

ACROSS THE STATES

EAM meets Trump's NSA; holds talks on bilateral ties

PNS ■ SAN FRANCISCO

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has met Congressman Michael Waltz, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for National Security Advisor...



'Delighted to meet' Waltz 'this evening', Jaishankar posted on X on Friday. 'Enjoyed a wide-ranging conversation on our bilateral partnership as well as current global issues...



NMHC crucial to make India leading maritime nation: Sonowal

PNS ■ LOTHAL (GUJ)

Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Saturday said the Rs 4,300-crore National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) being developed at Lothal in Gujarat...

Waterways, T K Ramachandran, said, 'The phase 1-A of the project, com-

Secretary of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, T K Ramachandran, said, 'The phase 1-A of the project, coming up with an estimated cost of Rs 1,200 crore, is expected to get over by August, 2025, with 65 per cent of its construction completed.'

Three women Maoists nabbed in Odisha

The Odisha Police on Saturday arrested three women Maoists, carrying a total bounty of Rs 8 lakh on their heads, in Malkangiri district...



Army unveils statue of Shivaji at eastern Ladakh

The Indian Army has installed a statue of Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji on the bank of Pangong lake at an altitude of 14,300 feet...

Heavy snowfall disrupts life in Kashmir Flights, rail services suspended

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

The Kashmir Valley received the season's heaviest snowfall on Saturday which threw normal life out of gear, affecting air, rail and road traffic...



received moderate snowfall. The plains of North Kashmir received light to moderate snowfall... The upper areas of the South Kashmir district received over two feet of snow...

PM Modi calls Gukesh an embodiment of calmness and humility

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday met newly-crowned chess world champion D Gukesh and described him as a confident young player who was an embodiment of calmness and humility...

PM posted on X after meeting Gukesh and his parents here. 'I have been closely interacting with him for a few years now, and it strikes me most about him is his determination and dedication...'



Man sets ablaze wife for giving birth to 3 daughters

A man allegedly poured petrol and set his wife ablaze in Maharashtra's Parbhani district after she gave birth to the couple's third daughter...



Manmohan played pivotal role in strengthening US-India ties: Biden

PNS ■ SAN FRANCISCO

Mourning the passing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, US President Joe Biden has called him 'a true statesman' and credited his strategic vision and political courage...



courage,' Biden said in a statement as he and the First Lady, Jill Biden, joined the people of India in grieving the loss of the former prime minister...

Security strengthened in Kolkata after arrests of Bangla infiltrators

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Security was strengthened in Kolkata ahead of New Year's Day following the arrest of two Bangladeshi infiltrators from the heart of the city...

replying to a question. To prevent any untoward incident on New Year's Day, 4,500 police personnel would be deployed in Kolkata, he added...



Kejriwal rubbishes LG inquiry, says BJP afraid of defeat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP is panicked that the AAP government would give Rs 2,100 to women under 'Mahila Samman Yojana' and thus trying to stop the scheme fearing defeat...



Ayodhya gearing up for influx of devotees, tourists

Ram Temple trust extends 'darshan' timings

PNS ■ AYODHYA (UP)

The temple town of Ayodhya is gearing up for a massive influx of devotees and tourists as the new year approaches, marking the end of the first English calendar year since the grand consecration ceremony at the Ram Temple was held on January 22...



'We are ready to welcome the devotees this new year. All our rooms have been booked in advance till January 15,' Ankit Mishra, owner of a local hotel in Ayodhya, said.

Ayodhya Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajkaran Nayyar said, 'There will be robust security arrangements at the Ram Temple, Hanumangarhi, Lata Chowk, Guptar Ghat, Surajkund, and other popular sites.'

BJP accuses Cong of 'indulging in politics' over funeral

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP on Saturday accused the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi of 'indulging in politics' over the funeral of former prime minister Manmohan Singh...

Government of Telangana, Office of the Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Hyderabad. FORM-E Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML. (See rule 7 (c))

The year that was: food

With 2024 about to end, we reflect on the food trends and unforgettable flavours that defined the year, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

A YEAR TO SAVOUR: FOOD MOMENTS OF 2024

As 2024 draws to a close, it's time to reflect on the tastes and trends that defined our culinary year. From viral dishes that united food lovers to beloved celebrity recipes that took over our kitchens, the year reminded us how food connects us. Whether it was the streets of Delhi buzzing with chatter over piping-hot kachoris or Instagram feeds flooding with quirky food combos, 2024 proved that our love for good food knows no bounds. So, let's dive into the highlights that made this year a feast for both our plates and our hearts.

VIRAL CELEBRITY RECIPES



Jackie Shroff's Anda Curry Patta and Baingan Bharta

Jackie Shroff's *Anda Curry Patta* became a go-to comfort dish for many, while his smoky *Baingan Bharta* gave eggplant a superstar moment. Everyone seemed to try their hand at his recipes, inspired by the way he explained each step in his cooking videos, peppered with his trademark "bhidu" charm. Fans couldn't get enough, rating his dishes a solid 10 out of 10 for their earthy, soulful, and undeniably delicious flavours. Jackie truly became the culinary hero of 2024!



Aditi Rao Hydari's Khagina

Aditi Rao Hydari's *Khagina* became a sensation as everyone tried recreating her rich, buttery take on the classic egg dish. Her charming explanation, "cut the onions into moon-shaped slices, cook until pinkish, crack the eggs and top with masala", made it a viral hit. Fans across the internet hailed it as the perfect brunch staple, calling it a true "taste of warmth".



Farah Khan's Yakhni Pulao

Farah Khan's *Yakhni Pulao* was the culinary sensation of the year. A soulful mix of tender meat and fragrant rice, the dish captivated fans who couldn't stop praising its simplicity and rich flavour. On her YouTube channel, she showed every step, making it easy to recreate. Viewers loved her detailed tips and rated it a perfect 10, proudly sharing their own versions online and creating videos titled "Trying Farah Khan's Favourite Yakhni Pulao".



INSTAGRAM VIRALS

Vada Pav in Delhi: A tiny stall in the heart of Delhi sent Mumbaiers into a frenzy! Foodies queued up for hours to get a taste of this Mumbai classic, proving that Delhi truly embraces all flavours.

Popcorn Momos in GK: Momo mania reached new heights with this crunchy, buttery twist. Found at a GK corner, this snack became the ultimate winter indulgence, drawing food bloggers and crowds alike.

Viral Cucumber Jar Salad: Healthy eating met Instagram aesthetics with this layered cucumber salad in a jar. With its vibrant colours and zesty dressing, it became a favourite for fitness enthusiasts and food photographers.



THESE DISHES NOT ONLY DEFINED THE CULINARY LANDSCAPE OF 2024 BUT ALSO REMINDED US OF THE DEEP CONNECTIONS BETWEEN FOOD, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY. HERE'S TO MORE DELECTABLE ADVENTURES IN THE YEAR AHEAD!



CELEB VIRAL FOOD COMBOS



Deepika Padukone's Ema Datshi
Deepika's love for the Bhutanese cheesy chilli dish *Ema Datshi* had people flocking to Tibetan restaurants to experience its fiery, creamy magic.

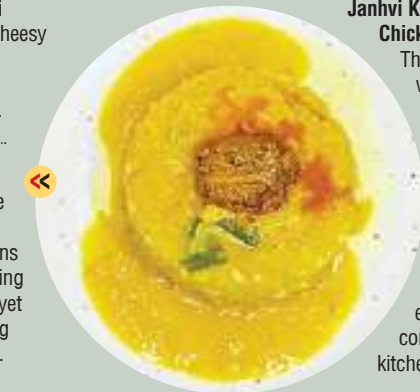


Janhvi Kapoor's Idli and Chicken Curry

This unlikely combo went viral after Janhvi shared her love for it. Foodies everywhere couldn't resist trying it, and it quickly became a trending dish, with fans recreating it at home and experimenting with the combo in their own kitchens.

Shraddha Kapoor's Varan Bhaat

This Maharashtrian classic became a viral sensation as Shraddha shared her family recipe. Fans across India tried recreating this simple yet comforting dish.



FLAVOURS THAT TRAVELLED

As we say goodbye to 2024, we revisited the places that captured our hearts and taste buds (Travel page III), where every bite told a story. Here's to the flavours that made this year's travels truly special.

Banaras #malaiyo #tamarchaat

Banaras delivered on all fronts this year, especially with its food. The winter-special *Malaiyo*, a frothy dessert that melts in your mouth, became a seasonal must-try. Meanwhile, the tangy and spicy *Tamatar Chaat* delighted foodies with its zesty flavours, making it the city's street-food superstar.

Kashmir #kahwa #rojanjosh

The "Paradise on Earth" showcased its culinary treasures alongside its natural beauty in 2024. *Kahwa*, the traditional spiced tea and the aromatic *Rogan Josh* were must-haves for travellers seeking warmth and flavour amidst the snow-draped landscapes.

Ladakh #thukpa #buttertea

Ladakh's dishes weren't just delicious, they were soul-soothing. The hearty *Thukpa*, a noodle soup packed with vegetables and meat, became a favourite, while the creamy, salty *Butter Tea* was a comforting companion in the chilly weather.

Goa #porkvindaloo #crabxecxec

Goa's cuisine stole the spotlight in 2024 with its bold and flavourful offerings. The spicy and tangy *Pork Vindaloo*, *Crab Xec Xec* and fiery *Prawns Balchao* cemented their place as iconic dishes, bringing joy to every table.

Lakshadweep #muskaavab

The smoky and succulent *Mus Kaavab* paired perfectly with the aromatic, coconut-infused *Tuna Curry*, making every bite a celebration of coastal flavours. Each meal offered a taste of island life, blending the sea's bounty with vibrant flavours.



ALL-TIME FAVOURITE FOOD STREETS OF DELHI

Let's remember Delhi's iconic street food, a delight for food lovers. Delhi's street food scene never fails to impress.

Chandni Chowk: This winter, Chandni Chowk dazzled with iconic *dahi bhallas*, *daulat ki chaat* and hot *jalebis* paired with *creamy rabri*.

Kamla Nagar: A shopper's paradise, the area also shone for its unbeatable *chole*

bhature and *Sharma Ji's kachoris*.

Lodhi Colony: *Anna Durga South Indian* offered perfect *dosas* and *idlis*, earning its spot as a social media favourite.

Connaught Place & Janpath: From *Jain Chawal Wale's* iconic *rajma rice* to *mini samosas* and *Wenger's* timeless baked treats, CP and Janpath were unmissable.



WANDERLUST OF INDIAN DESTINATIONS


2024 has been all about travel, realising the importance of travel, be it solo or in groups. Travel in every way is a gateway to self-discovery and deeper connections with the world around us, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

KASHMIR



#winterwonderland #switzerlandofindia
Kashmir, often called "Paradise on Earth," boasts breathtaking natural beauty with vibrant autumn foliage, crystal-clear lakes reflecting the snow-capped peaks, and verdant valleys nestled amidst majestic mountains. This pretty landscape, with its serene charm, makes Kashmir a truly unforgettable travel destination.

BANARAS




#gangaarti #kashivishwanath
Banaras or Varanasi or Kashi, a sacred city in Uttar Pradesh and it holds immense significance in Hinduism. It is a renowned pilgrimage site, deeply intertwined with traditions of death and mourning. The city was known for the most visited and trending places in India in 2024.

LADAKH



#pangonglake #kargil
Ladakh also known as Little Tibet, is a breathtaking region in India soared with snow-capped mountains, frozen lakes, ancient Buddhist monasteries perched on dramatic cliffs, and vibrant festivals filled with music and dance. Ladakh is one of the most loved places in 2024.

LAKSHADWEEP



#tropicalparadise #islandescape
Lakshadweep, a pure archipelago in the Arabian Sea, is a true beauty on Earth. Pristine white sand beaches lapped by clear turquoise waters, coral reefs teeming with marine life, and lush coconut palms swaying gently in the breeze. Lakshadweep offers a unique blend of natural beauty, and cultural richness.

GOA



#goadiaries #beachlover
Goa, a coastal paradise in India, is a vibrant blend of Portuguese heritage and Indian culture. There are pristine beaches lined with swaying palm trees, azure waters perfect for swimming and watersports, delicious seafood, and a lively nightlife scene.

THE YEAR THAT WAS: TRAVEL



Travel isn't just a physical journey, it's a soulful expedition, and some people always loved it while others have started loving it through social media. It opens doors to diverse cultures, helping us understand people and their unique stories. Exploring new destinations promotes a sense of spirituality, connecting us with something bigger than ourselves. Whether it's the tranquillity of a mountain sunrise or the vastness of an ocean, nature teaches us to embrace its beauty and simplicity. Meeting new people on these adventures broadens perspectives, bridging gaps and giving a sense of empathy. Travel is a reminder of how small yet interconnected the world and fills your heart with gratitude for the experiences that shape your journey through life.

#NEWYEARGETAWAYS

FOR TROPICAL CLIMATE LOVERS

GUWAHATI



From Guwahati you can expect a cool and pleasant weather in the north east on the New Year and can plan a getaway around visiting Kamakhya Temple.

KERALA



Kerala, "God's Own Country," can work as a perfect New Year's getaway helping in rejuvenating yourself amidst serene backwater cruises, and lush greenery.


FOR WINTER LOVERS

MANALI




Manali has started receiving the snowfall and has become a white paradise. It is the perfect getaway, offering snow-covered peaks and cosy cafes.

AULI



Auli as a destination is beautiful and scenic and has snowfall predictions on 27th December and after, making it a perfect destination for your new year.

MUKTESHWAR



Mukteshwar is an untouched beauty to help you find yourself and peace this new year. The charming trails and dense forests make it idealic.

the pioneer agenda

"Cinema's characteristic forte is its ability to capture and communicate the intimacies of the human mind"
— Satyajit Ray



THE YEAR THAT WAS: GINEMA

2024 has yet again been an amazing year for films, from iconic performances to thrilling narratives and unexpected misses, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

Cinema has long been a reflection of society, a medium of mass communication, and an instrument for change. From its inception, films have served as more than just a source of entertainment. They have been a mirror to society, amplifying voices, shedding light on pressing issues, and sparking conversations that transcend borders. Over the decades, the cinematic landscape has evolved, offering a fascinating mix of artistry, storytelling, and technical brilliance. This year was no exception.

Looking back at the journey of Indian cinema, it is astonishing to witness its evolution—from the poignant realism of Satyajit Ray's "Pather Panchali" and the thought-provoking narratives of Shyam Benegal to the visual spectacles crafted by modern filmmakers like S.S. Rajamouli and Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Over 69 years, the industry has grown into a cultural phenomenon, shaping not just entertainment but also the values and ideals of its audience.

The early years of Indian cinema were driven by socially conscious storytelling, as seen in classics like Shatranj Ke Khilari, Sadgati, and Aparajito. These films addressed societal issues with sensitivity and depth, using the medium to educate and inspire change. Directors like Ray and Benegal paved the way for a golden era where art met purpose, creating a legacy of films that resonated deeply with audiences. In recent years, however, talking

about films like Pushpa 2, Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya, Kalki 2898 AD, Kill, and more there has been a discernible shift in the motives behind filmmaking. While the essence of cinema as an art form endures, the industry has leaned heavily towards commercialisation. With a focus on box office numbers and global appeal, the cinematic experience has transformed into a spectacle, often prioritising grandeur and entertainment over substance. Yet, amidst the crowd of mass-market releases, there remain exceptions about the films that challenge norms, provoke thought, and carry forward the tradition of meaningful storytelling.

As we look back at the year that was, it becomes evident that cinema continues to straddle the line between its artistic roots and its commercial aspirations.

The past year has been a testament to the diversity of the medium, offering a mix of groundbreaking narratives, record-breaking successes, and a glimpse into the future of filmmaking will also some flops which didn't do well. This retrospective explores how the industry has evolved over time and examines the key highlights of the cinematic journey this year, from the unforgettable performances to the innovative storytelling that defined 2024.



@kritisanon

Actor of the year

Kirti Sanon stole 2024 in her name by her stellar, glamorous performances and delivering back to back hit films even with female protagonists loved by the audience.

TOP 10 FILMS

Amar Singh Chamkila: The film takes you through the lives of pop star duo Amar Singh Chamkila and Amarjot Kaur, shedding light on their rise to fame in the 1980s through chart-topping songs.
RATING: 4/5

Do Patti: Do Patti is a story of twin sisters, whose troubled relationship is tested by love, betrayal, and redemption. The film explores the themes of domestic violence with standout performances by Kriti Sanon.
RATING: 4/5

Maharaja: After his home is broken into, a barber seeks revenge by cryptically telling police that his "lakshmi" has been abducted. The story of his journey to retrieve "lakshmi" begins.
RATING: 4/5

Bhaiyya Ji: A retired crime boss is pulled back into a world of bloodshed and violence as he seeks vengeance against those who killed his younger brother, featuring Manoj Bajpayee as Bhaiyya Ji.
RATING: 4/5

Lucky Bhaskar: Lucky Bhaskar a Telugu-language period crime drama about a lower-middle-class man who turns to financial scams to overcome debt and humiliation, featuring Dulquer Salmaan in a compelling titular role.
RATING: 4/5

CTRL: CTRL is a thriller directed by Vikramaditya Motwane, plotting the dark side of the digital age and the dangers of oversharing online.
RATING: 3.5/5

Article 370: The story follows Yami Gautam as a special agent, assigned a high-stakes mission to quell violence in Kashmir and render Article 370 ineffective.
RATING: 3.5/5

Berlin: In 1993, the Bureau accused and arrested a deaf-mute young man of spying in New Delhi. An interpreter with expertise in sign language is brought in.
RATING: 3/5



Laapataa Ladies: Laapataa Ladies is a humorous and heartwarming tale of identity, empowerment, and self-discovery, marking Kiran Rao's triumphant return to direction.
RATING: 4.5/5



Sector 36: Sector 36 is a chilling crime thriller showcasing Vikrant Massey as a psychotic serial killer. The 124-minute drama is a must-watch for crime genre enthusiasts, delivering an unsettling narrative.
RATING: 3.5/5

WRONG CHOICES (FLOPS)

Bade Miyan Chote Miyan: Bade Miyan Chote Miyan is a Hindi sci-fi action film directed by Ali Abbas Zafar, starring Akshay Kumar, Tiger Shroff, and Prithviraj Sukumaran. The story follows two ex-soldiers racing to thwart a vengeful scientist's plan to attack India.

Sarfira: Sarfira is a Hindi drama directed by Sudha Kongara, starring Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal, and Radhika Madan. A remake of Soorai Potru, it follows a man's fight to create affordable airlines for low-income people, battling numerous obstacles along the way.

Maidaan: Maidaan is a biographical sports drama directed by Amit Ravindernath Sharma, starring Ajay Devgn as Syed Abdul Rahim, a pioneering football coach in India.

The Buckingham Murders: The Buckingham Murders is an Indian crime thriller directed by Hansal Mehta, starring Kareena Kapoor Khan as a grieving British-Indian detective investigating a child's murder in Buckinghamshire.



Yodha: Yodha an action thriller following Arun Kalyal (Sidharth Malhotra), a former soldier suspended after a failed mission, who is found on a hijacked plane years later. Blamed for the hijacking, Arun seeks revenge against the system.



LOVED SONGS

Aaj Ki Raat: Madhubanti Bagchi, Divya Kumar, Sachin -Jigar

MixSingh

Sahiba: Jasleen Royal

Ve Haaniyaan: Danny Ft Avvy Sra

Suniyan Suniyan: Juss and

Kaavaalaa: by Shilpa Rao, Anirudh Ravichander

TOP 5 WEB SERIES

1 Jamnapaar: Jamnapaar is a series on Amazon Mini TV about Shanky Bansal, a young man from East Delhi grappling with identity and aspirations. Struggling with feelings of inferiority, Shanky disowns his roots but eventually learns to embrace and take pride in them.

2 Gyaarah Gyaarah: Gyaarah Gyaarah, streaming on Zee5, is an Indian adaptation of the South Korean series Signal. It blends time travel, suspense, and crime drama across three timelines.

3 Heeramandi: Airing on Netflix, Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar is a 2024 Hindi period drama by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, exploring the lives of tawaifs in Lahore's Heera Mandi during India's independence struggle. The star-studded cast includes Manisha Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, and Aditi Rao Hydari.

4 Mirzapur Season 3: The third season of Mirzapur gets into an intense power struggle between Guddu, Sharad Shukla, and Kaleen Bhaiya, as alliances shift and rivalries deepen in the lawless city.

5 Ranneeti: The web series Ranneeti: Balakot and Beyond is a 2024 action series streaming on Zee5, following an R&AW agent and his team as they combat hybrid warfare post-Pulwama attacks. They race to rescue a captured pilot, expose Pakistan's propaganda.

'WE'LL KEEP EVOLVING, BUT NEVER STOP CREATING'

SEEDHE MAUT'S JOURNEY FROM THE STREETS OF DELHI TO BECOMING ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL FORCES IN INDIAN HIP-HOP IS NOTHING SHORT OF REMARKABLE. KNOWN FOR THEIR GRITTY LYRICS, INNOVATIVE SOUND AND UNAPOLOGETIC AUTHENTICITY, ENCORE AND CALM HAVE BUILT A UNIQUE SPACE FOR THEMSELVES IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY. FROM THE EARLY DAYS OF GRINDING AND PERFECTING THEIR CRAFT TO THEIR LATEST HIT KSHAMA, THE DUO HAS CONSISTENTLY PUSHED THE BOUNDARIES OF HIP-HOP, EARNING A DEDICATED FOLLOWING



PNS | HYDERABAD

Seedhe Maut, one of the most dynamic and influential duos in the Indian hip-hop scene, continues to redefine the genre with every track they release. Known for their raw, unapologetic lyrics and a unique blend of storytelling and energy, *Encore* and *Calm* have captured the hearts of millions. From their early days in Delhi to becoming an iconic voice for Gen Z, Seedhe Maut's journey has been one of relentless growth, experimentation and staying true to their roots. Their recently released track *Kshama* is a testament to their evolving sound and deeper introspection, offering listeners a glimpse into their personal experiences and thoughts. With each new release, Seedhe Maut continues to push the boundaries of hip-hop, making music that resonates on a profound level with their ever-growing fanbase.

In an exclusive interview, Seedhe Maut, one of the most celebrated acts in India's hip-hop scene, reflects on their journey, music and the evolution of their sound. The duo, composed of *Encore* and *Calm*, is known for pushing boundaries in the genre and their music has become a voice for a generation, particularly among Gen Z. With several years of hard work behind them, Seedhe Maut continues to innovate, explore new sounds, and stay true to their roots. As they reflect on their path, the duo shares insights into their creative process and the unwavering drive that has helped them rise to the top.

Seedhe Maut's journey, which began in the streets of Delhi, is a testament to their resilience and dedication. When asked about the emotion that best captures their journey, *Calm* expresses deep gratitude for their listeners and the growing Seedhe Maut Nation. "We feel grateful, firstly, for everything we have—our listeners, the fans who show up for every tour, and the entire desi hip-hop community that has supported us from the beginning. It's been a long road, but it's just the beginning," he says.

As the duo looks forward, they're focused on continuing to evolve their sound. "Our music and what we say have evolved with our own experiences. As we grew up, what we wrote and how we approached music changed. We're not going to hold back from experimenting with fresh sounds and we'll explore themes that are relevant to us," *Encore* shares. "What we create will always remain true to who we are. That's something that will never change."

Seedhe Maut's success has come from a mix of online recognition and live performances that have allowed them to connect with fans in a more tangible way. Reflecting on the love and recognition that they have received over the years, the duo

recalls, "The passion our fans have for us and our music is beyond anything we've ever experienced. It feels amazing to perform in front of such dedicated people. Seedhe Maut is more than just a group; it's a lifestyle." The duo is known for writing and producing their music in-house and this gives them greater control over their sound. "When you create music yourself, the amount of self-scrutiny increases," says *Encore*. "We try to push ourselves to explore new sounds and challenge what we know. But we do it because we want to continue sharpening our biggest weapon: our pens."

Despite the pressures of pushing creative boundaries, *Calm* emphasises that Seedhe Maut's primary goal is to make music that resonates with them personally. "We make music that we like. We make music for ourselves first. That's why we've never confined ourselves to any specific genre or sound," he explains. "Our music evolves with us and that's the key to staying true to who we are."

The duo also discusses how some of their tracks have been in the works for a long time, while others came together quickly. *Calm* shares that the beat for *Swah* is one of the oldest he's ever produced, while *Peace of Mind* was one of the first beats he created on his laptop. *Encore*, on the other hand, reveals that *Champion* was written at YouTube Fanfest and tracks like *Fanne Khan*, *Lunch Break* and *Kya Challa* were recorded on the spot in places like Delhi and Goa. Seedhe Maut's *Lunch Break* carries a nostalgic undertone, reflecting their childhood experiences and the universal feelings of rebellion and freedom that accompany youth. *Calm* elaborates on the theme, saying, "We'll always miss the carefree nature of childhood, but those years shape us in ways both good and bad. The theme of school and childhood is something we can all relate to, especially in a country like India, where children are often expected to conform to the system."

Despite the nostalgic tone, the duo insists they're not slowing down anytime soon. *Encore*, speaking on their relentless work ethic, says, "We make music like our lives depend on it—because, to be honest, it does. Music is our outlet, our way of processing things and it's our favorite thing to do. We'll keep evolving, but we'll never stop creating."

Calm reinforces this sentiment, stating, "Seedhe Maut isn't stopping. Rap is the instrument through which we speak about what matters to us and we'll continue to do that with every new album."

As Seedhe Maut continues to grow and break new ground in the Indian music scene, their passion for their craft remains unshaken. The duo's dedication to evolving their sound while staying true to themselves promises an exciting future ahead. For Seedhe Maut, the grind never stops and their music will always remain a reflection of their journey and their unwavering commitment to their art.

TRENDING

PERSON

MANMOHAN SINGH

Former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, took his last breath on December 26. He was one of India's longest-serving prime ministers.



VIDEO

RAHA'S 'HI' TO THE PAPS



Raha Kapoor in holiday mood as she says 'hi' to paparazzi, blows flying kisses as Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt smile

MOVIE

BABY JOHN



The Varun Dhawan, Keerthy Suresh and Wamiqa Gabbi-starrer, which hit the cinemas on December 25, turned out to be Dhawan's biggest opener in the past 5 years. The film has opened to mixed responses and is however creating quite a buzz.

DAMMUNTE PATTUKORA

Controversy surrounding around *Pushpa 2* sees no end and *Dammunte Pattukora* adds a pinch of salt to it. The song was released on the promotional part of the film, but shortly after they uploaded the song, they got trolled, resulting to the song being pulled down.



SONG

PICTURE

SANTA KEJRIWAL



The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create a festive Santa Claus avatar of its national convener Arvind Kejriwal for Christmas greetings.

THE BLEEDING EYE VIRUS

A call to action for awareness and prevention

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, experts discuss the rising threat of the Bleeding Eye Virus, its alarming symptoms, and the urgent need for prevention through hygiene, awareness and timely medical care

The Bleeding Eye Virus, medically referred to as viral hemorrhagic conjunctivitis, is a rare but alarming condition that poses significant health challenges, particularly in crowded or unsanitary environments. Characterised by dramatic symptoms such as blood-red streaks in the eyes due to ruptured capillaries, this condition is not only visually distressing but also indicative of deeper health risks. Experts stress the importance of early diagnosis, prevention and treatment to mitigate its impact on individuals and communities.

What is the bleeding eye virus?

Dr. M.L. Sujatha, Consultant Cataract and Cornea Refractive Surgeon at SS SPARSH Hospital, explains, "The Bleeding Eye Virus is an alarming condition that affects the delicate blood vessels in the eyes, causing them to rupture and produce blood-red streaks. While its appearance is dramatic, the condition is more than an aesthetic concern—it represents a significant health risk."

The virus primarily spreads through contact with infected bodily fluids, contaminated surfaces, or respiratory droplets, making it highly contagious in densely populated areas or where hygiene practices are poor. "This disease is commonly linked with outbreaks of viral hemorrhagic fevers or poor sanitation practices, which highlights the need for improved hygiene and healthcare infrastructure in affected areas," Dr. Sujatha emphasises.

Symptoms and complications

The Bleeding Eye Virus manifests through a range of striking and often

HEALTH TALK

painful symptoms that demand immediate attention. "The most distinctive symptom is the appearance of blood-streaked eyes, caused by ruptured capillaries in the conjunctiva," notes Dr. Sujatha.

This is often accompanied by:

- Intense redness and swelling
- Burning sensations
- Sensitivity to light
- Excessive tearing
- Crusting discharge, particularly after sleep

Systemic symptoms such as fever, fatigue and body aches are also common, indicating the virus's broader impact on the body. "If left untreated, the virus can lead to com-

plications such as corneal ulcers, scarring, secondary infections, and even blindness in extreme cases," warns Dr. Sujatha.

The onset of symptoms usually occurs within 2-7 days of exposure, with children, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems being particularly vulnerable.

Prevention: A proactive approach

Preventing the virus requires a comprehensive approach that emphasises hygiene, education, and access to healthcare resources. Dr. Col. Aditi Dusat, Senior Consultant in Ophthalmology at Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, stresses the importance of simple preventive measures. "Frequent handwashing, avoiding touch-

ing or rubbing the eyes and refraining from sharing personal items like towels, cosmetics, or eye drops can significantly reduce the risk of infection," she advises.

She also highlights the importance of protective gear: "Wearing masks and gloves in high-risk environments and maintaining a clean living space are equally critical."

Certain groups, such as healthcare workers, individuals in crowded conditions, and children, are at greater risk. "Children are particularly susceptible because of their tendency to touch their faces and eyes frequently, often without proper hygiene. Raising awareness about eye and hand hygiene in these groups is crucial," Dr. Dusat adds.

Access to clean water, improved sanitation, and healthcare resources in outbreak-prone areas is essential. These measures not only prevent the spread of the virus but also address the underlying conditions that facilitate its transmission.

Treatment: Early intervention is key

For individuals exposed to the virus or experiencing symptoms, seeking medical attention promptly is crucial. Dr. Dusat explains, "Early treatment with antiviral medications, supportive care like lubricating eye drops and symptomatic relief through cold compresses can effectively manage the infection and prevent complications."

Diagnostic tools such as viral cultures, blood tests and slit-lamp examinations are used to confirm the condition and develop a tailored treatment plan. "Recognising symptoms early and intervening promptly not only alleviates discomfort but also reduces the risk of long-term complications such as corneal scarring and vision loss," Dr. Sujatha emphasises.

Raising awareness and building resilience

Public awareness is a critical component in combating the virus. "People must understand how the virus spreads and what steps they can take to prevent exposure," says Dr. Sujatha. Educational campaigns, particularly in vulnerable communities, can empower individuals to adopt hygienic practices and seek care at the earliest signs of illness.

Both experts agree that improved healthcare infrastructure and hygiene practices are vital in managing and preventing outbreaks. "A proactive approach—combining education, hygiene, and prompt medical care—is the most effective way to combat this virus and protect public health," Dr. Dusat concludes.

Final thoughts

The bleeding eye virus serves as a reminder of the importance of hygiene, public awareness and robust healthcare systems. While its symptoms are dramatic, they underscore the need for vigilance and prompt action to prevent complications and curb its spread. Through collaborative efforts involving individuals, healthcare providers and public health authorities, the challenges posed by this condition can be effectively addressed.



'ROWDY' SPIRIT REDEFINED



Makkan Singh Raj Thakur, Congress MLA from Ramagundam, in this engaging interview with **Naveena Ghanate** of *The Pioneer*, opens up to share vignettes from his early days filled with challenges that helped build resilience in him to face fierce political battles that followed. Apart from a love story that defied odds, Thakur weaves a tale of passion, grit and unwavering dedication. Dive into his world as he shares the highs and lows of his journey, his unshakable loyalty to his roots, and his vision for the future.

YSR'S TIMELESS ADVICE

YS Rajashekar Reddy was not just a leader but a mentor whose words have guided me through some of the most challenging moments in my life. I vividly remember the time I was appointed chairman of the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh—a position that came with immense responsibility and public scrutiny. A day after a controversy erupted, with baseless allegations of land grab circulating in the media. Daily morning I used to be at the Chief Minister's residence and even I was shocked seeing the reports. I was overwhelmed and on the verge of resigning. YSR called me to his residence and offered words that still resonate with me: "In politics, controversies and accusations are inevitable. In politics, they will write worse things on family, personal life and everything. Never fear and never do a mistake. What matters is standing firm in your truth and answering your critics with your work. If you talk, strongly or don't talk at all. Don't let fear dictate your actions."

His advice became my guiding principle. Even today, when faced with criticism or adversity, I draw strength from his words and his unwavering belief in me.

TURNING DOWN PRP OFFER

Around the same time, megastar Chiranjeevi was setting up his Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) and approached me with an offer to contest on their ticket. Chiranjeevi, in his earnest manner, told me that he would ensure my candidacy unless I chose not to run. If I refused, the ticket would be given to Mana Telangana Party, led by Devender Goud. While the offer was tempting, I chose loyalty over ambition and consulted YSR. His response was firm: "When I say no, it means no, because your candidacy will be seen as something I orchestrated. Looking back, I believe I could have become an MLA at that time. However, my unwavering loyalty to YSR and my inexperience in navigating the complexities of political dynamics held me back. I was always aligned to one leader, one ideology, and I had not yet grasped the art of balancing ambition with political pragmatism. While it was a missed opportunity, it was also a learning moment that shaped my approach to politics in the years that followed."



HOPE AND HEARTBREAK

By 2018, I was confident that the Congress ticket for Ramagundam was coming my way. I had worked tirelessly to rebuild my political base, and the support from party leaders was strong. However, fate had other plans. The BRS candidate, Korukanti Chander, suffered a personal tragedy when his wife passed away just before the elections. Her posters, featuring emotional messages, were displayed across the constituency, invoking a wave of sympathy. The impact was so powerful that even I found myself thinking, "Should I vote for him? Despite the setback, I look back at my journey—from 1998 to 2023—with pride. Where I wanted to win, I fought with unwavering determination. Yes, I lost much along the way—my age, family time, assets, and even my peace of mind. I faced betrayal and backstabbing, which I often describe as being socially raped. But through it all, I never backed down. My resilience is my strength, and my loyalty to my people and principles remains unshaken. Winning isn't just about votes—it's about staying true to your cause, no matter the cost."



THE 'ROWDY' IMAGE AND FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

Yes I have the image of 'Rowdy' and I am one. Over the years, many have labelled me so, but I wear that tag with pride. To me, it is not about unruly behavior; it is about standing up for the people who cannot fight for themselves. I did beat up people who did wrong. I have a lot of cases for fighting people. Whether it's battling bureaucratic injustice, ensuring fair treatment for workers, or challenging corrupt practices, I have never shied away from a confrontation when it was necessary. My so-called 'rowdy' reputation comes from these fights—for refusing to back down when someone's rights were at stake. If standing firm for the people and speaking loudly for justice makes me a rowdy, then so be it. I believe in being fearless, and I don't mind shaking the system if it means getting things done for the greater good. Even YSR, Sudhir Kumar, PJR were called rowdy. If they are Rowdy, even I am one.

CONTESTING INDEPENDENTLY

In 2014, I contested independently in Ramagundam, refusing to abandon my constituency. Despite limited resources, I garnered 11,000 votes. I realized that political labels might come and go, but the work you do for the people leaves a lasting impact. Slowly, I rebuilt my presence, laying the groundwork for a return to active politics. My loyalty to Congress never wavered, but I knew that any re-entry into the party would require careful navigation of past conflicts and a commitment to unity.

DISILLUSIONMENT WITH YSRCP

I was present during critical moments, like the Mahabubabad incident and the meeting in Kadapa where Jagan openly stated that he had no issues with the formation of Telangana. While the statement was significant, what hurt me the most was seeing those who had once vehemently opposed and insulted Jagan later becoming his close allies once he became Chief Minister. These were individuals who had no role in the party's foundational struggles but reaped the rewards when power was within reach. I visited Jagan in jail during this turbulent time and pleaded with him not to adopt an anti-Telangana stance. I reminded him that just because Chandrababu Naidu had taken a controversial two-eyes policy, he didn't need to take a U-turn. I urged him to stand firm, but by then, I had started to lose faith. Jagan hugged me, held my hand, and asked me not to leave, assuring me that he would take care of my future. But the damage was done—I had sacrificed everything, only to see the leader I believed in change his stance for political convenience. After leaving YSRCP, I witnessed other Telangana leaders like Konda Surekha, Bajireddy Govardhan, KK Mahender Reddy, and Jitta Balakrishna Reddy leave the party. I couldn't help but think that if Jagan had stayed true to his principles, we could have won 26 seats in Telangana.

PUPPY LOVE THAT ENDURED

I married at a very young age, and it was a love marriage with Manali—one that came with its own twists and turns. Initially, I was interested in another girl, but fate had different plans. My wife fell in love with me, and when I realized her feelings, I made a promise: I will marry you and take care of you. Her father, a close associate of Chandrababu Naidu and a staunch supporter of the TDP, was understandably apprehensive, as I was firmly aligned with YSR and Congress. Despite these differences, our families came together, and the wedding was held with their consent. Today, we have four wonderful children—two boys and two girls. My eldest son, Prateek, is married, while Reva, my second daughter, is pursuing her undergraduate degree. My youngest, Nidhish, is in seventh grade. All my children are pampered and share my passion for sports, carrying forward the athletic spirit that has been a significant part of my life. Whenever I travel, I take the whole family along, ensuring we remain close-knit despite my political commitments.

OPPORTUNITIES AND LOYALTY

After my departure from YSRCP, I found myself at a political crossroads. The TRS leadership reached out to me, inviting me to join their ranks. I was offered a chance to contest from Mancherial or Musheerabad, but not from Ramagundam. My home and the constituency I was determined to serve. At the time, my pride held me back from the start. Those who were pragmatic and joined TRS, like Putta Madhu, went on to become MLAs. In hindsight, I acknowledge their strategic decisions, even as I stayed firm in my stance. My reluctance to join TRS or BJP—even after Kishan Reddy personally invited me—was rooted in my identity as a Congressman. But even Congress had its challenges. My association with Putta Madhu, who later joined TRS and rose to prominence, created friction with Sidhar Babu, who was understandably upset. I knew that if I were to return to Congress, it would have to be with his agreement.



A HUMBLE BEGINNING

I was born into a large family. We were nine siblings, but one passed away early, so we eight members grew up. Being the fourth child, I was very naughty. My forefathers were landlords and they had migrated here many generations ago. My father was a government employee in GENCO. My mother is a homemaker. I had a somewhat nomadic schooling experience. It started in a private school, but soon I was moved to Kothapalli Ramakrishna Mission School, then ZPHS, then in Karimnagar. I had to switch many schools partly because I was pampered. Our house was always open to people from surrounding villages. Farmers who came to sell their produce, traders passing through, or anyone needing a meal—my parents ensured no one left our home hungry. This upbringing instilled in me a deep respect for social service. I came to Hyderabad and discontinued degree as I was a full-timer in politics. I entered real estate; so, never continued education.



BRUSH WITH NAXALITES

The region I grew up in was deeply influenced by the Naxalite movement. The presence of Naxalites cast a shadow on everyone. I still remember one fateful incident from my youth when I was mistakenly targeted by a group of Naxalites. They thought I was someone else, and I was beaten up and left to die near a river. I survived miraculously. I was in coma for several days and had to undergo treatment for severe injuries. That incident changed me forever. I realized how fragile life is and how important it is to stand up for what you believe in, no matter the risks.

MY CALLING

My entry into the Congress party was a turning point. I started with the Youth Congress and worked my way up through sheer hard work. Leaders like Y S Rajashekar Reddy and Sudhir Kumar inspired me with their vision and commitment. I joined NSUI, became City Congress president and served in various capacities in Youth Congress. In 1998, YSR gave me a chance to become municipal chairman. But due to internal politics in party, local leaders proposed someone else. I did not even know where to take B-Form, so my name was announced but local leaders gave it to someone else. I was active in the Youth Congress. I have always had a deep connection with my native place Ramagundam. Despite having opportunities to contest from Hyderabad, I was resolute in my desire to fight for the people of Ramagundam. In 2004, I sought the Peddapalli ticket, but due to political alliances, it was allocated elsewhere. Understanding my passion and determination, Rajashekar Reddy promised me an opportunity and entrusted me with the chairmanship of the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SATS).



ELEVATING SPORTS

Becoming SATS Chairman was a defining moment in my career. As a sportsman myself—a powerlifter, bodybuilder, athlete, and a sixth-level black belt in taekwondo, even holding a Guinness World Record—I understood the potential of sports in transforming lives. My tenure was not just about holding a position; it was about elevating local sports to national level. We introduced initiatives that improved infrastructure and provided opportunities for athletes across the state. The role allowed me to contribute meaningfully to the sporting community while staying connected to my larger goal of serving the people of Ramagundam.

GREATEST DISASTER

The passing of YS Rajashekar Reddy was the single greatest disaster of my life, both emotionally and politically. I was deeply attached to him and his family, and his death left me directionless. My loyalty to the YS family led me to support YS Jagan Mohan Reddy wholeheartedly as he built the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). I was one of the core members of the team—just 15 of us—who worked tirelessly to establish the party. Every day in Hyderabad, we mobilized movements that laid the foundation for YSRCP's growth. It's a fact often overlooked today, but Telangana played a pivotal role in the initial boost of YSRCP. The party's karyakarthis in the region worked relentlessly to garner support, creating a strong base that became instrumental in Jagan's rise. When YS Jagan went to jail, it was YS Sharmila who took the reins, continuing the struggle through her padyatra. I joined her efforts, even when personal tragedy struck—my father passed away, but just two or three days later, I returned to the field and continued with the padyatra. I vividly remember being with Sharmila and Vijayamma in Sirilla, where we were attacked by KTR and his people. Such incidents were a harsh reminder of the intensity of our fight.



FROM LONDON TO LEADERSHIP

In 2018, I was in London visiting my daughter when I received calls from Revanth Reddy and Uttam Kumar Reddy. They asked me to return to the Congress, but I insisted that any decision should have the approval of Sidhar Babu, the local leader with whom I had differences in the past. TPCC assured me that the message had already been passed to Rahul Gandhi, and they were ready to welcome me back. Coincidentally, it was Rahul Gandhi's birthday when I arrived. At a meeting attended by leaders like Koppula Raju, Kuntia, Madhu Yashki, and Uttam Kumar Reddy—then the PCC Chief—Koppula Raju placed a shawl around my shoulders, symbolizing my official return to Congress. From there, I travelled to Manthani to meet Sidhar Babu. Together, we organized a massive meeting from Manthani to Ramagundam, rallying our supporters and building momentum for the 2018 elections.

RESILIENCE

Over the years, I have faced countless allegations—not just against me but also targeting my family, my son-in-law, and even my youngest child. These attacks were deeply personal and often baseless, but I refused to let them deter me. From 2018 onward, my focus was entirely on Ramagundam. I hardly left the constituency, spending my days on the roads, meeting people, and addressing their concerns. I wanted to be among the people, ensuring that their voices were heard and their needs were met. The 2023 elections were intense as TRS employed a new strategy: they distributed money and persuaded certain groups, to stay away from voting. Despite these tactics, around 1.5 lakh votes were eventually polled. I secured 92,000 votes—a testament to the trust and support of the people of Ramagundam. My focus now is on leaving a legacy of service and ensuring the well-being of my constituency through other means. As an MLA, my primary goal is to restore Ramagundam's lost glory. This region has immense potential, from power plants to industrial hubs. I am working tirelessly to bring in new projects, create jobs, and ensure the welfare of my constituents. Ramagundam is not just my constituency; it is my identity, and its development is my life's mission.



QUICK BYTES

- Favorite Food:** Pure non-vegetarian
- Fitness routine:** I am passionate about fitness and plan to restart my regime soon
- Favorite actor:** Chiranjeevi and Nagarjuna
- Favorite actress:** Aishwarya Rai
- Favorite colours:** Black and Red
- Favorite holiday destination:** Zurich
- Happiest moment:** Spending time with my family and becoming MLA
- Sad moments:** When my mother and father passed away
- Movies:** I watch a lot of movies, especially action
- Bad habit:** Getting angry
- Weakness:** I trust people
- Strength:** Family

