

sunday pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY The pioneer

The government should take over the lands of farmers only if they agree. The farmers who gave their land for the Mallanna Sagar Project have not got justice till now. The Congress Government must change its policy towards land losers and should give them land.

I appeal to the government to announce a new policy regarding this during the next Assembly session

-Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao, CPI MLA & State Secretary



A set back to fake well-wishers of Constitution

'Music's power to evoke emotions REFLECTS in my performance'

A standout SHUTTLE

DON'T MISS... SBI thwarts digital arrest

Preventing what could have been another digital arrest, the alert staff at the State Bank of India (SBI), Chandrayangutta branch, acted in time and thwarted the bid by cybercriminals to relieve a retired employee of his hard earned money. According to SBI officials, a retired employee visited the bank branch at Chandrayangutta along with his wife to request a transfer of Rs 46 lakhs via Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS). B Praveen, the Senior Associate at the counter, noticed that ...

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Unbridled corruption in Nirmal district

Corruption in Nirmal district continues to spiral out of control, despite repeated efforts by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to curb the menace. A recent case highlights the ongoing issue. Shakeer Khan, a Junior Assistant at Nirmal Municipality, was caught by ACB officers while accepting a Rs 20,000 bribe. The bribe was allegedly demanded to secure the regularisation of a complainant's order from the Regional Director of Municipal Administration in Warangal. Corruption seems ...

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Maha win boosts BJP's RS prospects

The BJP on Saturday snatched one Lok Sabha seat from the Congress, lowering the opposition party's tally to 98, while a runaway victory in Maharashtra will also boost the ruling alliance's prospects in the Rajya Sabha where the western state sends the second-highest number of members. The BJP had won 240 seats in the Lok Sabha elections held earlier this year. After its win in the Nanded Lok Sabha bypoll on Saturday, the party's tally in the 543-member Lower House has gone up to 241...

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Breather for Adani's Dharavi project

The landslide victory for ruling BJP-led Mahayuti in Maharashtra will bolster billionaire Gautam Adani-led group's USD 3-billion project to redevelop Mumbai slum of Dharavi into a 'world-class' district. Opposition Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) had pledged to reclaim all land given to the Adani group for redeveloping Asia's largest slum and promised to scrap the project altogether, if voted to power. For Adani, who is facing bribery charges in a US court, the scrapping of his pet Dharavi project would have been a big setback. With election results showing the BJP and its allies Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party factions led by Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, winning more than...

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BJP's Maha 'tsunami', INDIA retains J'khand

A CELEBRATION IN MAHARASHTRA



PNS ■ MUMBAI/RANCHI

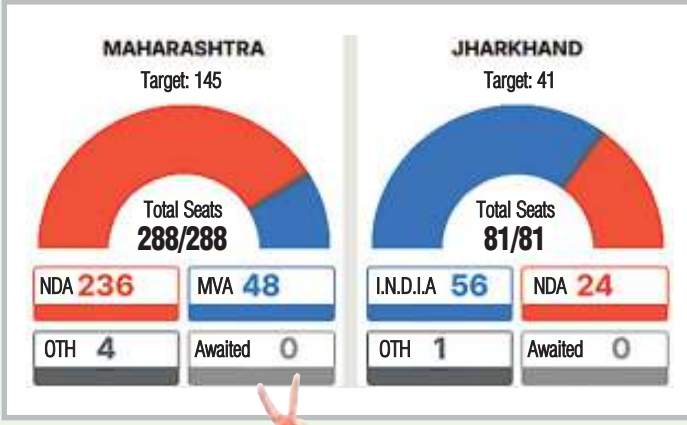
The BJP on Saturday pulled off a stunning performance in Maharashtra winning a record number of seats to propel the party-led ruling Mahayuti alliance to a landslide victory while the INDIA bloc stormed back to power in Jharkhand on the back of a spectacular showing by the JMM.

Message of development endorsed: Modi

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the latest round of elections has endorsed the message of development and defeated the politics of lies and betrayal propounded by the Congress and its allies. Addressing a gathering at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters here, Modi said divisive forces, negative politics and

dynasticism have been defeated in the Maharashtra election and bypolls in various states. He said the people of Maharashtra have voted for stability and taught a lesson to those who tried to create instability. The prime minister asserted that the message from the Maharashtra election is that of unity and it is also an

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AN ECSTATIC MOOD FOR INDIA



Such was the BJP's dominance that helped the Mahayuti alliance to get a three-fourths majority and continue the winning momentum after its recent historic hat-trick in Haryana, 128 of the 149 candidates fielded by the saffron party won. Four BJP candidates were also leading.

"Maharashtra has broken all records, it is the biggest win for any party or pre-poll alliance in the last 50 years," Prime Minister Narendra Modi told BJP workers at party headquarters to a thunderous applause late in the evening.

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Bypolls: Cong sweeps south

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WAYANAD (KERALA): Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Saturday cruised to her maiden electoral victory, from the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat in Kerala, with a margin of over 4.1 lakh votes against CPI(M)-led LDF's Sathyan Mokeri, according to figures released by the Election Commission. Priyanka got 6,22,338 votes which was less than the 6,47,445 votes

Priyanka bags Wayanad

Wins with a margin of 4.1 lakh votes

received by her brother Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha polls in Wayanad in April this year, but her victory margin of 4,10,931 was more than his lead of 3,64,422 votes, despite the decline in turnout in the Wayanad bypoll. The LS poll turnout in Wayanad, which has over 14 lakh registered voters, was close to 74 per cent

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Maharashtra taught Congress a lesson: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The people have taught the Congress a lesson in the Maharashtra Assembly elections, BRS leader Harish Rao said. He said that the people of the state did not believe the juggery of the Congress in the name of its five guarantees and that this election has shown that the people of Maharashtra have recognised the fraud committed by the Congress in Telangana. Harish was responding on the Maharashtra and Jharkhand elections on X. He said the Congress cheated the people of TG by saying that it would give Rs 2,500 per month to women under the

Mahalakshmi scheme. He said the people of Maharashtra noticed that the Congress had promised to pay Rs 3,000 in Maharashtra without implementing the scheme in TG. He said the Congress government evaded paying Rythu Bharosa to farmers and is not giving pensions. He said that people have noted things like farm loan waivers not being completed even after a year. Harish said that all these factors hit the Congress hard in the Maharashtra elections. He said that TG people live in cities like Mumbai, Sholapur, Pune and Nanded and news about the frauds committed by the Congress in TG had spread widely in Maharashtra.

GODAVARI WATER TO HYD CM directs officials to prepare report



CM A Revanth Reddy participates in a review with Water Board and Irrigation Department officials on Saturday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy reviewed the proposal to transfer 20

TMCs of Godavari water to meet Hyderabad's drinking water needs at a meeting with officials of the Irrigation Department and the

Hyderabad Water Board on Saturday. The CM ordered officials to prepare a comprehensive report on pumping Godavari water from Kondapochamma and Mallanna Sagar reservoirs. The CM asked the officials to conduct a detailed study on the total cost of transferring water from the reservoirs and the availability of water in the reservoirs. The CM asked officials to invite tenders by December beginning and to coordinate with Mission Bhagiratha officials. Municipal Administration Department Principal Secretary Dana Kishore, HMWSSB MD Ashok Reddy, Irrigation Secretary Prashant J. Patil and other officials attended the meeting.

CHANGE OF DAM GATES AP, TG & Karnataka okay Tungabhadra Board's proposal



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The governments of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana have accepted the Tungabhadra Board's proposal to change the gates of the Tungabhadra Dam. The Board has also accepted Telangana proposal to ensure that the storage capacity of the dam does not increase after increasing the height of the gates. Member Secretary ORK Reddy presented the report of the expert committee on installing new gates at the Board meeting. The authorities of the three states approved this, and they decided to change the gates in a phased manner.

Collector warns Social Welfare school staff of action against laxity

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BRIBERY CASE US SEC summons Gautam Adani, nephew

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Adani group founder and chairman Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar have been summoned to explain their stand on the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) allegation of paying USD 265 million (Rs 2,200 crore) in bribes to secure lucrative solar power contracts. Summons have been sent to Adani's Shantivan Farm residence in Ahmedabad and his nephew Sagar's Bodakdev residence in the same city for a reply to SEC within 21 days. "Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you received it)...you must

serve on the plaintiff (SEC) an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the



District Court. "If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. You also must file your answer or motion with the court," it added. Gautam Adani, 62, and seven other defendants, including his nephew Sagar, who is a director at the group's renewable energy unit Adani Green Energy Ltd, allegedly agreed to pay about USD 265 million in bribes to Indian government officials between approximately 2020 and 2024 to obtain lucrative solar energy supply contracts on terms that expected to yield USD 2 billion of profit over 20 years, according to an

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Public uprising imminent in TG, says Sanjay

- ◆ Predicts Congress MLAs themselves may bring down their Govt
- ◆ Asserts Maharashtra people did not believe Congress's lies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A public uprising is imminent in Telangana, the Union Minister of State for Home, Bandi Sanjay Kumar said. He said that the BJP will declare war on the failures of the Congress Government. Despite the Congress spreading lies in Maharashtra, the coalition failed to gain the trust of the people. He emphasized that Modi's development mantra succeeded and the increased majority of the BJP alliance is proof of that. He criticised the Congress as an 'Iron Leg' party, causing the downfall of its allies and predicted internal conflicts in the Congress unit in

Telangana. Congress MLAs themselves might bring down their government without BJP's intervention, he added. Addressing the media at the Mahashakti Temple in Karimnagar, Sanjay said the BJP alliance's resounding victory in Maharashtra confirmed surveys predicting an impressive majority for the NDA coalition, exceeding 220 seats. The BJP, which had earlier won 105 seats, is expected to cross 120 this time. Meanwhile, the Congress is expected to secure fewer seats than before and their coalition has disappeared, Sanjay said.

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Govt determined to check urban pollution: Uttam

Says e-vehicles can protect health, save lives

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Irrigation, Food & Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy reaffirmed the Telangana government's commitment to promote electric vehicles (EVs) to check the increasing pollution in urban areas. Speaking at the launch of the 'E-Raja L-5 Segment Electric Auto,' a 'Make in India' product by Rap Eco Motors, at the Administrative Staff College of

India (ASCI) on Saturday, Uttam highlighted the urgent need for both immediate and long-term measures to address urban pollution, which is severely affecting public health, productivity and the environment. He pointed to alarming trends in cities like New Delhi, where air quality is deteriorating rapidly due to the increasing number of vehicles. "Vehicle emissions are among the largest contributors to urban pollu-



tion, leading to a surge in respiratory diseases, reduced life expectancy and worsening overall general health. This is a crisis that requires decisive action," he said. Drawing parallels with New Delhi's air quality emergency, he warned, "Unchecked pollution could push our cities into a similar catastrophe, forcing people to live in unlivable conditions. Telangana is determined to prevent such a scenario." He said that the Telangana government has given 100% exemption on road tax and registration fees for electric vehicles

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OBTUSE ANGLE



ACROSS THE STATES



Woman kills her child to marry another man

A woman allegedly strangled her five-year-old daughter to death in northwest Delhi to marry a man she met on Instagram, police said on Saturday. The woman also told the police that she lived with a relative in Himachal Pradesh before coming to Delhi where her child was sexually assaulted, they said. Police received information from Deep Chand Bandhu Hospital on Friday about a child being brought dead. Inquiries revealed strangulation marks on the child's neck, they said. A case was registered and the child's relatives, including her mother, was interrogated, the Delhi Police said in a statement. After sustained interrogation, the mother broke down and revealed that she had strangled her daughter, the statement said.



Himachal govt to consider ranking colleges: CM

Himachal Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday said that the government is considering ranking the colleges of the state and a formula is also being prepared for it. Presiding over a programme of the Alumni Association at Government Degree College in Sanjauli, he said that there are about 138 colleges in the state. He said, "We want to strengthen the facilities in the colleges and all other government educational institutions. The state government is emphasising providing quality education to the students and there is no dearth of funds for this work." He said that an arts block, girls hostel and parking will be built in the college complex in two years. He also announced Rs 50 lakh to the Alumni Association.



'Raise voice for release of Engineer Rashid'

The Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) Saturday appealed to the Members of the Parliament to raise their voice for the release of fellow parliamentarian and party chief Sheikh Abdul Rashid. Addressing a press conference here, AIP vice president G N Shaheen said Rashid alias Engineer Rashid "was summoned to Delhi and detained under false and baseless charges" on August 5, 2019, the day Article 370 was abrogated. "Despite being held in custody, he contested the parliamentary elections, won with a massive mandate and became the elected voice of the Baramulla constituency. However, since taking his oath as a Member of Parliament, he has not been allowed to attend even a single session of the Lok Sabha," Shaheen said. He said the Baramulla constituency consists of 18 assembly segments and accounts for nearly 40 per cent of Jammu and Kashmir's population, and from 2008 to 2018, Rashid "fearlessly served" his people, voicing their concerns and aspirations without compromise.

Maha win boosts BJP's RS majority prospects

The BJP on Saturday snatched one Lok Sabha seat from the Congress, lowering the opposition party's tally to 98, while a runaway victory in Maharashtra will also boost the ruling alliance's prospects in the Rajya Sabha where the western state sends the second-highest number of members. The BJP had won 240 seats in the Lok Sabha elections held earlier this year. After its win in the Nanded Lok Sabha bypoll on Saturday, the party's tally in the 543-member Lower House has gone up to 241. The Nanded bypoll was necessitated by the death of Congress MP Vasantrao

Chavan on August 26. The Congress had won 99 seats in the Lok Sabha elections with party leader Rahul Gandhi winning from Rae Bareilly and Wayanad. He vacated his Wayanad seat from where his sibling Priyanka Gandhi Vadra won on Saturday. After winning Wayanad and losing Nanded, the Congress' tally in the Lok Sabha now stands at 98. The Bihar seat in West Bengal is now the lone vacancy in the Lok Sabha. Trinamool Congress MP SK Nurul Islam died on September 25. However, a bypoll could not be held in the seat as an election petition is pending against Islam in Calcutta High Court. The BJP-led alliance's landslide victory in Maharashtra has also boosted its prospects in the Rajya Sabha and could help it get a majority in the Upper House. Maharashtra sends 19 members to the Rajya Sabha.



AGRI DISTRESS

Cost and debt rising, yield stagnant: SC panel

Suggests examining MPS, other measures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Supreme Court-appointed panel on farmers' grievances and protests has filed its interim report, listing reasons for agrarian distress which among others include stagnant yield, rising costs and debts and inadequate marketing system. The high-powered committee, constituted on September 2 under former Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Nawab Singh to resolve the grievances of farmers agitating at the Shambhu border, also suggested solutions including examining the possibility of giving legal sanctity to Minimum Support Price and offering direct income support. While forming the committee, the SC had observed farmers' protest should not be politicised. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan on Friday took the interim report on record and praised the committee for its efforts and framing of the issues to be

examined and defuse the agitation. In its 11-page interim report, the panel said, "It is a well-known fact that the farming community in the country in general and that of Punjab and Haryana in particular has been facing an ever-increasing crisis over the last more than two decades." The stagnation in yield and production growth since the mid-1990s, after the initial higher gains of the Green Revolution, marked the beginning of the crisis, said the report. The panel said the debt on farmers and farm workers increased manifold in recent decades. "In 2022-23, institutional debt of farmers

The stagnation in yield and production growth since the mid-1990s, after the initial higher gains of the Green Revolution, marked the beginning of the crisis, said the report



in Punjab was Rs 73,673 crore, while in Haryana it was even higher at Rs 76,630 crore as per National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD, 2023). In addition, there is a significant burden of non-institutional debt on farmers, which is estimated to be 21.3 per cent of total outstanding debt on farmers in Punjab and 32 per cent in Haryana, according to National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO, 2019), the committee flagged. The committee also comprised retired IPS officer B S Sandhu, Mohali resident Devinder Sharma, professor Ranjit Singh Ghuman and Punjab Agriculture University agricultural economist Dr Sukhpal Singh.



A setback to fake well-wishers of Constitution

Amit Shah on Maha poll results

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday expressed gratitude to the people of Maharashtra for the "historic victory" of the Mahayuti alliance in the state polls and said that by giving such a huge mandate to the NDA, people have shut shops of "fake well-wishers of the Constitution". Shah also thanked the people of Jharkhand for blessing the BJP with the highest percentage of votes. "Jai Maharashtra! Heartfelt gratitude to the people of Maharashtra for this historic mandate," the Union minister said in a post on X in Hindi and Marathi. Maharashtra, the holy land of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule and

Veer Savarkar, has always kept culture and nation supreme along with development, the senior BJP leader said. "By giving such a huge mandate to the Mahayuti alliance amidst illusion and lies, the people have closed the shops of those who are fake well-wishers of the Constitution. This victory is the victory of every Maharashtra resident," he said.

Jharkhand results victory for Constitution: Rahul



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hailed the INDIA bloc's victory in the Jharkhand Assembly polls on Saturday as one for the protection of the Constitution as well as of water, forest and land, even as he described the Maharashtra poll results as "unexpected" and said his party will analyse the election outcome in the state in detail. In a post in Hindi on X, the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha thanked the voters of Jharkhand as well as those who voted for the INDIA opposition bloc in Maharashtra.

NDA DEBACLE IN JHARKHAND

No CM face, focus only on infiltration cost BJP dear

PNS ■ RANCHI

Despite the BJP-led NDA throwing all its weight to snatch Jharkhand from the hands of a JMM-headed coalition, the saffron camp suffered a debacle leaving the party's rank and file wondering what had gone wrong. Top BJP leaders such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma canvassed aggressively, but the NDA did not project any CM candidate, as its campaigns mainly focused on "infiltration from Bangladesh" and "corruption" of the

Hemant Soren regime. About 200 rallies were addressed by BJP leaders including about two dozen by Shah and PM Modi who also held mega road shows including one in Jharkhand's capital Ranchi drawing huge crowds. The NDA was leading barely in 24 of the 81 seats it contested. The BJP contested in 68 seats while its ally AJSU Party which contested on 10 seats is almost wiped out. Contradicting exit polls, Hemant Soren's Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) is heading towards a major victory by winning or establishing lead in 34 seats of the total 43 it contested.

Bypolls: Cong sweeps south

PNS ■ WAYANAD/BENGALURU

Southern electors overwhelmingly supported Congress nominees as the grand old party swept the Lok Sabha and Assembly by-polls held in Karnataka and Left-ruled Kerala on Saturday. Besides, the party retained the Palakkad Assembly seat. The CPI (M) retained Chelakkara, a left stronghold. In neighbouring Karnataka, it was Congress all the way, with the party winning all the three Assembly seats where bypolls were held. The Mallikarjuna Kharge-led party wrested Shiggaon and Channapatna from the opposition BJP-led bloc which had put up a spirited fight and the electoral victory was being seen as an endorsement of the



leadership of Congress Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar, also the party's state unit chief. The elections were a litmus test of sorts for the two leaders. While Siddaramaiah is embroiled in the MUDA land allotment case, Shivakumar had invested a lot of pride in

ensuring his party's good show in the elections, particularly in Channapatna, coming under his home district Ramanagara, a Vokkaliga-dominated region. The Congress retained its stronghold of Sandur, but the success in the rest of the seats must have counted more sweet to the ruling party.

'NCC will touch strength of 20 lakh in coming years'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Cadet Corps has competed 76 years of its existence and made commendable efforts in increasing the strength of cadets, the defence ministry said on Saturday asserting that the Corps will touch the strength of 20 lakh in coming years. The largest uniformed youth organisation in the world, the NCC was raised in 1948. The Corps will be celebrating its 76th Raising Day on Sunday, the ministry said in a statement. The NCC has made "commendable efforts in increasing the strength of cadets by 3 lakh and will be touching the strength of 20 lakh in coming years", Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh was quoted



as saying in the statement. He laid a wreath and paid homage to the fallen heroes on behalf of the entire NCC fraternity at the National War Memorial here. Singh emphasised the role of the NCC in the "Viksit Bharat" campaign, a pivotal initiative by the Government of India.

HC TO CENTRE

Nominate panel members to examine deepfake menace

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the Centre to nominate members for a committee constituted to examine the issue of deepfakes. The high court's direction came after it was informed by the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) that a committee had been formed on November 20 on deepfake matters. The Centre submitted that it was actively taking measures to address and mitigate the issues related to deepfake technology. A bench of Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela directed the central government to



nominate the members within a week. "The committee shall examine and take into consideration the suggestions filed by the petitioners. The committee

shall also consider the regulations as well as statutory framework in foreign countries like the European Union," the bench said in an order passed on November 21.

'Pollution in Delhi aggravating respiratory ailments'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bad air in Delhi has aggravated respiratory ailments, especially for patients with pre-existing lung diseases, doctors say. Dr Ankita Gupta, Assistant Professor in the Department of Respiratory Medicine said that air pollution aggravates respiratory diseases by introducing

particulate matter into the lungs. This can lead to symptoms like shortness of breath, sore throat, and in some cases, secondary infections. "Patients with pre-existing lung diseases are often on regular medication throughout the year. However, during periods of severe pollution, their usual dosage may not be effective," Dr Gupta said.

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function, making routine management of conditions like asthma, COPD, or chronic bronchitis far more challenging. "In such cases, we often need to increase the dosage or frequency of medications, such as inhalers, bronchodilators, or corticosteroids. Rescue inhalers might also be required more frequently to manage acute symptoms," Dr Parakh said.

Patients with coexisting conditions, such as diabetes, face longer recovery times because of weakened immunity, Dr Gupta said. Another doctor from the Lok Nayak Hospital's Department of Respiratory Medicine said that emergency cases of respiratory distress are also being observed during this period.





Step into Melt House for a warm ambiance with culinary delights, from cheesy grilled sandwiches to delightful desserts, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

Tucked on a road full of cafés and eateries, between the streets of Greater Kailash II, the *Melt House* café invites you to step inside and have the essence of a cozy vibes like you feel on the mountains while enjoying inside. The warm yellow colour mixed with brown, with bulbs hanging above the wooden tables, while the aroma of fresh ground coffee and wine mingles with the soft humming of acoustic music. *Melt House* is the kind of place where time seems to slow, promising a cozy experience with posters of coffee and scenic beauty giving you a beautiful time. From the dishes to the bar menu to *malting milkshakes* the *Melt House* caters everyone for a quality time and quality treat. Beginning with the grilled cheese speciality of the café, the *Piri Piri Cottage Cheese Grilled Cheese sandwich* is zesty containing pulled cottage cheese with onions, peppers, cheddar, mozzarella and American cheese. The *Piri Piri Cottage Cheese Grilled Cheese sandwich* gave a texture of firm and crunchy on the outside but the cheese enhanced the taste of the same. After the mouth-watering sandwich, you can embrace yourself and order the flavourful *Smoky Cajun Penne Alfredo* under the Big Plates menu. Indulged with a luscious blend of butter, heavy cream, and freshly grated

Parmesan for that perfect creamy Alfredo sauce, the *pasta* with *garlic bread* will activate your taste buds. If you are a pizza lover and a vegetarian, trying *Burrata Margherita* will be a delicious one. Bursting with vibrant, tangy flavour, balancing richness with just the right amount of acidity, *Burrata Margherita* is filled with Burrata cheese, red and yellow cherry tomato and fresh basil which will not be very visually appealing but is tasty and soft. Jumping into the small plates menu, *Pink Garlic Aioli Parmesan Truffle Fries* with *russet potatoes* cut into matchsticks with freshly grated Parmesan cheese, black truffle oil and mayonnaise for the aioli are moreish. Reflecting on the history and the aura of the café Chef *Rohit Negi* said, “The *Melt House* basically started from Gururam itself as an artisanal sandwich shop and then we have opened to big places having the speciality of cheese. There is the melted cheese concept we infuse in our dishes. Now, after we have all the totally cheesy flavours in our food, and we have differentiated it from any other restaurant you get on to. We have some Italian cuisine in it, and we have mixed it with cheese for the cheese lovers.” The café also has different offerings in *Vodka, Tequila, Red Wines, White Wines, Gin* and more. For the milkshake enthusiasts and the



hot chocolate connoisseurs, the *Classic Hot Chocolate* at the *Melt House* is a must try beverage. The *Cold coffee* at the *Melt House* is a refreshing blend of smooth, chilled coffee, served with ice for an invigorating lift. Its rich, bold flavour comes alive with each sip, perfectly balanced between the sweetness and



Terrai attributes its inception to the terrain and rich historical culture and culinary legacy of the State of Telangana. Situated in the southern-central part of the Indian peninsula on the high Deccan Plateau, cuisine of Telangana is influenced by the region's rich history of Deccan and Telugu culture. Nizam culture is a blend of opulent traditions, art, and cuisine that reflects the historical grandeur and diverse heritage of Telangana. Founded by the visionary restaurateur, *Rohit Kasuganti* and the creative powerhouse, *Anisha Deevakonda*, *Terrai* derives its name from terrain defining the topography of the young-historical State. Reinventing traditional cuisine, propagating the culture and community is the ethos of this new restaurant, *Terrai*.



From terrain to table, *Terrai* presents the evolution of Telangana Cuisine, says **SHARMILA CHAND**

THE VISION
The objective of *Terrai* is simple - it aims to propagate the deeply rooted culinary culture of the State, becoming synonymous with it. *Terrai* is a glorious homage to the rich heritage, culture and culinary prowess of Telangana. At *Terrai*, every dish serves as a resplendent tribute to the land, celebrating local women farmers and tribal chefs who utilise time-honoured techniques and ingredients. *Rohit Kasuganti*, Founder and CEO, *TSK Food Works*, says, “Telangana food has been overshadowed by the popularity of its neighbouring cousin. Taking immense pride in our roots, our thought and vision behind *Terrai* is to simply showcase the tradition and history behind the food from our State, designed for the modern diner. We want *Terrai* to lead a revolution, of sorts and to propagate Telangana cuisine to the World and enlighten our colleagues and guests to the rich legacy that it represents.”



envolved in an ambiance that exudes sophistication and warmth. Influenced by and representing the rich crafts of the State, the terracotta walls, adorned with intricate Ikkat mouldings and exquisite Dokra art, radiate an earthy elegance, while the captivating Bathukamma-inspired ceiling lights create a mesmerising glow throughout the space. Crafted by the renowned *Sona Reddy Studio*, every detail - from the repurposed traditional doors to the stunning original artworks by *Narahari* invites guests on an enchanting journey through Telangana's rich cultural tapestry. “*Terrai* is a creative canvas where we weave the rich cultural and artistic elements of Telangana into every detail. From collaborating with local artisans on the stunning Dokra art to sourcing textiles for our Ikat-inspired decor, every partnership reflects the soul of Telangana, bringing its stories to life. Our mission is to ensure that every guest experiences the essence of our heritage through innovative and traditional cuisine”, adds *Anisha Deevakonda*, Creative Head and Partner, *Terrai*.



NARRATIVE
Community is integral to the *Terrai* experience. The founders prioritise partnerships with local women farmers, artisans, and home cooks, ensuring that every ingredient is fresh, ethically sourced and imbued with the spirit of Telangana. This commitment to collaboration extends beyond the kitchen, celebrating the invaluable contributions these communities make to the state's culinary legacy, transforming each meal into a traditional story of connection. *Terrai* aspires to elevate Telangana's cuisine to its rightful place on the global gastronomic stage, offering a dining experience that transcends mere nourishment. It embodies a modern renaissance, a movement dedicated to establishing a distinctive identity for



ELEGANT WITH LOCAL CRAFTS
Sprawling in 12000 sq. ft., here is the dining destination, offering a luxurious experience with seating for 250 guests across four distinct dining halls, each designed to provide a unique ambiance. As you step in *Terrai*, you are



Telangana's culinary traditions, free from the shadows of other Indian influences. Guests are invited to embark on a glorious culinary adventure, reconnecting with the land through an exquisite array of flavours.

A MELANGE OF FLAVOURS & TEXTURES

Picture indulging in the *Karim Nagar Fried Chicken Wings*, a fiery sensation complemented by tangy pickled onions, or experiencing the opulence of *Terrai Mutton Curry* paired with *spiced Masala Pooris*. The *Golichina Mamsam*, crowned with crispy fried curry leaves, is a flavour explosion, while the refreshing *Not So Mirchi Cocktail* adds a zesty flourish. Round off your culinary adventure on a sweet note with the delectable *Saffron Cheesecake*, *Kandha Doodh*, adorned with delicate saffron pearls, each a testament to the glory of Telangana's rich culinary heritage. *Terrai* is more than just a celebration of exquisite flavours; it is a cultural sanctuary where the stories of Telangana come alive. Each dish encapsulates the region's unique traditions and customs, inviting diners to embark on a journey that honours the past while embracing contemporary flair. Here, every bite is a narrative, woven from the intricate tapestry of spices and age-old recipes passed down through generations, all set against a backdrop that resonates with the soul of the Deccan. In a world brimming with dining options, *Terrai* emerges as a splendid celebration of Telangana's heritage, inviting food enthusiasts to partake in an unforgettable journey that captures the very essence of the region. It's not merely a meal; it's a resplendent experience that delights the senses and nourishes the soul.

— *Sharmila Chand* is an author, columnist and journalist who writes on Food, Travel, Culture and Lifestyle

ADDRESS:
Terrai, Sattva Knowledge Park, Silpa Gram Craft Village, HITECH CITY, Hyderabad

THE ART AND SPIRIT OF CAKE MIXING

TEAM AGENDA

AT CROWN PLAZA, MAYUR VIHAR

The *Crown Plaza Mayur Vihar* recently hosted its annual *Cake Mixing Ceremony*, embracing the charming theme of an *English Country Christmas*. This delightful event transformed the hotel into a festive wonderland, inviting guests to partake in a time-honoured tradition that has brought people together for centuries.

The roots of cake mixing trace back to 17th-century Britain, where this delightful ceremony marked the end of the harvest season. Farmers would gather to soak fruits and nuts in spirits, preserving them for the rich Christmas cakes that would grace tables during the cold winter months. This joyful gathering symbolised abundance, gratitude and the spirit of community, a celebration of nature's bounty and the warmth of togetherness.

At the *Crown Plaza*, the atmosphere was filled with excitement and laughter as guests rolled up their sleeves and joined in the festive fun. The delightful aromas of dried fruits, fragrant spices and rich spirits filled the air, creating an inviting and warm environment. This year's theme of an *English Countryside Christmas* was beautifully reflected in the décor, featuring the traditional red, white and green colours that evoke feelings of warmth and festivity. The venue was adorned with charming elements reminiscent of the British countryside, where cosy cottages and snow-covered landscapes create a magical setting for the holiday season. This theme perfectly encapsulated the simplicity of nature, celebrating the spirit of family and community gatherings that are central to the festive season. As guests stirred the mixture, they shared stories and laughter, reinforcing the bonds of friendship and family. This camaraderie mirrored the gatherings of the past, where communities would unite to prepare for the joyous celebrations ahead. Once the mixing was complete, the cakes created during the ceremony would be set aside to mature in their rich blend of flavours, ready to be enjoyed during the Christmas festivities. The sharing of these cakes with the wider community reflects the



essence of the occasion, joy is amplified when shared with others. The *Cake Mixing Ceremony* at *Crown Plaza* embodies the essence of tradition, community and connection. In our fast-paced world, such events encourage us to pause, reflect and appreciate the simple pleasures that life offers. As attendees departed, they left not only with a sense of festivity but also with cherished memories of laughter and connection.

AT LE MERIDIEN, NEW DELHI

In recent years, *cake mixing* has become a much-anticipated ritual in the culinary calendar, where the joy of the holiday season is brought to life through the vibrant mixing of ingredients that will eventually turn into Christmas cakes. Traditionally marking the beginning of Christmas preparations, *cake-mixing* ceremonies have their roots in the mediaeval custom of feeding the Christmas cake with spirits and fruits, infusing it with rich flavours that are synonymous with the festive season. In hotels, restaurants and homes around the world, *cake mixing* symbolises warmth, joy, and a shared experience of holiday spirit. The *cake mixing* ceremony serves as a festive kick-off, celebrating togetherness and the joy of giving. This tradition often includes the blending of dried fruits, such as raisins, cherries, apricots, and

nuts, along with a blend of warming spices and a generous pour of spirits. The ingredients are then left to mature, allowing the fruits to soak in flavours, adding depth and complexity to the Christmas cakes and other holiday treats that will be shared with family and friends. Each year, *Le Meridien New Delhi* joins in this timeless tradition, creating a unique and memorable experience for guests and locals alike. This year, the hotel launched its *#WinterOfJoy* celebration with a magical *cake mixing* ceremony at their elegant venue, *Longitude*. The event drew food enthusiasts, media, and hotel guests together, where they witnessed the rhythmic blending of exotic fruits, spices, and luxurious ingredients, building anticipation for the holiday treats that await. *Meena Bhatia*, Vice President and General Manager of *Le Meridien New Delhi*, remarked on the occasion, “We are thrilled to embark on our *#WinterOfJoy* celebration with this heart-warming timeless tradition. We invite everyone to join us in experiencing a symphony of flavours, sights, and sounds as we embark on a festive journey.” The *cake-mixing* ceremony at *Le Meridien New Delhi* symbolises more than just the beginning of Christmas preparations; it represents a celebration of life, tradition and community.



Envision a captivating tale of luxury and sophistication in the heart of Hong Kong: This exquisite five-star harbour front gem has been a beacon of elegance since its inception over a decade ago, hosting a prestigious clientele of celebrities, dignitaries, and CEOs. Its allure knows no bounds, boasting flawless service, state-of-the-art amenities, and a culinary experience that is simply unparalleled.

LUXURY CONVERGE AT HONG KONG

HARBOUR VIEWS, URBAN VIBES

Nestled against the stunning backdrop of Victoria Harbour, with the vibrant pulse of Hong Kong Island at its core, Four Seasons Hong Kong effortlessly combines opulence with convenience. Step outside to breath-taking views of the harbour, while being seamlessly connected to the glamour of the IFC mall via air-conditioned walkways. Stroll along these pathways to access the Central Ferry and Star Ferry piers, the bustling Central business district, the Macau ferry terminal, as well as the Airport Express and Central MTR subway station. A flawless fusion of luxury and accessibility awaits at this unforgettable destination. As I approach the hotel's majestic entrance, I am immediately enveloped by the brilliance of its gleaming surfaces and soaring three-story windows, illuminated by the warm embrace of the sunlight. It feels as though I am stepping directly into the vibrant heart of the harbour itself. I find the hustle and bustle of people-watching utterly delightful—there are elegantly attired billionaires in Ferragamos gliding gracefully across the polished marble, while men in dark suits engage in hushed, intense negotiations, their powerful presence palpable. The air is rich with accents from around the globe, creating a symphony of cultures converging in this one place. Settling into



the Glass Room lobby lounge with a steaming cup of coffee in hand, I immerse myself in the spectacle of Hong Kong at its glamorous, cosmopolitan best.

INDULGE IN LUXURY

Stepping into my superior harbour front suite feels like entering a serene sanctuary bathed in natural light. The elegance of the space is unmistakable, with its clean, contemporary lines and a harmonious palette of neutral tones. I am instantly drawn to the inviting textures—the pale gold lozenge-patterned headboard, the sleek glossy lacquer cabinetry, and the softly striped carpeting that added warmth beneath my feet. The sumptuous bed beckons, flanked by high-tech panels equipped with sockets, USB ports, and intuitive touch-button controls for lighting and curtains, making it easy to transition from day to night. The bathroom is a lavish escape, adorned in rich honey marble that tempted me to



Experience an unparalleled luxury at the prestigious harbour front 'Four Seasons' hotel in Hong Kong, where elegance meets world-class amenities and panoramic views of Victoria Harbour, writes **AKANKSHA DEAN**



indulge in long, relaxing soaks. As a guest with access to a suite, I also enjoy the privilege of the Four Seasons remarkable 45th-floor Executive Club Lounge. It is an absolute delight, offering complimentary breakfast and afternoon tea, along with all-day refreshments, including beer, wine, soft drinks, and hot beverages. As evening approaches, the lounge transforms into a vibrant social space, serving champagne, cocktails, and a delightful array of both hot and cold buffet options—truly one of the city's best-kept secrets.

SIP, SAVOUR, CELEBRATE

The Four Seasons is an extraordinary culinary haven, boasting an impressive eight Michelin stars spread across three of its exceptional restaurants. I am fortunate enough to indulge in Lung King Heen, the first three-Michelin-star Chinese restaurant, delivering exceptional Cantonese cuisine through teamwork, quality ingredients, and outstanding hospitality, presenting

each dish as a masterpiece. Caprice, under Chef Guillaume Galliot, masterfully blends classic French cuisine with global influences, showcasing fresh ingredients, inventive techniques, and an exceptional wine and cheese selection for a remarkable dining experience. The French fine dining restaurant mesmerises me with a stunning visual and culinary symphony, also graced with three stars. Then there is the renowned Sushi Saito, where the expertise of Japanese seafood truly shines, earning its well-deserved two stars. Each morning, I savour a sumptuous international breakfast served in The Lounge on the ground floor. The offerings are nothing short of delightful: a vibrant selection of tropical fruits, delicate dim sum, eggs cooked to order, and an endless array of breads and pastries that set a luxurious tone for the day ahead. In the evenings, I discovered cocktail bar Argo, one of the world's best bars, presenting a new cocktail menu featuring 12 creations that celebrate familiar Hong Kong fruits and botanicals, showcasing their versatility. Its deco-inspired interior of glass and mirrors creates an enchanting atmosphere as I relish some sensational mixology. The Silver Fox, a remarkable concoction featuring Havana Club rum, fig leaf, oak lactone cordial, preserved lemon, and tonka, feels like drinking a piece of bliss. Each moment at The Four Seasons Hong Kong is a celebration of the finest flavours and experiences.



— The author is an independent food & travel writer, a chef and a catalyst and is the first Indian to have trained at Osteria Francescana, in Modena, Italy, rated as the world's best restaurant in the World's 50 Best Restaurants, in 2016 and 2018 and currently in the Best of The Best Category

Discovering the World's True Essence

In a landmark celebration, Mercure Hotels recently unveiled its 1,000th address worldwide at Mercure Dubai Deira last month. This flagship location introduced the innovative '1,000-Hours of Local Flavours,' a 42-day culinary experience designed to showcase the rich tapestry of local food and beverages. This initiative underscores Mercure's commitment to unveiling the authentic tastes of each destination.

By **RUPALI DEAN**

Since its inception in 1973, Mercure has been a champion of wanderlust, inviting globetrotters to embrace their inner local in every corner of the world. With a footprint spanning 65 countries and boasting 1,000 distinctive addresses, Mercure is dedicated to enveloping guests in a tapestry of local charm while upholding the highest hospitality standards.



EMBRACING COMMUNITY THROUGH CUISINE

I was absolutely delighted to join the celebration at Mercure Dubai Deira for the grand occasion of their 1,000th hotel opening worldwide. With 1,000 locations under its belt, Mercure's mid-scale brand truly excels in forging authentic connections to local cultures around the globe. The evening's theme, 'Discover Local Elements,' set the stage for an exquisite culinary experience brimming with dishes crafted from locally sourced ingredients. The standout moment for me was savouring the cinnamon-infused UAE rack of lamb, clay-cooked to perfection, delivering unmatched tenderness and flavour. For dessert, we indulged in a delicious pistachio honey cake—a refreshing take on the beloved pistachio chocolate trend. To heighten the excitement, we got a sneak peek at the '1,000 Local Flavours' menu, launched on 1st November and delighting taste buds for 42 days. A highlight was

the desert salad, featuring the iconic ghaf leaves of the UAE, a beautiful homage to local culture and heritage. This gathering not only celebrated Mercure's unwavering commitment to showcasing local flavours but also strengthened community connections in a vibrant and fulfilling way. Paul Stevens, the chief operating wizard at Accor for the premium, midscale, and economy realms across the Middle East, Africa, and Türkiye, exclaimed, "Hitting the 1,000-address mark isn't just a number; it's a vibrant badge of Mercure's unwavering commitment to authentic, locally-inspired hospitality around the globe! The '1,000-Hours of Local Flavours' is a delightful dive into cultural richness and community bonds, whisking guests away on a culinary



adventure that truly captures the heart and soul of each destination. And the excitement doesn't stop there—Mercure is rolling out the welcome mat for over 200 new hotels by 2028!"

SUSTAINABLE LUXURY REDEFINED

Julia Schamme, cluster general manager, has truly transformed Mercure Dubai Deira into a beacon of sustainability since its January opening. With an unwavering commitment to eco-friendly practices, the hotel has embraced compostable materials, bid farewell to plastics, and ensures guests enjoy unlimited, filtered water right in their rooms. The garden-to-table concept in the main restaurant beautifully showcases partnerships with local suppliers, including Hatta's Honeybee Farm, emphasising our dedication to sustainability. Nearly half of the menu is dedicated to delightful plant-based options, underlining our focus on health and environmental care. Moreover, Mercure's diverse team, representing 31 nationalities, embodies the 'heartist' spirit, highlighted by strong female leadership in critical roles such as HR and rooms management. The changes instigated under Julia's guidance reflect a holistic approach to hospitality, integrating sustainability and inclusivity at every level.

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN FUTURE AHEAD

Having learned about the hotel's future

I am truly excited about what lies ahead! The focus remains firmly on members, ensuring their needs are never overlooked. "The fantastic feedback we've received from our loyal Accor members speaks volumes about our robust loyalty programme. In fact, we rank among the top contributors in terms of member stays and direct bookings, thanks to Mercure's well-recognised and widespread brand. As one of the largest and fastest-growing mid-scale brands, we thrive on strong storytelling and high standards. Looking forward, we're committed to enhancing our personalised approach for members, providing them with dedicated attention and individual spaces," shares Julia Schamme. Accor is also eager to increase their community contributions, which is essential for them as a group. Additionally, they are exploring ways to deepen their involvement in charity work, allowing them to give back in significant ways. Their vision is to become the go-to spot for the community, whether it's for a cosy cup of coffee or laundry services. They want to be a place where neighbours can comfortably connect to Wi-Fi or hold quick meetings. Ultimately, the goal is to be the neighbourhood hub where everyone feels at home, capturing the essence of 'Discover Local' for the community.

— Awarded the "Best food writer in the country" by the Indian culinary forum, WACS and the Ministry of Tourism, Rupali Dean writes on food and travel

the pioneer agenda

"A recipe has no soul. You, as the cook, must bring soul to the recipe" - Thomas Keller



FOODBREAK



Pawan Soni
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards



Exciting culinary happenings continue to enrich NCR's food scene, with innovative pop-ups and eateries introducing diverse menus. The latest buzz? The celebrated London-based chain *Burger & Lobster* has brought its famous flavours to Delhi with an exclusive pop-up at *Grappa, Shangri-La Eros Hotel*. As a seafood enthusiast, I couldn't resist the allure of this pop-up, and I'm thrilled to say it didn't disappoint. These aren't the usual *lobsters* found locally, which primarily offer meat in the tail. Instead, these are exquisite *Atlantic lobsters flown* in from Canada, boasting sweet, chunky meat in both the claws and the tail. For the uninitiated, their texture and flavour might even be mistaken for crab—but one bite will make their unique charm unmistakable. Served steamed or grilled, these *lobsters* are paired with a delightful *lemon butter garlic sauce* that compliments their natural sweetness without overpowering it. Every bite was pure indulgence. Priced at ₹5,800, they're a luxurious yet fairly priced treat, especially given the five-star ambiance. The European-style patio

LOBSTERS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT GRAPPA POP-UP



(Left to right): Abhishek Sadhoo, General Manager, Shangri-La Eros New Delhi; Chef Brian Chang, Corporate Development Chef, Burger and Lobster and Chef Gagandeep Singh Sawhney, Executive Chef, Shangri-La Eros New Delhi

seating overlooking lush greenery further elevates the experience. For those who crave a pasta twist, the *Lobster Mac & Cheese* is a must-try. Even as someone who typically steers clear of pasta, I found it irresistible. Rich with *lobster meat* and coated in a decadent three-cheese sauce blended with *lobster bisque*, the dish is creamy and perfectly balanced. At ₹1,800, it's a satisfying portion worth every rupee. The menu also offers a variety of burgers. I shared the *Waffle Chicken Burger* with a friend, and it was a delightful surprise. A *crispy fried chicken thigh* nestled in a Belgian waffle and drizzled with ranch sauce, simple yet satisfying. If you're intrigued, don't wait too long. Book your slot before this pop-up ends, or you might find yourself chasing these lobsters all the way to London!



WAACK GIRLS : WAACKING ITS WAY WITH HEART-PUMPING & FOOT-STOMPING DRAMA

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

PLOT

Waack Girls is a dance drama film that revolves around a group of young dancers who come together to form a dance crew. The movie follows their journey as they prepare to compete in a prestigious dance competition. Along the way, they face various challenges, including personal conflicts, financial struggles, and self-doubt. *Waack Girls* follows Ishani (played by Mekhola Bose), a talented Math student from Kolkata, who gains a new passion for life after finding the energetic dance style of waacking. With her diverse team found throughout The City Of Joy, along with new manager Lopa (played by Rytasha Rathore), she explores the underground dance world, moving closer to becoming well-known. Spanning nine episodes, the show delves into the search for self-identity through dance, yet struggles to uphold a cohesive level of storytelling. Ishani's grandfather (played by actor Barun Chanda), is the central focus of her personal life as he struggles with the initial symptoms of dementia. The show also explores the backgrounds of Ishani's team members, but only briefly touches on their pasts. Tess (played by Chrisann Pereira) faces challenges with her mother's (played by Lillete Dubey) gambling addiction, Michke (played by Priyam Saha) deals with her mother's constant nagging and Anumita (played by Ruby Sah) wrestles with being a gymnast aspiring to dance. Ishani's friend LP (played by Anasua Chowdhury), who is a fashion designer struggling with financial difficulties, brings some moments of joy, but their storylines are hurried, making viewers want more depth.

HIGHLIGHTS

The *Waack Girls* series is a captivating and energetic show that showcases the journey of a vibrant dance crew. The series follows these girls as they navigate their passion for dance, overcome challenges, and pursue their dreams. With its inspirational storyline, the show is able to motivate and uplift its viewers. The show fea-



tures high-energy dance performances that blend elements of waacking, voguing, and hip-hop. They are a talented and dynamic group of young women who embody empowerment, self-expression and body positivity. Their strong female leads and authentic portrayal of friendships make the show relatable and engaging. Throughout the series, they face various obstacles and challenges, but they consistently demonstrate resilience, determination, and teamwork. Their ability to overcome adversity is a testament to the power of friendship and perseverance.

DRAWBACKS

Despite its impressive style, the series

sometimes struggles, becoming weak in certain areas by depending on familiar emotional patterns instead of originality, and featuring some repetitive storylines. The editing and cinematography, while visually appealing, sometimes feel inconsistent and lacking in polish, here and there. However, Taraporevala's directing skillfully juggles light-hearted moments with the show's deeper themes, showcasing subtlety and strength in handling the six interconnected lives.

PERFORMANCES

Mekhola Bose gives a sincere and genuine portrayal of Ishani, exuding a genuine charm that feels new and real. She

depicts the character's complex challenges well - juggling intelligence, money problems and the emotional burden of looking after her grandfather - all while craving the liberation of waacking. Mekhola, granddaughter of the iconic Soumitra Chatterjee, effectively portrays Ishani's experiences, allowing the audience to connect with her happiness and sorrows. Her interactions with the incomparable Barun Chanda evoke a warm feeling and stay with you. Rytasha Rathore, in the role of Lopa, effectively embodies her character on screen. She effortlessly maneuvers through periods of self-doubt, surges of confidence and emotional breakdowns. No matter if she is struggling with inner doubts or exuding a confident and

unapologetic vibe, her performance comes across as authentic and easy to connect with. Barun Chanda and Lillete Dubey are consistently excellent, just like Chrisann Pereira and Priyam Saha.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The girls experience has its moments of peak performance. The problems have always been present, yet there is a certain novelty in how they are presented. A show about females, created by a female...Director Sooni Taraporevala has done a good job. The depiction of Kolkata shines in the series. The cinematography beautifully showcases the city's character, from its lively streets to the charming Bow

Barracks. Yet, a few Bengali figures succumb to overused stereotypes, diminishing the genuineness of the otherwise vibrant backdrop. The show also incorporates various subplots alongside its main storyline, with some being successful while others are not as engaging. They do add some humorous moments, but ultimately do not effectively connect to the overall story.

VERDICT

Waack Girls is a vibrant and captivating series showcasing dance's beauty and the strength of female friendships. With its inspiring storyline, talented cast and stunning cinematography, the show is a compelling watch. However, it's not without its flaws, as it sometimes relies on familiar emotional patterns and repetitive storylines, preventing it from reaching its full potential. Despite these drawbacks, the series remains a heartwarming and engaging exploration of female empowerment, self-expression and the power of dance. With some refinement in its narrative and technical aspects, *Waack Girls* could have been a truly unforgettable viewing experience. Nevertheless, it's still a worthwhile watch for anyone looking for a uplifting and energetic drama.

CREATED & DIRECTED BY:
Padma Shri awardee Sooni Taraporevala

CO-WRITTEN BY: Sooni, Iyanah Bativala and Ronny Sen

PRODUCED BY:
Caleb Franklin, Vikesh Bhutani and Sooni Taraporevala

CAST: Mekhola Bose, Rytasha Rathore, Anasua Chowdhury, Chrisann Pereira, Priyam Saha, Ruby Sah, Achintya Bose, Barun Chanda, Lillete Dubey and the late Nitesh Pandey.

RATING: 3.5/5

LONG-LASTING, MOISTURISING FRUITY SQUEEZE TINTS

INNISFREE introduces the all-new Fruity Squeeze Tints, designed to give your lips a glossy, hydrating glow with each application. Infused with the innovative Shine Coating System, these tints boast 30% added moisture content, ensuring your lips stay hydrated, soft and luminous, throughout the day.



BROW PERFECTION MADE EASY

The Anastasia Beverly Hills Brow Definer is your go-to all-in-one tool for perfectly sculpted brows. Its triangular tip offers three edge sizes for defining, filling and detailing with ease, while the wax-pigment formula ensures smooth application and seamless blending. Featuring a soft, custom spoolie for precise finishing, it comes in shades like soft brown, medium brown, dark brown, chocolate, ash brown, ebony and granite, catering to a variety of brow tones.

Price: INR 2700



SHIELD YOUR LIPS WITH WINTER CHILLS

As winter approaches, many of us start to feel the effects of colder temperatures on our skin—dryness, flakiness and that tight, uncomfortable feeling. TNW Lip Serum is enriched with a highly nourishing formula. This lip care product has a smooth texture that easily gets absorbed into your lips, making them soft and moisturised for a long time.

Price: Rs 420

HAND-CRAFTED EYEWEAR COLLECTION

Coco Leni's collection features frames for glasses and sunglasses handmade by women artisans from Goa. Made from sustainable materials like bio-acetate, ethically sourced buffalo horns and eco-friendly alternatives to traditional plastics.



READY TO SMELL LIKE A DREAM?

The ultimate pocket perfume by Blur India are compact babies that can be carried wherever you go and glide on effortlessly, making them perfect for on-the-go touchups. They last longer than traditional perfumes and their lasting power further increases in the winters, making these a perfect.

5-IN-1 HAIR CARE

The Dreame AirStyle 5-in-1 Hair Care and Styling System is a versatile hair care tool with attachments for drying, smoothing, curling and volumising. Its advanced technology minimises heat damage while ensuring sleek results. This product is ideal for individuals looking for professional-grade styling tools at an affordable price during the sale.

Sale price: 18,999/-



MINI MASABA

Amid pregnancy cravings and late-night hustle, Masaba Gupta's little one was about to make her official debut—and so was Mini Masaba! Between snacking on pomegranate and dahi and using her own belly jelly, Masaba prepped for a brand launch while juggling a growing bump. She says, Mini Masaba will be a celebration of motherhood, creativity and the beautiful chaos that comes with it.



SYMPHONY OF STYLE AND SPARKLE

Heera—The Jewellery Trunk introduced the Modern Muse Collection, a dazzling lineup of jewellery that's as bold, chic and versatile as you are. Crafted in sterling silver and 14k gold, this collection offers stunning options in rose, yellow, and white gold tones. Featuring lab-grown diamonds of D-F colour and VVS-VS clarity, these pieces brings effortless elegance to parties, gatherings and all the moments worth celebrating.



HOROSCOPE



ARIES

Stay calm in critical situations, focus on health and work, avoid overexertion, and embrace new friendships. Be mindful of relationships, and decisions. Success follows organised efforts.



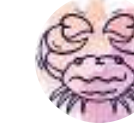
TAURUS

Seek harmony and emotional support while addressing family needs. Overcome insecurities and communicate openly. Your efforts will bring relief, stability and final success in ventures.



GEMINI

Embrace love, loyalty and job success. Overcome confusion by gaining perspective. Balance pressure with gentleness, and nurture relationships to achieve stability and fulfilment in life.



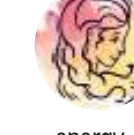
CANCER

Focus on self-improvement, rely on trusted support, and stay determined. Manage family conflicts calmly and embrace new friendships. Success and recognition will follow your hard work.



LEO

Focus on health, work organisation, and refreshing your mind. Embrace unexpected love and career opportunities. Stay firm amid changes and adapt to new environments for success.



VRIGO

Embrace setbacks, remain bold and harness creative energy. Overcome distress with positivity and succeed in business. Get independence from your family to tide over future challenges.



LIBRA

Balance relationships with gentleness and humility. Embrace love and foster family happiness. Overcome challenges with confidence. New career shifts will bring stability and security.



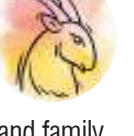
SCORPIO

Stay calm amidst mental strain. Focus on moneymaking, take up fruitful projects and enjoy rejuvenation. Adapt to new changes, seek expert advice and cherish travel opportunities.



SAGITTARIUS

Embrace harmony, nurture family bonds, and stay persistent with projects. Your optimism, love and cooperation ensure relationship stability. Let generosity guide joyful experiences.



CAPRICORN

There will be unexpected connections and beauty. Overcome setbacks with willpower and family support. Balance emotions, and secure career success through persistence for growth.



AQUARIUS

Stay open to others' ideas, balance energy and emotions, and seek advice before making changes. Patience will bring appreciation, while hard work leads to success and growth.



PISCES

Stay calm in critical situations, communicate openly and embrace love and support. Control unhealthy habits, offer guidance to others, and think carefully before making changes.

'MUSIC'S POWER TO EVOKE EMOTIONS REFLECTS IN MY PERFORMANCE'



With every note, he touches hearts; with every lyric, he speaks directly to the soul. Step into the symphony of B Praak's world, where every melody tells a story and every note resonates with the human experience. The Pioneer presents a heart-to-heart chat with India's beloved singer-composer, unraveling the threads of his musical genius and the heart that beats behind it

His songs are a masterpiece in emotional storytelling, weaving a sonic tapestry that wraps around the heart, squeezing tightly, and releasing a cascade of feelings. His soulful voice, infused with vulnerability and depth, has an uncanny ability to tap into the human experience, resonating with the joys, sorrows and triumphs that make us uniquely human. With each note, he skillfully excavates the complexities of love, loss and longing, crafting melodies that echo the whispers of our own hearts.

Well, to prove this is the *Saari Duniya Jalaa Denge*, the climax song from the Ranbir Kapoor starrer *Animal*. While it was all action, punches and kicks, his voice certainly made the climax so compelling that it would be wrong to say that anyone would have not been in tears.

His music career has been earnest to his passion and dedication. With a voice that resonates deeply with audiences, he has successfully transitioned from being a music composer and producer to a playback singer. And here, we have the star of the day here with us, as he

reflects, "I've always believed that music has the power to evoke emotions and my performances are a testament to that. Every song I've sung carries an emotional element that resonates deeply with my audience, regardless of whether it's a love ballad or a melancholic tune."

Whether you're rejoicing or grieving, B Praak's songs have an unparalleled power to evoke emotions, validate feelings and provide solace – a testament to the transformative magic of music that transcends words, speaks directly to the soul and connects us all in ways both seen and unseen.

For the *Maana Dil Da* crooner, spirituality plays a pivotal role in his life. "I firmly believe in maintaining a strong

connection with God. It provides solace amidst life's uncertainties." He stresses the importance of unwavering faith and devotion, believing that positivity and sincere prayers yield blessings.

As a singer, he is extremely selective about the projects he takes on. "My team and I prioritise content above all, ensuring that the song has longevity," he explains. He admires individuals from various industries who strive for excellence and in fact, he is particularly fond of South Indian music. "Growing up, I've been enamored with South Indian music and I still cherish it," he shares. When he received the opportunity to sing a Telugu track, he was immediately captivated. "Recording it was challenging yet enjoyable, taking eight hours to perfect every word." Well, for the unaware, our B Praak paaji was the voice behind *Suryudivo Chandrudivo* from *Sarileru Neekevaru*. Oh! And also, he lent his voice for the Hindi version *Kanguva's Fire Song*.

The *Filhaal* singer's gratitude knows no bounds when he speaks of his Akshay Paaji, who has been instrumental in his career. "He's more than just a mentor – he's a blessing from God. His love and affection for me and the Punjabi community are unparalleled. He promotes talent and encourages me at every turn. His presence in my life is a testament to the power of people's blessings."

Well, getting back to his music, authenticity remains key to his music-making process. "I strive to craft songs that are real, relatable and raw," he shares. "I believe honesty and vulnerability resonate deeply with people." His ultimate goal is to create music that connects profoundly with his audience.

As he looks back on his journey, the *Kesari* artist attributes his success to a combination of blessings, hard work and loved ones' support. "I'm committed to staying true to my art and spreading love and positivity through my music," he affirms.

With his soulful voice and heartfelt compositions, he continues to captivate audiences worldwide. His dedication to his craft and his faith serves as an inspiration to many, cementing his position as one of Bollywood's most beloved singers.



“ EVERY SONG I'VE SUNG CARRIES AN EMOTIONAL ELEMENT THAT RESONATES DEEPLY WITH MY AUDIENCE, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER IT'S A LOVE BALLAD OR A MELANCHOLIC TUNE ”

TEJAL SINHA
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With a voice that tugs at heartstrings and compositions that resonate deeply, B Praak has established himself as one of India's most celebrated singers and music composers. His soulful voice has become synonymous with emotional depth, effortlessly conveying the complexities of the human heart through his music. With every rendition, he breathes life into lyrics, transcending mere melody and speaking directly to the soul. As a gifted singer and music composer, his distinctive sound has captivated audiences, earning him a revered place in the Indian music industry. With a remarkable discography that spans chart-topping Punjabi hits and iconic Bollywood playback singles including *Mam Bharrya*, *Filhaal*, *Baarish Ki Jaaye*, *Kesari*, *Maana Dil*, *Heer Aasmani* and *Saari Duniya Jalaa Denge*, to name a few out of many from the endless list, is enough for one to get pretty much engrossed into the song.

His journey, the *Mukke Paye Si* singer says, has been nothing short of blessed. "I'm overwhelmed with gratitude and feel humbled by the opportunities that have come my way." From composing music for films to lending his voice to soul-stirring tracks, his growth has been remarkable.

TRENDING

LIONEL MESSI



PERSON
Kerala Sports Minister V Abdurahiman on Wednesday (November 20, 2024) revealed that the Argentina football team, including legendary player Lionel Messi, will visit Kerala next year (2025) for an international match.

A HEART-WARMING MEET

VIDEO
For the first time ever, the world's shortest woman, Jyoti Amge, meets the tallest woman, Rumeysa Gelgi, in an inspiring encounter that has captivated audiences globally.



THE SABARMATI REPORT



MOVIE
The much-anticipated film *The Sabarmati Report* has sparked considerable discussion following its release. The Uttar Pradesh government, Haryana and many other states declared it tax-free due to its controversial connection with the 2002 Godhra riots, further fueling its national conversation.

PAYAL

SONG
This week, the vibrant track *Payal* has been making waves with its energetic beats. Composed by the renowned Yo Yo Honey Singh and featuring poignant lyrics by Paradox, the music video, directed by Mihir Gulati, has become a fan favourite.



ONE DIRECTION'S EMOTIONAL REUNION



PICTURE
A heart-wrenching final farewell was given to Liam Payne, the British artist, at a private funeral attended by his family and bandmates.

Silent menace: Unmasking the rising threat of stomach cancer in India

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Imagine feeling a nagging discomfort after meals— bloating, heartburn, or a stubborn bout of indigestion. You brush it off, thinking it's something you ate. But what if these everyday nuisances are whispers of something far more sinister? Stomach cancer, often called the "silent killer," hides in plain sight, its symptoms blending seamlessly with common digestive woes. Early warning signs like unexplained weight loss, nausea, fatigue, or even a persistent loss of appetite can be easy to ignore. Why does this disease stay so well-hidden, and what can we do to catch it in time? Stomach cancer remains one of the most challenging cancers to diagnose and treat, often because its symptoms mimic common digestive issues. Dr. Prathyusha, associate consultant in medical oncology at Sparsh Hospital, sheds light on its complexities, from the most prevalent types to groundbreaking treatment options and the role of stress in its progression. The majority of stomach cancer cases are adenocarcinomas, but they're not all the same. "Adenocarcinoma comes in two primary forms—intestinal and diffuse," explains Dr. Prathyusha. The intestinal type is closely tied to environmental factors, such as *Helicobacter pylori* infection and dietary choices. "When detected early, it offers a better prognosis due to its slower progression," she adds. "This type progresses rapidly and is harder to manage, resulting in a poorer prognosis." Less common types, such as gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GISTs) and lymphomas, require specialised treatments and can have varying outcomes depending on how early they are diagnosed. Surgery remains the cornerstone of treatment for early-stage stomach cancer, but techniques like laparoscopy and robotic surgery are transforming recovery times and outcomes. "For advanced stages, perioperative chemotherapy has become standard, improving survival rates," says Dr. Prathyusha.

Survival Rates by Stage:
Stage I (Early-stage): Five-year survival rates are around 60-70%, often with curative surgery alone.
Stage II & III (Locally advanced): These stages see survival rates drop to 30-50%, with a combination of

surgery and chemotherapy being key.

Stage IV (Metastatic): Survival is less than 10%, as treatment focuses on extending life and improving quality. "Early detection through routine screenings and increased awareness is crucial to improving these outcomes," she emphasises. Though stress doesn't directly cause stomach cancer, it can significantly influence its progression. "Chronic stress weakens the immune system and promotes inflammation, creating a favorable environment for cancer growth," explains Dr. Prathyusha.

Dr. Mansi Khanderia, lead consultant in medical oncology at SS Sparsh Hospital, further delves into the overlooked symptoms, contributing factors and the role of genetics in understanding and addressing this formidable disease. Persistent indigestion, mild abdominal discomfort, bloating and feeling full quickly are some early warning signs. Unexplained weight loss and fatigue from anemia caused by chronic blood loss are other indicators. Unfortunately, these symptoms are frequently overlooked, especially in older adults or individuals with risk factors. "Patient awareness and routine check-ups are crucial," says Dr. Mansi, adding that timely evaluation can lead to early detection and significantly improve treatment outcomes. Dr. Khanderia explains that one major culprit is *Helicobacter pylori* infection, which exacerbates mucosal damage over time. Compounding factors like smoking, alcohol consumption and prolonged NSAID use amplify this risk. "Treating the underlying causes of chronic gastritis or ulcers and regular monitoring, especially in older adults, are essential to prevent progression to stomach cancer," she advises. As a Group 1 carcinogen identified by the World Health Organisation, *H. pylori* infection is a significant contributor to gastric cancer. "It causes chronic inflammation, disrupts the stomach lining and induces precancerous changes," Dr. Khanderia explains. The infection is particularly risky for individuals with a genetic predisposition or additional factors such as poor diet or chronic gastritis. Prevention strategies include routine screening in high-risk populations, timely eradication therapy using antibiotics and improved hygiene to reduce transmission. "High-risk individuals, such as those with a family history of gastric cancer or chronic gastritis, should undergo regular

The rise in stomach cancer highlights the urgent need to address lifestyle habits, dietary choices, and chronic stress. As The Pioneer connects with experts, they emphasise early detection, personalised treatments and awareness as key to combating this formidable disease.

HEALTH TALK



endoscopic surveillance," she advises. Additional diagnostic methods include testing for *H. pylori*, checking serum pepsinogen levels and using CT scans for staging. The role of genetics in stomach cancer is profound. "A family history of stomach cancer significantly increases risk, especially with inherited genetic mutations like those in the CDH1 gene," explains Dr. Khanderia. Hereditary diffuse gastric cancer (HDGC) and syndromes like Lynch syndrome or familial adenomatous polyposis further elevate the likelihood of developing the disease. Genetic counseling and early screening are crucial for individuals with a strong family history. Preventive strategies include regular endoscopies, dietary modifications and *H. pylori* eradication. "For those with a genetic predisposition, vigilance is key to catching the disease early or preventing its onset altogether," she concludes. Priya Paliwal, chief dietitian at Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, sheds light on how dietary habits influence stomach cancer risk, what to eat to lower it, and how to navigate nutrition during treatment. High salt intake and processed foods are two of the biggest dietary offenders when it comes to stomach cancer risk. "Excessive salt damages the stomach lining, making it more vulnerable to *H. pylori* infection, a major risk factor for gastric cancer," explains Paliwal. Processed foods, often laden with nitrates and nitrites, convert into carcinogenic compounds during digestion. These diets are also deficient in protective antioxidants and fiber. "The solution lies in fresh, unprocessed foods, moderate sodium levels, and staying hydrated," she advises. She highlights cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, vitamin C-packed fruits and foods rich in selenium and beta-carotene as particularly protective due to their antioxidant properties. Fermented foods such as yogurt and kimchi help maintain a healthy gut microbiome. "Red and processed meats, as well as smoked or pickled foods, should be limited," she warns. Anti-inflammatory ingredients like turmeric and ginger can also soothe the gastric irritation. The journey through stomach cancer treatment comes with its own nutritional challenges. "High-protein foods like eggs, legumes and lean meats aid in tissue repair and energy recovery," she says. Ginger and peppermint are natural remedies for nausea, while small, frequent meals ease digestive strain. Antioxidant-rich foods like berries, spinach and nuts help combat oxidative stress from chemotherapy. Probiotics such as yogurt and kefir support gut health, which is often disrupted during treatment. "Hydration is crucial," she adds, suggesting soups, smoothies

and herbal teas as easy-to-consume options. From a nutritional standpoint, alcohol and smoking exacerbate the risk of stomach cancer. "Alcohol irritates the stomach lining and amplifies the carcinogenic effects of nitrosamines in smoked and processed foods," Paliwal explains. Smoking not only reduces stomach acid production, disrupting digestion, but also decreases the bioavailability of nutrients like vitamin C, further compounding the risk. "Quitting both habits and adopting a nutrient-rich diet is crucial to reduce gastric damage and overall cancer risk," she emphasises. Fasting and detox diets are often touted as miracle solutions, but their role in stomach cancer prevention or management is limited. "While intermittent fasting may reduce inflammation and support cellular repair, extreme fasting or detox diets can deprive the body of essential nutrients," Paliwal warns. For those managing stomach cancer, nutritional stability is key. "Malnutrition can worsen outcomes, so rather than restrictive diets, focus on a balanced diet rich in antioxidants, whole foods, and adequate hydration," she suggests. Always consult a healthcare professional before making significant dietary changes. Your plate is a powerful tool in the fight against stomach cancer. Meanwhile, according to Dr. Aravind Badiger, Technical Director, BDR Pharmaceuticals, as the urbanisation accelerates, so do sedentary lifestyles. Long working hours, limited physical activity and growing reliance on fast and processed foods have become common, particularly in urban areas. "These foods are often high in refined sugars, unhealthy fats and preservatives, all of which are linked to cancer due to their carcinogenic potential," notes Dr. Badiger. Modern, fast-paced lifestyles come with a toll—chronic stress. Beyond its psychological impact, stress triggers physiological changes like increased inflammation and weakened immunity, both of which can contribute to cancer development. "Stress often drives unhealthy coping mechanisms like overeating or consuming convenience foods, which are low in nutritional value and high in cancer risks," says Dr. Badiger. "Routine screenings and preventive check-ups are scarce, leading to late-stage diagnoses and poorer outcomes," Dr. Badiger emphasises. The rise in stomach cancer in India underscores the urgent need to address modern lifestyle habits, dietary practices, and chronic stress. "By adopting healthier choices and fostering awareness, we can reduce the burden of stomach cancer and improve quality of life," concludes Dr. Badiger.

A STANDOUT SHUTTTLER



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS IN BADMINTON

For me, badminton wasn't always about a career path or an ambitious goal; it was more of a family inheritance, passed down by my father. Dad used to play badminton. In my growing years, I would play, not so much to secure a future in sports, but to secure a spot on my classmates' radar. Upon winning tournament after tournament, my photographs would show up in the papers, giving me the perfect excuse to flaunt a bit. It was fun back then (laughs). After that, I developed an interest in the sport and began playing with Dad whenever he went out to play with his pals. I attended a summer camp for the first time when I was ten years old and I picked up the fundamentals quickly. I was able to participate in tournaments over the first six months, which provided me the courage to continue playing the game.

MY FATHER IS MY MENTOR

Since there wasn't much exposure when I was growing up in Thiruvananthapuram, I didn't have any role models. However, my dad used to send me a lot of CDs when I was a kid so I could watch the best musicians. I used to imitate those early role models, such as Indonesian Taufiq Hidayat. Apart from that, everything was patterned after my dad's ways because, to me, he was the only person who had any knowledge of badminton at that time. Aside from that, I had no idea what was going on in the nation, and until I was around 15 or 16, I had no idea who Pulella Gopichand and Prakash Padukone were. My father, throughout his 20 years in the Air Force, maintained a pretty strict lifestyle. Since teaching discipline can be very difficult and is simpler if one learns by observing others, I could learn a lot from him. And my father would just advise me to avoid cheating. He would warn me that cheating wouldn't benefit me in the long term and would simply make me happy for a short time. You will always be exposed if you cheat a few months or years later. I've always been able to do it since I was younger.



WEATHERING STORMS

As for those teenage challenges; injuries and setbacks impacted me differently at each stage of my career. At 18, every injury felt like a personal tragedy; I was restless, with a singular drive to bounce back and play. But by my mid-20s, wisdom began to set in: 'treatment, discipline, patience' - they became my tools as much as my racquet. And now, as a veteran of the court in my late 20s, I embraced the roller-coaster of professional sports with maturity. In sports, downfalls are more frequent than success stories and you have to be prepared to come back swinging each time. For me, the journey through the ups and downs of badminton has been one of constant evolution. When I first faced setbacks in my late teens, every injury felt like a crisis. At 18 or 19, patience wasn't my strong suit. The restless urge to recover quickly and return to the game often clouded my judgment, leaving me grappling with the uncertainty of how to handle the lows. At that age, you don't know what to do; you're just restless.

HIS DAILY GRIND

Even though the excitement of childhood blurs into a haze, I can fondly recall the thrill of state tournaments. National tournaments? Those were tough. But state tournaments were a blast! Winning those gave you bragging rights. Yet, it was never just about fun; it was laying the groundwork for the rigorous routine that now defines my life. Fast forward to today, my days are finely tuned for peak performance. A typical morning starts at 7:00, followed by a rigorous prep and training session from 9 to nearly noon. Then, after a break for lunch, I am back on the court by 3:30 for another round, often stretching, treating injuries and prepping until evening. Evenings are my only real downtime, as the rest of my schedule is packed with training, recovery and travel. I get the most 'free' time when I am on the road for tournaments. A few hours of training mean I can recharge mentally before hitting the court. I should be completely happy with what I accomplished after I retire from the sport. I've tried everything for that reason, including physiotherapists, trainers, mental health specialists, dietitians and breathing exercises. You don't know what's best for you, so I keep trying all those things. One thing may occasionally be the one that works for you. However, until you give someone that chance, you won't know.



CHERISHED FAMILY CONNECTIONS

For me, family is an anchor, despite the distance my career demands. I share a close, albeit unconventional, bond with my elder sister. She's completely different, no interest in sports. Though our lives rarely intersect, we maintain a unique connection, mostly through my niece, who brings me daily joy as a 'constant conversation' and a perfect stress buster. Off the court, I am as down-to-earth as they come. My off-duty days in Hyderabad are spent enjoying movies, chilling at cafes over coffee, or grabbing the rare chance for a holiday.

HIS UNFULFILLED CRICKET DREAM

But I wasn't just limited to one court. I was the quintessential sports enthusiast. Cricket almost stole my heart. If I hadn't played badminton, I'd probably be a bowler by now. Outdoors was my natural habitat, always out of the house, always swinging a bat or a racquet and never the 'good kid' sitting obediently indoors.

HISTORIC THOMAS CUP WIN!

For me, the Thomas Cup holds an irreplaceable spot in my heart. Reflecting on my journey, I rank my tournaments not by medals or prestige but by the pure, unfiltered joy they brought me. And nothing quite measured up to the thrill of winning the Thomas Cup with my teammates. No one thought India could win a team event. People used to say, 'India doesn't play as a team.' Proving everyone wrong that day - that was one of my best moments.

SHIFT FROM SCHOOL TO OPEN LEARNING

My schooling had its moment in the sun until my ninth grade. But as my interest in the game deepened and I moved to Hyderabad to train, it became clear that juggling textbooks and shuttlecocks wasn't going to be sustainable. By 11th grade, I transitioned to open schooling - a practical solution for a young athlete balancing sport and studies, though academics weren't exactly on the podium at this point.

OLYMPICS HEARTBREAK

Yet, like any athlete, my journey hasn't been without heartbreak. As for the most crushing blow, it was catching chikungunya just 20 days before the Paris Olympics - an event for which I had trained my entire life. It was brutal. To have worked so hard for years and then have something like that happen; it's hard to absorb. But instead of letting it break me, I channelled that disappointment as fuel. I told myself, I need to come back and win something big. I needed that redemption. During the 2018 World Championships, I received a diagnosis of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) - a chronic condition that manifests as inflammation of the vocal cords, chest and abdominal pain and heartburn. The same problem hindered my training and performance in 2019-2020, but I bounced back from it and the COVID-19 aftereffects to gradually and steadily reclaim my position in the top men's singles rankings.

RELOCATING TO HYDERABAD FOR STARDOM

My love for badminton transformed into a serious pursuit when I was about 16 or 17 years - an age when dreams often feel bigger than reality. It was then that I had a talk with my parents. I wasn't great at it then, but I wasn't bad either. I knew I could get better. With that fond hope, I packed my bags and moved to Hyderabad for what I thought would be a two-year trial. As it turned out, I wasn't just 'not bad'; I was set on the path to become one of India's badminton stars.

SECRETS TO MANAGING SUCCESS AND STRESS

I credit Hyderabad's renowned Gopichand Academy, which shaped me into the player I am today. Like anyone navigating a demanding career, I rely on stress relievers to recharge. Music, catching up with friends and exploring new places help me decompress. Especially now, at 28-29, you don't always want excitement. Sometimes you just want to sit, talk and unwind.



VICTORIES AND DEFEATS ARE EQUAL TEACHERS

By my mid-20s though, experience began to temper that impatience. With a bit more maturity under my belt, I learned that bouncing back meant more than simply rushing to the court. Rehab routines, precise recovery strategies and a clearer understanding of my physical limits started to become part of my toolkit. I was still itching to get back to the game, but now I understood the importance of doing it right, of preparing myself to return stronger rather than sooner. But it was in my late 20s that I had come to see the sport in its truest light. By 28 or 29, you're mature enough to know that this is just how life works in sports. I learned to accept that while the highs are exhilarating, they're rare - a moment in the spotlight amid long stretches spent under the radar. In the world of competitive sports, triumphs are fleeting, and the grind can often be relentless. You might win a big tournament once in a year or two, but most of the time, you're behind the scenes, working hard, staying steady. For me, the lows have become as much a part of the game as the victories and I have come to appreciate the journey itself, the rhythm of wins and losses, and finding purpose in perseverance.



LEARNING FROM A SLIP

I had a lot going on in my thoughts at the time I slipped, so it was challenging. I was down 4-11 and things were not going well to start. I was a little bewildered for the next five to ten minutes. Which motions should I stay away from? Will it be a terrible experience? I quickly realised that things might not get too bad because I didn't twist my ankle. I felt like I kind of slipped and that jerk happened behind my ankle and Achilles. After the slip, I didn't want the team to think that this match is gone. I was more worried about the game than I was about getting hurt. I needed to give the painkiller time to start working because I knew the agony was there. Being in the finals of such a significant event made me aware of how huge this could get. Some lunges were very difficult and it goes without saying that jumping behind was difficult as well. After that, I believe I gained some insight into what I could do differently. At the beginning of the game, I was playing pretty quickly, but after the slip, I decided to try playing more slowly due to the movements. I felt that my opponent was uncomfortable when I played slowly, so I thought it would assist me today. That day, the injury sort of provided me that chance. I would say that the 2018 Commonwealth Games were one of the most difficult days for me. When I finished without a medal after losing two matches in a single day, I can vividly recall that day; I was simply lost. At that point, Bhaiya gave me a call and I believe we chatted for almost three hours at the food court. 'You have made the effort that you truly need to,' he remarked. Simply put, sometimes the victory arrives when you least expect it and not when you wish for it. Because you fervently hoped that you would receive this medal, but you never did. Many factors led to your encounter with Lee Chong Wei at the semifinals. Sometimes, people are unaware of how remarkable he is.

CREDITS SAINA NEHWAL AND PV SINDHU FOR BADMINTON'S RISE



In my opinion, badminton has changed significantly over the past ten or so years. And since I believe they were the flag bearers, I would like to thank Saina (Nehwal) and PV (Sindhu). Saina, in particular, in my opinion, made the sport more well-known in the beginning when she sort of won those large medals that no one else could at the time. Furthermore, I believe that Sindhu was able to regularly execute performances after that. This, in my opinion, caused a significant shift in perception, particularly within the system, as people began to believe that badminton as a sport could actually accomplish this. Due to all of these two's significant victories, there was a lot of assistance in badminton. And to be honest, I believe that's why we've received a lot of support over the past 10 years, particularly from the government and other corporations. There is a lot of belief that there is potential in the sport for us to compete and win medals in the Olympics and the World Championship.

RAPID FIRE

- Describe yourself: Hard worker
- Favorite travel spot: Turkey
- Next travel spot on wishlist: New York
- Favourite colour: Blue
- Favourite cuisine: Japanese
- Sports idol: Messi
- Biggest fear: Fear of losing
- Life mantra: Just go with the flow
- Five-year vision: Playing the sport I love