

'Genome India data will help develop precision medicines'
 Acting on the orders of Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Commissioner AV Ranganath's orders, Rajapushpa Constructions has begun removing the illegally dumped mud in the Musi River near Narsingi, close to Gandipet. Two weeks ago, Commissioner Ranganath inspected the site after receiving complaints of illegal dumping and encroachment in ...

INDIA AIMS TO BOOST ORGANIC PRODUCTS EXPORTS: GOYAL
 Talking to reporters while leaving his residence to appear before the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), he denied all corruption charges and said that he was not afraid of any case. He said he has full faith in the law, courts and the Constitution.

Pragya Jaiswal: Akhanda is my life-changing FILM
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's Australia visit has been cancelled. The CM will go to New Delhi on January 14 and will remain there on January 15 and 16 to attend the AICC office inauguration. From New Delhi, the Chief Minister will go to Singapore on January 17 and spend two days in the city-state.

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The Bharti Act provides a permanent solution to land disputes in the state. Due to the Revenue Act-2020 commoners were facing many problems in Telangana. Even three years after the Act was introduced rules were not framed. There is no village in Telangana without land disputes. The BRS admin had destroyed the revenue system for its selfish interests
 - Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Minister, Telangana

DON'T MISS...

Mud removal begins in Musi

Acting on the orders of Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Commissioner AV Ranganath's orders, Rajapushpa Constructions has begun removing the illegally dumped mud in the Musi River near Narsingi, close to Gandipet. Two weeks ago, Commissioner Ranganath inspected the site after receiving complaints of illegal dumping and encroachment in ...

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'India's contribution to civilisation great'

President of Trinidad and Tobago Christine Carla Kangaloo on Thursday said India has made some of the "greatest contributions" to the world civilization in various fields such as mathematics, medicine and navigation. Addressing the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, 2025 convention virtually as the chief guest, Kangaloo said, "India's contributions to the world's development are ..."

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Adani-ISKCON to start 'Mahaprasad Seva'

The Adani Group and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) have joined hands to serve meals to devotees at the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj this year. The Mahaprasad Seva will be offered for the entire duration of the Maha Kumbh Mela, from January 13 to February 26. To thank ISKCON for this initiative, Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani on Thursday met Guru Prasad Swami, the Chairman ...

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'I think he will be the next captain'

The legendary Sunil Gavaskar is in awe of Jasprit Bumrah's leadership qualities and reckons the peerless fast bowler will succeed Rohit Sharma as the next captain of the Indian team following his extraordinary display in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Bumrah recently produced one of the best-ever bowling performances by an overseas pacer in Australia and picked 32 wickets over five Tests. He was also captain during India's only victory in the series, helping the visitors to a ...

-SPORTS

World is listening to India, says Modi

Asserting that the world today listens to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said due to the country's heritage, it is able to tell the international community that the future does not lie in 'Yudhi' (war) but in 'Budhi' (Buddha).

Addressing the diaspora at the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention here, Modi said India is not only the mother of democracy, but democracy is a part of people's lives here.

Emphasising that he has always considered the Indian diaspora as ambassadors of India, the PM expressed his joy in meeting and conversing with fellow citizens around the world and said the love and blessings he receives from them are unforgettable.

"I have always believed that our diaspora is our 'Rashtradoot', and I

FORMULA E CASE
No arrest of KTR, only questioning for 7 hrs

ACB puts 82 questions ■ Most of them were repeated: KTR

ACB sleuths asked BRS Working President KTR around 82 questions which he claimed to be questions framed by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. "Most of them were repeat questions, I asked them (ACB) where the corruption was," he said. Amid chants of 'CM CM', KTR returned to Telangana Bhavan at around 5.30 pm and got a rousing reception from BRS activists. He got a welcome at his home in Nandi Nagar too.



"The ACB officials had nothing new to ask. Just like there is 'no Mysore in Mysore Bonda,' the ACB's corruption case had no corruption in it," KTR said.

Continued on Page 2

Supreme Court refuses urgent hearing

TO TAKE UP CASE ON JAN 15
 BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) faced a setback in the Supreme Court as his plea to speed up hearing in the Formula E Race case was refused.



The case was filed by the Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB). KTR had sought an urgent quashing of the charges against him. The SC, led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna, clarified that the hearing was already scheduled for January 15 and cannot be advanced. CJI Khanna said that there was no compelling reason to justify an early hearing and dismissed the urgency raised by KTR's counsel.

Continued on Page 2

Yogita Rana is new Education Secretary

The Telangana Government has issued transfer and posting orders for IAS officers. Dr Yogita Rana, who was awaiting posting, has been appointed as the Secretary of the Education Department. This relieves N. Sridhar (IAS, 1997) who was holding the post on a Full Additional Charge (FAC) basis. K. Surendra Mohan, the Secretary of the Mines & Geology and Industries & Commerce (I&C) Department has been transferred and posted as the Commissioner of Transport.

Continued on Page 2

Sanjay to CM: Pay Aarogyasri & fee dues

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar asked Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to release Aarogyasri and fee reimbursement dues immediately. He said the approach of the Congress Government regarding education and healthcare is causing severe distress to the public.



Sanjay addressed an open letter to the CM regarding on Thursday. "The Congress Government's approach to implementing Aarogyasri and fee reimbursement schemes is like praising with words but mocking in action. On the one hand, they announced an increase

in Aarogyasri's limit to Rs 10 lakh and an expansion of healthcare services. But they have failed to pay pending bills, making healthcare services under Aarogyasri inaccessible to the public," Sanjay said.

70% of beer price in Telangana comprises taxes

United Breweries Limited (UBL) clarified that nearly 70% of the consumer price of beer in Telangana comprises state taxes, duties, VAT and other levies. The statement was issued after the suspension of supplies to the Telangana Beverages Corporation Limited (TGBCL) due to losses. The UBL emphasized that its current basic prices, which account for only 16% of the consumer price, have remained unchanged since 2019.

The company cited the rising cost of raw materials like barley, sugar and fuel, which have seen inflation of 110% over three years, making operations unsustainable.

GUV APPROVES BHU BHARATI ACT

Will come into force soon, assures Ponguleti



Revenue Department's Chief Secretary Naveen Mittal presenting a copy of the Bharti Act approved by Governor Jishnu Dev Varma to the Minister at the Secretariat on Thursday

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma has approved the Bharti Act (ROR Act-2024) and the government will bring the Act into force as soon as possible, Revenue, Housing and Information and PR Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said. The government will provide effective revenue services from now on, he added.

Ponguleti asked officials to implement the historic Bharti Act cleared by Governor Jishnu Dev Varma as soon as possible. He said the Bharti Act is being introduced to provide comprehensive revenue services to Telangana's people.

"On behalf of the government, I extend special thanks to the Governor for approving the Bharti Act to provide a permanent solution to land problems. On behalf of landown-

ers, I would like to express my special thanks to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who has provided all possible assistance to introduce this law, to all my fellow Cabinet members, public representatives, officers and staff who worked day and night, as well as to the intellectuals who gave many suggestions to enact this law. Thanks to everyone behind this law," he said.

Continued on Page 2

TIRUPATI STAMPEDE

AP orders probe, suspends 2 officials



Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday ordered a judicial inquiry into the tragic stampede incident in Tirupati that resulted in six deaths and left nearly 40 devotees injured. He also announced the suspension of several senior officials for their role in the incident, including Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Raman Kumar, and SV Gosala Director Dr. Harinath Reddy, who were directly responsible for the site's management. Additionally, three other officials — JEO Goutami, SP Subbarayudu, and CVSO Sridhar — have been transferred as part of the administrative overhaul.

- Ex gratia & compensation was announced: Rs 25 lakh for the deceased, Rs 5 lakh for the severely injured, and Rs 2 lakh for others
- Naidu assured special arrangements for injured devotees to have darshan on January 10
- The new token system in Tirupati, introduced by the previous administration, will be reviewed with Agama experts
- Naidu emphasises the importance of maintaining sanctity of Tirumala and improving the pilgrimage experience

Venkateswara on January 10, following their wishes.

Naidu explained that the stampede occurred as devotees were queuing up for Vaikuntha Dvara Darshanam tokens. He noted that the new system of issuing tokens in Tirupati, introduced by the previous government, might have contributed to the confusion. He emphasised that the system would be reviewed in consultation with Agama experts to make it more pilgrim-friendly and aligned with temple traditions.

Earlier, Naidu visited the hospi-

tal where the injured were being treated and reaffirmed his commitment to safeguarding the sanctity of Tirumala. He stressed that the TTD Board and the Administration would need to work in close coordination to ensure the safety and well-being of all pilgrims.

Ministers Anam Ram Narayana Reddy, Anitha, Satya Prasad, Satya Kumar Yadav, Parthasaradhi, Rama Naidu, along with TTD Board Chairman BR Naidu, TTD EO Syamala Rao, and other officials, were present at the press briefing.

Lady IAS officers to inspect girls' welfare hostels: CS



In a move to improve the quality of education and facilities in government girls' welfare hostels in Telangana, Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari said that women All India Services (AIS) officers will personally inspect these hostels and stay overnight there to assess conditions.

Highlighting the government's commitment, the CS said that Telangana has 540 government girls' welfare hostels catering to students from SC, ST, BC, and minority communities. The inspections are aimed at improving education standards and ensuring the supply of quality food.

Addressing a teleconference held with senior officials on Thursday,





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PAPER WITH PASSION

Breaking ice

The India-Afghanistan talks reflect India's shift from non-recognition of the Taliban to a pragmatic approach to engagement

In a significant step towards recalibrating ties, India and the Taliban-led Afghan government held a high-level meeting in Dubai. The dialogue, attended by India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Mawlavi Amir Khan Muttaqi, revolved around enhancing bilateral relations and addressing regional challenges.



gain relevance amidst regional tensions, notably Pakistan's airstrikes in Afghanistan, which New Delhi strongly condemned. This shared concern over Islamabad's destabilising actions further aligns Indian and Afghan interests, fostering mutual cooperation.

The Dubai meeting covered a wide range of topics. India reaffirmed its commitment to aiding Afghanistan's recovery. It pledged continued support in healthcare, food security, and disaster relief, building on its earlier contributions, such as 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat, medical supplies, and vaccines.

Besides, both sides emphasised the strategic importance of Chabahar Port in Iran as a key trade and humanitarian supply route. The port offers Afghanistan access to global markets, bypassing Pakistan, and could serve as a stabilising economic lifeline for the war-torn country. India has expressed readiness to resume developmental activities, including infrastructure and capacity-building projects.

PICTALK



A commuter rides his bicycle through a mustard field on a winter morning, in Nadia

Navigating Trump redux: India's tightrope



BHOPIINDER SINGH

While Trump's focus on countering China could strengthen Indo-US strategic ties, his erratic temperament and divisive policies present challenges

In India, there is a mix of excitement, tentativeness, and even concern, with the second coming of Donald Trump as the President of the United States. While Trump's excitable temperament is well known, he ought to be served better with hindsight of experience.

A lot will depend on 'Team Trump' who will aid and assist Trump as he attempts the shape his poll promises of MAGA i.e., Make America Great Again! However, unlike the first term when he did inherit and heed reputation and professionalism as the criteria for key jobs in the Trump administration (though subsequently, he developed a penchant for 'revolving door' ousters of many), this time the criteria only seem to be 'loyalty' to Trump, personally.



is' instinct embolden Beijing to finally bite the bullet on Taiwan and storm the same, knowing that beyond mouthing platitudes, Washington DC will not intervene militarily? The picture emerging out of a beleaguered (and potentially isolated) Ukraine does not seem reassuring from a security angle, as the possibility of America pushing its 'allies' under the bus, seems very plausible. Even disconcerting memories of the Summer of 2020 when the Chinese aggression pushed through Indian frontiers, with a seemingly disinterested Trump offering to 'negotiate a deal' instead of adopting a more assertive stance, are still raw.



THERE IS A DISCONCERTING AND CONTRADICTORY LOGIC TO MANY RECENT APPOINTMENTS THAT BEGS THE QUESTION IF IT INDEED WILL BE 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' - SOMETHING DELHI HAD GOT USED TO, IRRESPECTIVE OF THE DISPENSATION IN WASHINGTON DC

engagement and conversations, as the Indian democracy has its dynamics and imagined perceptions that will disallow unruly comments, even if they were to come from the USA. Adding to the complexity is the contradiction that many amongst this new Trump cabinet are trigger-happy interventionists (e.g., Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Elise Stefanik the Ambassador to UN etc.) a la neoconservatives whom Trump rubbish repeatedly - how this contradiction will manifest will be interesting.

rifying ability to shed responsibilities towards his allies (sovereign, coalition, and even personal) and also his moral responsibility by readily abandoning its vital geostrategic stakes (remember Afghanistan, and now Syria) with a thoughtless shrug of the shoulder and "not my problem" approach. This tests the will to invest in a transactional relationship like the one offered by Trump, as no support can be construed for sure.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA'S GDP GAP WITH CHINA WIDENS

Madam - An analysis of the economies done by a start-up highlights the pressing necessity to boost India's lacklustre growth. In 1980, India's Gross Domestic Product was \$186 billion, close to China's \$303 billion. But, by 2024, India's GDP had grown 21 times to \$3.93 trillion, while China's GDP had surged to \$18.5 trillion - 61 times its 1980 level.

The decade before 2004 was a period of consolidation after structural reforms were initiated. India has to rejig its economic strategy to achieve a consistent 9-10 per cent rate of growth. India chose a mixed economic system, which combines the features of both socialist and free-market economic systems. The recent push towards private investment in government-owned assets has served only as an easy route for crony capitalists to enrich themselves into billionaires.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

India's AI gets a leg-up



Modi's 'Digital India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India). The Government of India is already committed to promoting digital infrastructure, skill development, and startups.

A golden chapter has begun in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in India. The announcement by Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella to invest \$3 billion (approximately Rs 25,000 crores) marks a historic step toward elevating India's technological capabilities to new heights.

The initiative to train 10 million Indians in AI over the next five years is a significant step to prepare the youth for global competition. This effort will create new opportunities in areas such as cloud infrastructure, data centres, and SaaS (Software as a Service). With the support of the government, Indian industries and startups will become global leaders in competition.

RK Jain | Barwani

STAMPEDE AT TIRUPATI TEMPLE

Madam - Six devotees, including four women, and many injured in a stampede near Vishnu Niwasam in Tirupati for getting tokens to visit Tirumala Srivari Vaikuntha Dvara is disturbing, tragic and appalling. A huge rush for getting tokens by devotees had caused the tragedy.

An immediate investigation should be conducted into this incident. Officials should be made accountable for negligence of duty. People were accommodated in temporarily constructed compartments and neatly provided darshan. This token system is ill-advised and should be dispensed with.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

EARTHQUAKE IN TIBET

Madam - Powerful Tibet earthquake near Nepal kills 53, injures 62; tremors also felt in Bhutan and northern India, including Delhi-NCR and parts of Bihar. The impact of the temblor was felt across the region of 800,000 people, which is administered by Shigatse, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism.

Can we ever forget the havoc the Nepal earthquakes wreaked back in 2015, killing about 9,000 people, or the huge quake in China's Sichuan province in 2008 that killed almost 70,000 people? Today (on January 7, 2025), a 7.1 magnitude earthquake, near the Nepal-Tibet border, was felt in North India. India's geographical position at tectonic plate boundaries makes it prone to earthquakes, particularly in the Himalayan and Northeast regions.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

How India's healthcare sector is accelerating towards Viksit Bharat 2047



P N ARORA

As India embarks on its journey toward becoming a \$35 trillion economy by 2047, the healthcare sector emerges as a critical pillar in this transformation.

As India aims to achieve its ambitious goal of becoming a \$35 trillion economy by 2047, the healthcare sector stands as the cornerstone of this transformation. With aspirations to increase the average life expectancy from 71 to over 85, India's vision of Viksit Bharat aligns closely with the sentiment of "Swasth Bharat, Viksit Bharat, and Niramaya Bharat."

A Visionary Healthcare System As part of its vision, the government strives to establish a healthcare system capable of addressing the diverse needs of a population exceeding 1.4 billion. Not only are efforts underway to improve physician and hospital bed ratios, expand access to affordable healthcare, and ensure universal health insurance coverage but the inclusion of senior citizens over 70 years through the Ayushman Bharat Vay Vandana Card highlights the commitment to an inclusive healthcare approach. India's



Viksit Bharat 2047 journey builds upon substantial achievements in the healthcare sector. Since independence, the nation has witnessed notable reductions in neonatal, infant, under-five, and maternal mortality rates, reflecting improved healthcare outcomes.

Role of the Pharmaceutical Sector India's pharmaceutical leadership has further solidified the country's position as a global healthcare contributor. As a leading producer of vaccines and generic medicines, the nation plays a pivotal role in ensuring global healthcare equity.

emphasis on preventive care, mental health, and holistic wellness. The transition from mass-produced to biotech-based personalized medicine, supported by advancements in CRISPR and nano-technology, is set to redefine pharmaceutical practices. India's healthcare system is also poised to transform its business models, shifting from predominantly out-of-pocket expenses to public and insurance-funded frameworks. This evolution will not only strengthen the healthcare sector but also ensure equity and affordability for all.

Roadmap of Viksit Bharat 2047: Looking ahead, the roadmap to Viksit Bharat 2047 includes priorities such as workforce development through the expansion of medical and nursing colleges, further integration of cutting-edge technologies, and an





FIRST COLUMN

TRUMP 2.0: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASEAN

With Trump's return, Southeast Asia finds itself bracing for another era of US ambiguity



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

With the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency, Southeast Asia braces for another era of unpredictability in American foreign policy. Southeast Asian nations, while expressing formal congratulations following Trump's victory, are now focusing on how his administration will impact their economies and strategic interests. As the region's governments gear up for a distinctly different governance style than the one under President Joe Biden, the potential for dramatic shifts in trade relations, diplomatic ties and regional stability is palpable. The ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—spanning from Indonesia to Myanmar—are acutely aware that Southeast Asia may not be at the top of the new administration's priority list.

Trump is a known figure for his transactional and often unpredictable style of diplomacy. ASEAN countries, while understanding the volatility that a Trump administration can bring, remain cautiously optimistic that his return might lead to a return to serious trade talks. Many regional leaders believe that Trump's preference for direct, bilateral negotiations could lead to more favourable deals for specific countries, particularly those that are not bound by multilateral negotiations, like those seen under Biden's tenure. Yet, for many in Southeast Asia, the most pressing concern remains the US-China relationship. Since Trump's first term, ASEAN nations have had to balance their relationships with both China and the US, seeking to maintain economic growth and regional security without angering either side. The dynamic has changed considerably in the



post-pandemic era, as China and ASEAN emerged as each other's largest trade partners. The direction of US-China relations will have profound consequences for Southeast Asia's economic stability and security. Under Trump, this relationship was tense, marked by the trade war and military posturing, and the nomination of hardline China critics, such as Marco Rubio for Secretary of State and Mike Waltz as National Security Advisor, signals that the US will continue to confront China head-on in ways that could disrupt regional dynamics. While many ASEAN leaders are concerned about the economic impact of a hard-line US-China policy, there is also hope that Trump's presidency could bring much-needed attention back to Southeast Asia's trade and strategic importance. This could be particularly appealing to resource-rich nations like Indonesia and the Philippines, which are in high demand for critical minerals used in electronics and green technologies. On the other hand, a significant worry for ASEAN countries is that they may become collateral damage in the US's efforts to reduce its trade deficit.

Despite these uncertainties, ASEAN's primary goal will remain stability and balance. ASEAN countries will push for steady relationships with both global powers, aiming to shield themselves from the worst effects of US-China tensions while seeking to expand their own economic and diplomatic space. To avoid being left behind, India is watching the space closely, as it is well aware that Trump will target Delhi soon. Delhi is trying to rebuild bilateral relationships with several ASEAN groups of countries, even as it participates with full vigour on the multilateral platform. The chief guest for 2025 Republic Day would be the President of Indonesia, a key country in ASEAN. India's exports to the US could be hit due to Trump's overtures and it needs to find new markets for its products, while gently easing out domestic compliances and trade barriers. The region's future relationship with the US will depend not only on Trump's domestic agenda but also on how ASEAN and India navigate the delicate balance between American and Chinese influence in the years to come.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

The courage to tell untold stories on the celluloid



SANTANU GANGULY

Despite the challenges, a new wave of filmmakers continues to illuminate untold stories, challenging entrenched narratives and bringing forgotten truths to light



Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has praised the film *The Sabarmati Report* produced by Ekta Kapoor and her Balaji Motion Pictures. Before this also PM has been praised for films - *The Kashmir Files* and *The Kerala Story*. It took almost seventy years after the independence of India, for a few courageous filmmakers like Vivek Agnihotri to make *Buddha in a Traffic Jam*, *The Tashkent Files*, *The Kashmir Files*, and *Vaccine War*; Sanjay Puran Singh make *72 Hoorain* and Sudipto Sen to make *The Kerala Story* and *Bastar: The Naxal Story* both produced by Vipul Shah. Fortunately, most of these films have been celebrated among the audiences overwhelmingly. The group of pseudo-secular, those who still control the fake narratives to spread one-sided, false propaganda throughout the world, have also been super active in dismissing these films.

But not all filmmakers are lucky enough; forget about PM's praise to release their films, get proper distribution channels or theatres, or the cooperation from the local authorities, governments and positive reviews by film critics. It is almost swimming against the tide. After the success of those films, some independent filmmakers got the courage to tell the true stories, incidents which were unfortunately never been part of our history syllabus. The incidents were not discussed, or debated much by the elite of the society or the so-called liberal, secular, intellectual groups. Very few filmmakers dare to make films on those subjects, because, in most cases, the victims are the majority Hindu community while the oppressors are from other communities. Since the last many years there has been a tendency among the liberals, that whenever the Hindus are the victim, the stories have been buried with all extra efforts so that the so-called peace should be maintained in society.

Even if there has been immense loss of human lives, property, rape of women, and permanent displacement from the homeland, nothing is much more impor-



SINCE THE LAST MANY YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A TENDENCY AMONG THE LIBERALS, THAT WHENEVER THE HINDUS ARE THE VICTIM, THE STORIES HAVE BEEN BURIED WITH ALL EXTRA EFFORTS SO THAT THE SO-CALLED PEACE SHOULD BE MAINTAINED IN SOCIETY

tant than the pseudo ideology of keeping peace in the society to just appease the particular community.

That is why so far whatever films have been made on the partition of India very few films portrayed the true stories. Most of the films are sugar-coated to portray that the victims belong to both communities and it was a loss for everyone. No doubt the partition of India was a great loss for all the communities but why do we feel ashamed to point out the faults and the responsible people? Neither our history books nor the literature or cinema have been ever so brave as to tell the actual stories of our society.

Filmmaker M K Shivaaksh made the film *Accident or Conspiracy: Godhra* which is based on the infamous case of Godhra in Gujarat, where fifty-six Ram devotees were burnt alive in a train coach of the Sabarmati Express by one particular community. Again the film became the victim of the ecosystem and got a very limited release so the film can't be seen by many people in the country. While *The Sabarmati Report* not only got praise from the PM but also Yogi Adityanath, Pushkar Singh Dhami and Naib Singh Saini took time to watch the film along with the crew and casts and made the film tax-free in their respective states UP, Uttarakhand and Haryana because of Ekta Kapoor - Smriti Irani connection. But Shivaaksh was not that lucky at all.

He had planned to release his film *Accident or Conspiracy: Godhra* in February but the censor board delayed the process for seven months. They have asked for literally all the evidence and the makers have provided all the related evidence based on the

Nanavati - Mehta Commission Report, Court Verdicts, eyewitness records as well as all the supporting documents.

To study the material the censor board took seven months and even after that they gave the certificate where they chopped about fifty per cent of the content, informed Shivaaksh. Unfortunately, some renowned actors also took advantage of the situation from these novice young independent filmmakers to bully them, those who have good connections with the government agencies as well as some strong political backing. Initially, they talk big to bag the role and comparatively good remuneration, but after the film is completed, instead of helping the film for smooth sailing, they even discourage the other co-actors from not promoting their film just pretending to be secular. Forget to help with the censor process, they don't even come forward to promote the film, nor even post on social media.

Pushendra Singh director of *Ajmer 92*, Kamal Chandra director of *Humare Baraah and Shivaaksh*, all of them have the same terrible experiences with some of their actors. Akashaditya Lama's Bengal 1947 described the hardships faced by the displaced Hindu refugees from the then East Pakistan now Bangladesh to the completely unknown, unfamiliar terrain of present days Chhatisgarh.

A few political leaders' high ambitions divided the country into three different territories and created devastating for the crores of innocent people in the country. The film was released in very limited theatres. Akashaditya said that when he made the film in Chhatisgarh, the then Congress government helped him a lot

without imposing many terms and conditions, then Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, told him only not to show Pundit Nehru in a bad light.

Even a cabinet minister came to receive the shooting team at the airport, and arranged the full-proof security for the entire team, with overwhelming hospitality. By the time the film got ready to release BJP government came to power in Chhatisgarh, but unfortunately, the film never got any special attention or tax rebate from the local government. However, the films have been screened at various film festivals. In the same manner, another film *The Diary of West Bengal* directed by Sanoj Mishra has suffered massively at the hands of the government and political elements of West Bengal.

Finally, the film was released, which too a very limited release by the order of the court. All of these films are not only talking of the great human rights violations by one particular religious community towards the majority Hindu community but also these films are unbiased, true documentation of time a political era as well as the impact on society. Unfortunately, none of these films got any recognition, big awards or even tax rebates from the government. In this situation, a special section "The untold stories" could have been curated in the just concluded International Film Festival of India (IFFI) which would have been very much appropriate to showcase the film to the larger audiences, as well as the screening at IFFI would have certainly boosted the morale of the filmmakers.

(The writer is a Delhi based Film Festival curator. The views expressed are personal)

What gaming regulation can learn from SEBI'S F&O regulations

India's gaming sector stands at a critical juncture. Thoughtful regulation can help it realise its immense potential while safeguarding consumers

Two seemingly disparate sectors—India's gaming industry and capital markets—are drawing significant attention in public policy discourse. Both sectors hold immense promise: gaming contributes to job creation, while capital markets foster capital formation. However, both also pose substantial challenges. Gaming can lead to habit formation and addiction, while the Futures and Options (F&O) segment of capital markets carries risks of speculative losses. Policymakers have tackled these challenges differently, with contrasting approaches in gaming and F&O regulation.



MANDAR KAGADE

around 568 million players—and employing 15,000 developers. The sector's revenue is projected to grow from \$3 billion in 2023 to \$6 billion by 2028, potentially creating 250,000 new jobs over the next decade. With development costs in India nearly 50 per cent lower than the global average, gaming has the potential to generate significant export revenues. However, this growth depends

on balanced regulation, particularly concerning gaming's habit-forming nature. Unfortunately, current proposals by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), and other stakeholders lean toward rigid, prescriptive measures, drawing inspiration from China's heavy-handed regulatory framework.

Flaws in Current Gaming Regulation

1. Time and Age Restrictions Proposals to impose strict time limits and age restrictions on gaming apps are touted as innovative but raise significant concerns. Forcing intermediaries to monitor minors' activities infringes on privacy and contravenes the data minimi-

sation principle of India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA). Such policies may inadvertently lead to surveillance overreach, compromising minors' online privacy.

Parents, who have a far greater vested interest in their children's wellbeing, are better positioned to manage their gaming habits. Handing this responsibility to unelected bureaucrats not only undermines parental discretion but also risks creating intrusive and overly broad policies.

2. Blanket Warnings and Advertising Restrictions

The Ministry of Education's 2021 advisory linking online gaming to "gaming disorder" is an overgeneralisation. Such broad statements, without clinical substantiation, stigmatise



gaming and equate it with gambling. Similarly, ASCI's restrictions on advertisements portraying gaming as a viable career path stifle creativity. These measures lump educational and cerebral games with gambling-like activities, dis-incentivising developers from creating "good habit-forming" games. This could slow innovation and limit the gaming sector's growth potential.

Learning from SEBI'S Approach to F&O Regulation

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) faced a similar challenge with F&O trading, where explosive volumes exposed retail investors to speculative risks. Instead of resorting to outright bans,

Key Steps by SEBI:

Increased Contract Sizes: Raising the minimum investment size by 50 per cent reduced speculative trading by retail investors.

Disclosure Requirements: Brokers were mandated to display potential downsides prominently, promoting informed decision-making.

Structural Adjustments: Limiting weekly expiries to one per exchange curbed excessive speculative activity. These steps exemplify a bal-

anced approach—relying on nudges and incentives rather than bans. SEBI recognised that heavy-handed policies could undermine broader goals, such as increasing equity market participation.

India's gaming sector can benefit from SEBI's measured approach to F&O regulation. Policymakers must embrace strategies that balance innovation, consumer protection, and industry growth. Here are three actionable recommendations:

1. Nudges and Incentives Over Mandates:

Rather than micromanaging user behavior, regulators can incentivise responsible gaming through voluntary measures. For instance, gaming platforms could offer rewards for adhering to healthy gaming limits.

2. Transparent Education Over Stigma

Policymakers should prioritise honest disclosures about gaming's potential downsides instead of messaging that fosters shame. Clear and factual communication can empower gamers to make informed choices without demonising the industry.

3. Consideration of Unintended Consequences:

A tunnel-vision approach risks stifling innovation and creating barriers to growth. Policymakers must evaluate how restrictive measures might deter investment, hinder creativity, or drive users to unregulated platforms.

(The writer is Founder & Principal, Black Dot Public Policy Advisors; views are personal)

TRAVELOGUE

'Barefoot pilgrimages and deer sightings—Tirupati was pure magic!'



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Travelling is a profound experience that allows individuals to learn new languages, explore diverse cultures, discover unique traditions and savour new cuisines. It offers an escape from the hectic routines of daily life, providing adventure, peace and personal growth. For actress Nandini Rai, travelling is more than a hobby; it is an inspiring journey that pushes people out of their comfort zones, encouraging them to see, taste and try new things. While travelling presents challenges such as adapting to new surroundings and meeting unfamiliar people, it also creates cherished memories to share with loved ones.

Reflecting on her recent trips, Nandini shared her experiences of visiting the United States and Tirupati:

"I recently visited the United States and as soon as I returned, I planned a trip to Tirupati within a day's time. Both destinations were amazing and I had a wonderful time!"

The *Varisu* actress described her visit to Tirupati, a city in Andhra Pradesh renowned for its spiritual significance and cultural heritage. The city is home to the famous Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, a sacred Hindu pilgrimage site. "My most memorable moment from the Tirupati trip was walking barefoot all the way up to Tirumala. The mantras playing on the speakers, the scenic beauty and spotting deer along the way created the most amazing feeling," she expressed.

During this trip, she discovered Japali, a serene spot nestled within the dense forest of Tirumala, famous for its Hanuman Temple. "I had to walk 4 kilometers through the jungle to have darshan, but it was a unique and enriching experience," she shared.

One place that stood out to Nandini was Assam, a northeastern state in India celebrated for its rich culture, natural beauty and warm hospitality.

"Assam felt unique to me. The cleanliness in the villages, the pristine lakes and the humble, down-to-earth people amazed me. It felt like stepping into a different world," she said.

For the *Metro Kathalu* fame, Rishikesh, in Uttarakhand, holds a special place in her heart. Known for its tranquil environment and spiritual significance, Rishikesh offers her solace and rejuvenation.

"Rishikesh is my go-to place for peace and rejuvenation. I've been there almost 20 times and every visit brings me immense peace. The sight of the Ganga flowing alongside the mountains makes me feel closer to God. It's where I go when I'm sad, happy, or simply need a break." While travelling offers joy and new experiences, it also has its challenges. For the *Astakamma* actress, travelling alone at night has been a frightening experience. "Walking alone on streets at night during trips can be daunting, especially for women. It's a challenge we face in today's times," she noted. To create meaningful travel memories, she encourages immersing oneself in the local culture, connecting with people, and being open to unexpected adventures.

"Capture moments through photos but also experience them fully without the lens. Be present in the moment," she advises. When asked about her next destination, she revealed her desire to visit Finland, a country known for its stunning landscapes and vibrant Northern Lights. She enjoys travelling in groups, as it offers opportunities to bond with friends and gain fresh perspectives.

"Group travel allows you to see different opinions and understand your friends better. It's a beautiful way to connect," she shared. Nandini believes travelling has transformed her approach to life.

"After my trips, I feel like a new person. My tensions, pressures, and sadness have faded away. Travelling has brought me immense happiness and changed my outlook on life in a positive way," she concluded.

Travelling is indeed a life-changing experience that helps individuals grow, heal, and embrace the world with an open heart. Her travel stories remind us to take time to explore, connect and create memories that enrich our lives.



From exploring the vibrant culture of the United States to finding spiritual solace in Tirupati, actress Nandini Rai takes *The Pioneer* through her recent trips that have been transformative. She also discusses her travels that have shaped her perspective and brought immense joy and peace to her life

Bringing intersectionality and inclusivity to climate justice

PNS| HYDERABAD

Nature is queer and our approach to the world can benefit from queerness." For climate justice advocate Nivedita Bansal (she/they), these words are more than a philosophy—they are a way of life. A climate practitioner and community organiser, Nivedita's journey into environmental advocacy is deeply rooted in intersectionality, inclusivity and a personal connection to the natural world.

"With its sprawling mangroves and thoughtful urban planning, Navi Mumbai felt like the epitome of a sustainable city," she recalls. But as they grew older, watching the mangroves disappear and public infrastructure deteriorate was unsettling. "One of the lakes has even been cut off from its water source, making it uninhabitable for the pink flamingos that used to flock there every year," they lament.

Their commitment to climate justice began in high school with a research project measuring the environmental impact of Ganapati idol immersion on local water bodies.

"This project made me realise the profound effects human activities have on natural heritage. I became deeply invested in Mumbai's water ecosystems and knew that one day I would work in environmental advocacy," Nivedita



says. Nivedita pursued their passion for the environment through rigorous education. They attended summer school courses at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington and Mahindra United World College in Pune, where they explored the interconnectedness of

urban planning, ocean acidification, and climate change. Later, they earned a BSc in Global Sustainability Science (Hons) from Utrecht University, specialising in environmental governance.

Their most cherished project, *Minecraft Mumbai* (Coast Custodians), was born during the controversial Mumbai Coastal Road Project.

"As I saw the project rapidly destroying the shallow seas, it broke my heart to think of all the sea stars, eels, octopi, and corals being killed. So I gathered a few friends, and we started *Minecraft Mumbai*," Nivedita explains.

Using open-source geodata, the team created a navigable digital replica of Mumbai, attempting to simulate the coastal road and highlight its flaws. While the project was ultimately halted, Nivedita learned the power of community.

Beyond raising awareness, she is leading an ongoing research project to compile

Sustainable



Development Goal (SDG) data for Indian states, in line with international standards.

"No other organisation reports SDG progress at the state level in India. This one-stop resource will empower civil society to ask better questions of policymakers and industries," they explain. As a queer individual, she lived experiences shape their approach to climate leadership.

"Queerness is about self-acceptance and it's been instrumental in forming my leadership style. Nature is inherently queer—it exists in countless shapes, sizes, colours and patterns. Similarly, climate activism must embrace diversity in people, perspectives, and solutions," they say.

"The queer community strives to leave no one behind, and that's a value I carry into my work. So far, I've engaged over 50 young people in deep and meaningful ways, creating space for everyone's ideas and initiatives," she shares.

Currently part of the 2024 cohort of the Women Climate Collective (WCC), she credits the platform for helping them recover from burnout and tackle impostor syndrome.

"Through WCC, I met inspiring women leaders, attended COP 29, received capacity-building training and most importantly, learned to reflect. Thanks to them, I feel empowered to continue my work with confidence," they say.

Mindful of the emotional toll of climate advocacy, Nivedita ensures they make time for family, friends, their partner and pets. They also pursue art, photography, cooking and fitness to stay grounded.

For Nivedita, climate advocacy is about more than protecting the planet; it's about building a world that values inclusivity, diversity, and collaboration. Their work serves as a reminder that with determination and community, it's possible to create a sustainable and equitable future.

Why cancer is a 'young person's disease'

Cancer has long been perceived as a disease that primarily affects older individuals. However, recent trends are challenging this notion, with cancer rates in young adults—those in their 20s and 30s—rising significantly. While this shift is alarming, understanding the reasons behind it and the importance of early detection can empower young people to take proactive steps toward better health.

Changing face of cancer

Statistics reveal a concerning rise in cancer cases among younger populations. Cancers such as colorectal, breast, thyroid and melanoma are being diagnosed more frequently in millennials and Gen Z individuals compared to previous generations at the same age. This shift has left many young adults grappling with a diagnosis they never anticipated.

Medical oncologists attribute this increase to a combination of factors, including:

- **Lifestyle changes:** Sedentary behavior, poor dietary choices, obesity and increased alcohol consumption have been linked to cancer development.

- **Environmental exposures:** Growing up in an era of higher pollution levels, excessive screen time and potential carcinogen exposure may contribute to these trends.

- **Genetic predisposition:** While genetics play a role in some cases, external factors often act as triggers, accelerating the onset of the disease.

- **Delayed screenings:** Many young adults skip routine health checks, dismissing symptoms as minor issues due to a general perception of being too young for serious illnesses.

Impact on young lives

A cancer diagnosis in early adulthood often brings unique challenges. Individuals in this age group are typically building their careers, relationships and families. The emotional, financial and social toll of treatment can disrupt these critical life milestones.

Moreover, young bodies tend to metabolise medications differently, making treatment more aggressive in some



cases. The psychological impact of navigating cancer during what should be the prime of life often requires additional mental health support, which can be overlooked in traditional treatment plans.

Early detection is crucial

The key to combating this alarming trend lies in early detection and prevention. Cancer caught at an earlier stage is often more treatable, with significantly higher survival rates. Unfortunately, young adults are less likely to undergo regular screenings or report persistent symptoms to a healthcare provider.

Here are some steps to improve awareness and early detection:

1. **Know the warning signs:** Be vigilant about unexplained weight loss, persistent fatigue, unusual lumps, changes in bowel or urinary habits, or prolonged pain.

2. **Adopt healthy habits:** Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, and avoid smoking or excessive alcohol consumption.

3. **Stay informed about family history:** If certain cancers run in your family, discuss genetic testing and earlier screening options with your doctor.

4. **Advocate for yourself:** If you notice concerning symptoms, don't hesitate to seek medical advice, even if you feel too young to be at risk.

Role of awareness

A crucial aspect of addressing this trend is raising awareness among younger generations. Campaigns that highlight the importance of regular health check-ups and early cancer detection can help dispel the myth that cancer is exclusively an older person's disease. Healthcare providers, too, play a pivotal role in this shift. By offering tailored screening recommendations and emphasising the importance of prevention, medical professionals can bridge the gap between awareness and action.

Message of hope

Despite the rise in cancer rates among young adults, advancements in oncology offer hope. Improved diagnostic tools, targeted therapies, and personalised treatment plans are making it possible for many young patients to achieve full recovery and lead healthy lives. For millennials and Gen Z, the key takeaway is clear: cancer is no longer an age-restricted disease. By embracing proactive healthcare, recognizing potential risks and prioritising early intervention, young people can take charge of their health and reduce their cancer risk. Together, healthcare providers, young adults and communities can work toward a future where no one is caught off guard by a diagnosis they thought belonged to another age group.

(The author, Dr Rajeev Vijayakumar, Sr consultant-Medical oncologist and BMT physician, at Gleneagles BGS Hospital, Kengeri, Bengaluru.)

what's brewing?



PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary



Deepshikha Mahila Club celebrated its Annual Sports Day at MCH Play Ground, Ameerpet. With a legacy of 60 years, the club has been dedicated to supporting underprivileged women and providing quality education to disadvantaged children. Under the leadership of President Radhika Malani, the club's 135 members and 5 honorary members, along with the KGHS Trust Board and students had participated in this event.

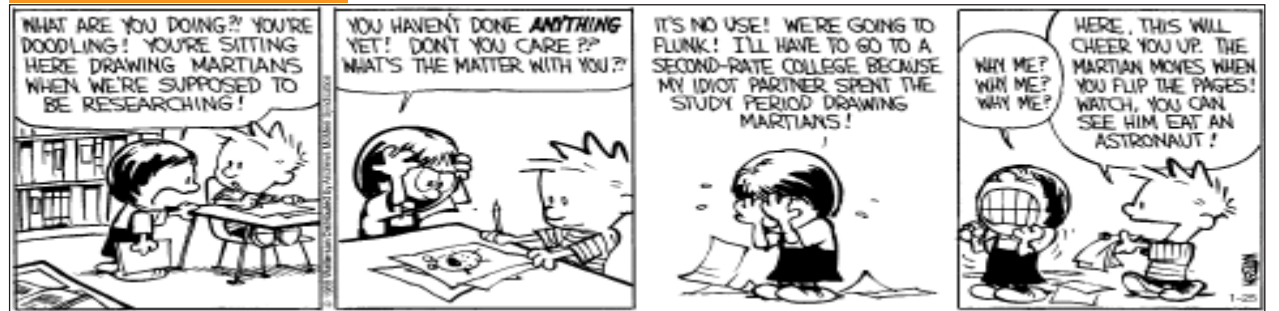
Nethra Season 3 is underway at Classic Garden, Secunderabad and was inaugurated by Socialite Amrut Kumar Jain, Dy Mayor Mothe Srilatha Shoban Reddy and Gandhi Nagar Corporator Pavani Vinay Kumar. The two-day event features over 90 stalls showcasing special collections from Lucknow, Bikaner, Organizers, Manisha Singh, Hema, Heena and Mohini

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



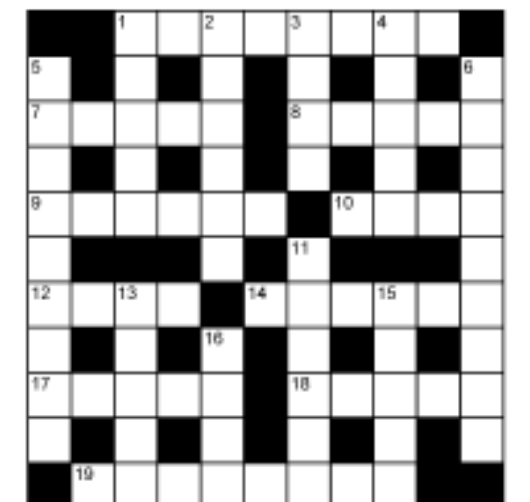
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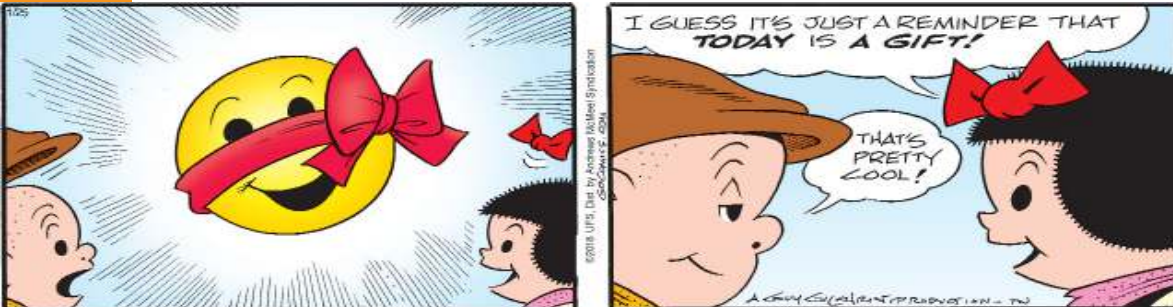
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- Expecting a baby
- Similar
- Eat soup with this
- Reply
- A large furry animal
- A snake's noise
- Overtakes
- A dentist repairs these
- Living
- A game of jumping a rope
- A skydiver wears this
- Without clothing
- Honolulu is the capital of this American island state
- Say something
- A wasp's weapon
- Cut with an axe

DOWN

- Sets of two
- The number of players in a cricket team
- Smell with this
- A rope loop



IN HYDERABAD: THEY MAY PLAN AN EVENT IN CLOSED DOORS, AND IT IS NOT FOR FANS. THEY WILL COMMUNICATE THROUGH MEDIA CHANNELS



Pre-release event of Balakrishna starrer Daaku Maharaaj cancelled

The highly anticipated pre-release event of Balakrishna's upcoming film Daaku Maharaaj, which was scheduled to take place today in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, has been cancelled. Directed by Bobby Kolli and produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya, the event was set to feature Balakrishna's son-in-law and Andhra Pradesh Minister Nara Lokesh as the chief guest.

pede occurred in Tirupati, resulting in the loss of several lives. The unfortunate incident, which took place at a devotional site, deeply saddened the team. Considering the circumstances, the filmmakers decided it was inappropriate to proceed with the event.

Some members of the unit had already left for Anantapur early in the morning but were asked to return after the cancellation decision was communicated. Sources indicate that the team is now planning a smaller event in Hyderabad. However, this event will not involve fans and is likely to take place behind closed doors.

PRAGYA JAISWAL: Akhanda is my life-changing film

PRAGYA JAISWAL TALKS ABOUT HER UPCOMING FILM DAAKU MAHARAAJ, HER EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH BALAKRISHNA, HER ROLE AND HER BIRTHDAY PLANS

SURESH KAVIRAYANI sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

After a couple of years away from Telugu cinema, Pragya Jaiswal returns with Daaku Maharaaj, where she stars opposite Nandamuri Balakrishna. Interestingly, her last major Telugu hit, Akhanda, also featured Balakrishna. "Balakrishna is a lucky charm," said Pragya, who is overjoyed about her new film releasing on January 12—coinciding with her birthday and the Sankranti festival.

Pragya, who began her career nearly a decade ago, feels her journey is still fresh. "Every film is a new adventure with new characters to explore. There have been ups and downs, but I feel blessed. I've had the privilege to learn from some of the best filmmakers and actors. This journey has been incredible and I look forward to many more years in the industry," she reflected.

"Akhanda was my life-changing film. It was the biggest hit of my career and I feel blessed to have worked with Boyapati sir and Balakrishna. I'm thrilled to collaborate with Bala Sir again in Daaku Maharaaj and the upcoming Akhanda 2," she added. In Daaku Maharaaj, Pragya plays a unique character named Kaveri. "It's a completely different role for me and I'm very excited about it," she said. She revealed that she was shooting a Hindi film, Khel Khel Mein, when she got the offer for this project.

She also shared her long-standing connection with director Bobby. "I met Bobby even before I debuted with Kanche. We've stayed in touch over the years but never had a chance to work together until now. Watching the teaser of Daaku Maharaaj convinced me to take up this project. Working with Bobby has been an absolute blessing," she said.

Talking about her co-star Balakrishna, she expressed her admiration for his work ethic and personality. "This is my second film with Bala Sir and surprisingly, he hasn't changed a bit. He's as positive, energetic and full of life as ever. On set, he's always cracking jokes or sharing stories about his father's movies. But when the camera rolls, he transforms into a superhuman—especially during intense scenes like the Aghora character in Akhanda. His dedication and energy are unmatched," she said.

She also highlighted how much she has learned from him. "His discipline is incredible. He wakes up at 3:30 a.m. does his pooja, works out and is always on set before time. It's inspiring to see such commitment," she added. Shooting for Daaku Maharaaj came with its own set of challenges. "Filming in Rajasthan was tough. The extreme heat, dust and propeller fans made it physically demanding. I fell sick on the second or third day, but the team's passion kept me going," she revealed.

As her film release coincides with her birthday, Pragya plans to stay in Hyderabad to celebrate both occasions. "I want to watch the film with the audience and experience the euphoria. Having my film release on my birthday, during Sankranti, feels like a sign from the universe. It's the best celebration I could ask for," she concluded.



Ram Charan's make-or-break moment



The upcoming film Game Changer is poised to be a significant milestone in Ram Charan's career. Following his multi-starrer RRR, the actor is now set to appear in this film as a solo lead. Although he made a cameo appearance in Acharya after RRR, Ram Charan has high expectations for Game Changer. This film will be released not only in Telugu but also in other languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada.

Dialogue King Sai Kumar completes 50 yrs in film career

Popularly known for his iconic dialogues, Sai Kumar has completed 50 years of his illustrious journey in films. He debuted as a child artiste with the film Devudu Chesina Pelli, which was released on January 9, 1975. Since then, he has never looked back, continuing to act as a lead actor, character artiste, and hosting numerous TV shows.

Sai Kumar is extremely popular for his police films like Police Story, Agni IPS, Police Story 2 and Central Jail. His dialogues from these cop films are still widely popular and often referenced. In addition to his acting career, Sai Kumar is also a renowned dubbing artist, having lent his voice to actors Rajasekhar and Suman in many films.

Born to a family of artists, Sai Kumar's father, P.J. Sharma, was a dubbing artist and actor, while his mother, Krishna Jyothi, was a renowned actress in the Kannada film industry. Although Kannada is his mother tongue, Sai Kumar has made a distinct mark in

the South Indian film industry. Sai Kumar earned recognition as a great actor with the movie Sneham, directed by Bapu. He has acted in numerous evergreen films in both Kannada and Telugu. In 2006, he won the Nandi Award for Best Villain for his role in Samanyudu and again in 2010, he won the Nandi Award for Best Supporting Actor for his performance in Prasthanam. He also won Filmfare Awards for his acting in Samanyudu, Prasthanam and Rang Tarang.

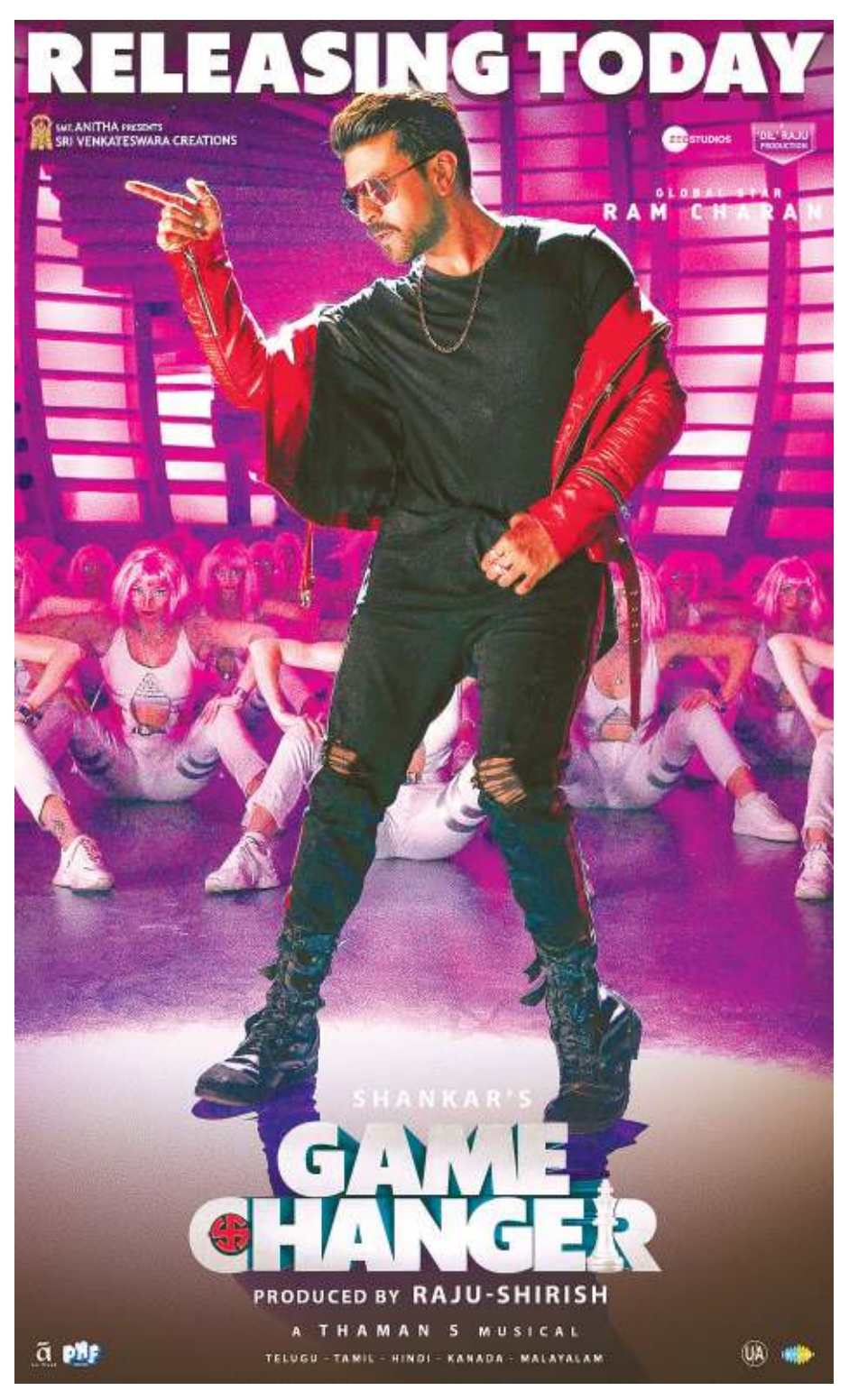
Despite completing 50 years as an actor, Sai Kumar continues to be part of numerous high-profile projects, keeping him as one of the busiest actors in the industry. His son, Aadi Sai Kumar, is also an actor and busy with films.



DIRECTOR SUKUMAR'S DAUGHTER DEBUT WITH GANDHI TATHA CHETTU

Director Sukumar, who recently delivered the blockbuster film Pushpa 2, has another reason to celebrate. His daughter, Sukriti Veni Bandreddy, is all set to make her debut with the film Gandhi Tatha Chettu. The trailer of this film was launched by superstar Mahesh Babu through his social media. Padmavati Malladi has directed the film, while Naveen Yerneni, Yalamanchili Ravishankar and Shesha Sindhu Rao have jointly produced it. Sukumar's wife, Tabitha Sukumar, is presenting the film. Interestingly, Gandhi Tatha Chettu has already won awards and appreciation at several international film festivals. Sukriti Veni also received the Best Child Artist award for her performance.

The movie is set for a worldwide theatrical release on January 24, announced the makers. Mahesh Babu launched the trailer and said on his social media, "Happy to launch the trailer of #GandhiTathaChettu... Looks heartwarming and deeply touching... My best wishes to Sukriti and the entire team for their journey ahead." The story revolves around a girl named Gandhi, who, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's principles, strives to protect her grandfather's beloved tree and her village. The emotional narrative appears to be centered on how the girl follows the path of non-violence to achieve her goal. Sukumar himself plays a role in the film alongside his daughter Sukriti Veni. Director Padmavati Malladi stated, "This film follows the story of a 13-year-old girl who, inspired by Gandhi's ideals, tries to save her village. It's a story every parent should show their children. The film conveys emotions that will touch every heart, leaving viewers with an indescribable feeling."



Tottenham beats Liverpool 1-0 in English League Cup semifinals

PTI ■ LONDON

Lucas Bergvall's first goal for Tottenham secured a 1-0 win over Liverpool in the first-leg match notable for a serious-looking injury to Rodrigo Bentancur and the first in-stadium announcement by a referee in the English game. The 18-year-old Bergvall slotted home the winner in the 86th minute following a pass from Dominic Solanke, who thought 10 minutes earlier that he had given Tottenham the lead. That goal was ruled out after a VAR check for offside and referee Stuart Attwell communicated the decision via a wireless microphone to spectators inside Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and to TV viewers. In the sixth minute, Bentancur — the Uruguay midfielder who plays for Tottenham — fell to the ground and lay prone after landing awkwardly when

attempting a header from a corner. He was carried off on a stretcher, to applause from around the ground, after receiving treatment during a 10-minute delay and Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou confirmed after the game that Bentancur was "conscious" and talking. The second leg is at Anfield on Feb. 6. Newcastle leads Arsenal 2-0 after the first leg of the other semifinal match. Liverpool, the defending League Cup champion, saw its 24-match unbeaten run in all competitions come to an end and there was a hint of controversy about only the team's second loss of the season. Visiting players and manager Arne Slot were unhappy that Bergvall was on the field to score what proved to be the winning goal after he escaped collecting a second yellow card for a foul on Kostas Tsimikas moments earlier. Indeed, Tsimikas was off the field, waiting to come



back on having received treatment following Bergvall's tackle, when the Sweden midfielder tucked home his finish. Slot earned a yellow card himself for his protests, though he shook Attwell's hand after the final whistle. "The decision he made had a lot of impact on the result tonight," Slot said. Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk said it was "quite obvious" that Bergvall deserved a second yellow card. "And a minute later he scores the winner," Van Dijk said. "He (Attwell) made a mistake, in my opinion. And I told him that." It was a busy end to the match for Attwell, who took center stage after there was a video review following Solanke's strike in the 76th minute. After being notified that Solanke was offside, Attwell used the public address system to declare the goal had been ruled out, in an NFL-style announcement.

The League Cup semifinals were chosen to pilot a process in England that has been widely used in other sports, and in soccer at the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in 2023 and other FIFA events. **Kinsky's dream debut** Three days after signing from Sparta Prague, Antonin Kinsky — a 21-year-old goalkeeper from the Czech Republic — was handed his debut by Tottenham and he kept a clean sheet after producing a string of great saves, notably from Liverpool substitute Darwin Nunez. His parents and sister were in the crowd to watch him play his first match in English soccer and he was emotional after the game. "I have never dreamed this," Kinsky said. Tottenham signed the highly rated Kinsky with first-choice goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario currently out injured.



Aiming for hat-trick of SA20 titles: Markram

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Sunrisers Eastern Cape skipper Aiden Markram says his side is pumped up to make it a hat-trick of titles at the SA20 as it faces MI Cape Town in its opening game. Markram's team has won both the editions of the competition so far. The tournament begins days after South Africa blanked Pakistan in a Test series at home. "Definitely still really pumped to try and get a third one this year. Obviously, (there are) no guarantees and it's a hugely competitive tournament, so hopefully in a month's time something cool can happen," Markram said during the Captains' Day press conference here. Former South Africa captain Faf du Plessis said his side Joburg Super Kings haven't got the ideal weather to finalise its preparations as it has rained for the last few days in Johannesburg, but his players are surely up for a fight. "From my side, the weather has been a bit of a downer down in Joburg, it's been pretty wet. But from a squad perspective, some great signings in Joburg too, and you know the likes of Jonny Bairstow, Devon Conway, (Matheesha) Pathirana," du Plessis said. "Those three guys and

(Tabraiz) Shamsi, obviously, have a lot of experience that comes with them. So, all in all, our squad are looking very balanced. Two injuries, that wasn't ideal for our pace attack for Nandre Burger and Lizaad Williams. But we still feel we have enough options to put out a well balanced team," he added. MI Cape Town's Rashid Khan said his side was determined to put a better show in the third edition. "I think from the first year we had some really close games and it just didn't go our way. We had some great cricket last year as well, some wonderful cricket," he said. "But it was just more about the result, it didn't come our way. In the fresh year, we'll go with a fresh mind. We have some new faces in the team. We're looking forward to the new challenges and hopefully this year it won't be the same in the last few years." Paarl Royals' captain David Miller said the competitiveness in the league has benefited South African cricket to a major extent. "It's been two special years for us, but also for the competition itself. Just playing with the competitive juices that we have, all the games are really fun to be a part of, as well as having incredible overseas players, all the coaches are around," he said.

I think he will be the next captain: Gavaskar on Jasprit Bumrah

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The legendary Sunil Gavaskar is in awe of Jasprit Bumrah's leadership qualities and reckons the peerless fast bowler will succeed Rohit Sharma as the next captain of the Indian team following his extraordinary display in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Bumrah recently produced one of the best-ever bowling performances by an overseas pacer in Australia and picked 32 wickets over five Tests. He was also captain during India's only victory in the series, helping the visitors to a convincing win at the Optus Stadium in Perth in the opener. "He could be the next man. I think he will be the next man. Because he leads from the front, he has got a very good air about him, the air of a leader but not somebody who is going to pressure on you," Gavaskar



aired his views on Channel 7. "The batting great added, 'Sometimes, you have captains who put a lot of pressure on you. With Bumrah you can see that, he expects the others to do what their job is, why they are in the national team, but it doesn't seem to pressurise anybody.' Bumrah has been spearheading the Indian pace attack for some years now and his guidance has helped the

likes of Mohammed Siraj to grow as a fast bowler. "With the fast bowlers, he has been absolutely brilliant, standing at mid-off, mid-on and every time just being at hand to tell them. I think he was absolutely brilliant and I won't be surprised if he takes over very soon." Bumrah took his wickets at an incredible average of 13.06 and an even better strike rate of 28.37 before pulling up injured midway through Australia's first innings at the SCG in the final Test. In Bumrah's absence, the home team chased down 162 on the third day to win the series 3-1. The lead pacer was handed the captaincy in the final Test after the out-of-form Rohit Sharma "opted out" but a back spasm prevented Bumrah from bowling on the crucial third day. Bumrah destroyed Australia in Perth with eight wickets, grabbed six wickets in the first innings at the Gabba, and nearly turned the Boxing Day Test on its head with his exploits on the fourth afternoon at MCG. In the series decider at SCG, Bumrah sent back Usman Khawaja and Marnus Labuschagne early in Australia's first innings but could only bowl one over after lunch on the second day when the game was evenly poised.



McSweeney returns to Australia squad for Sri Lanka tour

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Nathan McSweeney was recalled to Australia's test squad on Thursday to tour Sri Lanka, less than three weeks after being dropped from the top order. Australia's selectors announced their squad Thursday for the two-test tour, with several fresh faces added to the group that played India in Sydney last week. Australia won the five-test series 3-1 and clinched a spot in the World Test Championship against South Africa at Lord's in June. Steve Smith will lead the squad to Sri Lanka while regular skipper Pat Cummins is on leave as his wife awaits the birth of the couple's second child. Australia's selectors concentrated on spin for the two Sri Lanka tests, with uncapped 21-year-old Cooper Connolly among the seven full or part-time slow bowling options in the 16-man squad. Connolly, a left-arm allrounder, has represented Australia in limited-overs cricket and has been called up for his maiden test campaign along with specialist spinners Todd Murphy and Matthew Kuhnemann. McSweeney scored 72 runs at an average of 14.4 in his first three tests against India, before being replaced by Sam Konstas for the Melbourne Cricket Ground test starting Dec. 26. The 25-year-old McSweeney has batted at No. 3 for South Australia state this season — averaging 97 — but has previously batted further down the order. Cricket Australia also said Cummins was "focusing on an ankle issue which was managed through the test summer" and fellow paceman Josh Hazlewood was continuing his recovery from a calf injury. Mitchell Marsh was omitted for the tour, joining Hazlewood in focusing on the 50-overs Champion's Trophy in Pakistan which immediately follows the test tour. The first test begins Jan. 29 and the second Feb. 6, both at spin-friendly Galle International Stadium. A one-off one-day international is scheduled for Feb. 13, also at Galle. "Sri Lanka is a challenging and exciting place to tour given the different conditions players may be presented with," selector George Bailey said. "This squad provides several ways to structure the XI depending on what type of wickets we may encounter in each match." **Australia squad:** Steve Smith (captain), Sean Abbott, Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cooper Connolly, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Sam Konstas, Matt Kuhnemann, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Nathan McSweeney, Todd Murphy, Mitchell Starc, Beau Webster.

Mandhana-led India eye dominant show in first-ever bilateral series against Ireland

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Riding high on a dominant performance against the West Indies, India under Smriti Mandhana will look to carry forward their winning momentum when they take on Ireland in the first-ever women's bilateral series, with the opening ODI scheduled here on Friday. India had swept the West Indies 3-0 in the ODI series, following a 2-1 triumph in the T20 series. Mandhana emerged as the top run-scorer across formats, scoring 148 runs in the ODI series, including two half-centuries, and 193 runs in the T20s, with three successive fifties. Notably, she scored five consecutive half-centuries, only missing out in the final ODI and Mandhana will look to bring the same form as she leads the team in the absence of regular captain Harmanpreet



Kaur, who has been rested alongside fast bowler Renuka Singh. With Kaur and Renuka missing, the responsibility shifts to the rest of the batters, including Harleen Deol, Pratika Rawal, and Jemimah Rodrigues, to step up. Deol was the top scorer in the ODI series with 160 runs, including a brilliant 115, while Rawal and Rodrigues also had solid

outings, scoring 134 and 112 runs, respectively, with a fifty each in the ODIs. In the bowling department, Renuka's absence will be felt as she was the leading wicket-taker with 10 wickets in the ODI series against the West Indies. The onus will now fall on newcomers Titas Sadhu and Saima Thakor to make their mark. Sadhu, 20, who has three wickets in ODIs and 13 wickets in T20s, will be expected to provide early breakthroughs, having impressed with her pace and swing in domestic and recent international cricket. Saima, 28, will also look to continue her good form after taking seven wickets in eight ODIs so far. Vice-captain and off-spinner Deepti Sharma will be crucial, especially after her career-best bowling performance of 6 for 31 in the third ODI against the West Indies. Priya Mishra and Tanuja Kanwar will play key roles in supporting Deepti.

Australian Open 2025: Cases involving Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek make doping a top topic

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

It is a topic that shadowed tennis in 2024 and is still a talking point as the 2025 Grand Slam season opens at the Australian Open on Sunday (Saturday EST): doping and the cases involving Jannik Sinner — which actually is still not fully resolved — and Iga Swiatek. Both spent much of last year at No. 1, and Sinner still will hold that spot in the ATP rankings when he steps on court at Melbourne Park to begin the defense of his championship, one of two major trophies he won over the past 12 months. Swiatek, a five-time Slam champ and the woman leading the WTA rankings most of the past three seasons, is currently No. 2 behind Aryna Sabalenka, who will be chasing her third consecutive title in Australia. "Obviously, there are going to be some negative comments," Swiatek said. "You're not going to avoid that." Most current players prefer to remain silent when asked about the cases. But there are those who have been happy to weigh in, including 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic, raising questions about

whether Sinner and Swiatek were treated the same as other players facing similar circumstances and why their situations were kept under wraps for months. "I sit and wonder, Why such a big difference in treatment and judgment?" was two-time major champion Simona Halep's reaction to Swiatek's punishment. "I can't find, and I don't think there can be, a logical answer." Halep initially was banned for four years after testing positive for the banned drug Roxadustat at the 2022 U.S. Open, then had that penalty reduced to nine months on appeal — although she already had been off the tour longer than that. She was supposed to compete at Melbourne Park for the first time in three years, but withdrew from qualifying because of knee and shoulder pain. No one has been louder about the subject lately than Nick Kyrgios, the 2022 Wimbledon runner-up who missed nearly all of the past two seasons because of injuries. He has been commenting regularly, in real life and online, even taking a jab (that he said was in jest) at Cruz Hewitt after the 16-year-old son of Australian Davis Cup captain Lleyton posted a photo with Sinner



from a practice session. "It's been handled horrifically in our sport. Two world No. 1s, both getting done for doping, is disgusting for our sport," Kyrgios said at the Brisbane International, the first event of his comeback. "It's a horrible look." Where do things stand with Jannik Sinner's positive drug tests? Sinner was the dominant player in men's tennis last year, and there's little reason to think that won't continue. In 2024, he went 73-6 with eight titles, including at the U.S. Open, and led Italy to the Davis Cup. He heads into the Australian Open on a 14-match winning streak. Hanging over it all is this: Two positive tests for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid in March were made public in August; the International Tennis Integrity

Agency (ITIA) determined he shouldn't be suspended because the exposure to Clostebol was considered accidental — the result of a massage from a trainer who used the substance after cutting his own finger. The World Anti-Doping Agency was not entirely convinced about the exoneration and thinks a ban of one to two years would be appropriate. Its appeal, lodged in September, is still pending, and a final determination is expected after the Australian Open ends. "It's in (my) head a little bit," Sinner said, adding that he is confident everything will go his way. What happened with Iga Swiatek's failed doping test? Swiatek accepted a one-month suspension in late November after testing positive for a banned heart medication known as TMZ. She failed an out-of-competition test in August, and the ITIA accepted her explanation that it was caused by the contamination of a nonprescription medication, melatonin, that Swiatek was taking for jet lag and sleeping issues. She missed three tournaments — although the real reason wasn't revealed at the time — and finished serving her punishment after the season was done. "This whole process was pretty abstract sometimes and hard to understand," Swiatek said, surely speaking for many observers. Which is why, perhaps, Dutch captain Paul Haarhuis said what he did after his team lost to Sinner's Italy in the Davis Cup finals. "Jannik, in my personal opinion, is an unbelievably nice guy (and) great player," Haarhuis said, "but we (might) never know what happened." Are there other noteworthy cases in tennis? While Sinner and Swiatek will compete in Melbourne, another player involved in a recent ITIA case won't: Max Purcell, who won men's doubles titles at the U.S. Open in September and Wimbledon in 2022 and was a two-time runner-up at the Australian Open. Purcell didn't test positive, though. Instead, he accepted a provisional suspension for, as he described it, having "unknowingly received an IV infusion of vitamins above the allowable limit." "I have no good words for it," said Jordan Thompson, Purcell's doubles partner in New York last year.