















## FIRST COLUMN

### SURVIVING THE TECH-DRIVEN ERA

Amid rapid technological obsolescence, the need for reinvention has never been more critical



RAVI VALLURI

It would be worthwhile to examine how organisations are structured and articulated. In the long haul organisations blessed with individuals willing to experiment, innovate and embrace technology will be the ones that survive. At the pace that technology with its variants is fashioning itself, numerous applications unravelling virtually by the minute, and the level of obsolescence and attrition of equipment is becoming extraordinarily high. In such a scenario, humans and organisations will be subsumed by various products and their variants. The human mind can no longer remain in the typewriter mode. The garden of Organisational Theory and Behaviour is dotted with eminent scholars. Three pioneers, Adam Smith, Charles Babbage and Robert Owen provided the ballast and the basic groundwork.

Adam Smith advanced the argument that countries and organisations would profit by adopting the tenets of division of labour, what is now termed as specialisation. Charles Babbage in his seminal work postulated: Through the division of labour, the time required for learning a job or skill gets drastically reduced. Right at the stage of infancy wastage of material gets minimised and diminishes. The mind is propelled to take up serious tasks upon attaining superior skills. Way back in 1789, Robert Owen at 18 went on to acquire a factory. He was a utopian, way ahead of his times. In 1825, he promulgated regulated working hours, child labour laws, public education and business involvement in various community projects – a precursor to CSR.



In today's wired world, individuals work from their dwellings. Places with the latest technology and gizmos at their disposal. Over the last decade, the entire paradigm of organisational behaviour has metamorphosed. Technology stares at organisations with peering eyes, the complexity and dynamics of structures having undergone a complete metamorphosis. Let us look at the Indian Railways. There was a time when the operating and manufacturing departments held sway in the decision-making process. Today, it is the technical departments that are the game changers. The concept of fixed work hours is history.

The workforce must be alert 24x7. Thus, employees need to brush up on their skill sets to brace for the challenges of the virtual world. Let us examine the model of direct teaching through online classes – one-on-one, between the teacher and the tutee. The very paradigm may affect teaching techniques in schools and universities. Similarly, qualified doctors instruct their colleagues through Skype or other means during complex surgeries. In such a scenario, scores of organisational structures, government or those in the private sector must adapt radically in order to survive.

The workforce must continuously upgrade their skill set or face extinction. Perhaps emotions of warmth may be lost in the maze of technological evolution. The philosophy of an organisation, its goals and objectives and the behavioural pattern between the structure and the workforce have been stranded in a traffic jam of the kind one encounters in major cities of India like Gurugram. Stephen Hawking has in a rather depressing prognosis, predicted that life would be extinct on this planet on four grounds – nukes, global warming, man-made viruses or robots. Thus, the human mind should re-invent itself and current organisational behaviour and theories or prepare a blueprint to discover a sister planet to inhabit. Aeons ago, Aristotle wrote, "We are what we repeatedly do." This paradigm will have to change for organisations to survive.

*(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)*

# South Korea faces its gravest political crisis



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Yoon's actions threaten the democratic foundations painstakingly built over decades, echoing a legacy of authoritarianism that South Korea has fought to overcome



President Yoon Suk-yeol has plunged South Korea into a political crisis that risks echoing the darkest chapters of the nation's history. As his administration teeters on the edge of a dramatic shift, Yoon has turned to martial law, invoking emergency powers in a desperate gambit to silence political opposition and maintain control.

The implications of his actions are profound, not just for his presidency, but for South Korea's ongoing struggle with its totalitarian past, its relationship with foreign powers, and its own identity as a modern democracy. South Koreans fought so hard to build a democratic system. Under South Korea's Constitution, the president has the authority to declare martial law in the face of military threats or a national emergency. However, the reasons Yoon provided for his declaration—opposition-driven impeachment efforts, budgetary clashes, and an increasingly fractured political spectrum—hardly constitute a national crisis of the magnitude that would justify such a drastic measure.

The events surrounding Yoon's attempt to invoke emergency powers are not isolated; they represent the continuation of a deeply ingrained political pattern, where martial law is not only a tool of governance but a reminder of a nation's struggle between democracy and repression.

The debate surrounding Yoon's leadership has drawn comparisons to previous impeachments in South Korea, particularly those of Roh Moo-hyun and Park Geun-hye. Roh, in 2004, faced impeachment over election law violations, though the Constitutional Court reinstated him. Less than a decade later, Park was ousted through impeachment over a corruption scandal.

Yoon, while not yet facing the same fate, is set to have his impeachment voted on today following his controversial declaration of martial law, which lasted only six hours and was rejected by lawmakers



THE IMPLICATIONS OF HIS ACTIONS ARE PROFOUND, NOT JUST FOR HIS PRESIDENCY, BUT FOR SOUTH KOREA'S ONGOING STRUGGLE WITH ITS TOTALITARIAN PAST, ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH FOREIGN POWERS, AND ITS OWN IDENTITY AS A MODERN DEMOCRACY

ers and the public. Whether or not he survives, South Korea remains trapped in a cycle of political crises, where democratic ideals clash with despotic impulses, reflecting a historical legacy that has shaped the nation for over a century.

To understand the scope of South Korea's political turmoil, one must look at the country's history with martial law—a tool that has long been used by political elites to stifle dissent and assert control.

South Korea's 20th century is defined by foreign intervention, division, and military rule. Following Japan's brutal annexation of Korea in 1910, martial law became a key instrument of colonial repression, aimed at quelling any resistance to Japanese imperial rule. The atrocities of this period, from forced labour to the sexual enslavement of women, left deep scars on the Korean psyche.

It was a time when the very concept of Korean autonomy seemed impossible, as external powers sought to mould the country to fit their interests. The end of Japanese rule in 1945, after World War II, did not herald peace for the Korean Peninsula. Instead, Korea was divided into two zones of occupation: the Soviet-controlled North and the American-controlled South.

The subsequent Korean War (1950-1953) left the country in ruins, its political and social fabric torn apart by the conflict. In the aftermath, South Korea was deeply reliant on American military protection, a dependency that would come to define the country's geopolitical position during the Cold War. But South Korea's reliance on foreign power

came at a cost. The U.S., though a key ally, often dictated the direction of South Korean politics, using its military presence to enforce stability while limiting the country's true political autonomy. By 1953, when the armistice was signed, the U.S. had established a major military presence in South Korea, which would grow over the coming decades.

This military dominance, coupled with South Korea's internal political instability, created fertile ground for martial law to flourish as a means of maintaining control. One of the most infamous instances of martial law came in 1961 when General Park Chung-hee seized power in a military coup. Park's regime, which lasted for over a decade, was characterised by authoritarian rule, but also rapid industrialisation, transforming South Korea into one of Asia's economic powerhouses.

His government used martial law to suppress political opposition and silence dissent, paving the way for further military interventions in South Korea's political life.

Even after Park's assassination in 1979, his successors continued to rely on dictatorial measures to control the populace, with the 1980 Gwangju Uprising standing as a stark reminder of the brutality of military rule. It was only after the uprisings of 1987, following widespread protests, that South Korea began its transition to a more democratic system—though martial law remained an ever-present force in the background, a reminder of the fragility of its democratic institutions.

The current political crisis, however, is not just about Yoon's leadership or the fractured state of

South Korea's political structure. It is also a reflection of the country's broader struggle with its geopolitical position. As the U.S. continues to view South Korea as a critical ally in its efforts to counter China's rise, the country's internal divisions risk undermining its role as a stable partner in the region. The growing U.S. military presence over the decades, with South Korea becoming home to the largest U.S. military base in a foreign country—Camp Humphreys—has been a key feature of this relationship. The presence of 28,500 U.S. troops, the THAAD missile defence system, and the constant military drills aimed at countering the threat from North Korea and China, have turned South Korea into a crucial outpost for American interests in East Asia.

In this context, the political instability surrounding President Yoon and his administration is more than just an internal affair—it is a matter of global significance. The U.S. cannot afford to let South Korea's internal divisions spiral out of control, especially as tensions with North Korea and China continue to escalate. If South Korea cannot reconcile its internal political fractures, it risks becoming an unreliable ally in the eyes of its most important partner. This would have significant consequences, not just for South Korea, but for the broader geopolitical ramifications of NATO's eastward expansion and the "Pivot to Asia" strategy coined by former President Barack Obama, which continues to haunt Asian countries.

*(The writer is a journalist and author. Views expressed are personal)*

# Hybrid model secures ICC Champions Trophy hosting rights

## Pakistan's government approves a hybrid hosting model proposed by India, ensuring its role in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025

A pragmatic and groundbreaking decision has emerged from Pakistan's government corridors, approving its cricket board's acceptance of India's proposed hybrid model for hosting ICC events. This strategic approach, which includes matches at neutral venues such as the UAE, is a lifeline for Pakistan cricket. It ensures the preservation of Pakistan's hosting rights for the prestigious ICC Champions Trophy, scheduled from February 19 to March 9, 2025. Ultimately, cricket itself emerges as the ultimate winner. Millions of cricket enthusiasts across India and Pakistan are celebrating the International Cricket Council's (ICC) successful mediation. This reso-



K S TOMAR

lution underscores the power of sports to bridge divides. The ICC had earlier warned of revoking Pakistan's hosting rights if it rejected the hybrid model. The enduring passion of fans-united by their love for cricket-remains unfazed by territorial boundaries. Matches between India and Pakistan, steeped in rivalry and emotion, transcend sports and become spectacles of patriotism and fervour.

In a parallel development, Jay Shah has been elected as the new ICC chief, marking a pivotal moment in global cricket governance. Shah's leadership promises transformative opportunities for the ICC, leveraging his vast experience as chairman of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the world's wealthiest cricket body. His election sets the stage for significant milestones, particularly in organising high-profile tournaments like the Champions Trophy.

For the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), this decision was a calculated move to avert potential isolation. Rejecting India's terms could have deprived Pakistan of the opportunity to showcase its hosting capabilities, particu-

larly given India's security concerns. The hybrid model, which splits matches between Pakistan and the UAE, provides a balanced solution. Pakistan retains its hosting rights while addressing India's apprehensions, thus averting reputational and financial losses.

Accepting the hybrid model aligns with Pakistan's long-term vision for cricket. It ensures that Pakistan remains a credible host for international events and preserves the opportunity to solidify its reputation. Additionally, the agreement likely includes financial assurances from the ICC, compensating for any perceived compromises. Successful implementation could enhance Pakistan's image as a reliable cricketing



hub, following well-received tours by Australia and England. The hybrid model offers a win-win outcome, balancing security concerns with hosting ambitions. While India's matches will take place at neutral venues, Pakistan retains the opportunity to host other games on its soil. This arrangement allows local

fans to experience international cricket firsthand. Furthermore, the PCB's insistence on reciprocity for events in India until 2031 demonstrates strategic foresight, paving the way for equitable future agreements.

Boycotting the Champions Trophy would have been a catastrophic misstep for Pakistan. Such a decision could have alienated the PCB from the ICC and key stakeholders, given India's significant influence in global cricket. The financial and reputational damage, coupled with diminished fan morale and strained sponsor relations, would have left lasting scars. By prioritizing long-term gains, the PCB has ensured its continued relevance on the international

cricket stage. Shah aims to introduce cricket to new markets such as the USA, China, and Africa, diversifying the audience and making the game truly global. His expertise in revenue generation could lead to record-breaking media deals, benefiting smaller boards through equitable revenue sharing. By integrating advanced technologies and data-driven strategies, Shah could modernize ICC tournaments, appealing to younger audiences and enhancing the game's global appeal.

As an Indian, Shah might face allegations of favouring BCCI interests. Ensuring inclusivity and addressing member concerns will be crucial. Balancing the dominance of cricketing giants like India,

England, and Australia with the development of smaller nations will be a key test of Shah's leadership. The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 holds immense promise under Jay Shah's leadership, with the potential to set benchmarks in competitiveness, innovation, and fan engagement. Pakistan's pragmatic decision to embrace the hybrid model ensures its pivotal role in this journey, preserving its cricketing ambitions while fostering international collaboration. Together, these developments signify a new era for the sport, uniting fans and nations under the banner of cricket.

*(Writer is strategic affairs columnist and senior political analyst; views are personal)*





## 'HYD IS MY PLACE OF BIRTH, ROMANTICALLY CHAINED TO MY HEART'

**SHRIRAM ALLURI |**



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Shriram Alluri is not just an indie rock musician and songwriter; he's a force redefining cross-cultural music. Hailing from Hyderabad, his journey is proof of the universality of music. Growing up immersed in India's classical melodies, Bollywood hits and Tollywood tunes, his first encounter with rock music as a teenager ignited his creative spark. Picking up a guitar set him on a path that led to recording his debut album, *Man of Truth*, at Brighton Electric Studios in 2015.

With *Evani Kosam*, a Telugu-language single produced by Grammy-winner Tommaso Colliva, he seamlessly blended Western rock with his roots. This groundbreaking track marked a turning point, allowing him to share a piece of his heritage with global audiences. Well, after spending over a decade in the UK, Finland and various parts of India, his return to Hyderabad has been a tale of nostalgia, discovery and reckoning with change. "Hyderabad has been treating me with tough love. I was born here, went away for a while, and returned a couple of years ago. It seems the city

hasn't taken kindly to my hiatus. I'm still trying to get my claws into its ground." The return, while emotionally grounding, came with its own set of apprehensions. "I needed to be home. Being part of the global indie music space had tested my limits, and I felt like I was floating in space along with my high-flying dreams. Coming back gave me firmer soil to stand on. But some of my apprehensions have proven to be right. The city isn't as accommodating to my profession as I'd hoped." For him, Hyderabad is both familiar and foreign. Having lived in the city from the time of his birth until 10th standard, "Returning feels like being both at home and a stranger in the city all at once. The Hyderabad of my childhood was vastly different. It's all built up now, but there's nowhere to go. What hasn't changed, though, is the essence of home—family and food. The food here, whether home-cooked or from the city's eateries, is a unique blend of cultures and cuisines. But it's a gut health hazard," he adds with a laugh. Among his fondest memories is a late-night escapade that speaks volumes about his family's love and the city's vibrant culinary culture. "When I was nine, I woke my parents up at 10:30

pm, demanding chicken. They were flummoxed but indulged me, taking me to the country club for a late-night feast. It's a memory I cherish deeply," he recalls. Professionally, Hyderabad poses significant challenges for an independent musician like him. "The city isn't built for my profession. There aren't enough live venues for indie music. It's up to the artists here to create that scene. However, the obstacles haven't deterred me. I pursue my work, keeping in mind the Buddhist saying, 'One isn't entitled to the fruits of one's labour.' The struggle fuels my art," he says. He also feels the city could do more to foster intellectual and creative exchange. "I dislike the lack of stimulating conversations and the exchange of ideas between independent minds. Maybe I need to explore more spaces in the city to find those connections," he reflects. Despite the challenges, his bond with Hyderabad remains unshaken. "It's my land of birth, romantically chained to my heart," he says. "But my mind seeks beyond its defining and confining shores." For him, Hyderabad is both an anchor and a launchpad, a city that grounds him while pushing him to dream beyond its limits.

With a voice that weaves together the threads of East and West, Shriram Alluri is redefining the sound of indie rock. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, the Hyderabad-born musician opens up about his journey, his inspirations, and the city that shaped him

**HYDERABOND**

## Shahana Goswami on 'Beyond takes, discovering deeper truths' in *Despatch*

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In a world where drama often takes center stage, Shahana Goswami's understated yet powerful performances have become a beacon of nuanced storytelling. With a career spanning over a decade, Goswami has solidified her position as one of India's most versatile and sought-after actresses. From her breakout role in Naseruddin Shah's critically acclaimed *Firaq* to her captivating performances in *Rock On!!* and *Viceroy's House*, Goswami has consistently proven her ability to bring complexity and depth to her characters. With her latest role in Kanu Behl's *Despatch*, she once again showcases her remarkable range and talent, delivering a nuanced and emotionally charged performance that leaves a lasting impact.

In a gripping series like *Despatch*, she delivers a nuanced performance, navigating the intricate web of relationships and moral dilemmas. We had the opportunity to sit down with her and discuss her approach to her role.

When asked about her character's role within the layered narrative of *Despatch*, *The Honeymoon Travels Ltd* fame shared, "To start with, Shweta's character, though she is a journalist, she's a financial journalist, and it's never really explored in the film because you see her only with respect to being Joy's wife. So the dynamic that you see between them is purely a husband-wife relationship, and the journalistic aspect is never, it never plays out between them. There was nothing specific in terms of the layering of the realities of the journalistic world that came into play. It was more the layering of the emotional realities of that."

According to Shahana, the portrayal of women in male-dominated industries like journalism is often secondary or unexplored. However, she believes that *Despatch* offers a refreshing take on this trope. "I think it's best to watch the series and form your own opinion. But I can say that *Despatch* features several strong female characters, and the storytelling does a great job of explaining what makes someone brave and the power that can be hidden behind someone who's perceived as brave," the *Rock On* fame shared.

She credits her nuanced performance to the direction of Kanu Behl. Known for his exacting and meticulous approach, Behl's process can be demanding, but Goswami found it to be a collaborative and rewarding experience.

"Kanu is definitely somebody who is exacting, but the beauty with him is that his exacting is not with him knowing what he wants," the *Firaq* star explained. "It's to discover, and he wants to discover it with you. So, the great thing is that his desire is only to keep dri-

**In an intimate conversation with *The Pioneer*, the versatile and accomplished actress Shahana Goswami pulls back the curtain on her creative process, sharing insightful reflections on her latest role in Kanu Behl's gripping series *Despatch***



ving till the point that we find something new, till we find something unexpected, till we discover a chance upon a reality that may not come obviously to you, but in that moment, playing it out again and again, you end up exploring or coming across or stumbling upon a different reality or different way of expressing and reacting and responding."

When asked about how *Despatch* challenged or expanded her creative boundaries, Goswami credited director Kanu Behl's method of working. "It's to do with Kanu's method of working and how he works," she explained. "Starting from the workshop process, we really went down to the bare bones of the character, the histories, the shared histories... it was a really very, very interesting process."


However, when asked about her character's relationship with the themes of power and truth within the media world, the *Ra.One* star noted that this aspect of the series did not apply to her character. The dynamics between their characters is emotionally and psychologically complex and she shared her insights on what makes this relationship so compelling.

She noted that this dynamic was carefully crafted through extensive discussions and workshops with her co-star Manoj Bajpayee and director Kanu Behl. "We would keep finding the right kind of choreography through those emotions and things while doing the scenes," she said.

When asked about her character's role in reflecting the moral decay of the central protagonist, the *Break Ke Baad* fame clarified that her character's dynamic with the protagonist doesn't necessarily serve as a mirror to his moral decay. "I don't think that there is any specific moral decay that this dynamic shows in his character, except for just a failed marriage and a possible aspect of philandering," she explained. "But that's never really expressed to be the case. He's already kind of separated from his wife... so him having a relationship with somebody else is possibly something that happened after the separation."

Despite having limited screen time in *Despatch*, her performance leaves a lasting impact on the audience. When asked about her approach to ensuring her character's impact, she humbly attributed it to her enjoyment of the process. "I didn't do anything to make sure. I only played the part and enjoyed playing the part, and I liked the character, the draft, and the journey, and the process."

Goswami also appreciated the opportunity to do multiple takes with a specific focus on discovering deeper truths. "It's not just doing take after take for the sake of it, but with very specific motivations towards going deeper, finding more truth," she said. "Allowing yourself to fatigue to a point where you then discover something new... it felt very natural and very safe."



## Navigating the fascinating world of Clinical Psychology

As mental health issues increase dramatically along with awareness is also increasing, the demand for mental health professionals, including clinical psychology, also increases, but there is a huge shortage of Clinical Psychologists in India, so those who are studying Psychology or plan to make a career in psychology; a right time to choose psychology for their future. Psychology not only helps aspirant to make their careers but also allows them to help others deal with their problem.

Major depressive disorder and anxiety disorders, along with substance use disorder or personality disorders, constitute the major burden. One in seven Indians is suffering from mental illness, while about 7.3% of the teenagers falling under the age group of 13-17 are facing emotional and behavioural issues in a fast-paced society. More than 1.64 Lakh people died by suicide in 2021 according to NCRB and drastically suicides is one of the significant causes of death among the working aged group of 15-29 years. However, the ideas people have about mental health are still not positive and people delay or avoid getting the help they need. People with mental health issues remain untreated due to a lack of mental health professionals and their scarcity of mental health care services.

Clinical Psychology played an important role in treating Mental Illness for many centuries, but a formal journey of Clinical psychology began in the late nineteenth century when psychological science became very prominent in treating mental health issues systematically and formally.

Clinical psychology is very broad, so some schools of thought provide quite different views or approaches to practice. Psychodynamic approach, which employs ideas proposed by Sigmund Freud; the first fundamental tenet is held that the unconscious mind or past experiences more specifically experiences in childhood dictate behaviour and mental illnesses. The behaviourist approach of learning can be traced from Ivan Pavlov and John B. Watson as well as BF Skinner.

It concerns the elimination of unwanted behaviors by using behaviour change systems, which many disorders, including phobia, anxiety disorders, and addiction, require.

The cognitive approach emphasizes how thinking determines people's feelings and actions developed by Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis. Cognitive therapy seeks to modify negative and distorted cognition by changing how a person interprets a situation or thought. When linked with the behavioural approach in CBT, it forms a robust, evidence-based model that focuses on cognition and behaviour to deal with mental issues.

Humanistic approach focuses on free will and individual potential and their relationship to the environment. The social approach relates mental health issues to social events, while the biological approach tries to understand behaviour and illnesses based on biological things like genes, brain or hormones.

Many therapists are interested in integrative models, where therapy is based on various theories to meet the client's requirements. When therapists use CBT to treat disorders, they are using a combination of Behavioural and Cognitive perspectives.

Altogether, all these methods describe the variety and prospect of clinical psychology, which provides a set of methods fitting the versatile and complex nature of mental health problems. By creating valuable theoretical and practical knowledge, clinical psychologists deliver efficient individual treatment to enhance clients' health.

**Ways of becoming a Clinical Psychologist in India**

To be a Clinical Psychologist, after class XII, a person has to study for 7 years: 3 years graduation + 2 years master's and then 2 years M.Phil in Clinical Psychology. According to the new regulation, it is now 6 years. As per the new National Education Policy 2020, the Rehabilitation Council of India has set up new courses for highly intensive training.

*(The author, Dr. Arvind Otta, is a Senior Psychologist & Mental Health Activist.)*



Mythus Brewpub and Kitchen has been launched in the heart of Gandipet. Taking up the culinary and drink game up a notch, the launch party was host to the top socialites and influencers in the city of Hyderabad, with a vibe never-seen-before. The night encompassed a classy soiree where the guests enjoyed an open air vibe upon one of the biggest rooftop bars in the city.



**PARTY**

**SIP, SAVOUR AND CELEBRATE**

Get ready to shake up your palate, foodies! Toast & Tonic, your favourite urban dining gem, is turning up the flavour dial with an all-new menu that's as vibrant as its patrons and as bold as its cocktails. This is not your average menu update; this is a gastronomic symphony that's funky, fresh and full of unexpected twists! Mark your calendars! Whether you're looking for a business lunch, a night out with friends, or just to say "cheers" to good times, the revamped menu is your new excuse to indulge. It has always been the go-to spot for those who crave innovation on their plates and in their glasses. Now, with the launch of their creatively reimagined menu, they're setting out to prove that dining can be as playful as it is delicious.

**HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:**

**Bold flavours meet global inspirations:** From the crisp Himachal apples that add a tangy twist to the Caramelised apple and beetroot salad to the creamy locally made burrata cheese that stars in the Burrata 2.0, every dish celebrates the unique flavours of the region. Banel cheese puffs, Naga chilli sauce and jowar salad are just a few examples of the carefully selected ingredients that add depth and authenticity to the menu. Whether you're savouring the Wild Mushroom Soup, indulging in the Lamb Mushroom Curry, or treating yourself to the Kunafa Cheesecake, every dish is thoughtfully created.

**For sweet tooth:** To round off the dining experience, our artisanal gelato selection showcases the same dedication to local flavors and quality ingredients. Handcrafted in-house, try our unique range of gelatos such as Pistachio, sourced from Kerala's finest farms, or the Cereal Milk gelato, that offers a playful twist on childhood nostalgia, while the Dark Chocolate Sorbet and Passion Fruit Sorbet provide rich and refreshing contrasts. Every element of the menu, from the carefully curated dishes to the artisanal gelatos, pays tribute to the vibrant Indian flavors and ingredients, blended seamlessly with international flair to create a truly distinctive dining experience that is both globally inspired and locally rooted.

**Vegetarian delights that steal show:** Veggie lovers, rejoice! No longer are you relegated to mere side salads. It is bringing you dishes like crispy Brussels sprouts with a creamy garlic yogurt and pomegranate molasses, which will definitely leave you wanting more. There are also a lot of other fun, thoughtfully created vegetarian dishes as well.

**Beverages worth toast (or two!):** It wouldn't be as it's without a refresh of the bar menu. The in-house mixologists have pulled out all the stops with quirky new concoctions like the Popcorn Caramel that is made with gin, homemade popcorn, caramel shrub, tonic water and served with star anise ice. Sip on the Purple Patch that blends gin, kokum & gooseberry shrub served with rose petal ice. So, take a seat, loosen that belt and dive fork-first into a menu that'll have you coming back for more. Come indulge, we're saving a seat just for you.



The second season of GradRight's ShiftED 2024 event brought together about 4,000 study abroad aspirants, featuring partnerships with leading US and UK universities and financial institutions to build trust and transparency in global higher education.



Hyderabad hosts India International Travel Mart 2024, bringing together key stakeholders from across the travel and tourism industry to showcase innovations and promote connections at HITEX Exhibition Centre.



Actresses Indraja and Raashi launch the poster for 'Mrs Queen of Telangana,' a beauty pageant aimed at empowering women, set to hold its grand finale on December 28.



Actor Vishwak Sen, along with Minister Sridhar Babu, MLA Veerlapally Shankar and producer Bandla Ganesh, launched the logo of Dairy Trends at the product launch event, held at Marie Gold Hotel in Ameerpet.



The renowned Hyderabad food chain Paradise unveils its much-awaited 'Royal Festival - Secrets from the Kitchen of Paradise', endorsed by popular Tollywood actor Sundeep Kishan. The Royal Festival intends to bring back the lost flavours of India especially with enchanting aromas and enriching taste using the traditional high-quality spices and recipes right out of Kitchen of Paradise. Royal Festival is live across all Paradise outlets, dine in, take away and delivery including their newly launched

**FUN**

**ARCHIE**



**CALVIN AND HOBBS**



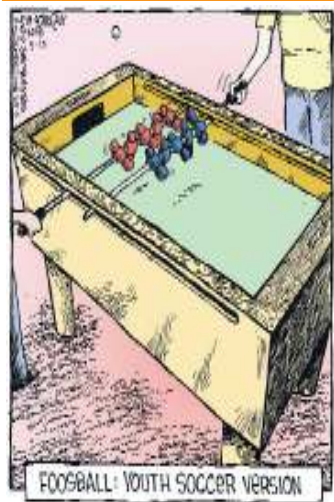
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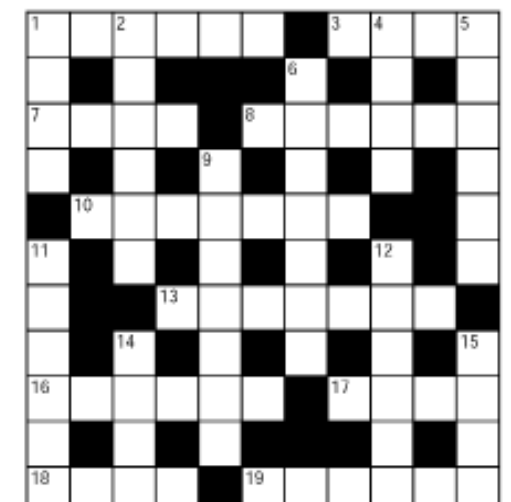
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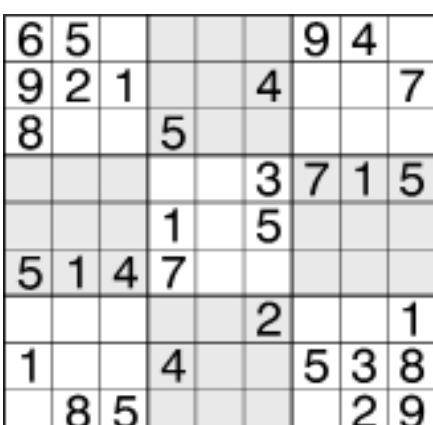
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**SUDOKU**



**Yesterday's solution**  
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7 9 1 4 8 5 3 6 2  
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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 precious metal
- 3 A game played with clubs
- 7 A holder for picked flowers
- 8 Just about
- 10 Where Danes live
- 13 Took no notice of
- 16 A season
- 17 Young woman
- 18 Make music with the voice
- 19 Wanting food

**DOWN**

- 1 Rescue
- 2 Use your ears
- 4 Yours and mine



**GINGER MEGGS**



# PUSHPA 2: THE RULE MIRED IN CONTROVERSIES

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Allu Arjun and director Sukumar's much-anticipated film, *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, released on Thursday. With inflated ticket prices, the makers anticipated huge box-office numbers on the first day. However, to everyone's surprise, the film found itself embroiled in controversies. Many fans criticised the high ticket prices, especially since Allu Arjun had often claimed his fans are his greatest strength. This hike led to lower audience turnout in several top centers. From the second day onward, bookings began to drop significantly in major cities, delivering an unexpected shock to the makers.

One of the major controversies is a tragic incident at Sandhya Theatre, RTC Cross Roads in Hyderabad, where a stampede occurred during a screening of the film attended by Allu Arjun and some team members. A woman lost her life and her son being hospitalised. Initially, neither Allu Arjun nor the filmmakers issued a statement regarding the incident. However, after mounting criticism, they released an official statement. Meanwhile, a case has been filed against Allu Arjun, the movie's makers and the theatre management.

The makers had planned to hold a press conference on Friday but cancelled it at the last moment without providing an explana-

WHILE THE FILM MADE RECORD COLLECTIONS IN SOME AREAS ON ITS OPENING DAY WITH HIKED TICKET PRICES, IT HAS BEEN MAKING HEADLINES MORE FOR ITS CONTROVERSIES THAN ITS SUCCESS



tion. It is speculated that they are avoiding media interactions amidst the ongoing controversies.

Another controversy arose even before the film's release when reports surfaced that music director Devi Sri Prasad was unable to deliver the background score on time. Consequently, the team brought in Sam CS, Ajaneesh and SS Thaman for the background score. Despite their contributions, only Sam CS was credited in the title cards, while Ajaneesh's name appeared in the thank-you cards. Thaman's name was omitted entirely, sparking criticism online for the lack of acknowledgment.

Additionally, certain dialogues in the film have caused a stir on social media. A specific line, reportedly aimed at industry veteran Chiranjeevi—often referred to as "Boss"—has drawn significant backlash. The dialogue, "Evadra Boss? Evadikira Boss? Aadi ki aadi kodukku, aadi tammudu ki, kooda nene Boss" ("Who is the Boss, and for whom? I am the Boss for him, his son, and his brother"), is being widely discussed and criticised for its implications.

Meanwhile, Allu Arjun's visit to Nandyal has also sparked controversy. Despite defending the visit on multiple occasions, many Mega Fans (Chiranjeevi's fanbase) have turned against him, with reports suggesting they are actively campaigning against the film. With high ticket prices, average reviews and fan backlash, the burning question is whether the film can recover and turn a profit, or if it will face losses like the first installment. Only time will reveal how audiences will respond in the coming days.

## Ram Pothineni's new film shoot begins

Ram Pothineni is gearing up for a fresh start with his upcoming film, tentatively titled *RAPO22*. Directed by P Mahesh Babu, the movie began shooting on Friday, following the release of an intriguing poster. The actor, who is coming off a string of box-office failures with *The Warrior*, *Skanda* and *Double Ismart*, appears ready to reinvent himself by exploring a new genre. Known for his action-packed roles, Ram is now venturing into something distinct and engaging.

The latest unveiled poster introduces his character, Sagar, with the tagline "Suparichithudu" (a known man), hinting at a role deeply rooted in emotion

and nostalgia. The poster's vibrant yet vintage vibe showcases Ram in a completely new avatar, creating anticipation among fans. The film stars Bhagyashree Borse as the female lead and is produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y Ravi Shankar under the Mythri Movie Makers banner. Vivek-Mervin is composing the music. With this fresh approach, *RAPO22* aims to mark an exciting new chapter in Ram Pothineni's career.



## BALAKRISHNA CLARIFIES SON'S DEBUT FILM POSTPONEMENT

Nandamuri Balakrishna's son Mokshagna's debut film, which was supposed to launch on Thursday, has been postponed. Directed by Prashanth Varma and produced by Cherukuri Sudhakar, the sudden cancellation has led to speculation, with some reports suggesting the project might be shelved. Other rumors pointed to creative differences between Prashanth Varma and Mokshagna as the cause for the delay.

Addressing these rumours late Thursday evening, Balakrishna clarified the situation. Speaking during a brand promotion event in Kakinada alongside actress Samyuktha, he revealed, "The film was supposed to start, but he (Mokshagna) is not well, so it got canceled. Everything is good for us." However, Balakrishna did not provide any details about a new launch date or the current status of the project.

While Balakrishna reassured fans, it appears that Mokshagna's debut may take more time before it officially materialises.

## Gopichand Mallineni's *Jatt* brings a mass feast

Bollywood actor Sunny Deol is teaming up for the first time with Telugu director Gopichand Mallineni for an action-packed film titled *Jatt*. Produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y Ravi Shankar, this high-budget film has already created a massive buzz with its intriguing title and first look. Adding to the excitement, the makers have now unveiled the film's teaser. Several moments in the teaser highlight Sunny Deol's commanding screen presence and intense character, including a dramatic fight sequence where he uses a massive fan as a weapon. The teaser concludes on an electrifying note, introducing Randeep Hooda as the main antagonist. As suggested by the glimpses, the fierce showdown between Sunny Deol and Randeep Hooda is set to be one of the film's major highlights. Director Gopichand Mallineni showcases his expertise in crafting a mass-appealing action entertainer, complemented by S Thaman's gripping background score. The film also features Vineet Kumar Singh, Saiyami Kher and Regena Cassandra in pivotal roles. *Jatt* is scheduled for release in April 2025.



## KEERTHY SURESH & BEAU JET OFF TO GOA

Actress Keerthy Suresh and her longtime partner, Dubai-based businessman Antony Thattil, have headed to Goa ahead of their intimate wedding scheduled for December 12. The couple, accompanied by friends, was spotted boarding a flight from Chennai, as revealed in a shared Instagram story featuring their flight tickets and the hashtag #KAwedding.

A leaked wedding invitation from Keerthy's parents, G Suresh Kumar and Menaka Suresh Kumar, confirmed the date, requesting blessings for the couple's new journey. Keerthy and Antony, who have been together for 15 years, first shared a glimpse of their relationship publicly during Diwali.

## Akhil Akkineni's next with Krithi Shetty



After the failure of *Agent*, Akhil Akkineni has not signed any new films and has remained inactive throughout 2024. He had a few days back, announced his engagement to girlfriend Zainab Ravdjee. Now on the professional front, according to sources, director Murali Kishor Abburu is set to direct Akhil in his upcoming film. Abburu previously directed *Vinaro Bhagyamu Vishnu Katha* with Kiran Abbavaram. Reports suggest that the new film will begin shooting on December 17.

The makers have roped in Krithi Shetty as the female lead for this project. Despite her successful debut in *Uppena*, Krithi has struggled to achieve consistent box-office success. Her most recent film, *ARM*, opposite Tovino Thomas, released in multiple languages but failed to perform well commercially. Paired opposite Akhil Akkineni for the first time, Krithi is reportedly looking forward to this collaboration. "Director Kishor Abburu has crafted a strong script that offers significant roles for both Akhil and Krithi," said a source.

The film will be produced by Annapurna Studios, Akhil's family production house. Fans eagerly await this pairing and the new chapter in Akhil's career.

# Australia 86-1 in reply to India's 180 at stumps on day one of pink ball Test

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Australia reached 86 for 1 in their first innings after dismissing India for 180 at the end of the opening day of the pink-ball Test here on Friday. Nathan McSweeney and Marnus Labuschagne were at the crease on 38 and 20 respectively when the stumps were drawn after 33 overs of play in Australia's first innings. The home side trail by 94 runs. Opener Usman Khawaja was the lone Australia batter out for 13 off the bowling of Jasprit Bumrah. Earlier, India were all out for 180 at dinner after playing 44.12 overs as the visitors lost four and six wickets in the first and second sessions of the day respectively after opting to bat. Nitish Reddy top-scored for India with 42 off 54 balls, while KL Rahul and Shubman



Gill contributed 37 and 31 respectively. Yashasvi Jaiswal (0), Virat Kohli (7) and captain Rohit Sharma (3) fell cheaply while Rishabh Pant and Ravichandran Ashwin contributed 21 and 22 respectively. Pacer Mitchell Starc was the wrecker-in-chief for Australia as he took six Indian wickets for 48 runs. India made three changes with captain Rohit, Gill and Ashwin returning to the playing XI after missing the first Test which India won by 295 runs. Devdutt Padikkal, Dhruv Jurel and Washington Sundar made way for them. Brief Scores: India: 180 all out in 44.1 overs (Nitish Reddy 42, KL Rahul 37, Shubman Gill 31; Mitchell Starc 6/48). Australia: 86 for 1 in 33 overs (Nathan McSweeney 38 not out, Marnus Labuschagne 20 not out; Jasprit Bumrah 1/13).



## In 200th ISL game, Kerala Blasters eye victory against Bengaluru FC

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Appearing in their 200th ISL game, Kerala Blasters will have their task cut out as they look to mark the occasion with victory against formidable hosts Bengaluru FC here on Saturday. The Blues are presently placed in the second spot in the league table, with 20 points from 10 engagements, after six victories and a couple of draws. As for the Kochi-based Tuskers, they will want to move up the table from the current 10th place, having managed 11 points. Bengaluru have secured 13 points from their first five home matches this season, and victory on Saturday would take their tally to 16 points, their best-ever after after six home games in ISL history. Bengaluru FC have never failed to score against Kerala Blasters FC in the ISL, netting 27 goals in 16 meetings. The Blues will look to leverage this record to secure another crucial win in the upcoming match. Sunil Chhetri has been a talisman in this fixture, scoring seven goals, the most by any player in this fixture. The Kerala Blasters FC have conceded in their last 11 away matches, a streak that could extend to a record-equalling 12 games with another defensive lapse. Their tally of 40 away losses is the joint-most in ISL history alongside NorthEast United FC. The team is also coming off a 0-1 loss to FC Goa, failing to

score for the first time this season. The last time they went goalless in back-to-back matches was in February-March 2023. Bengaluru FC have dominated the rivalry, with 10 wins in 16 matches, compared to Kerala Blasters FC's 4 wins and 2 draws. At home, Bengaluru FC are unbeaten against the Kochi-based team, winning five of six matches and scoring eight goals while conceding only two. Chhetri touched upon his team's rivalry against Kerala Blasters FC by hailing it as one of the most remarkable fixtures in the competition. Assistant coach Renedy Singh addressed the team's form post the international break in addition to their preparation for the clash against Kerala Blasters FC. "The first time we played in Kerala, I didn't expect it (the fixture) to grow as much as it has. It's one of the best games to watch, whether it's played in Kochi or Bengaluru. People put a check list on their calendar for this match and I'm sure it will be the same tomorrow," Chhetri said. Kerala Blasters FC head coach Mikael Stahre is confident of his team's tactical setup and stressed on defending collectively in the coming match. "From a technical perspective I think we are on the right track. We have to focus on the team performance. We should defend together as a side and focus on doing the small things right," Stahre said.

## Messi and Inter Miami to open Club World Cup against Egyptian club Al Ahly



AP ■ MIAMI

Lionel Messi and Inter Miami know their path for next year's Club World Cup. The host team — invited by FIFA to compete despite criticism from many in the soccer world — will play the tournament's first match on June 15 against Egyptian club Al Ahly, as part of a group that will also feature Palmeiras and Porto. Other opening matches include Paris Saint-Germain vs. Atletico Madrid and Brazilian club Botafogo playing at Major League Soccer's Seattle Sounders in Group B; Monterrey against Inter Milan in Group E; and Real Madrid facing the Saudi club Al-Hilal — potentially a showdown pitting superstars Kylian Mbappé for Real Madrid and Neymar for Al-Hilal if the Brazilian great remains with that club. "Anytime that you have certain things where soccer is big and you bring it to the U.S., it's going to be a great atmosphere and entertaining," said baseball great Ken Griffey Jr., part of the Sounders' ownership group. His club will get the chance to play one of the world's storied teams in PSG during group play. "I'm going to leave that one alone," Griffey said, smiling. The draw was held Thursday in Miami, with the 32 teams finally finding out their first three opponents in the newly expanded event. The tournament will be held in the U.S. From June 15 to July 13, using 12 stadiums in 11 different cities. The final will be at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, the same stadium that will play

host to the 2026 World Cup final. Among the powerhouse clubs in the field: Manchester City, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, PSG, Chelsea, Borussia Dortmund and Inter Milan. There's also the four highest-ranked teams from South America: Flamengo, Palmeiras, River Plate and Fluminense. And Messi's team, as a representative of the host nation, gets the distinction of playing the first match. It'll happen at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida. "It's about inclusivity, it's about bringing clubs from all over the world, the 32 best clubs and best players from all over the world together," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said. Some would argue it's not the 32 "best" clubs. Inter Miami's selection was widely panned by critics, the volume of that only rising after the team that won the Supporters Shield as the best MLS team in the regular season — with a record-setting point total — lost in Round 1 of the MLS Cup playoffs. "There's no controversy," Inter Miami managing owner Jorge Mas said. Major League Soccer got two teams: Seattle and Inter Miami. The Sounders qualified for the field, and Inter Miami was placed into it as the host nation's representative. The club competition uses the traditional 32-team format used by the World Cup from 1998 to 2022. Eight round-robin groups of four teams each were drawn Thursday, with the top two from each group advancing to a knockout bracket of 16. Europe got 12 spots and South

America six to lead the field, while Africa, Asia and North America all got four — with Inter Miami essentially a fifth from North America since it has host status. Oceania got one spot. "There is no rule that said the MLS Cup winner needs to be in the Club World Cup," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said. "I have no interest in anything other than what I think is going to be best for the showcase, best for our league. I am supportive of the decision that FIFA made and I'm excited to put Miami and Seattle in a global media deal and be shown around the world." Mas said Inter Miami getting the privilege of playing the opening match of the tournament at home is "a testament to our community, the soccer culture that's here." "Who would have told us five years ago, with no club, that we'd be here today at a draw with the best teams in the world," Mas said. "That's what we aspire to. That's what we dream of." Group A: Palmeiras, Porto, Al Ahly, Inter Miami. Group B: Paris Saint-Germain, Atletico Madrid, Botafogo, Seattle. Group C: Bayern Munich, Auckland City, Boca Juniors, Benfica. Group D: Flamengo, ES Tunis, Chelsea, Leon. Group E: River Plate, Urawa, Monterrey, Inter Milan. Group F: Fluminense, Borussia Dortmund, Ulsan, Mamelodi Sundowns. Group G: Manchester City, Wydad, Al Ain, Juventus.

## Shammi Silva takes over ACC presidency role from Jay Shah

PTI ■ DUBAI

Sri Lanka's Shammi Silva has taken over as the president of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), succeeding India's Jay Shah, who recently became the chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC). Shah had vacated the position after three terms as ACC President. It won't be Silva's maiden role with the ACC, having previously functioned as the chairman of the organisation's Finance & Marketing Committee. "It is a great honour to lead the Asian Cricket Council. Cricket is the heartbeat of Asia, and I look forward to working closely with all member nations to elevate the game, provide opportunities for emerging talent, and strengthen the bonds that unite us through this beautiful sport," said Silva



in a statement. On behalf of the ACC, Silva also extended heartfelt gratitude to Shah for his exemplary leadership and significant contributions during his tenure. "Under Mr Shah's stewardship, the ACC achieved remarkable milestones, including the successfully achieving highest value for its commercial rights of ACC Asia Cup tournaments

for 2024-31, the introduction of a new pathway events structure, and the continued development and growth of cricket across its member nations," the ACC said. Silva's tenure begins at a pivotal time, with the ACC focusing on the upcoming Asia Cup and striving to strengthen Asia's position as a powerhouse in global cricket.

## World Chess Championship: Gukesh, Liren eye breakthrough after series of draws

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Half a dozen draws and some missed opportunities later, spirited challenger D Gukesh and resolute defending champion Ding Liren would be desperate for a breakthrough when they clash in the 10th game of the World Chess Championship here on Saturday. Gukesh has explored several winning lines but the advantage has not translated into victories for the Indian, and with just five more classical games left to be played in the USD 2.5 million prize money championship, the 18-year-old would look to break the deadlock and hope to take a decisive lead after a day's rest on Friday. The draw on Thursday, which was the seventh of the match and sixth on the trot, has left both players on an identical score of 4.5 points each, still three shy of the championship-winning tally. The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game while Gukesh had emerged victorious in the third. All other games have ended in draws. If history is anything to go by, the reigning champion wins the match if



the scores are tied 4-4 after eight games which was the case here too. The Chennai-born Indian knows that he will have to punch hard against his gritty Chinese opponent, who has a habit of coming up with well-disguised tricks when the chips are down. World number one and five-times world champion Magnus Carlsen minced no words while doing a recap of the ninth game and said that the time was running out for Gukesh. "I think we have finally arrived at a moment when Gukesh is not a

favourite in this match anymore, it's pure a 50-50 match as it comes," said Carlsen. If the deadlock is not broken after 14 rounds, Gukesh could well surrender the initiative to his Chinese opponent when the games are played under the faster time control to determine the winner. Liren is said to have an advantage in short games. Gukesh, one of the architects of India's maiden Chess Olympiad title triumph recently, said after the draw in the ninth game on Thursday that he would like to improve his performance in

critical moments. "...Hopefully, at some point when I do the right things, I believe that the results will come," he had said. The youngest-ever challenger to the crown was guilty of letting go a very promising position to settle for a draw in the marathon seventh game, something which would have rattled him. But he didn't allow the morale to sag in the eighth game. He declined a draw initially through repetition which would have ended the game earlier, thus showing his intent to win at all cost. In the ninth game, the Indian got an opportunity to exert some pressure on his 20th turn but Liren surprised him. Gukesh could be slightly disadvantaged in the remaining five games as Liren will have white thrice, but the Indian said there was not much difference having black or white pieces. "Nowadays there is not much difference between white and black, because of the computers... All the lines that were considered dubious, the computers make them work. Now it's an equal game with both colours, so I wouldn't say it's a huge advantage," Gukesh had said on Thursday.

## Grid penalty for Charles Leclerc deals a blow to Ferrari's hopes in F1 constructors' title race

AP ■ ABU DHABI

A grid penalty for Charles Leclerc threatens to end Ferrari's hopes of beating McLaren to the Formula 1 constructors' title. Ferrari said Friday the team had to change the battery pack on Leclerc's car in the first practice session in Abu Dhabi. Ferrari said the team expects a 10-place penalty on the grid for Sunday's race. Leclerc was fastest in the first practice session by a second from McLaren's Lando Norris, with Lewis Hamilton third fastest for Mercedes. Leclerc's brother Arthur took

over Carlos Sainz Jr's car and was 18th. Teams have to give two practice sessions per season to younger and less experienced drivers. McLaren goes into the race with a 21-point lead over Ferrari in the constructors' standings. Leclerc's teammate Sainz said Thursday that he expected that either he or Leclerc would have to win the race in Abu Dhabi, with the other car also finishing on the podium, to have a chance of the title "unless something very disastrous happened" to McLaren. Either McLaren or Ferrari will end a long wait for an F1

constructors' title Sunday. McLaren hasn't won the lucrative prize for teams since 1998 and Ferrari's last win was in 2008. Tension in the paddockTwo of Formula 1's top drivers are exchanging bitter personal attacks. All-time great Hamilton is bidding an emotional farewell to Mercedes. It's all overshadowed the constructors' title fight. Despite Max Verstappen wrapping up his fourth driver title in Las Vegas two weeks ago, the Red Bull star is still the center of attention for a feud with George Russell of Mercedes.



Russell branded Verstappen "a bully" and accused him of threatening behaviour following a dispute between the two in qualifying at the Qatar Grand Prix last week. Verstappen was pushed off pole position in Qatar in favor of Russell, and has said his rival lied to get him a penalty. Verstappen is aiming for his 10th race win of the season in Abu Dhabi. That's an impressive feat by most drivers' standards but not for Verstappen, who won 15 races in 2022 and topped it with 19 last year. The whole weekend in Abu Dhabi will be a long goodbye

for Hamilton as he leaves Mercedes, where he won six of his seven titles, and joins Ferrari for 2025. Hamilton is driving in Abu Dhabi with the names of 150 fans on his car as part of a "Thank you, Lewis" campaign by Mercedes. The move to Ferrari was announced before the season began and Hamilton admitted Thursday the prolonged farewell has been much more of a strain on his emotions than he expected. Hamilton is out of form and was pessimistic about finishing on a high after penalties and a puncture marred his race in Qatar.

Doohan leads new wave of rookiesHamilton's move to Ferrari shocked F1 when it was announced in February, and it set off a chain reaction of driver moves elsewhere. Next year F1 will have its largest influx of young drivers in years as established names switch teams or leave the grid. One of the new faces is on the grid in Abu Dhabi after Alpine opted to give Jack Doohan an early taste of F1. He replaces Esteban Ocon for the last race of the season. Doohan, a 21-year-old Australian, is the son of motorcycle racing great Mick Doohan.