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Race through India's first karting circuit in Irungattukottai near Chennai **P3**

MEET THE VOICE BEHIND 'GOLDEN SPARROW' **P4**



Fresh off the success of *RRR*, Jr NTR explains his mindset on *Devara: Part 1*, his first solo release in six years

Hand of God

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Keeping in fashion with pan-Indian actors promoting their films in centres outside their home turf, Jr NTR was in Chennai recently for the press meet of *Devara: Part 1*, his upcoming film. Pointing out how this is his first solo film in six years, the actor has no qualms in accepting that he is high-strung about the release.

"I'm very confident of team *Devara*, thanks to the kind of technicians we have... my director Siva (Koratala Siva), Sabu sir (production designer Sabu Cyril), Sreekar sir (editor Sreekar Prasad) and Randy sir (cinematographer Rathnavelu). Anirudh has been killing it lately, too. They all have done something wonderful in the film and I wish I could show it on my face," says a laughing NTR.

NTR calls *Devara* his most enterprising project and that is quite a claim for an actor who has recently been part of a film like *RRR*. "This is probably the most ambitious movie I've been a part of so far in my career. It's very high on VFX which is a different craft altogether and Rajamouli has mastered it. He knows when, where, why and how to use it. So it's not everybody's cup of tea," says the actor.

"Unfortunately, when a production designer does a great job, people think it's done by VFX. The underwater shoot for *Devara* was probably the toughest; we shot for about 30 days underwater and it also involved some crazy stunts."

The film's music has already met its fair share of virality on social media. Speaking of Anirudh, NTR says, "This is Ani's era. Many technicians have a phase of huge success but after a point of time, it fizzles out. We have seen multiple examples. But I feel this person is here to stay."

"He puts in a lot of hard work; even if we are in dire need of an output that needs to come in that very day, he doesn't compromise on it because he knows how

important music is for any movie. I don't remember the last time I actually went berserk seeing Rajinikanth sir and it happened in *Jailer*...because of the music," says NTR.

Skippping the pan-India game *RRR* might have made NTR a household name across the country, but he does not believe every film of his has to match that tag. "I'm not in this pan-India game. Only when a story travels across boundaries, can you push it; you don't do it because you have a pan-Indian market," says NTR, citing *Kantara* as an example.

NTR's mother is a Kannadiga. He grew up listening to the stories of Guliga and Panjurli (deities). "My mom and my grandmother used to tell me stories about it and now, a movie has come out on it. I never thought the movie would strike a chord with the country, but it did. The writer and filmmaker



We felt that to tell a story like this, a single-part, three-hour narration is not enough. If our audiences were ready to watch a five-hour movie, we would have done that

JR NTR

should have the ability to connect it with the masses and only then will it happen."

NTR adds that they never intended to make *Devara* as a two-parter. "We felt that to tell a story like this, a single-part, three-hour narration is not enough. If our audiences were ready to watch a five-hour movie, we would have done that. But we have a stigma that it might test the patience of the audience."

The power of manifestation Jr NTR's grandfather and legendary actor NT Rama Rao had starred alongside veteran actor Sridevi in a dozen films and with *Devara*, Sridevi's daughter Janhvi Kapoor is making her Telugu debut. NTR says Janhvi manifested her addition to this project.

"Karan Johar called me one day and said Janhvi is a bright actor and asked me to have her in my movie. I told him we were still at the writing stage. But I think she manifested so much that by the end of it, we had no choice but to cast her and she has killed it in film," says NTR, adding that Janhvi initially had her inhibitions. "She had a lot of fear and tension, especially with Telugu, dancing and more importantly living up to that expectation of Sridevi garu. But Janhvi has shocked us all..."

Janhvi is not the only cast member picked from the shores of Bollywood for *Devara*; its antagonist is Saif Ali Khan who recently made his debut in the South with *Adipurush*. NTR says that it was a conscious decision to not show much of him in the trailer. "He's amazing and has done something that he hasn't done before. *Omkara* and his role in the film was amazing, and here he plays Bhaira who is equally as powerful as *Devara*," says NTR.

"*Devara* is a mass film with a lot of commercial elements," adds NTR before clarifying what sets his film apart. "In mainstream commercial films, the protagonist comes to the aid of people who don't have confidence, gives them that and takes them forward. But here, it's the opposite; when people have a lot of confidence, somebody comes from the outside and says 'No, we need to have a little bit of fear'. It is a very beautifully-articulated heroism." NTR also says that the characters played by Kalaivarasan and Shine Tom Chacko are unlike what they have done before. "*Devara* is an action drama, you need to have a lot of relatable characters and that's what we have done."

Devara: Part 1 is scheduled to hit theatres on September 27

Wisdom in the commons

Porombokkiyal 2024 explores knowledge in our shared social spaces

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Often when we say someone is educated, what we mean is literate. Because, knowledge has multiple sources. If there is ever an opportunity to gain more than book knowledge, it is the Porombokkiyal 2024, a symposium of the arts, sciences, and knowledge born from our commons. "This is an initiative of the Chennai Kalai Theru Vizha. Our work through the festival, has been about creating intersections in society between different cultural and social groups through art and conversation," says acclaimed singer and supporter of the festival, TM Krishna.

The word poromboke is a term for a piece of land that is not listed in the revenue records. It originates from Tamil and is often used as slang to mean "waste". Porombokkiyal is another attempt to reclaim it. "The commons is a very important space where knowledge is constantly created," says Krishna. "The idea of this symposium is to listen to the people who are knowledge bearers. They learn differently, and express differently. We must listen to them, to understand what happens in their lives," he adds.

Each speaker will converse with a moderator for 45 minutes, followed by a 30-minute audience interaction. Life on the Shores is a conversation with women prawn pickers of Pazhaverkaadu (Pulicat). Seeds of Survival will be a narration of stories from Thiruvannamalai with paddy farmers E Leninhasan and Baskar Manimegalar. The third session will be on the science and art of goat herding with goat herder A Thangavelu, titled Beyond the Flock. The series of talks will conclude with a conversation on the living tradition of the folk instrument mugaveenai with musician Sasikumar titled Wind and Rhythm.

Porombokkiyal 2024 will be hosted at The Folly, Amethyst on October 2 from 10am. Entry is free.



Stories that matter A shepherd herding goats in Periyapalayam near Chennai. B JOTHI RAMALINGAM

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Kovalam's Pearl beach basks in a resplendent glow. Not of the rising sun this time, but of large floodlights erected on the shore, that put the ocean and its rippling frothy waves under the spotlight.

At India's first-ever experimental night surfing event, Kovalam's surfing stars manoeuvred quickly thinning waves, with the moon (and spectators lounging on the beach) as their witness. From the shore, each wave break made for a spectacle as the surfers, clad in reds, blues and whites caught the waves in quick succession. As the night darkened and the winds slowed down, the athletes also encountered long periods of waiting. Earlier in the afternoon, the surfers balanced the waves, striking poses.

Titled Big Air Flo 2024, the event was a spectacle more than a competition, and largely experimental since this was the first time Indian surfers were trying to tame moonlit waves.

"It is an idea we have had for years. The event was meant for



Perfect 10 under the moon

Expert surfers in Kovalam manoeuvred waves under the night sky in India's first-ever night surf spectacle

people who love the sport. Everyone is out here to enjoy," said Arun Vasu, president, Surfing Federation of India. Held in collaboration with Red Bull and TT Group, the event had Irish big wave surfer Conor Maguire on the shores of Kovalam, interacting with the

ever-burgeoning surfing community of Kovalam and Mammallapuram over the weekend. "The idea was that he shares his experiences with the surfing community and they learn from each other," Arun said. The event was spread over

two nights of surfing and a morning of expression, and air acts. The majority of surfers were from Kovalam and Mamallapuram, apart from athletes from Karnataka, and the Maldives.

The night is young (Left) A surfer in action; (below) Kamali at the event. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Arun said that in a festival setting, almost 80% come for the music, leaving the sport largely ignored. This time, on a Friday night, families settled on the shores to catch the action on water, as children built sandcastles on the side. Collective cheers arose every time a surfer managed to catch a wave.

For the athletes, surfing at night poses different challenges. Through the day, tides vary. The wind is off-shore and so the waves hold better during the first half of the

day which is why early mornings are preferred for surfing. By afternoon, on the other hand, the sea breeze comes in, and the waves get a little tricky, said Arun.

"What is tricky is that even with the floodlights, sometimes we cannot judge the wave coming in. We may not see the swell unless it's right in front of you. It is blank for a while," said Srikanth, who is preparing for a tournament in Reunion Island next year. "Surfing at night is not beginner-friendly. This was a new experience for me, as in the night the waves were calmer and smaller," said the athlete, who has been surfing for the last 10 years.

There have been a lot of enquiries on whether night surfing will be a permanent fixture on the Coromandel Coast. Arun however, does not make any promises. "But we really hope that such events spring up across India, and this is one of the many ways through which the community can grow."





One track mind

This track at Irungattukottai is India’s first karting circuit built to FIA-CIK specifications

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At Madras International Karting Arena (MIKA), you can hear the go-karts before you see them. Follow the sound of the engines and you will reach the spanking new 1.2 kilometre track. Seven-year-olds are whizzing past,

manoeuvring their speeding karts with great control like they have been driving for decades. In comparison, I – with 20 years of experience of driving on the road – match the speed of a bullock cart, cautiously hitting the brake every time I turn a corner. MIKA was launched last week amidst great fanfare as two-time Formula One champion Mika Hakkinen inaugurated the facility.

He even did a couple of laps around the track with Narain Karthikeyan and Karun Chandhok, former F1 racers from India. “Mika drove the electric kart and the Rotax race kart. He was quite impressed with the circuit and said it is a good playground for young drivers,” says Rohan Shankar, head of operations – MIKA. The track, developed by Madras Motor Sports Club (MMSC), has been involved in motorsports since the 1950s and is instrumental in making Chennai a hub for this sport. “It took a little over 12 months to build MIKA, while it took 12 years to build the Madras International Circuit back in the 1950s,” says Rohan, adding, “All F1

drivers come from a karting background. MMSC knows how important karting is to develop motorsports at the grass-roots level and so they built MIKA to bump up international racing and the skill of racers here,” he adds. What is special about MIKA is that it is India’s first karting circuit built to FIA-CIK (Commission Internationale de Karting) specifications. “This means we can get approved to hold world championship racing and this is important for the growth of the sport in India. The track is perfectly laid and not bumpy. The approval from CIK also depends on safety. We’ve got the right type of barriers comprising around 5,000 tyres stacked around the track with a belt wrapped around it. There are floodlights to light up the track that can also host night racing,” explains Rohan.

Race ready Competitions are already lined up, with the MECO FMSCI National Karting Championship Rotax Max Classes 2024 starting this weekend. Narain Karthikeyan even called it challenging after a quick drive. “The track has a lot of tight corners and camber on a few turns; the elevation also changes. One requires skill to make the most of their time on the track,” says Rohan. MIKA currently has 25 karts, including petrol and electric variants. There are karts for kids, adults and twin seaters as well, between seven to 15 horse power. The everyday karts can go up to 75 kmph and the professional ones go up to 160 kmph. “There has been an increase in interest in karting,” says Rohan, adding that this facility will make karting accessible. Shortly, it will also be open to novices and families. Everybody can try their hand at it, and those with an interest can take it to the next level.



The track is perfectly laid and not bumpy. We’ve got barriers comprising 5,000 tyres stacked around it

ROHAN SHANKAR

MIKA is in Irungattukottai, adjacent to Madras International Circuit.



All set (Top) Karun Chandhok, Mika Hakkinen, and Narain Karthikeyan at the track. S SHIVA RAJ AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Snack on the patty that make monsoon day feel happy

The monsoons are here. All with its dull cloudy afternoons, heavy showers, colourful umbrellas and the rush for us to get home soon. And during this time our cravings for warm and delicious snacks skyrocket. There's something about the rhythmic pitter-patter of raindrops that makes us yearn for comfort food. Among the array of monsoon delights, one snack has become particularly popular with today's generation: the Amul Happy Treats Burger Patty. This frozen, ready-to-cook snack offers the perfect solution for those rainy day cravings. Made from the best quality potatoes sourced from North Gujarat and processed in a state-of-the-art manufacturing plant with imported machinery, Amul Happy Treats Burger Patty promises the high quality that Amul stands for. With its 100% natural ingredients, devoid of any artificial colors or flavors, this completely vegetarian snack is sure to delight your taste buds.

What sets Amul Happy Treats Burger Patty apart is its superior content and flavor. These snacks deliver a rich, authentic potato taste that will leave you wanting more. The best part? There's no need to thaw before cooking! You can simply fry or bake the patties to perfection, making them a versatile option for any kitchen.

Imagine this: the rain is pouring outside, and you're cozy indoors with a piping hot burger in hand. The crispy, golden-brown patty is nestled between a soft bun, complemented by a generous slice of AMUL Cheese, a dollop of tangy tomato ketchup, and garnished with freshly sliced onions and tomatoes. It's a quick and tasty snack that transforms a rainy day into a delightful experience.

Whether you're gathered with family for an impromptu snack time or simply enjoying a quiet moment alone, Amul Happy Treats Burger Patty is your go-to option for a monsoon treat. Because with Amul Happy Treats, every rainy day becomes a celebration of taste and quality.

"CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE"



Fashion in sparkles Arti Bagdy Fashion Collezione ushers in the festive season with a line-up of over 10 jewellers and 45 designers from across the country, showcasing their latest range. Visitors can shop from jewellers such as Ghanasingh Be True, Vasundhara Diamond Roof, Pradeep Poddar and SP Jewels. The event will also feature occasion-wear saris by Neelgar (bandhani), Nayaab (chikankari from Lucknow), Naju A Billimoria (Parsi-embroidered saris) and Raisa by Srishti (Jaipur), Varastara showcasing Kanjivaram saris with chikankari embroidery and Madalsa Goel. @Hyatt Regency, Teynampet. September 26 (3pm to 8pm) and 27 (11am to 8pm). For details, call 9841246901

Realism on the lens The upcoming edition of TEDxNapier Bridge Salon will focus on photography, and feature four guest speakers Jaisingh Nageswaran; Dr AV Arun; Krithika Sriram and Srivatsan Sankaran with live interactions, a display of classic and modern cameras, and coffee table books @Kalki Theatre, VR Mall, Anna Nagar. September 29, 2.45pm to 6.45pm. For details and tickets priced at ₹499, call 9566260587.



The nation wants to know Nexus Consulting presents Indica — The India Quiz. Being held since 2016, the annual quiz is open to school students. To participate in the 10th edition of the quiz, register by logging on to www.indica.consultnexus.in. There is no registration fee. Under each category, there will be written prelims followed by an on-stage quiz hosted by quizmaster Venky Srinivasan. This is a team quiz with two students per team, open to students across two categories: Juniors — Class V to VIII and Seniors — class IX to XII. @Sir Pitti Thyagaraya Hall, T Nagar, On October 2.



Game on Participants at the boccia championship held at YMCA Nandanam. S SHIVA RAJ

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Winning spirit

court last weekend over a hundred wheelchairs plied alongside many blue, red and white balls. The 6th edition of Tamil Nadu State Boccia Championship was a show of strength as boccia, the sport, gains steady visibility in the country. “It is encouraging to see other players showcasing

Chennai hosted the 6th Tamil Nadu State Boccia Championship with players from the city, Coimbatore, Salem, Madurai, Tiruchi, Tirunelveli and Tenkasi

their talent within the limitations they have. I learn a lot every time I go for such tournaments,” continues Sabana. In the last National Championship held in Gwalior, Sabana clinched a gold and silver. First introduced in 1984 at the Paralympics, boccia is also one among the two sports that does not have an Olympic counterpart. Initially, it was introduced as a sport for people with cerebral palsy, but now includes muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injuries and other severe physical disabilities. Chennai’s interaction with boccia has been leveraged by Ekta Trust since 2016. “We want to give a reason for people with disabilities to come out of their homes, for leisure and not just education and work. We have been promoting the sport since 2016 by training individuals from across the State for National-level competitions,” explains Sathish Kumar, coordinator, boccia development programme at Chennai-based Ekta Trust. Players from Coimbatore, Salem, Madurai, Tiruchi, Tirunelveli, and Tenkasi, apart from Chennai, across special schools and community-based rehabilitation projects were in participation at this tournament. Physiotherapists Jefferson Leckler and Simi TA said that one of the most notable aspects this year was increased participation from children. Jefferson adds that for many players, the sport is no longer a hobby.



Golden glory

All about singer Sublahshini, the voice behind the latest viral Tamil track, ‘Golden Sparrow’

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As on date, the song ‘Golden Sparrow’, from the soon-to-be released Dhanush-Priyanka Mohan starrer *Nilavuku En Mel Ennadi Kobam*, has 18 million views and 4,200 odd comments on YouTube. The discourse it has caused on X (formerly Twitter) has divided Gen Z and a pre-Y2K generation deeply, with both parties contesting about who brought out better music. Conclusions are still up in the air, but 24-year-old musician Sublahshini behind the song, takes delight in a confession.

“I’ve read nearly all the comments. The first set were obviously directed towards [actor] Priyanka Mohan. Over time, I saw some that claimed to like my voice. This is a huge moment,” says the singer who has sung the number along with the likes of Dhanush and rapper Arivu, for music director GV Prakash Kumar.

For someone who grew up insecure about her deep voice, a viral song like this feels like validating her early years. “My parents disconnected the cable connection at home the year I was born to ensure that my brother and I studied well. As a consequence, I had no choice but to turn to the radio. I listened to music every minute that I was

Sublashini is known for the ‘Kaathadi’ number, composed by Anand Kasinath

free but I noticed that the women always hit the high notes that I never could. I instead sang the male parts for many years to compensate. I’m glad people like Adele, Bombay Jayashri and Usha Uthup existed. They taught me that a variety of voices could sing but it was always difficult to be confident about singing. All I need to do is adjust my pitch,” she says.

Although this is her first playback number, the young artiste has recorded and released several independent songs. Instagram has been her choice of platform to put out music, particularly English covers. Music producer and singer-songwriter Ritviz’s repost of her music helped her profile get visibility back in the day, she says. She adds that she won a

contest and received the opportunity in 2020 to sing ‘Kanaa’, a song produced by Indian music producer Nucleya.

However, it was a one-minute song, ‘Kaathadi’, made with Anand Kashinath during the pandemic in 2021, that was a hit. “I’ve always been a fan of Dulquer Salman because.. well.. look at him. But when he mentioned liking ‘Kaathadi’ during an interview, I was on cloud nine.”

Sublahshini, who loves puns, wanted to add a spin to what she calls a once-criinge Instagram handle. It is why she tried to play with her name and create a new identity. This has stuck and helped her carve not just a niche in the music space, but also take a break from her day job as a human resources professional to focus on music exclusively. “An English album has been in the works for a while. I’m excited to put out my independent music after a while, hopefully by the end of the year,” she says.

For now though, she is basking in the golden glory of her sparrow song.



Flying high
Sublahshini.
SPECIAL
ARRANGEMENT

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Vijay Antony is inarguably a trendsetter; after all, his biggest hit song as a composer, ‘Naakka Mukka’, starts with a line prophesying it to be the “massive hit of the year” and for his recent film’s promotion, he has pulled off something unique. The usual PR-driven interviews of celebrities for promotions happen at the same spot, giving them a template look. Perturbed by this, Vijay, along with an art director and his team, created a dynamic set-up where the entire look and feel of the interview room is changed for every interview, and everything from the chair and promotional posters in the background to the lights are changed to make sure each video looks unique.

“As we grow and gain knowledge in cinema, I’m also learning how important publicity is. I realised in my previous film interviews that all of them happened in the same room, and those videos looked weak and lacked depth. I wanted to give the quality people see in films wherever I appear,” says Vijay, who is gearing up for his latest release, *Hitler*.

Vijay still consistently releases multiple films every year. He calls it a product of circumstances beyond his control, “The films I produced were released on time, but some of my other films were delayed. So when they are finally released, the span between the films gets reduced. Though that was

JOHAN SATHYADAS



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Power politics

Multi-hyphenate Vijay Antony on his upcoming film *Hitler*, a political subject

not the plan, I don’t see anything wrong with it.”

Will this, however, be termed as ‘over-exposure’? He answers, “Irrespective of how often your titles release, what the movie talks about and whether it’s entertaining for the audience is all that matters. All I care about during narration is how good the story and screenplay is. In *Romeo*, the female lead character doesn’t like her husband and those around him would make fun of him. But the husband loves her and sacrifices a lot, so I see *Romeo* in the same vein as *Pichaikaran*,” says Vijay as he segues into why that’s



If a film is good, it will become a blockbuster irrespective of its release date. Viswasam and Petta were released on the same day, and both became hits. It’s content that matters the most

VIJAY ANTONY

film. *Romeo* is a film where I tried comedy after *India Pakistan*. *Pichaikaran* was high on emotions and *Kolaigaran* was a thriller. I don’t care about a film’s genre,” says Vijay.

Vijay, whose interviews are going viral for the philosophical thoughts he infuses them with, concludes by saying, “We are all like cotton balls bursting from the plant, being taken where the wind takes us. When we try to go against it and fail, we go into depression and anxiety. Every situation will change us, but we have to keep going through them. Keeping expectations low and working towards what we want feels like the way to go.”

Hitler is releasing in theatres on September 27



Living the Thug Life

Tamil film *Nayakan*, released in 1987, is celebrated as a cult classic till date. The men behind that film, Mani Ratnam and Kamal Haasan, are back together after 35 years for a film titled *Thug Life*. Shoot on this film recently concluded, according to a recent social media post from the makers. It is expected that the film will hit screens next year. The film is jointly produced by Red Giant Movies, Raaj Kamal Films International and Madras Talkies. Apart from Kamal Haasan, who was last seen in *Indian 2* and *Kalki*, *Thug Life* will also feature Silambarasan, Trisha Krishnan, Ashok Selvan, Pankaj Tripathi, Ali Fazal, Abhirami, Nassar, Joju George, and Aishwarya Lekshmi. The music will be composed by AR Rahman.



The Russian link

Mosfilm, one of Russia’s oldest and renowned movie studios, is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. To mark the occasion, the Chennai International Film Festival, in association with the Russian Centre of Science and Culture, is hosting a three-day Mosfilm Festival. The Mosfilm Festival will screen films like *Rent a House* with *All the Inconveniences*, *The Star* and *Ward No 6*, among others. Screenings are from September 27 - September 29 (3pm onwards). All films have English subtitles, and entry is free. Venue: AVM Auditorium, Avichi College of Arts and Science, Arcot Road, Virugambakkam



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