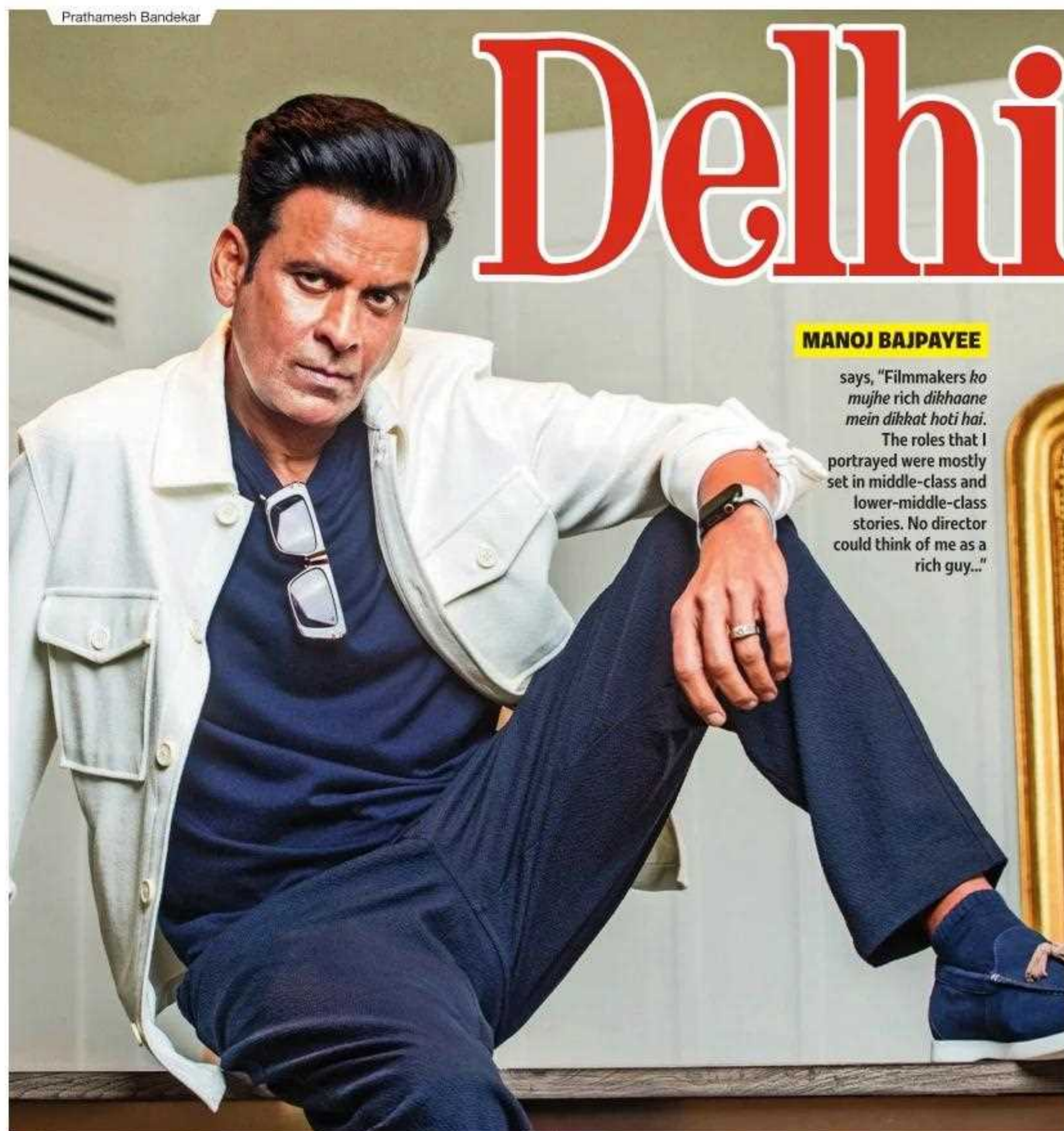



BACK BEAT
 DIVAS KICK
 OFF PARIS
 FASHION
 WEEK

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OF INDIA


MANOJ BAJPAYEE

 says, "Filmmakers ko
 mujhe rich dikhaane
 mein dikkat hoti hai.

 The roles that I
 portrayed were mostly
 set in middle-class and
 lower-middle-class
 stories. No director
 could think of me as a
 rich guy..."

'DIRECTORS CAN'T THINK OF ME IN RICH-GUY ROLE'

Renuka Vyavahare

Manoj Bajpayee, whose career boasts of some remarkable and versatile power-packed performances, points out the stereotyping that exists in Bollywood and says that it's time the film industry looks within and works on its weaknesses instead of defending them.

'I AM NEVER CONSIDERED FOR HIGH SOCIETY ROLES'

Talking about how stereotyping exists, looking back at his own film journey, Manoj says, "The only film before *Gulmohar* (2023) where I played a rich guy was *Zubeidaa* (2001). That was Shyam Benegal's conviction. He was the one who felt that real

maharajas were not Greek gods. They looked normal. In *Veer-Zaara* (2004), I played a politician from Pakistan. I had two scenes in it, but Yashji (Chopra) was adamant that I do it. He cast me after watching *Pinjar* (2003). These filmmakers had that vision which stems from seeing life up close. *Bakiyon ko mujhe rich dikhaane mein dikkat hoti hai.*"

CONTINUED ON P 3

SHIMMERY FASHION SHOWCASES AT DTFW



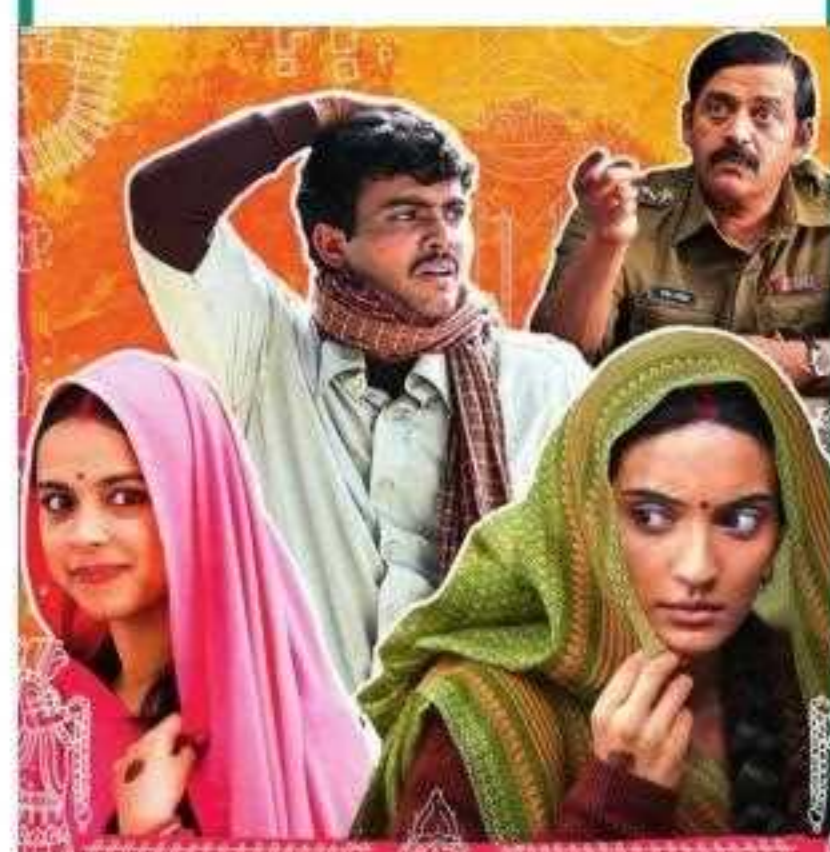
Delhi Times Fashion Week (DTFW), presented by Obello Life, co-presented by Signature Global Group and powered by Silentpartners Inc, began on a glamorous note as Karishma Tanna (second from left) graced the ramp for Obello Life presents Archana Kochhar (L). The owners of Obello Life, Mohit Gogia (R) and Shweta Gogia (second from right) were also present at the event.

Pics: Ranjit Kumar

Day 2 of the event concluded with the Signature Global Group Grand Finale by Manojiraj Khosla (second from left), who showcased metallic shimmer, sequined outfits, and smart silhouettes on the ramp. The grand finale was attended by Iti Aggarwal and Bharti Aggarwal, Directors of Signature Global Group (second & third from right)



INTERNET DIVIDED OVER INDIA'S ENTRY FOR OSCARS



Laapataa Ladies was chosen as India's Oscar submission over several films, including Cannes winner *All We Imagine As Light*. The decision has got mixed reactions

BACK PAGE

Complaint filed over Coldplay ticket scalping



Following the rampant scalping of Coldplay concert tickets, the official ticketing platform for the concert lodged a complaint with the Mumbai Police. On Monday night, the platform released a statement clarifying, "Scalping is strictly condemned and punishable by law in India. We have filed a complaint with the police authorities and will provide complete support to them in the investigation of this matter." The Mumbai Police added that scalping is "strictly condemned and punishable under sections of the BNS and IT Act."

COLDPLAY CONCERT LEADS TO HOTEL PRICE SURGE IN MUMBAI

P 3



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 of Spice
 MRP. ₹409.00 ₹225

 Flat 51% Off
 Renee Fab 5
 5-in-1 Lipstick
 MRP. ₹750.00 ₹368

Home and living

Up to 70% off


 Flat 31% Off
 Chakaachak Eazo Grass
 Broom 1 Pc
 MRP. ₹115.00 ₹79

 Flat 57% Off
 Quace (15 x 26) cms
 Cylindrical Table Lamp -
 Beige
 MRP. ₹1399.00 ₹599

Kitchen and dining

Up to 60% off


 Flat 54% Off
 SOLARA 1.2L Elixir 40oz
 Stainless Steel Hot and
 Cold Insulated Tumbler with
 Lid & Straw - Mint Green
 MRP. ₹3499.00 ₹1599

 Flat 49% Off
 Nayasa 3 Pcs Round
 Plastic Storage Container
 (1L, 2L & 3L) - Brown
 MRP. ₹409.00 ₹209

Toys and sports

Up to 65% off


 Flat 78% Off
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 Color-Assorted
 MRP. ₹2499.00 ₹549

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 Bracelet and Ring (Red)
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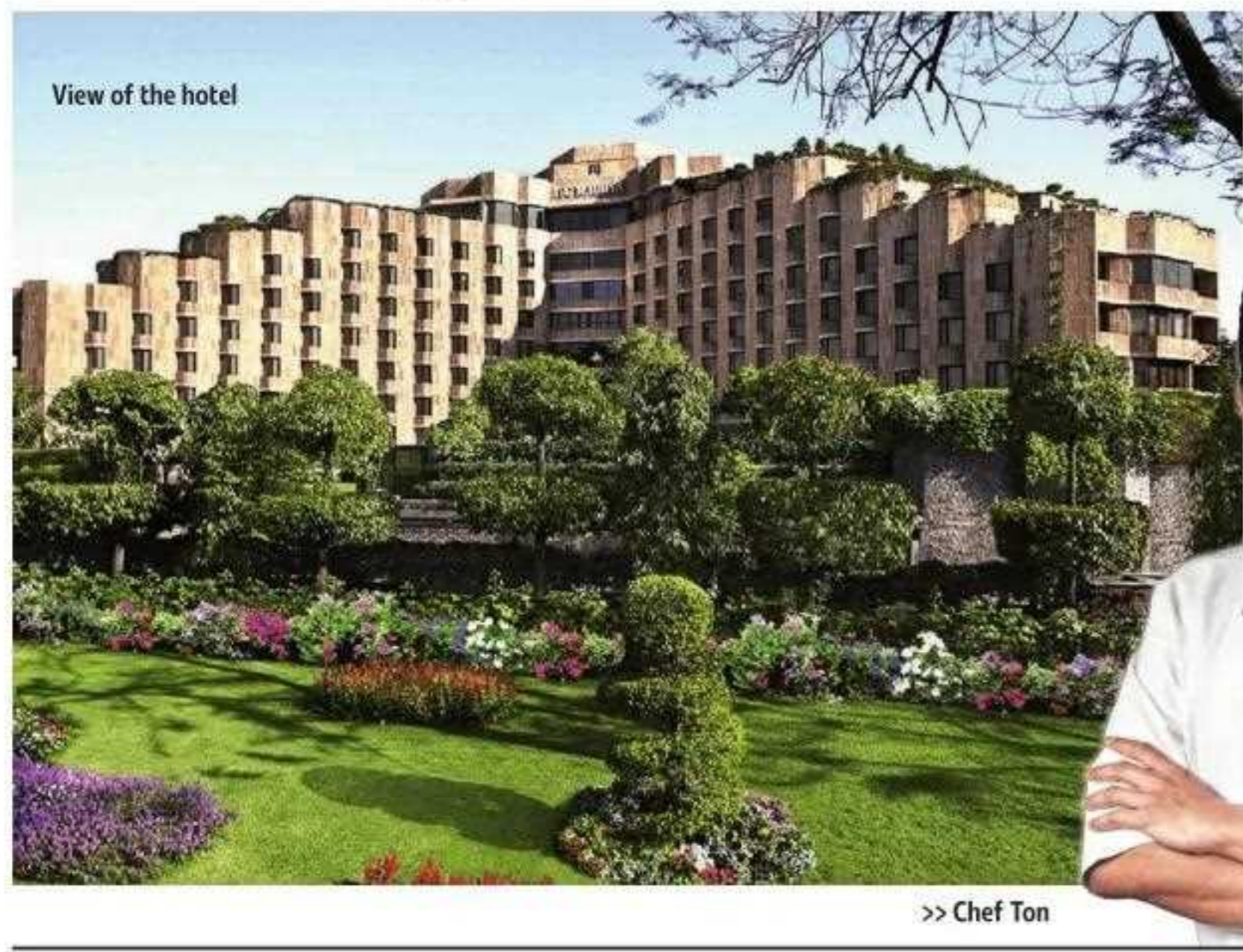


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From Bangkok to Delhi: A Thai culinary affair in the city



The capital got a taste of authentic Thai cuisine, recently. ITC Maurya curated an exceptional evening featuring Chef Ton of the noted Michelin-starred restaurants, Le Du and Nusara from Bangkok. A representative from the brand's management team says, "Known for his innovative cuisine, Chef Ton brought a unique blend of authentic Thai flavours and techniques for a memorable dining experience. The pop-up offered a

thoughtfully crafted menu, showcasing Chef Ton's signature style." There was a six-course menu at the event consisting of some meticulously crafted dishes, paired with exquisite beverages. The representative further adds, "Chef Ton's collaboration with ITC Maurya further underscored the hotel's commitment to providing its guests with unparalleled culinary experiences."



AI tricks people into believing purple apples actually exist



It is not real... We've had lots of apples that have been developed in Saskatchewan, but none of them are purple
- Rachelle Hofmeister, a horticulturist

Apple lovers are flocking to Canada's Saskatchewan to get their hands on purple apples after their pictures went viral on social media. The only catch is: They are AI-generated and thus fake. Pictures posted by an Instagram user Unnaturalist AI are so attractive and tempting, it tricked people into believing the innovation of purple-coloured apples. The post's caption also mentioned the fruit's place of origin. It also geotagged Knott's Berry Farm - a theme park in California. The post also mentioned that the apples are a prized ingredient in purple applesauce, a delicacy relished by indigenous Saskatchewan people. However, Rachelle Hofmeister, a horticulturist at Dutch Growers in Regina, Saskatchewan, told CTV News, "It looks amazing. It would be so fun. But, unfortunately, it is not real... We've had lots of apples that have been developed in Saskatchewan, but none of them are purple." Despite being fake, the pictures have taken social media by storm.



The AI-generated apple trees and the fruit (left) that went viral

Ladies vs the Light: It's hardly a duel

There is rarely a year when India's official entry to the Oscars does not come with its share of controversies, of fans and commentators throwing in their weight behind their favourites and slugging it out on social media. In 2014, crowd and critics' favourite *The Lunchbox* lost out to the obscure *The Good Road*. In 2020, *Gully Boy* made it to the list, *Super Deluxe* didn't, raising questions about the filters applied to the selection process and prompting Vijay Sethupathi to say he was "disappointed" over the "politics" behind it all. We seem to be continuing the tradition this year, as *Laapataa Ladies* has nudged out Cannes history maker, *All We Imagine As Light*. There are theories - about Payal Kapadia's vocal stance against the 'establishment', the credibility of the panel that 'overlooked' an 'obvious winner' in favour of a simplistic and widely watched film (*All We Imagine* has had a limited theatrical release in India), and the questionable logic behind an all-male selection committee that calls Indian women a "strange mixture of submission and dominance" in its infamous citation. To be fair, Rao's film came at a time when popular cinema had found its El Dorado in testosterone-driven formulaic films that edged out the women from the narrative. *Laapataa Ladies* took on the *Animal*, pun intended. Both films were successful in their own ways. Both were in the shortlist of 29 that the Oscars panel considered. Alongside Kapadia's still-life watercolour of a movie. And here's the fine print that comes into play. A glance at the list of India's official entries to the Oscars since 1957 will tell you how it may not be the easiest task to select that one film that represents India's cinematic and cultural diversity on the global arena. From *Pathar Panchali to Lagaan, Reshma Aur Shera to Village Rockstars*, from mass commercial films to art house films, we have tried everything. Apart from *The Elephant Whisperers* (documentary) and Satyajit Ray's Lifetime Achievement award, our brush with the Oscars has mostly been in the realm of song and dance and costumes. The debate over whether Kapadia stood a better chance over Rao may not be settled any time soon. But for now, we may want to sit back and relish this moment - that we are discussing the Oscar-worthiness of two talented female filmmakers, helming two incredibly talented pools of actors, who have created their unique cinematic language. Even if pitted as rivals, Rao and Kapadia have changed something somewhere. And that alone calls for a celebration.



The posters of *Laapataa Ladies* and (below) *All We Imagine As Light*

Agree? Disagree? Got a POV idea? Write to us at: pov@timesofindia.com

LEISURE

EVENTS

EXHIBITION
India Habitat Centre: *Urban Thoughts - A solo Stainless Steel Sculpture* exhibition by Vikash Kalra. Till October 12, Centre Atrium, IHC

EXHIBITION
India Habitat Centre: *Mystic Miniatures - A solo painting* exhibition by Anuj Prasad. Today, Visual Arts Gallery, IHC

Email us at tims.delhitimes@timesofindia.com

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

Level: Medium

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

HOW TO PLAY
Fill in the grid so that every horizontal row, every vertical column, every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9, without repeating the numbers in the same row, column or box. You can't change the digits already given in the grid. Every puzzle has one solution.

TIMES HITORI

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

HOW TO PLAY
1. A number may appear just once in each row or column. Eliminate repeat numbers by darkening cells. (see example)
2. Darkened cells must never be adjacent in a row or column.
3. Unmarked cells must create a single continuous area, undivided by darkened cells.
4. Every time you darken a cell, you automatically circle its vertical and horizontal neighbours, which means they cannot be eliminated.
5. Any cell "sandwiched" between neighbours of the same value can be circled. (e.g. 6 4 5)
6. A "triple" is a special case of sandwich. Circle the centre cells, and darken the ends. (e.g. 6 6 6)

Example

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

LOOP THE LOOP

RULES
• Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A).
• Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B).
• Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines.
• You can't draw lines around zeroes.
• Each puzzle has just one unique solution.

HOW TO BEGIN:
Example (Fig A) - Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.
Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a deadend (Fig B).

THE DAILY CROSSWORD

By Jerry Edelstein 25/09/2024

ACROSS
1 Mazda two-seater
6 Nerve centers
10 A bit open
14 "What a bummer!"
15 Soon, quaintly
16 Small bay
17 Part of a cross-examination
20 French 10
21 Salt Lake City college athletes
22 Female sheep
23 Mint family herb
26 Earlier than
29 High school honor that may come with a tiara
31 Pa. neighbor
34 Having five sharps, on a score
35 One of a kind
36 Nobleman's address
39 Adjust, as wheels
41 Non grata
42 Flee
43 Verdi opera set in Egypt
44 Hibernation spot
45 Tackle the slopes
46 Highlighted excerpt in an article
48 WNBA official
51 Spoils
52 Place for the Torah
55 Stella ___ cookies
56 Pro vote
58 "Behave!" and an apt title for this puzzle
64 "Got it"
65 Future atty.'s exam
66 Give a quick review
67 Moist
68 "Sisters" Emmy winner Ward
69 Writing class writing assignment
DOWN
1 Waze display

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

A	M	B	E	R	M	O	E	T	S	T	Y					
I	C	E	A	X	E	O	N	C	E	O	T	R				
F	J	E	D	G	E	F	A	C	T	O	R	P	O	E	M	
F	R	A	U	D	C	H	O	P	S	C	E	N	E	S		
Y	A	L	E	C	H	I	P	L	E	A	D	E	R			
T	H	I	S	I	R	L	C	O	O							
T	E	T	R	A	A	T	M	C	R	O	W					
B	O	X	E	S	O	F	C	H	O	C	H	O	L	A	T	E
O	U	T	S	R	E	X	A	R	A	B	S					
B	R	R	I	K	E	P	S	A	S							
B	A	R	M	I	T	Z	V	A	H	S	A	S				
J	U	R	I	S	T	E	A	R	C	A	C	T	I			
A	S	A	P	K	I	S	S	T	H	E	C	H	E	F		
M	E	R	E	A	R	T	E	I	N	T	O	I	T			
S	S	E	T	E	S	S	M	A	S	O	N					

GARFIELD

SUNBEAMS...
NATURE'S CHARGING STATION

ARCHIE

LOOK AT YOU! YOU'VE BEEN SITTING THERE FOR HOURS AND HOURS!
AW, GET OFF MY CASE!
ANYWAY, HOW CAN YOU KNOW HOW LONG I'VE BEEN SITTING HERE?
TWEET! TWEET!

SPELLATHON

Today's Ratings:
10-average | 12-good | 14-outstanding

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, a letter can be used as many times as it appears in the puzzle. Each word must contain the central letter. There should be at least one seven letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed. British English Dictionary is used as reference.

K
I E
M
N R
O

DENNIS THE MENACE

"NO, DENNIS, I HIGHLY DOUBT THE VIKINGS SANG 'ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT' AS THEY SAILED."

SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters in the four word jumbles, one letter to each square/circle, to make four ordinary words

FAEIR
RUSTS
AAUDLN
IINGHK

Hope is being able to see that there is ___ despite all of the ___ - Desmond Tutu (5,8)

HOW TO PLAY
Now arrange the letters in the circles to form the answer to the riddle or to fill in the missing word as indicated

FINOLEX FORTUNE

See what the stars have in store for you - according to your moon sign.

ARIES: You will probably rid yourself of a situation you have been in before. Despite all your caution, there is a risk for you to make quite a big mistake. It may be just the matter of changes. You will not enjoy your travels. An unexpected event sets your feet into action.

TAURUS: The most important thing to do is to make sure you have removed yourself from looking at this problem from a one-sided perspective. Your self-criticism will be too vast to admit the fact.

GEMINI: You are likely to take the role of event manager in social events and will be exceedingly successful as well. The main thing of the day is to rethink your relationships. Devote more energy to clearing the emotional mines.

CANCER: You have a more sedate and conservative start to your day. Your work area will be filled with difficulties. You may find yourself a bit too detached from your job requirements. A financial crisis looms large behind you and you may be forced to tighten your purse.

LEO: You'll be out of your current bind in a flash. When you look back on today, you'll see it as a mere blip. But that doesn't speed time along for you any faster right now. You find yourself determined to bring your finances back on track.

VIRGO: Try to find the time to take a good look at the values that you are portraying. Academic or intellectual activity may be rewarding. Try to seek some tips on investments. You find things going not up to your expectations this day.

LIBRA: Start planning any changes that you may want to make in your work plans. You can handle any situation with tact and intelligence. Spiritual innings are on the cards for you now. You will be benefited financially. A domestic responsibility would occupy your day.

SCORPIO: Try to make the time so you could choose confidently. Exhausting yourself with thought processes costs you. You may find attracted to a fascinating person and an important relation in your life. Your confidence on your ability to control your state of affairs lifts your spirits.

SAGITTARIUS: Make sure you have a clean environment. You are about to come into your own and command the respect that you deserve in the world. You may be wondering whether you are really getting at the deeper layers. You are turning emotional uncertainty into determination.

CAPRICORN: It is really necessary for you to learn to see all sides of every situation and most important, so learn to listen. You are likely to come face to face with a spiritual person.

AQUARIUS: Be assured that your coming choices are well grounded. There may be long delays in personal fulfillment. The challenges will resurface in your life. A strange sense of discomfort will be there.

PISCES: You will feel lot of contentment and confidence. Remember that moderation is necessary in all aspect of your life. You find new resolutions are nothing more than comic attempts to correct ones mistakes. You will have a rewarding experience in terms of the respect and goodwill.

SOLUTIONS TO GAMES/PUZZLES

TIMES SUDOKU

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

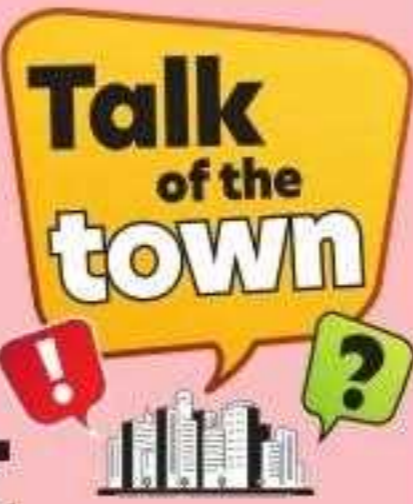
LOOP THE LOOP

TIMES HITORI

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

SCRAMBLE
Answer: Hope is being able to see that there is ___ despite all of the ___ - Desmond Tutu

Coldplay mania continues: Mumbai hotel prices skyrocket



Those who managed to get their hands on the elusive Coldplay concert tickets have something new to worry about – getting a hotel room in Mumbai during the concert days. Most hotels within a 20 km radius of DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai have hiked their tariffs by 5x or 10x – going up to several lakhs in some cases – for the concert dates



Shrey @shreyyy_agrawal
I have a flat in Mumbai, so whoever gives me their 1 Coldplay ticket, gets a free stay 🌟

Sindhu Kumari @SindhuK6662473
Coldplay's Mumbai concert in January 2025 has driven hotel prices near DY Patil Stadium skyrocketing to Rs 3 to 5 lakh for three nights. Many luxury hotels are fully booked, reflecting the massive demand from fans eager to attend the event.

Parikshit khanna @ParikshitK
Hotel rates surge to ₹2 lakh a night as Coldplay gears up for their India tour in 2025! Fans are booking fast for the concert of the year!
#ColdplayIndia #MumbaiConcert

AD @CatchMeAbhiOrb
Rates of Hotels at Navi Mumbai during the 2 day Coldplay concert. These never crossed 10k and now look at these insane prices.

Sacchitanand Uttekar @USacchitanand
People applying for #Coldplay tickets should also take a look at hotel prices in Navi Mumbai & Mumbai 😊
I strongly demand a "Mumbaikar" quota for such events 🙏

Several tweets attached screenshots of current room tariffs on the concert dates, pointing out how even hotels that generally have a per night price of 5K had increased it to 50K+

If you dig deeper, you'll notice that Bollywood lacks insight, says Manoj



Prathamesh Bandekar

Manoj Bajpayee

CONTINUED FROM K 1

Manoj adds, "The roles that I portrayed were mostly set in middle-class and lower-middle-class stories. I am never considered for high society roles. No director could think of me as a rich guy, barring the two stalwarts that I mentioned. This stereotyping exists."

'MOST PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS ARE CUT OFF FROM REALITY'

The celebrated actor feels there's a larger problem that the industry is facing today. He feels, if you dig deeper, you'll notice that our industry (Bollywood) lacks insight towards life, our country and people. He says, "The problem that our industry is facing is lack of insight. Most people who are at the helm of studios or decision-making positions belong to a generation that hasn't seen India. They are completely cut off from reality. Their references

are other films and not real life. And there came a point when tickets became unaffordable and south films in dubbed versions became people's staple diet in the north because those films were more relatable."

'IF YOU WISH TO PURSUE A CAREER IN HINDI MOVIES, YOU MUST LEARN HINDI'

He says, "It's not the fault of urban kids that they are well versed in English over Hindi. As parents, those who can afford it, we want our kids to study in the best of English medium schools and get the best education. There's nothing wrong with that. However, if these kids wish to pursue a career in Hindi movies and become a part of the industry, you must learn the language." "You will be surprised to know, 20 years back, I didn't have to struggle to get my script in Devanagari. Today, it's a struggle because 98% of actors read Hindi lines written in English," adds Manoj.

'People who come from remote places have seen life'

Manoj shares, "People like me who come from remote places, we have seen life. I once told an aspiring actor, 'Train mein baitho aur ek saal Hindustan dekho. Mere gaon chale jao, mera ghar khulva doonga. Stay there. That's where you will learn about relationships as you will talk to common people'. For me, that experience will teach you more than any acting school."

20 years ago, I didn't have to struggle to get my script in Devanagari. Today it's a struggle because 98% actors read Hindi lines written in English

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SOUTH DELHI					CENTRAL DELHI					GREATER NOIDA								
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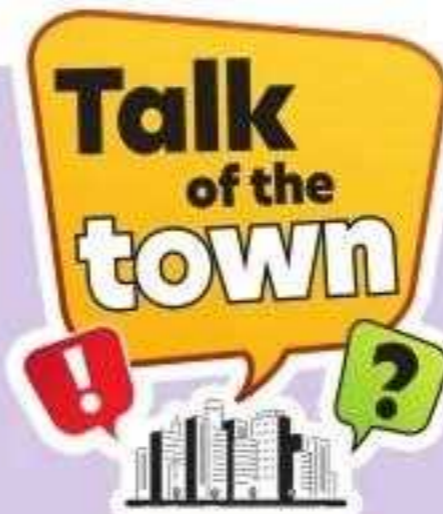
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Netizens divided on India's Oscars choice



As soon as the news of *Laapataa Ladies* being India's official Oscar submission for 2025 came out, social media users shared their two cents on whether it's a good choice, or if the Cannes winner *All We Imagine as Light* was a better pick



Priyant @Priyant1987
Congrats India doing everything to avoid going to the Oscars once again

@evermine
i loved laapataa ladies but choosing it over all we imagine as light, a movie that has received so much international acclaim is like shooting yourself in the foot

Ajay Singh @ajaxsingh
India's Oscar selection committee is a bunch of knuckleheads! Sheer morons! First Lunchbox, then RRR, now ALL WE IMAGINE AS LIGHT. They have screwed three films that had a genuine shot at the statue!

Baradwaj Rangan @baradwajrangan
Submitting a film for the Oscars is not just about the film being good but also whether the producers have the funds / desire / know-how / contacts to mount the hugely expensive Oscar campaign. #laapataaladies is the perfect choice.

Kumar @theonlykumar
Laapataa Ladies is a good pick for the Academy Award. It has a strong chance due to Aamir Khan's production, distribution, and campaigning capabilities. The Oscars encompass more than just films. The marketing campaigning will cost a lot.



AH @TaciturnToast
I'm thinking All We Imagine As Light put the jury to sleep and they chose a slightly more entertaining film. They didn't want to unleash the pretentious and boring Indian films out to the world.

वरुण @varungrover
I mean it was expected that the chaaploos mandali (who can't even write a citation with any attention to detail or meaning) will never select a film by someone who has questioned their authority. And it's still heartbreaking. We rarely get such a strong contender as AWIAL.

Guy Lodge @GuyLodge
Yep, they never go with the festival favourite! Looking forward to seeing Lapataa Ladies but feel very bad for Payal Kapadia.

वरुण @varungrover
At the same time, happy for Kiran Rao and her team. They made a sensitive, progressive, rooted film told beautifully through a new set of actors (and a hate-speicher) - and totally deserve a shot at glory. Best wishes to them. Jai Ho!

Sucharita @Su4ita
I'm just happy for my girl Chhaya Kadam. AWIAL ho ya Laapata, she is living her best life

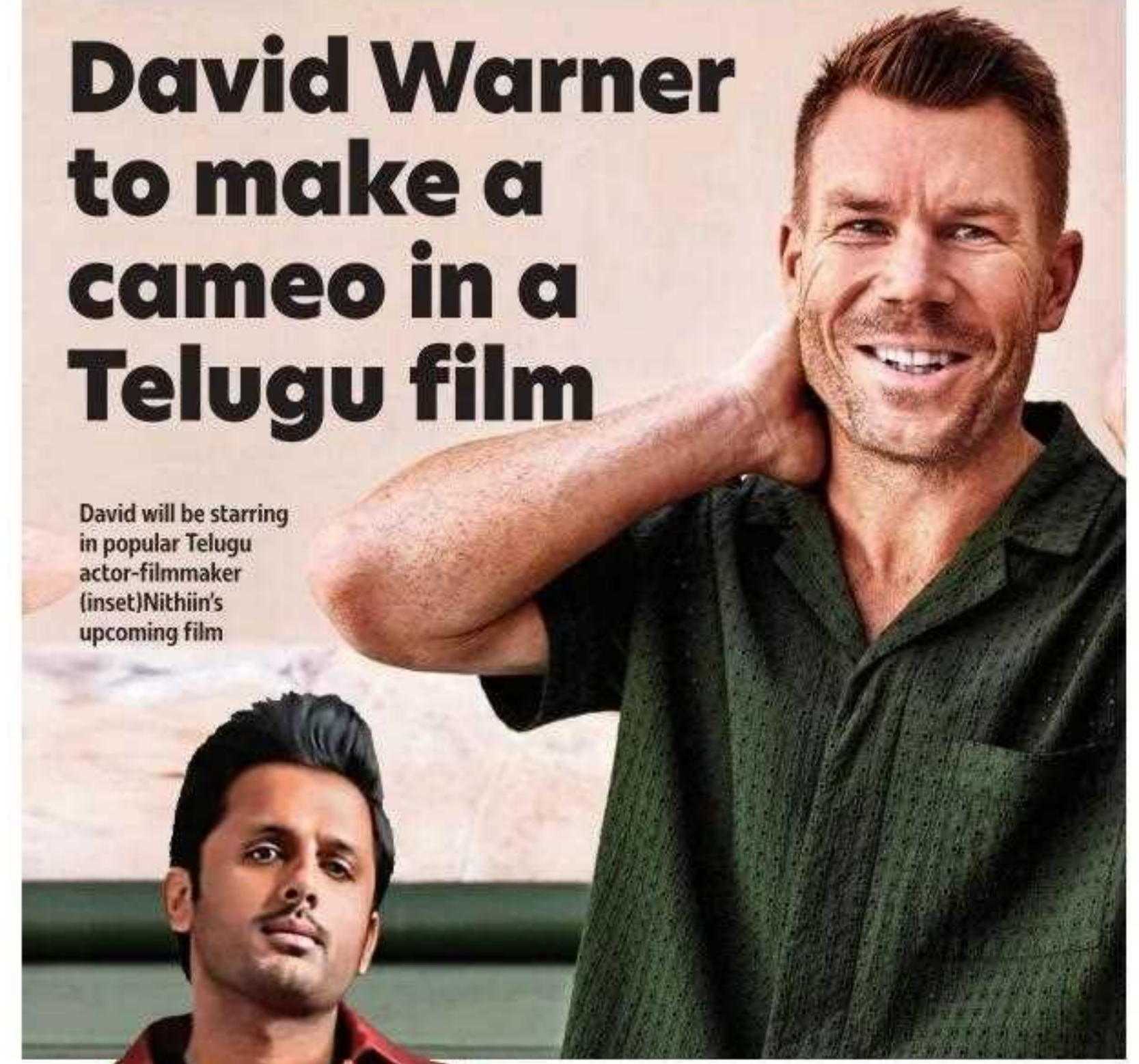
ALAN WALKER LANDS IN INDIA FOR A 10-CITY TOUR

Alan Walker is gearing up for a 10-city tour across India, which kicks off on September 27 in Kolkata. Ahead of his first performance, the Norwegian DJ was spotted arriving in Mumbai, dressed in a brown hoodie and black pants. Alan is set to perform in cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, Ahmedabad, Kochi, Hyderabad, Pune, Shillong, Chennai, and Kolkata, between September 27 to October 20.



David Warner to make a cameo in a Telugu film

David will be starring in popular Telugu actor-filmmaker (inset) Nithiin's upcoming film



Australian cricketer David Warner is set to make a special appearance in the upcoming Telugu film, *Robinhood*, starring Nithiin. The film, directed by Venky Kudumula, is currently in production in Melbourne, Australia. The film's team confirmed that Warner, known for his active social media presence, has already completed shooting for his portion of the film. TNN

A star-studded eve at Paris Fashion Week

No amount of rain could mar the glamorous opening of Paris Fashion Week in the French capital on Monday. From the iconic Jane Fonda to Alia Bhatt making a debut, the runway saw some of the most stylish divas serving fashion goals on the runway



Bridgerton star Simone Ashley wore a bodycon, one-shoulder silver gown with a thigh-high slit. She kept her look minimal with simple silver earrings

Actress Jane Fonda brought bling to the ramp in an all-silver ensemble. She wore a metallic silver trench coat and paired it with sneakers, while also flaunting her voluminous silver curls

Actresses Cara Delevingne and Eva Longoria shared a candid moment on the ramp as the divas, dressed in red and white respectively, walked together

Alia Bhatt, who made her Paris Fashion Week debut in a metallic silver corset and black flared pants, walked hand-in-hand with American actress **Andie MacDowell** (left)

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan painted Paris red wearing a bubble hem gown. The actress greeted the French audience with a 'namaste' and blew air kisses as she walked the ramp

POOJA MAHIMKAR
@timesofindia.com

For those looking to build a career in a field that thrives on innovation and constantly pushes technological boundaries, game development offers the perfect blend of challenge and fun. Today's game developers aren't just crafting visually stunning worlds—they're leveraging powerful game engines specifically designed to enhance unique projects. "These improvements provide game developers the power to simplify processes, integrating complex gameplay, art, and other features seamlessly into their games," says Roby John, co-founder and CEO, SuperGaming. Along with games, gameplay has also evolved in the country, "Casual and hyper

or movie franchise. For instance, after the Harry Potter series dominated bookshelves and box office, games soon followed on mobile, console, and PC platforms, keeping the magic alive while driving revenue. While games were considered somewhat of an afterthought until a few years ago, the trend has now flipped, with shows and films



Arnold Su, vice president, consumer and gaming PC, system business group, ASUS India adds, "Video gaming in general is fast becoming a mainstream sport in the country and a good example would be Asian games. Since 2022, esports has been a part of it and India has been a participant country."

MONEY MATTERS
Ashish Sikka, director and category head, Lenovo India says, "The Indian gaming community is undergoing a rapid transformation, with the country now boasting the world's second-largest gaming audience. By 2025, it's projected that over 500 million gamers will be a part of this thriving ecosystem. In a recent survey we conducted, an astounding 89 per cent of gamers in India are under 24 years

of age, available in more mature markets. Government support and private sector investments are crucial to building state-of-the-art gaming studios, research and development centres and training facilities. Further, fostering a conducive environment for startups and providing access to funding and mentorship can spur innovation and drive growth in the sector," opines Anuraag Saxena, CEO, E-Gaming Federation.

THE REGIONAL TOUCH
It's fresh, interesting, and incredible to see the adoption of Indian and South Asian narratives driving the games developed by creators from the region. "Indian developers are increasingly choosing to tell stories with the flavour of their culture, offering something new to the world, while resonating with local

audiences," says John. This has also encouraged indie games to experiment with unconventional ideas and gameplay mechanics. Lower barriers to entry have also contributed significantly to the growing popularity of indie games. Powerful tools enable small teams or even solo developers to produce high-quality games without extensive resources. Digital distribution platforms allow these games to reach a global audience without traditional publishing deals. This democratisation of game development has led to a surge in indie game production, increasing the chances of finding hidden gems.

POLICY PUSH
Industry experts also state that the government's proposal for 100 per cent FDI approval is set to elevate the profile of Indian game developers on the global stage. "The influx of foreign investment is expected to foster innovation, talent development, and the creation of world-class games. The combination of a massive domestic market and a supportive regulatory environment makes India an attractive destination for gaming companies worldwide," concludes John.

PHONE EVOLUTION
According to a study by



PHOTOS: ISTOCK

Game face on: Indian gamers are levelling up

India is stepping up its game (quite literally), blending local culture with new tech. The journey has just begun, and the future looks bright for game developers

casual games continue to engage people across the globe. In India, the availability of better hardware at affordable prices is bringing more players into the gaming fold. This has led to a significant increase in mid to hardcore gaming, with more competitive titles capturing audience attention. Additionally, with the rise of online gameplay, gaming is increasingly being adopted as a form of interactive entertainment," adds John.

TABLES HAVE TURNED
For years, gaming was seen as an extension of a book

Gamers dedicate around 12 hours each week to gaming. 67% of gamers prefer gaming on PCs as compared to mobile phones today

- HP's Gaming Landscape Study 2023

increasingly being inspired by popular video games. The success of The Super Mario Bros Movie is a testament to how films derived from video games are gaining widespread recognition.

old, highlighting the region as a crucial market for innovative gaming solutions." However, the curious thing is, "The country currently accounts for just one per cent of the total global gaming revenue, emphasising the untapped potential of the sector. The industry also requires substantial investments in infrastructure and technology to compete globally. While there have been notable success stories, such as the rise of homegrown game developers and esports platforms, the industry still lacks the robust infrastruc-

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Mindfulness mode activated: Make mental health a priority

Here's how new-age gaming can affect your mental health

ISHA.KHATU@timesofindia.com

From real-time strategy games (RTS) to massively multiplayer online games (MMO), online gaming offers an array of experiences. However, as gaming becomes more integrated into daily life, its impact on mental health is increasingly debated.

Read on to know the impact of online gaming on mental health and some ways to maintain a healthy balance.

Positive impact of online gaming on mental health

COGNITIVE BENEFITS

Online gaming, particularly genres like RTS and MOBA (multiplayer online battle arena), can enhance cognitive functions. Players often engage in complex problem-solving, strategic planning, and quick decision-making, which can improve mental agility and critical thinking skills.

Hardika Zaveri, a psychologist based in Mumbai informs, "Players of shooting/action games, which are mostly violent, have more accurate attention allocation (reaction time in terms of speed and accuracy) and a higher spatial resolution in visual processing. These skills can be learned relatively quicker than traditional ways, and the effects last much longer."

"Many problem-solving games involve intricate puzzles and challenges, requiring

players to think critically and find solutions. These games often encourage experimentation with different approaches to overcome obstacles, fostering flexible thinking and adaptability. Strategic thinking is another key benefit. In strategy games, players have to anticipate opponents' moves and plan counter-strategies, enhancing their ability to predict outcomes and think several steps ahead. Additionally, many games feature dynamic environments where players must adapt their strategies on the fly, honing their ability to react to unexpected changes," shares Hiral Sagar, a counselling psychologist and arts-based therapist.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Contrary to popular belief, MMOs and multiplayer games can foster social interactions. Players from around the world connect, collaborate, and build friendships.

For many, these virtual interactions can provide a sense of community and belonging, particularly for those who feel isolated in their offline lives. The teamwork and communication skills developed in these settings can translate into better social skills in real life.

STRESS RELIEF

Gaming can be a form of escapism, offering a break from the stresses of daily life. Engaging in a virtual world allows players to decompress and unwind, reducing stress and anxiety. The immersive nature of games can be particularly effective in diverting attention from worries and promoting relaxation.

IMPROVES CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION

Many games encourage creativity, whether it's through customising characters, designing virtual spaces, or engaging in role-playing. These activities can stimulate the imagination and provide a creative outlet, fostering a sense of accomplishment and boosting self-esteem. Sagar mentions, "Games that allow for creative expression, such as sandbox games, can foster imagination and creativity."

Dr Rane mentions, "Gamers must follow the 20-20-20 rule (every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and gaze at something 20 feet away) to maintain good eye health along with proper screen contrast and good lighting in the room."

Dr Gogia suggests, "Headphones with noise-cancelling technology are recommended, as these noise-cancelling headphones can block out external noises, which allows you to enjoy games at a lower volume."



Solutions to maintain a healthy balance

Set boundaries:

Schedule breaks and allocate specific times for gaming, balancing it with other activities;

Physical activity:

Regular exercises can boost mood, improve physical health, and provide a necessary break from screen time;

Foster real-life social connections:

Spend time with family and friends, participate in offline activities, and engage in face-to-face interactions;

Monitor content and behaviour:

Parents should set age-appropriate limits and discuss the potential impacts of violent or mature content to mitigate negative effects;

Protect hearing and eyesight:

Use screen filters or blue light glasses, and ensure that the volume is kept at a safe level;

Seek professional help if needed:

Therapists and counsellors can provide support and strategies to address gaming addiction and related mental health issues.

Negative impact of online gaming on mental health

ADDICTION AND COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOUR

One of the most significant concerns is gaming addiction. Zaveri adds, "Online games are highly driven by a sense of accomplishment. Winning a level or two can increase dopamine

levels and boost this sense of accomplishment, essentially mimicking a sense of high. If the gamer is engaging in unchecked gameplay behaviour (no schedule to follow outside of gaming) or is unaware of this biofeedback mechanism, it can create a loop and contribute to addictive tendencies. Signs and symptoms of gaming addiction can include withdrawal, preoccupation with gaming, loss of control, interpersonal and/or intrapersonal conflicts, and depressive moods." This can also result in sleep deprivation and decreased academic or professional performance.

SOCIAL ISOLATION

While online gaming can foster virtual connections as mentioned above, it can also lead to social isolation in the physical world. Players may spend long hours gaming at the expense of real-life interactions, leading to weakened social ties and a sense of loneliness. This isolation can exacerbate feelings of depression and anxiety.

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Some studies suggest a link between violent online video games and aggressive behaviour. First-person shooter games and other violent genres are said to desensitise players to violence and increase aggressive thoughts and behaviours. However, this topic remains contentious, with other research indicating that the impact may be minimal or influenced by pre-existing personality traits.

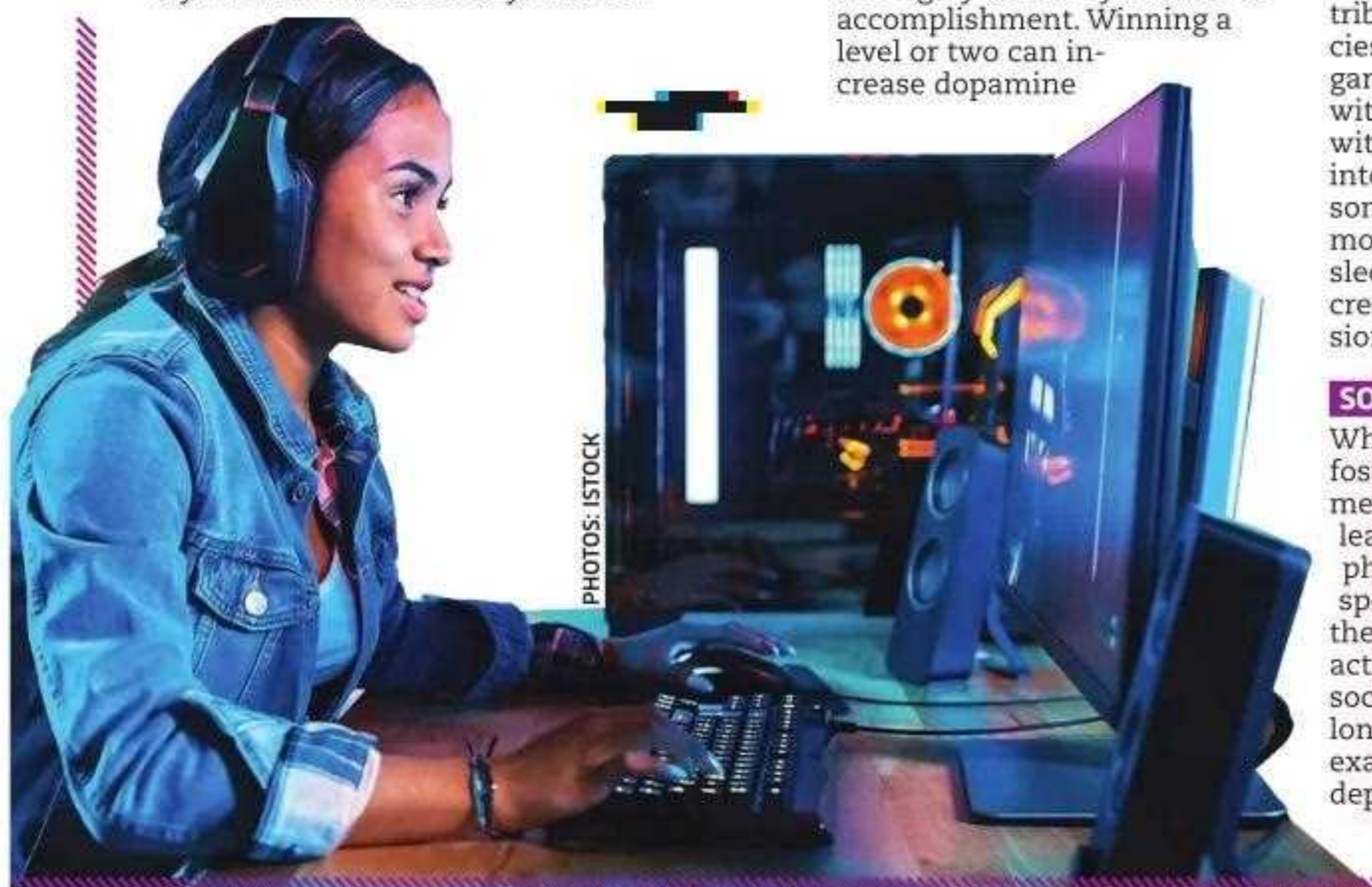
IMPACT ON EYES AND EARS

Prolonged exposure to loud volumes through headphones and extended screen time during gaming can severely impact hearing and eyesight, leading to significant mental health challenges. Dr Vivek Gogia, ENT director at De Cure International Centre, Gurgaon, explains, "Continuous exposure to loud gaming music or background sounds can cause hair cells in the ear to lose their sensitivity to vibration, sometimes resulting in temporary or even permanent hearing loss. This auditory damage can lead to

social withdrawal and isolation, further exacerbating mental health issues. Similarly, talking about the impact of gaming on eyes, Dr Nandita Rane, a Mumbai-based ophthalmologist informs, "Extended periods of screen time can cause digital eye strain, leading to symptoms such as headaches, blurred vision, dry eyes, and ocular fatigue. Over time, this strain can increase the risk of developing myopia and can contribute to stress and anxiety." The combination of these physical ailments, coupled with the sedentary lifestyle often associated with prolonged gaming, can lead to irritability, decreased productivity, and an overall decline in mental well-being.

MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

Excessive gaming can contribute to or exacerbate mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and mood disorders. The competitive nature of many games can lead to stress and frustration, particularly when players experience repeated losses or cyberbullying within the gaming community.



"Dad, I want to be a professional gamer..."

...A few years back, no parent would welcome a career in gaming. However, the gaming industry today offers lucrative job roles that you can leverage

RITIKA.GONDHALEKAR @timesofindia.com

The Indian gaming sector has levelled up significantly, evolving from a niche hobby to a billion-dollar industry teeming with both, talent and opportunity. The Indian gaming industry comprises over 1,400 gaming companies, including 500 gaming studios, states

However, what the sector lacks is formal education. "Over the past five years, education options for gaming in India have evolved significantly. As a result, some educational institutions are now opening their curricula to gaming and esports related courses. The introduction of online courses, along with traditional programmes such as BBA

and MCA, now featuring specialised integrations in gaming and esports within their curricula, represents a shift towards more structured and industry-aligned educational opportunities," says Lokesh Suji, director, Esports Federation of India (ESFI) and vice president of Asian Esports Federation (AESF). Shefali Johnson, chief of staff, NODWIN Gaming

JOB ROLES ACROSS THE GLOBE IN GAMING INDUSTRY:

- Game Designer;
- Sound Designer/ Audio Engineer;
- Quality Assurance (QA) Tester;
- Data Analyst/Game Analyst;
- Esports Manager/Organiser;
- Gameplay Programmer;
- VR/AR Developer;
- Mobile Game Developer.

-Lokesh Suji, director, ESFI and vice president of Asian Esports Federation (AESF)

creation around gaming have been popular in more mature gaming markets for some time now, but with India's digital growth, Indian gaming creators have started to make their mark in the content creation space.

Game Designing: Game designing often requires professional training, though it totally depends on what role one is vying for. For example, games are built on engines, for which one must learn the process with a formal course at an institute or online. Game design also has multiple roles, like storyboard artists, sound designers, art and design personnel, narrative designers, game testers and much more. Each of these distinct roles are crucial to creating successful games. Many studios have people adept at more than one of these disciplines, but



Back in 2004, there were only two major tournaments each year, but now there's an event happening almost every month. The prize pools have skyrocketed from USD 10,000 in international tournaments to a staggering USD 60 million today. The widespread rollout of 4G has dramatically transformed the landscape, making gaming accessible to a vast audience. Esports is now a recognised sport, creating a wealth of prospects for players, professional teams, endorsers, creators, and publishers alike. My advice is to practice diligently with top gamers rather than focusing on social media. If you're an esports player, let your game speak for you.

- Shantanu Basu, a professional gamer

The Indian Gaming Report 2024, based on the analysis and secondary data of Interactive Entertainment and Innovation Council (IIC). The same report also mentions that the annual revenue for gaming is projected to reach USD six billion by 2028. In this pursuit, the sector is brimming with not just pro gamers, but also with those who have successfully combined their qualifications with their talent for gaming.

Game streaming and content creation around gaming have been popular in more mature gaming markets for some time now, but with India's digital growth, Indian gaming creators have started to make their mark in the content creation space

shares a few career options available in the sector: **Esports athlete:** With enormous talent across the country, frequent tournaments backed by reputed brands and sizable prize pools are providing a platform to the country's youth to pursue this career option. These tournaments provide curated offerings by bifurcating the participation level and providing opportunities, especially to the en-

trants at the grassroots of the competition. **Content creation:** Game streaming and content

it is important for aspirants to know which one entices them the most; choose a course accordingly and then apply to various studios.

War of the platforms

Presenting a comparative analysis of gaming consoles, gaming PCs, and mobiles

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GAME CONSOLE

The advantage of a gaming console is that the fixed specifications make it easier for game developers to design games. "From a consumer point of view, this guarantees a set level of performance and expectation—you always know what to expect in terms of experience. It's this consistency in the development process and user experience that makes it ideal. Let's not forget, the graphics are top-notch," shares Srinivasan Veeraraghavan, co-founder at Dot9Games, one of the leading gaming studios in India. It is safe to say that console gaming has created a community of gaming enthusiasts and professional players.

The biggest drawback of a gaming console today is its cost. Investing thousands in a product for a single purpose can seem excessive, and purchasing new games only adds to the expense. Another possible drawback is the lack of portability.

PC GAMING

"One of the major factors working in favour of PC gaming is the fact that one can multitask," shares Vishal Parekh - COO, CyberPower-PC, a custom gaming PC company/brand. The multifunctionality and the scope of customisation make PC gaming rank higher in terms of performance and expectation compared to consoles or mobile devices. You can also make use of different accessories such as a controller, joystick, gaming mouse, keyboard, etc. The game engine or almost all the accessories can be changed in case of any error. This leaves PC gaming with no restrictions, as all the devices can be upgraded over time. The customisation of settings, great graphics and optimal gaming speed are just a few advantages of PC gaming.

Veeraraghavan shares, "Multitasking abilities aside, to ensure high-quality gaming, PC gaming quite likely has the highest entry barrier in terms of hardware. To buy a good enough PC to run all of the latest and greatest games at a

reasonable resolution and frame rate, you'll be paying at least Rs 1,00,000 to Rs 1,50,000."

MOBILE GAMING

"Mobile games played a pivotal role in ensuring widespread gaming in the country. However, we are seeing a remarkable shift in consumption patterns in India. Not only does mobile gaming allow users to play games from anywhere, but it also has made gaming more acceptable," highlights Parekh. While mobile gaming may be affordable and portable, it does lose some points for poor user experience. The gameplay often lags; unless upgraded to a paid version, the user will be often bombarded with unwanted ads; the game may not be optimised for all types of phones. "From a player's perspective, the concern is curation. Store ratings can be manipulated and while there have been attempts from platform holders to editorialise and curate games for easier consumption, there's a lot more that can be done," concludes Veeraraghavan.



Ctrl + Alt + Victory: Meet athletes who have put esports on the global map

Competitive gaming has evolved from a peripheral hobby to a global phenomenon. Meet the esports players who are redefining what it means to be an athlete in the digital age

ARCHANA.AJITH@timesofindia.com



TANMAY SINGH (Sc0ut0P)

Age: 26

Hometown: Odisha

Educational Qualification: B. Tech in Mechanical Engineering

Achievements:

- Favourite Esports Athlete of the Year 2023
- 3rd A-Tier Battlegrounds Mobile India Series 2023
- 2nd S-Tier PUBG Mobile World League 2020: East
- 2nd A-Tier ESL India Premiership 2020 Summer Season: Finals

Tanmay Singh's journey into competitive gaming began due to a sports injury when he was 20. While on bed rest, he turned to gaming to stay engaged. During this period, a friend introduced him to competitive gaming and leaderboards. "I got hooked on a battle royale mobile game, which was trending globally and I seized the opportunity and started participating in national and international competitions. My big break came in 2018 when my team was selected, out of 22 teams, to represent India in a competition in Thailand," says Singh. Recently, Singh's team won a national championship and is gearing up for another major national tournament.

"What many fail to understand is that esports, though different in format, demands the same level of commitment as any other sport and the core values remain the same: discipline, hard work, and dedication. However, balance is essential in life, and spending time with family and loved ones is crucial because it helps maintain your mental health. I've seen many people retire from competitive gaming due to mental health struggles, so taking care of your mental well-being should be a priority," adds Singh.

Singh also highlights the importance of education alongside gaming, calling it a vital safety net as the gaming scene in India is still in its nascent stages. "Unlike other countries, India lacks a dedicated esports body to govern and support the industry. This is a significant gap that needs to be bridged to help gaming in India reach its full potential," concludes Singh.



TIRTH MEHTA

Age: 29

Hometown: Bhuj, Kachchh, Gujarat

Educational Qualifications: MSc IT, BSc IT, Diploma in Computer Engineering

Achievements:

- Asian Games 2018 - Bronze Medal
- Top 16 IeSF World Championship 2016 (Indonesia)
- WESG 2018 - Top 8 (China)

Tirth Mehta's love for gaming began at the age of eight, playing casual games like Mario for fun. But his view of gaming changed during college when he discovered competitive games. "I was introduced to a world of tournaments and events like the World Cyber Games, often called

the 'Olympics of esports.' That is when I realised gaming could be more than just a hobby," says Mehta.

At just 15, Mehta started his competitive gaming journey. He won a bronze medal at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta. Mehta secured his place by winning national qualifiers and then defeating opponents from Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the regionals. Reflecting on the experience, he says, "Entering the athletes' village was unforgettable - the energy was filled with patriotism and seeing the Indian flag raised, knowing I contributed to that, was beyond words."

For those aspiring to be esports athletes, Mehta advises being smart about which games to focus on, especially if they aim to represent India in global competitions. "Don't avoid tournaments because you're afraid to lose. Every competition is a chance to learn. Even when you win, find areas to improve," advises Mehta. Additionally, he also encourages Indian gamers to participate in domestic as well as global tournaments.



AKSHAJ SHENOY

Age: 22

Hometown: Kochi, Kerala

Educational Qualification: B.A. Economics

Achievements:

- 1st place, Road to Asian Games Regional Qualifier (RDAG)
- 5th place, Asian Games 2023

Akshaj Shenoy's journey into esports began at age 11; he was inspired by watching his sister play a PC game. "I used to play mobile games but seeing her on PC made me want to try it myself. When she hesitated to teach me, I turned to YouTube tutorials," recalls Shenoy. This led him to discover a popular

5v5 multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game. His dedication paid off and by 2021, Shenoy formed his dream team, which dominated local tournaments and drew the attention of the Esports Federation of India (ESFI), who were selecting players for the 2023 Asian Games. "We went undefeated in South Asia, and that's when we got the call for Asian Games. It was surreal," says Shenoy.

Representing India on an international stage as the captain was a dream come true for Shenoy. "It's more than just a personal achievement; it's about putting India on the global map. We want to show that Indian gamers can compete at the highest level," exclaims Shenoy.



KAMPELLI PAVAN (mr.tomboy)

Age: 26

Hometown: Sultanabad, Peddapalli District, Telangana

Educational Qualification: B.Tech in Civil Engineering

Achievements:

- Top 16 in eFootball Championship 2022
- Top 16 in eFootball Championship 2023
- 2024 eFootball Arsenal Club Champion and finalist in eFootball World Championship 2024

Kampelli Pavan's journey started from humble beginnings in a small village in Telangana, where he discovered his love for football. Despite his passion for the sport, he faced the challenge of pursuing football in India where cricket dominates. However, his love for the game led him to the world of virtual football, where he found an outlet to channel his passion.

During his third year of engineering, Pavan decided to support his family financially, and started streaming his gameplay. Initially, it was difficult to gain traction, but his content resonated with the Malayali community of Kerala, who shared his love for football. Their support played a crucial role in the early success of his channel, which eventually led to him competing in esports tournaments.

"I competed in several esports tournaments. Despite setbacks in 2022 and 2023, I finally reached the top eight in the 2024 football World Championship, representing India in Japan. It felt good to be recognised by people there, and meeting famous personalities. This was a monumental achievement, especially considering the limited recognition and support for football games in India," shares Pavan.

Pavan emphasised that the pressures of competitive gaming can be tough. "Mental strength is key. Players often face burnout and need support. In such cases, it's important to maintain a structured routine with regular exercise, a healthy diet, and sufficient sleep, as it helps in managing stress and being your best self," advises Pavan.

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From a niche hobby to mainstream sport

Let's delve into the evolution of the country's gaming culture

GLADWIN.MENEZES
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Remember gaming cafes? Those hourly charged LAN gaming set-ups where gaming enthusiasts from the neighbourhood gathered to unlock the next level? This was the start of a new wave in the gaming sector; it evolved from being a one or two person experience, to a communal affair. The new co-operative gaming option gave gamers a chance to extend their group and thus groups of gamers began to first come to light. Hyper-localised tournaments between cyber-cafes and gaming hubs soon became frequent.

"The esports boom now has revitalised the gaming scene by showcasing regional talent and drawing investment, which enhances the gaming ecosystem's infrastructure. The local game development industry is flourishing through innovative games that appeal to both domestic and international audiences. This growth is creating jobs and attracting more young people



Singh Nathani, founder, of Envify Media.

This enthusiasm for gaming has also converted into profitable sales figures. The gaming industry in India is now in a much better position than it used to be. "The online gaming industry in India has seen a rapid expansion with a 28 per cent CAGR between FY20 and FY23, and projections indicate further growth to Rs 33,243 crore by FY28, with a sustained 15 per cent CAGR. This sector not only attracts significant foreign and domestic investments, but also generates substantial direct and indirect employment. Leveraging India's IT prowess, the industry holds natural potential for India. Notably, while the size of the global gaming industry crossed USD 300 billion in 2021 — more than the combined markets for the movie and music industry — the online gaming segment in India constitutes 1.1 per cent of the global online gaming revenue," explains Kashyap Reddy, co-founder and CEO, Hitwicket, a mobile game.

Adding to this, Nathani says, "Gaming cafes walked so India's gaming culture could run. While the pandemic saw a surge in personal gaming setups, gaming cafes remain an integral part of the scene. They provide an accessible entry point for anyone, from the casual player to the aspiring pro, without the hefty investment of a high-end PC or laptop. These cafes still serve as vibrant hubs where gamers can immerse themselves in their favourite titles, compete with friends, and be part of a community. For many, gaming cafes are the gateway into the larger gaming world, offering an environment rich in camaraderie and shared passion. Far from being a relic of the past, they continue to play a crucial role in nurturing and expanding India's dynamic gaming culture."

into careers in gaming, from game development to content creation. Streaming has become an important aspect of gaming culture, with many players gaining large online followings. This shift signals a culture change in India, where gaming is now seen as a legitimate form of entertainment and a career option," shares Anurag Banerjee, CPTO and co-founder, LightFury Games.

The Indian online gaming market saw explosive growth, with gamers rising from 250 million in FY18 to 400 million by mid-2020, driven by lockdowns, remote work, and a shift to virtual social interactions, highlights a KPMG report. Mobiles, laptops, and computers became the new playgrounds, and suddenly, the gaming scene in India erupted. "We witnessed an extraordinary surge in gaming influencers and content creators, who quickly became household names, amassing millions of views each week. What was once considered a niche interest became mainstream, evolving into a widely accepted and celebrated pastime. Just as we used to gather with friends at 6 pm every evening during our childhood, today's gamers meet on streaming platforms, creating a new kind of social bond," shares Vishal



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