gang*, which also features Jackie Shroff and Priyami, Sunny Leone has an exciting line-up of projects. She will star in *Kennedy*, has an untitled Malayalam film to her credit and is collaborating with Himesh Reshammiya and Prabhudeva on an untitled project.



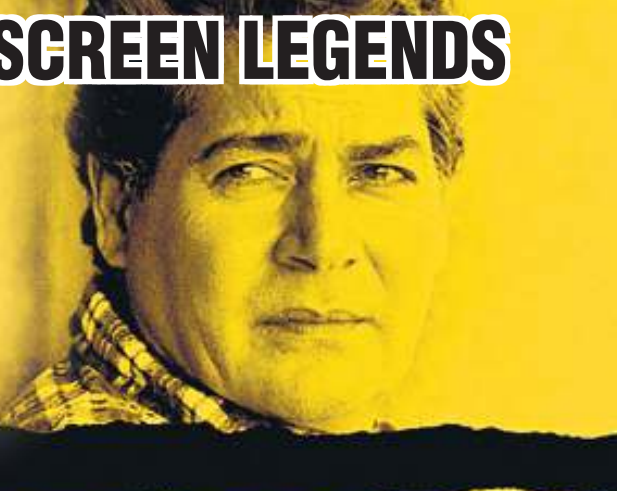
Kit Harrington admits Game of Thrones ending was rushed!

Mistakes were made during the final season of *Game of Thrones*, says British star Kit Harrington, who played the fan-favourite character of Jon Snow in the HBO series. During a profile interview, Harrington agreed with the fans that the eighth and final season of the smash hit show, which premiered in May 2019 to negative reviews, was "rushed." "I think there were mistakes made, maybe story-wise towards the end. I think there were some interesting choices that didn't quite work," Harrington said. "I think if there was any fault with the end of *Thrones*, it was that we were all so tired, we couldn't have gone on longer. And so I understand some people thought it was rushed and I might agree with them. But I'm not sure

there was any alternative," he added. The final season of *Game of Thrones*, which aired in 2019, faced widespread criticism from fans and critics alike for several reasons, with the most common complaint being that the show, which had spent years building up complex storylines and character arcs, crammed significant events into just six episodes. Harrington said that though "everyone is entitled to their opinion, the team felt worn out after filming the series for over 10 years. I look at pictures of me in that final season and I look exhausted. I look spent. I didn't have another season in me," he said. "I went in and everyone loved *Thrones*; I came out and everyone hated it... I thought, 'What the f**k is going on?'" he added.

FROM STRUGGLES TO SCREEN LEGENDS

The trailer for *Angry Young Men*, a three-part docuseries released by Prime Video, masterfully captures the personal and professional journey of the legendary writer-duo Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar, more popularly known as Salim-Javed. In the 1970s, they revolutionised Indian cinema by reinventing the Bollywood formula, introducing 'angry young man' heroes in a romance-dominated industry and making action-dramas a beloved genre. Produced by Salman Khan Films, Excel Media & Entertainment and Tiger Baby, *Angry Young Men* is executive produced by Salma Khan, Salman Khan, Ritesh Sidhwani, Farhan Akhtar, Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti and marks the directorial debut of Namrata Rao. The trailer for the docuseries presents an emotional and inspirational look at the extraordinary journey and enduring legacy of Salim-Javed. It immerses the audience in the rich Bollywood realm that they created, spotlighting their iconic characters and blockbusters such as *Deewar*, *Don*, *Sholay*, *Trishul* and *Dostana*—films that have left an indelible imprint on Indian cinema. From their modest



origins to becoming the first screenwriters to achieve stardom, it showcases rare archival footage, offering a nostalgic glimpse into their personal relationships, camaraderie, and creative brilliance through their unforgettable collaboration across 24 films. Heartfelt reflections from industry figures like Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bachchan, Hema Malini, Helen, Salman Khan, Hrithik Roshan, Aamir Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan further highlight the significant impact Salim-Javed had on their careers.

"I started my career in front of the camera but realised that my true strength lay in telling stories," said Salim Khan. "That's when I decided to focus on what came naturally to me—writing. I then met Javed, who was equally passionate about writing and together we did some fantastic work, of which I am very proud. We had an excellent run, achieved great success and also challenged industry norms along the way. It feels wonderful that our journey is being documented for future generations, and I hope they will be inspired to do their best and not be confined by society's prescribed roles." Meanwhile, Javed Akhtar recalled arriving in the city as a young man with no job, contacts, or money and often going to bed hungry. Despite that, quitting never crossed his mind. "What I always knew, however, was that my life story was something I would want to share with the world. The support we have received from our family, friends and the industry in documenting our journey has been heartening and I would like to thank them all for their love."

STANDALONE

Actress Rani Mukerji honoured the late filmmaker Yash Chopra with the unveiling of a commemorative stamp, marking a significant milestone for the Indian cinema industry. The historic occasion was marked with the first-ever celebration of Indian cinema at the Australian Parliament, which coincided with the 15th anniversary of the *Melbourne Indian Film Festival*. The program coincided with Rani Mukerji and Karan Johar's keynote addresses at the Canberra Parliament.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



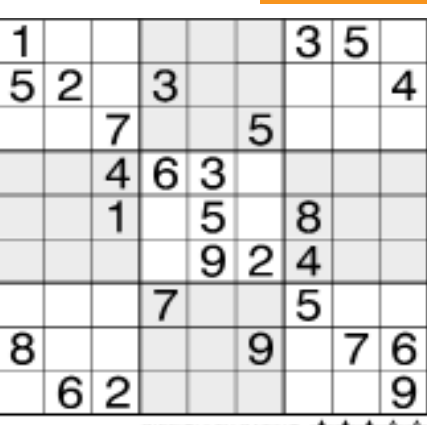
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

9	5	1	3	8	6	2	4	7
2	3	8	1	4	7	9	5	6
4	6	7	5	9	2	1	8	3
8	2	6	4	7	3	5	1	9
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3	1	2	7	6	8	4	9	5
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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 A water sport
- 7 After eighth
- 8 Worship
- 9 Hurt someone's feelings by being rude to them
- 10 Fewer
- 12 This metal goes rusty
- 14 A fruit
- 17 A large serving spoon
- 18 Book name
- 19 Someone in jail
- 4 Rope loop
- 5 Not able to be seen
- 6 Read this daily
- 11 Cardboard box
- 13 Command
- 15 Change
- 16 Unidy shambles

DOWN

- 1 Musical pieces for the voice
- 2 Breathe in
- 3 A ditch around a castle



UNSTOPPABLE FORCE BEHIND KILL: Nikhil on turning Patna's chaos into cinematic gold



SHIKHA DUGGAL

The greatest spot to watch *Kill*, a violent Indian beat-em-up set on a train and written in Hindi by Nikhil Nagesh Bhat, would probably still be a cinema theatre. The director has been blown away by Lionsgate and the John Wick franchise producing company's plans to remake his Indian action film in English. True, the filmmaker produced nonstop action scenes that as many people as possible should witness. It's fantastic to learn that an English-language version is now being developed. It could be inevitable for it to occur!

We contact the filmmaker out of curiosity to find out more about how it all transpired and he suffices, "People first took an interest in my film, I recall, at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) premiere. Then the news suddenly leaked out! At first, I would surreptitiously visit theatres to observe the reactions to my movie. Applause, hoots and other noises were heard. This isn't what I recall from last time! These kinds of reactions, in my opinion, would only occur in a star-studded film, yet look at us. It was also a huge confidence booster for my actors."

It's unbelievable that the movie is still making news and the writer keeps telling us, "I learned with a pleasant surprise that my movie was being considered for a Hollywood remake. When I saw the guys from the production business, I could see they were shocked by the scenes I had directed and the performances my actors were giving them. The strength and emotional engagement of it rather impressed them! Do you have feelings for a dacoit? That's what was taking place in the movie theatres. This astonished them to see. Today, a localised tale is making its way around the world; to me, this is nothing less than a phenomenon."

Speaking briefly about his hopes for such a worldwide hit, the *Apurva* fame says, "My film has been viewed by people from Chile, Argentina, Ecuador and Mexico. What a feeling! They were all required to state only one thing: they all truly enjoyed the film's emotional content. Permit me to take the readers back in time to the 1990s, when I was a child living in Patna. Back then, Bihar was an unstable state. Every day, murders and robberies occur and I have witnessed these crimes in my immediate surroundings. But the thing that sticks out in my memory from all of this is that none of them appeared to be criminals—rather, they were charmers! I made similar suggestions in my film, which is where the inspiration that everyone is discussing originated."

The name of the unconventional actor, Raghav Juyal, was suggested by one of his associates! After seeing a hundred or more auditions, Nikhil cast him because of a self-tape where he could see an unpredictable quality in Raghav's eyes. "The casting director had enough of me until I decided on Raghav. I told my team right away not to put me in front of any other actors after meeting Lakshya Kapoor because I couldn't see beyond him. He served as my Amrit. I saw Tanya Manikantala in the cult film *A Suitable Boy* and her innocent gaze convinced me to cast her in *Kill*. Her eyes convey so much emotion."

The Patna guy reminisces about filming *Kill* by sharing a few unforgettable stories, such as, "I have a clear recall of the first time my film was shown at an international film festival around midnight. Suddenly, I started to get strange ideas like, 'Why am I here?' Right now, I feel like something is wrong with every shot and sound! I was experiencing intense internal anxiety. I began to worry that we might be poorly received by the crowd. Twenty-five minutes in, the audience began to react. From then on, there was no turning back and the rest is history." He said he had chills as he was talking. That's how vivid the recollection of shooting *Kill* was for him!

Filmmaker-writer Nikhil Nagesh Bhat, whose latest venture *Kill* has been in talks to date, speaks to *The Pioneer* about the tremendous response for the film at TIFF and more of the Behind the scenes from the film



FOOD REVIEW

Feasts made effortless!

AARTI SREENATH

Let's not forget the fact that, when it comes to hosting a party at your house, it's no less than a tiring task. I used to feel overwhelmed for sure by the endless chores, especially cooking the huge amount of food for the guests, until I discovered CaterNinja. This service doesn't just provide food; it creates a culinary experience that lingers long after the last bite. The menu reads like a symphony of flavours, each dish carefully curated to deliver a memorable dining experience.

The *Achari Chicken Tikka*, with its perfect balance of spice and tang, could easily make you rethink your go-to starter. The *Tandoori Prawns*, juicy and charred just right, evoke the smoky allure of coastal grills. The *Seekh Kebab*, despite being a vegetarian option, was packed with such a robust taste that it competed with its meaty counterparts. The *Paneer Tikka*, with its velvety texture and fragrant marinade, was to the finesse with which the simplest ingredients can be elevated.

The main course was a celebration of classic Indian comfort food. The *Butter Chicken*, rich and indulgent, married the sweetness of tomato with the warmth of *garam masala* in a way that lingers on the palate long after the last bite. The *Dal Makhni*, slow-cooked to perfection, was creamy and hearty, a bowl of warmth that felt like home. The *Veg Pulao*, fragrant with spices and dotted with colorful vegetables, was the perfect accompaniment, while the *Wheat Paratha* offering a wholesome touch. And just when you think you can't eat another bite, the *Moong Dal Halwa* arrives, a sweet finale that is both comforting and indulgent, with its earthy notes of lentils and the richness of ghee.

But what truly sets it apart isn't just the food; it's the entire experience. As the brainchild of Anup Agarwal and Anurag Mishra, CaterNinja redefines what catering can be. It's not just about delivering food; it's about making the process seamless and customisable, catering to events of all sizes, whether at home or in the office.

Their journey hasn't been without challenges. It's a platform that's a haven for food lovers, offering services like NinjaBox, NinjaBuffet and NinjaLive, each bringing a unique twist to the catering experience. In a world where hosting an event can often feel daunting, it is the ally you need—swift, efficient and always on point—ensuring your event is nothing short of spectacular.

FOODS TO TRY: Achari Chicken Tikka, Tandoori Prawns, Paneer Tikka

VERDICT: 3.5/5

TEJAL SINHA

2023 saw India's first-ever chat show on positive masculinity with Yuva's popular show *Be A Man Yaar*, by The Man Company. While the first season saw Naseeruddin Shah, Karan Johar, Vicky Kaushal and Zakir Khan, among the rest, start the much-needed conversation around men and see an astonishing response, the second season has already been making waves with Javed Akhtar, Kartik Aaryan, Bhuvan Bam and Imran Khan.

With more men, laughs, love, hugs and vulnerability, an ecstatic Nikhil Taneja has taken up the seat, engaging in candid conversations. "I could have only hoped but not expected the overwhelming response to Season 1 of *Be A Man Yaar*," shares the media entrepreneur in an exclusive interaction with *The Pioneer*. As he shares the response, he reiterates his belief that there is space in the media and entertainment sector, as well as among audiences, for gentler, more empathetic and more intimate conversations involving men.

So what's up with Season 2? This season, he says, they have tried to maintain the goal of creating a safe space on the internet for positive masculine conversations.

"There's a belief system that the only kind of masculinity that exists or is lauded is the alpha masculine or hyper-masculine because we see that in pop culture and in films time and again," shares Nikhil, adding, "It leads us to believe that perhaps this is what the audiences want, but the fact is that we have never given an alternative to the audiences. We have always reinforced gender stereotypes by showcasing a certain kind of 'heroic' masculinity, so it just made me feel so grateful that the audiences showed up for an alternative. It proves that there are many masculinities possible and we need to hold space for softer masculinities as well."

With *Be A Man Yaar*, Nikhil aimed to reclaim the idea of the phrase 'Be a man', that's often used to ask men to not cry, to toughen up, to not express pain and to not be emotional or vulnerable, rather 'it's okay to express'.

"Everything I heard from any guest, no matter how difficult or different it was from my own story, I felt like I was able to see my own stories in theirs," affirms Nikhil. Whether it was Nakuul Mehta speaking of not being able to hug his father, Karan Johar speaking of being called unkind names in school, or Vicky Kaushal speaking about not being able to cry. "That's the incredible thing about listening to the raw stories of those who may seem to be unlike you—you realise that we are all the same in the kind of emotions we feel and how difficult it is, especially for us men, to be able to find spaces to speak of these emotions."

When you have a theme like *Be A Man Yaar*, he believes that it encourages men to have deep, personal conversations, which, in fact, is not easy for everyone to agree to let their guard down and to be a part of a show like that. For instance, "So when someone like Kartik Aaryan, who is so widely known and loved, agrees to bring his most authentic self to a show

Nikhil Taneja returns with more conversations and continues to promote men opening up about their emotions in the new season of *Be A Man Yaar*, featuring beloved celebrities. In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, he discusses the theme, recalling the stories of celebrities and more

Be A Man Yaar, it's okay to express!



like ours, it is an indication to his fans and so many others that these conversations are necessary, important and meaningful." True that! Today, despite Kartik being one of the leading actors of the B-Town, he still spoke about his fear of being 'unfit'.

With people having a notion that men can work and fit anywhere, he further highlights, "The stereotype there is that men can work and fit anywhere that's acceptable by society as a conventionally male profession. There are professions where the name in itself typically has 'man' associated with it because it's expected only of men to do it, like 'fireman' or 'watchman'. Even in sports, it was called 'batsman' until women started playing just as well and they changed the term to 'batter'. But whenever men want to take not-so-mainstream professions, they are discouraged and told that they are unfit for them, just as women and other genders are discouraged from taking up things typically expected to be done by men. In an ideal society, everyone should have equal rights to be whoever they want to be. We are definitely getting there, but slowly."

When men speak about their depressive thoughts, they are either thought of or shamed as 'weak', or are expected to get better on their own because they are men. There's very little space given to the mental health of men, as men are always expected to be on top of their emotional health—except when it comes to anger.

Talking of men's mental health, there was also a time when Nikhil battled anxiety, making him put a pause on his career, take a sabbatical and reevaluate life choices, which led him on a more introspective and empathetic path. With several panic attacks and emotional breakdowns, he somehow took up the courage to battle the stigma that comes with seeking therapy.

In his most recent episode, Imran Khan shared that he had trouble recognising his anxiety at first. He described waking up at 4 a.m., feeling his heart racing and struggling to breathe and staying awake until sunrise. This ongoing discomfort caused him to open up to his mother about feeling powerless and inept. He encountered criticism from those who dismissed therapy and emotional vulnerability as weaknesses when seeking help.

"How do you respect a man who's not earning, not going to work, or just crying about his feelings? That narrative weighed heavily on me," he expressed.

We often do not have enough conversations about failure in society with men. Men are often looked at as 'return on investments', for a lot of our countrymen are supposed to be breadwinners to support the dreams and aspirations of the whole family and sometimes to just put food on the table. While Kartik spoke about rejections in his career, Nikhil shared, "In such a situation, where the worth of men is reduced to how much money they can make for their families, any time they face failure, it's not just taken as 'rejection', but as the difference between the family's survival and livelihood. Every rejection then adds up in the minds of men and they see themselves as unable to live up to their gender, by not being able to earn enough. We need men to become comfortable with the idea of failure as a way of life and not take it personally to the level of harming themselves or others."

PONTING BACKS AUSTRALIA TO HAND INDIA 3-1 DEFEAT IN BORDER-GAVASKAR TROPHY

PTI ■ DUBAI

Ricky Ponting believes Australia will have a "point to prove" after two straight Test series defeats at home against India and backed the Pat Cummins-led side to win the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy 3-1 come November-December. India, who have returned victorious in both their previous Test assignments Down Under with identical margins of 2-1, will take on the world No.1 Australia in a five-Test series starting on November 22. "It's going to be a competitive series. Australia has got a bit of a point to prove against India in Australia on the back of what happened the last two series here," Ponting told "The ICC Review". "We are back to (having) five Tests as well, which is the other really important thing about this series. It has only been four Tests the last couple of time. (To have) five Tests, everyone is really excited by that and I don't know if there'd be too many drawn games. "I'm obviously going to tip Australia to win and I'm never going to tip against Australia. There will be some bad weather somewhere, so I'm going to say 3-1 to Australia," he added. India and Australia have not played a five-Test series after their bilateral affairs came to be known as the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Before that, in 1991-92, India had toured



Australia for a five-Test series. Ponting backed India's left-arm seamer Khaleel Ahmed, whom he coached in the IPL at Delhi Capitals, to be a part of India's touring party. "Someone like Khaleel Ahmed, I think, could find himself on the Test

tour. He has just been over in Zimbabwe recently and played that (T20) series over there, but a left-arm would be ideal for them to have in their touring squad," Ponting said. The former Australia skipper hoped both teams will be deploying full-

fledged bowling attacks. "(Mohammed) Shami will be back fit by then. (Mohammed) Siraj we know will be there-abouts somewhere and obviously (Jasprit) Bumrah is going nowhere. Both teams are going to line up really, really strongly," he said.

Ponting said the competitiveness between India and Australia is quite close to the Ashes rivalry against England. "I was a part of it when that really started to grow, when the rivalry really started to grow, was it's right at the back end of my career," Ponting said. "I've said for the last couple of years now, Australia have always had a fierce rivalry with England, obviously, and a very strong rivalry with South Africa. "But I think India is now sitting right on the back of what an Ashes clash is like and probably overtaken the rivalry with South Africa. Ponting said while Australia's squad looks more or less settled, it remains to be seen if Steve Smith would like to persist being at the opening slot. "Australia will pretty much pick itself. Probably, the only one question there might be with Australia again, is if (Steve) Smith's the right man to be opening the batting," he said. "That would be the only query that I can see there. But that was all about obviously bringing Cameron Green back into the side. "So I'll rephrase it, not whether Smith's the right man to open the batting but whether he thinks it's the right spot for him. Because if he doesn't think it's the right spot, then they'll make a change and get someone else back up there," Ponting added.



Sri Lanka Cricket ropes in Ian Bell as batting coach ahead of away Test series vs England

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Tuesday appointed Ian Bell as their batting coach ahead of their tour of England comprising three Tests. Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) announced on its website that Bell, who scored 7727 runs in 118 Tests, will start working with the national side later this week. "He will start working with the team from August 16 and remain until the conclusion of the three-Test match series," SLC said. SLC CEO Ashley de Silva expressed: "We appointed Ian to bring in a person with local knowledge to help the players with key insights on the conditions there."

"Ian has a lot of experience playing in England, and we believe his inputs will help our team in this crucial tour. Sri Lanka's tour of England begins with the first Test at Manchester from August 21-25. The second Test will be played at Lord's from August 29-September 2 while The Oval will host the third and final Test from September 6-10. Meanwhile, England could be in a race against time with skipper Ben Stokes suffering a hamstring injury last Sunday while playing in The Hundred. Stokes sustained the injury while batting and was eventually helped off the field. He was taken for scans and was also seen walking with the help of crutches.



We didn't even get desired coach for Olympics: Ashwini

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian doubles badminton specialist Ashwini Ponnappa on Tuesday said she received little to no individual financial assistance from the sports ministry in the build up to Paris Olympics and even her request for a coach was turned down ahead of the just-concluded Games. The Sports Authority of India (SAI) had come out with a document, detailing the financial support provided to the Paris-bound Indian athletes. It mentions that Ashwini was provided Rs 4,50,000 under TOPS and Rs 1,48,04,080 under Annual calendar for Training and Competition (ACTC), which included the procurement of Game Ready recovery equipment, international competitions and sparring partner in the Tokyo cycle. "I'm absolutely shocked.. I don't mind not getting money but telling the nation that I got money is ridiculous. I haven't received it. Like if you're talking about national

camp, then that 1.5 Crore is spent on all the campers," Ashwini told PTI. "I don't have a specific coach. As for my personalised trainer, I'm paying for him myself. I'm not taking money from anyone. I've played on my own until November (2023). I was included as part of TOPS only after we qualified..." Ashwini, 34, has been one of the top Indian doubles player, having won a gold, a silver and a bronze in the Commonwealth Games 2010, 2014 and 2018 respectively. She has also competed in the London and Rio Olympics with Jwala Gutta. Detailing the Rs 1.48 crore spending, a SAI source said: "The Rs 1.48 crore has been spent on her on travel, stay, food, competition fee, DA in all the competitions that she participated in as part of the Indian team in the Paris cycle. "This money is given to BAI as part of ACTC." Ashwini, who had paired with N Sikki Reddy till August, 2022, joined hands with Tanisha Crasto in



December that year and started playing in international tournaments from January 2023. A series of good performances helped them seal their Paris berth, after which the duo were included in the TOPS scheme in May this year. "The ministry has always supported me. I've been part of the team for years and I'm grateful for the support I've received," Ashwini said. "The last year I haven't been supported and it's ok. But you can't say I've been given Rs 1.5 crore, if it's over four years, fair enough. As I was TOPS when I was partnering Sikki." Playing her third Olympics, Ashwini was left in tears after she and her partner Tanisha couldn't win a single match to make an unceremonious exit from the group stage. "I haven't played well, irrespective of the coach not being there, I take responsibility for that. But you can't say I'm getting this amount when I haven't even got this amount," she said.

I will meet hockey team before Sept 10 to chalk out future plans: Sports Minister

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday informed that he will hold a meeting with the bronze medal winning Indian men's hockey team before September 10 to chalk out future plans in its endeavour to clinch the gold medal in 2028 Los Angeles Games. Mandaviya on Tuesday felicitated star custodian PR Sreejesh, defender Sanjay, Amit Rohidas and striker Abhishek after their return from Paris on Tuesday morning. "It's been a wonderful performance from you guys, we didn't get the gold but we came very close to it and the way you guys inspired after the semifinal loss is commendable," Mandaviya said. "But it's not the end of the road and I will sit with you by September 10 and churn out future course of action so that

we should return with nothing less than gold from Los Angeles. I will seek your opinion how to go about it and try to provide you all possible support from the government." The minister also said he was satisfied with the performance of the Indian contingent even though they couldn't match last edition's result. In Tokyo India won seven medals including a gold, but in Paris the country could manage just six medals -- five bronze medals and one silver. The Indians, however, missed out on seven medals, finishing fourth, a fact which Mandaviya rued. "In Tokyo, we won seven medals but in Paris we won six. But the fact is we missed out on seven more medals by finishing fourth, which is a worthy performance," he said. Mandaviya had earlier felicitated the other members of the hockey who returned early.

PTI ■ JAIPUR

India is hoping to win more than 25 medals from its largest-ever contingent of 84 athletes at the upcoming Paris Paralympic Games beginning on August 28, the country's governing body chief Devendra Jhajharia said on Tuesday. Jhajharia, himself a double gold medalist at the Paralympics, said the Indian contingent would look the carry the momentum of record-breaking performances in the 2021 Tokyo Paralympics and 2023 Hangzhou Asian Para Games. India had won 19 medals at the Tokyo Paralympics and a historic 111 medal at the Para Asian Games. "This is the biggest para

India aiming to win more than 25 medals at Paris Paralympics: PCI chief Jhajharia

contingent India has ever sent to the Paralympics. We are very confident about the overall performance and are sure to win more than 25 medals," Jhajharia said here at an event organised by the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI). India is set to compete in 12 sports, including archery, athletics, badminton, canoeing, cycling, blind judo, powerlifting, rowing, shooting, swimming, table tennis, and taekwondo. "Most of our athletes are in excellent shape, having



trained rigorously for this event. We expect outstanding results, particularly in athletics, badminton, archery, and shooting. They are ready to make India proud," the PCI president said. The Indian team boasts of a mix of experienced and young athletes athletes. Many of them are participating in their second or third Paralympics. Amit Kumar Saroha, a seasoned athlete competing in his fourth Paralympics, will represent India in the

F51 category discus throw. The 39-year-old Asian Para Games medalist is the oldest member of the contingent. On the other end of the spectrum, the youngest athlete is 17-year-old archer Sheetal Devi, who shoots with her legs instead of her hands due to a medical condition that has afflicted her since birth. She recently made headlines by winning gold medals in individual compound and mixed team events in archery at the 2023 Asian Para Games. Meanwhile, 100 Sports Management Private Limited has been awarded the exclusive broadcasting and digital media right for Paris Paralympics in India, according to a release.

Premier League will have different look when season starts Friday

AP ■ LONDON

The Premier League rarely stands still. For the 2024-25 season starting on Friday, there are five newly hired managers, around \$1.6 billion worth of new players (and counting), new offside technology, updated financial regulations and a tweaked match schedule. COACHING CHANGES: A quarter of the coaches will be taking charge of a Premier League game for the first time, with Liverpool (Arne Slot), Chelsea (Enzo Maresca) and Brighton (Fabian Hurler) all having new managers and both Southampton (Russell Martin) and Ipswich (Kieran McKenna) gaining promotion with managers owning no top-flight experience. Throw in Julien Lopetegui being the new guy at West Ham after 4 1/2 years of David Moyes at the helm and Steve Cooper replacing Maresca at Leicester, and the dugouts will look different this season. Most of the intrigue, however, will focus on Slot and what style he implements at Liverpool after the team's nearly nine years with the popular Jurgen Klopp. Rock n' roll

could turn into more control, with Slot preferring more of a possession game. SLOWER MARKET: The Premier League's 20 clubs have spent as much on new players in this transfer window as those in Spain, Italy and Germany combined, according to transfermarkt.Com. So why does it feel such a slow summer of trading? Maybe because there have been no blockbuster deals, with the most expensive being striker Dominic Solanke moving to Tottenham from Bournemouth for 65 million pounds (\$83 million). However, lots of deals for between \$30-70 million quickly add up - and there are still three weeks left in the window, during which Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal and Chelsea are expected to weigh in. City (Savinho) and Arsenal (Riccardo Calafiori) have only made one new signing so far and Liverpool hasn't made any. Come the end of transfer deadline day on Aug. 30, don't be surprised if Premier League clubs have spent way more than \$2 billion - even if most are balancing the books with sales because of the league's sterner financial rules.



SEMI-AUTOMATED OFFSIDES: Expect offside decisions to be reached much quicker in the Premier League this season. The competition is introducing semi-automated offside technology for the first time, with the new system set to be launched during the first half of the season. Multiple cameras will track player movements and record data points on parts of the body that are relevant for an offside decision. Data is processed with artificial intelligence to create a 3D offside line that is alerted to the team of VAR officials. It is expected to take an average of around 30 seconds off the length of time it currently takes VAR officials to come to a decision manually. Semi-automated offside technology were used at the 2022 World Cup and at the recent European Championship. SPENDING RULES: Last season in the Premier League was notable for some clubs, like Everton and Nottingham Forest, receiving points deductions for breaking the competition's profitability and sustainability regulations, which are now being more strictly applied. This coming season is the final year of those regulations, with two new

forms of spending caps being trialed ahead of their introduction from the 2025-26 season. Teams in England's top division will trial a "Squad Cost Rules" system, which will limit spending on players to 85% of a club's soccer revenue and net profit or loss on player sales. A second system called "Top to Bottom Anchoring" limits - or anchors - spending to a multiple of the lowest combined prize money and cash from TV rights forecast to be earned by a team. The league said the systems aimed to "improve and preserve clubs' financial sustainability and the competitive balance of the Premier League" as well as "promote aspiration of clubs. NO WINTER BREAK: The Premier League is renowned for being a relentless slog - even more so this season. There's no winter break for clubs this time, with the season starting later, to give players more time to recover from international tournaments this summer, and therefore being squeezed. Last year, for example, five games were held each weekend over a two-week period, giving teams at least one weekend off over January.

'IT WAS A CHALLENGE TO DUB FOR AN APE IN TELUGU'



Voice artist R Shankar, who has been on the path of lending his voice to some great projects, irrespective of the languages, speaks to *The Pioneer* about his journey, lending his voice to Big B and the challenge of lending his voice in the *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*

TEJAL SINHA

What started off as an inclination back in his childhood, today R. Shankar has been a dubbing and voice artist for over 13 years now. Having his voice over multiple languages, he has recently lent his voice to the box-office hit *Deadpool and Wolverine*. Not just this, he has also been the voice of the Proximus character in the *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*.

"I began dubbing as a voice artist in 2010," shares the artist, who had also lent his voice to Sylvester Stallone in *Samaritan*, John Cena in *Ricky Stanicky*, as well as Jackpot and Dave Bautista in *My Spy*. "I began working as the voice behind the supporting characters and now here I am doing lead characters. I have lent my voice to around 750 to 800 movies in all languages."

Over the years, he has found his inspiration in Sai Kumar, Ravishankar, Shrinvas Murthy and Hyderabad's legend, RCM Raju. However, Big B's voice, he says, has been a benchmark that has inspired him a lot.

After finding his inspiration in the voice of Big B, he did get the opportunity to even be his voice in films like *Ganapath* and *Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy*. What an honour!

As we went ahead in this chat, he recalls, "It was a nice experience working in *Deadpool and Wolverine* because this was a big opportunity for me. The dubbing director, had supported me a lot. Voicing has been one of the most important aspects of every movie. Every movie has voice tests; collecting voice samples and pick the ones that better suit the character." However, he shares that dubbing for Hollywood movies is a bit challenging because they are

very conscious. "We cannot afford to leave out the beauty of the character. We cannot leave out what the expressions of the characters should be. As a voice artist, our main focus needs to always be on connecting with regional audiences."

Having also lent his voice to Prabhas-starrer *Salaar* and Yash-starrer *KGF* and sharing his feelings on the films' success from his point of view, he shares, "It's pleasing. However, if a film is going to do well or not, as a voice artist, we have to do our work. If, commercially, the film is doing well, then what else can we ask for? Our hard work is recognised by other people; they'll get to know about you and also know about how we can work on any of the projects, not confined to a particular genre."

Speaking of his most challenging project, beyond a doubt, it was the *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*. Voicing the Proximus character, he says, "I really enjoyed it. Working on different projects, brings a whole new learning experience. This project was certainly different from the previous ones because it was the first time that I was dubbing for an ape. The film is made of motions that capture a kind of technology. With this project, I was really surprised because they came up with detailed expressions. We had to coordinate and be very careful because every minute the expressions were being changed."

As we head towards the end of the chat, with great enthusiasm, Shankar gushes, "The job of a voice artist is in itself a tough job, because it is not your behaviour or expressions. We need to dub according to the dubbing director, take inputs and deliver things accordingly. Now, I am glad that the voice artists have also been getting their due credit."

KRITI SCOOPS OUT OVER HER IDEAL LIFE PARTNER

Kriti Sanon has been making waves this year with standout performances in *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya* and *Crew* recently. As she enjoys the success of these films, she's also gearing up for her next project, *Do Patti*, where she stars alongside Kajol. In a recent interview, Sanon shared her thoughts on what she seeks in a life partner.

Sanon expressed a desire for a partner who brings positivity and motivation into her life. She explained, "You want people who contribute positively to your life. They should inspire and support you, especially during tough times. A partner should be there for you through both joyful and challenging moments, making achievements feel meaningful when shared."

The actress also touched on the loneliness often felt in the Bollywood industry, noting, "Loneliness in this field can be profound. You frequently form close bonds on set, but they are temporary. Moving from one project to another, everything feels fleeting. Therefore, having stable constants in your personal life is essential."

Recently, Sanon celebrated her birthday in Greece with her sister Nupur Sanon and her rumoured boyfriend Kabir Bahia made an appearance in the social media posts from the celebration. Despite the public interest, Sanon has chosen to keep details about her relationship status private.



Is Malavika Mohanan set to portray goddess in *Thangalaan*?

The trailer for *Thangalaan* has recently been unveiled, generating considerable buzz with its stunning visuals and unique portrayals. Among the notable cast members are Chiyaan Vikram and Malavika Mohanan, who both appear in striking new roles. While Vikram's character is prominently featured, Malavika's role is more enigmatic, with her being briefly introduced as Aarathi. The trailer's brief but impactful glimpses of Malavika Mohanan have sparked widespread speculation about her character. Although details are scarce, many believe she may be playing the role of a goddess. Her significant mention by other characters and the grandeur associated with her appearance suggest a pivotal role in the narrative.

An industry insider has hinted, "Malavika Mohanan, as Aarathi, is expected to portray a goddess in *Thangalaan*. Her role is designed to add substantial depth to the film's storyline and audiences can look forward to experiencing intriguing character nuances." While the specifics of her role remain under wraps, it is clear that Malavika Mohanan's character will be a crucial and compelling element of *Thangalaan*. Fans eagerly await to discover whether she will indeed embody a goddess in this highly anticipated film.



Kamal's *ThugLife* hits new milestone with train set shoot

The highly anticipated film *ThugLife*, starring the iconic Kamal Haasan, has recently taken a thrilling turn as the team shifts focus to a dynamic train set for pivotal scenes. Filming is currently underway on these meticulously crafted sets, with the climax and crucial flashback sequences being captured over the past five days. The train set, designed to reflect various time periods, adds a distinctive atmosphere to the film's narrative, enhancing the dramatic impact of these pivotal scenes. This segment of the shoot is crucial as it underscores the film's high-stakes drama and emotional

depth. Directed by Mani Ratnam, *ThugLife* promises to be a gripping saga, with Kamal Haasan portraying a complex character embroiled in thrilling and intense situations. The choice of a train set for these important scenes adds a layer of authenticity and excitement, complementing the film's intricate storyline. Fans eagerly await further updates on the project, which is expected to showcase Haasan's unparalleled acting prowess and innovative storytelling. The film's production team is working diligently to ensure that *ThugLife* meets the high expectations of audiences and critics alike.

PrimeShow Films to release *Double ISMART* in TG

Following their blockbuster hit with *ISmart Shankar*, Ustaad Ram Pothineni and the dynamic director Puri Jagannadh are poised to make an even bigger splash with their highly anticipated sequel, *Double ISMART*. The film is set to hit theatres on August 15. In a significant development, PrimeShow Films has secured the theatrical rights for *Double ISMART* in the Nizam area. The distribution house, known for its lucrative deals in other regions, will oversee the release in this crucial market.

Double ISMART has generated substantial buzz with its engaging songs, teaser, and trailer. The film promises to blend mass appeal with action, romance, and poignant emotional moments. Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt joins the cast in a prominent role as the Big Bull, while Kavya Thapar stars as Ram's love interest. Produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur under the Puri Connects banner, the film features a chart-topping score by Mani Sharma, adding to the excitement surrounding its release.



Janhvi celebrates Sridevi's birthday by visiting Tirupati with boyfriend

Actress Janhvi Kapoor, known for her spiritual connection with the Tirupati Balaji temple, made a heartfelt pilgrimage to the shrine on her late mother Sridevi's 61st birth anniversary. Accompanied by her boyfriend, Shikhar Pahariya, Janhvi's visit was captured in a video that quickly went viral on social media.

On Tuesday, Janhvi honoured her mother with a touching Instagram post. She shared a series of photos, including an image of the temple, a childhood picture with Sridevi, and a snapshot of herself in a saree worn for the Tirupati visit. Alongside the images, she wrote, "Happy birthday Mumma. I love you (sic)." In the video from the temple, Janhvi, dressed in a yellow saree with a green blouse and traditional jewelry, was seen seeking blessings with Shikhar, who wore a traditional South Indian dhoti and shawl.



KAVIN, NAYANTHARA FILM'S FIRST SINGLE ALL READY

The highly anticipated film starring Kavin and Nayanthara, is generating a lot of buzz. The latest update is that the first single from the film is ready. The song, crafted into a lively and peppy melody, promises to be a highlight of the film's soundtrack.

The track, which features a popular sweet name as its title, has been penned by the talented Vishnu Edavan. Known for his work on the songs for *LEO* and *Devara*, Edavan brings his expertise to this new project, ensuring that the song is both catchy and memorable. The music for the film is composed by Jen Martin, who has been working on creating an engaging and energetic score to complement the vibrant mood of the single. The collaboration between Edavan and Martin aims to deliver a track that will resonate with audiences and enhance the film's appeal.

Vishnu Edavan, who is also directing the film, is making his mark not only behind the camera but also through his musical contributions. The song's upbeat nature and Edavan's lyrical touch are set to make it a popular addition to the film's soundtrack.



DEVARA 'AYUDHA PUJA' SHOOTING WRAPS UP

The production of the highly anticipated film *Devara* has reached a significant milestone with the completion of its Ayudha Puja shooting on Tuesday.

The wrap-up of this crucial segment signals exciting developments ahead for the movie's release. *Devara: Part 1* is described as "an epic action saga" set in picturesque coastal landscapes. The film showcases exhilarating, emotionally intense events across a historical timeline. It centers on a titular protagonist who rises as a hero for the oppressed and a formidable force against wrongdoers.

Directed and written by Koratala Siva and produced by Sudhakar Mikkilineni and Nandamuri Kalyana Ram, the film unfolds against the stunning backdrop of coastal lands. Featuring Jr. NTR and Janhvi Kapoor in the lead roles, it also boasts a robust supporting cast, including Saif Ali Khan, Prakash Raj, Meka Srikanth, Chaitra Roy, Murli Sharma and more.