

TRICOLOUR ESTATE

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Wednesday
8.7.2026

Pages: 4
Price: Rs.2

Volume: 1
Issue: 50

Published from Jagtial
Circulated to Telangana

PRGI Regd: TGENG/26/A3325
www.tricolourestate.com



AI Reshapes Tech Industry: 1.2 Lakh Jobs Cut in 2026

New Delhi, July 7: Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven automation is dramatically reshaping the global technology industry, with 119,494 employees laid off by 219 technology companies so far in 2026, according to workforce tracking platform Layoffs.fyi. Unlike previous years, when companies cited over-hiring and cost-cutting as the primary reasons for layoffs, firms are now openly attributing workforce reductions to their transition towards AI-first business models. Major technology companies are redirecting billions of dollars toward AI infrastructure, specialised chips, cloud computing, and automation while reducing traditional workforce requirements. Industry leaders including Oracle, Meta, Cisco, Google, In-



tuit, Cloudflare, Coinbase, PayPal, and General Motors have all announced significant job cuts as part of their AI transformation strategies. Oracle recorded the largest workforce reduction, eliminating nearly 21,000 positions, representing about 13% of its global workforce. The company said the restructuring would help finance large-scale AI investments. Meta, led by Mark Zuckerberg, cut around 8,000 jobs while simultaneously redeploying nearly 7,000 employees into AI-focused roles. Networking giant Cisco announced around 4,000 layoffs despite strong financial

performance, stating that AI had become central to its future growth strategy. Financial software company Intuit also reduced its workforce by approximately 3,000 employees (17%), saying the move would accelerate AI development. Google quietly trimmed jobs in its Cloud division while restructuring operations around AI-powered workflows, even as cloud revenues continued to grow strongly. Cloudflare, Coinbase, PayPal and General Motors have also implemented AI-driven restructuring measures, highlighting that the impact of automation now extends beyond traditional software companies into finance, cybersecurity and manufacturing. Experts believe the current trend marks a structural transformation rather than a temporary cost-cutting exercise, with companies increasingly investing in AI technologies while reducing roles that can be automated.

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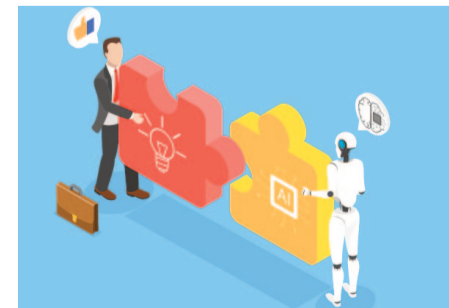
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AI Adoption Outpaces Skills

New Delhi, July 7: Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming a core part of Indian workplaces, with 43% of organisations already deploying AI and another 20% running pilot projects. However, workforce readiness continues to lag behind technology adoption, according to the inaugural Aon Human Capital Trends Study. The report highlights that while Indian companies are rapidly investing in AI, many are yet to equip employees with the necessary skills and support to maximise the technology's potential. India's combined AI deployment and pilot rate stands at 63%, trailing the Asia-Pacific average of 74%, but the country has emerged as a preferred destination for AI talent. According

to the study, 39% of Indian organisations are confident about attracting and retaining AI-skilled professionals, significantly higher than the Asia-Pacific average of 21% and the global average of 24%. The report notes that India's growing AI talent pool provides a competitive advantage, but organisations must continue investing in employee upskilling to ensure workers can effectively collaborate with AI rather than compete against it. The survey also found improvements in workforce planning through data-driven decision-making. More than 55% of organisations reported high levels of HR data maturity, enabling better hiring, productivity, and workforce planning decisions. Additionally, 25%



of companies said they now have a clearly defined employee value proposition, reflecting a greater focus on aligning people strategies with business objectives. Despite these gains, the study revealed a significant gap between employer perceptions and employee experiences regarding workplace benefits. While 89% of employers said they have strong employee wellbeing strate-

gies, employees reported limited access to several promised benefits. For instance, 88% of organisations believe childcare support is important, but only 20% of employees said they actually receive it. Similarly, although 89% of employers consider financial education a key employee benefit, only 14% of workers reported having access to such programmes. The report concludes that AI adoption alone will not determine business success. Companies that combine AI investments with continuous employee upskilling, effective workforce planning, and improved employee experience are expected to gain a stronger competitive advantage in the years ahead.



EDITORIAL

Strengthening
Democracy Through
Electoral Reforms

Democracy derives its strength not merely from the right to vote but from the integrity, transparency, and inclusiveness of the electoral process. As the world's largest democracy, India has successfully conducted elections involving hundreds of millions of voters for over seven decades. This remarkable achievement has earned global admiration. However, the evolving political, technological, and social landscape demands continuous electoral reforms to preserve public trust and strengthen democratic institutions. The Election Commission of India has introduced several reforms over the years, including Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), online voter registration, and systematic voter awareness campaigns. These measures have improved efficiency and expanded voter participation. Yet, challenges such as money power, criminalisation of politics, misinformation on social media, hate speech, and low urban voter turnout continue to raise concerns about the quality of democratic participation. One of the most pressing issues is the growing influence of money in elections. Rising campaign expenditures often create an uneven playing field, making it difficult for capable candidates with limited financial resources to compete. Greater transparency in political funding, stricter monitoring of campaign expenses, and stronger disclosure norms are essential to ensure fairness and public accountability. The criminalisation of politics is another challenge that cannot be ignored. While every individual is presumed innocent until proven guilty, political parties should exercise greater responsibility in selecting candidates with clean public records. Strengthening ethical standards in public life would enhance citizens' confidence in democratic institutions. The digital age has introduced new opportunities as well as new risks. Social media has become a powerful tool for political communication, but it has also accelerated the spread of misinformation, deepfakes, and divisive narratives. Combating these threats requires a balanced approach that protects freedom of expression while promoting factual information, digital literacy, and responsible use of technology during elections. Increasing voter participation must also remain a national priority. Despite high turnout in many rural areas, several urban constituencies continue to record lower participation. Young voters, first-time electors, migrant workers, and persons with disabilities should receive greater support through awareness campaigns, accessible polling facilities, and voter-friendly initiatives that encourage wider participation.

Will El Niño Inevitably Affect India's Agricultural Sector?

Climate has always been the backbone of Indian agriculture. For centuries, farmers have relied on the timely arrival of the southwest monsoon to sow, nurture, and harvest their crops. However, in recent decades, changing climatic conditions have made rainfall increasingly unpredictable. The emerging possibility of an El Niño event during the current monsoon season has once again raised concerns over India's agricultural output, rural economy, and food security. While El Niño is a naturally occurring climatic phenomenon, its impact is becoming more severe in the era of global warming. The crucial question, therefore, is not whether El Niño can be prevented, but whether India is adequately prepared to minimize its consequences. According to forecasts issued by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), the India Meteorological Department (IMD), and several international climate agencies, the Pacific Ocean is gradually transitioning from neutral ENSO conditions towards an El Niño phase. At the same time, the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), which sometimes offsets the adverse effects of El Niño, is expected to remain largely neutral. This combination increases the possibility of below-normal southwest monsoon rainfall between June and September. Although El Niño does not produce identical outcomes every time, history demonstrates that several strong El Niño events—including those of 1982-83, 1997-98, and 2015-16—were associated with significant climatic disruptions across the globe. India experienced rainfall deficits during many of these years, affecting agriculture, water resources, and rural livelihoods. However, climate scientists also emphasize that factors such as sea surface temperatures in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, local atmospheric circulation, and the Indian Ocean Dipole influence the final outcome. Therefore, reduced rainfall is a possibility—not an inevitability—but preparedness remains essential. Agriculture remains one of the most climate-sensitive sectors of the Indian economy. Nearly 75 percent of the country's annual rainfall is received during the southwest monsoon, while about half of India's cultivated land still depends directly on rainfall

rather than assured irrigation. Millions of small and marginal farmers make sowing decisions based entirely on the arrival and distribution of monsoon rains. Even a modest rainfall deficit can disrupt cropping patterns, reduce productivity, and weaken rural incomes. The implications extend far beyond farming. Agriculture supports nearly half of India's workforce directly or indirectly. Reduced agricultural production affects food prices, rural employment, agro-based industries, livestock, transportation, and overall economic growth. A weak monsoon also reduces reservoir levels, limiting irrigation water and hydropower generation while increasing dependence on groundwater extraction. Drinking water shortages become more severe, particularly in drought-prone regions. Climate change has compounded these vulnerabilities. Rising global temperatures have altered the traditional monsoon cycle. India has witnessed more frequent heatwaves, sudden cloudbursts, prolonged dry spells, and unseasonal rainfall over the past decade. Temperatures touching 45°C to 48°C have become increasingly common across several states. Instead of steady seasonal rainfall, farmers now face erratic precipitation—heavy downpours over a few days followed by extended periods of drought. Such irregular weather makes agricultural planning extremely difficult. States such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and large parts of central India are particularly vulnerable because a substantial proportion of their agricultural land remains rain-fed. Crops such as cotton, soybean, maize, red gram, black gram, groundnut, sorghum, and pearl millet are especially sensitive to rainfall shortages during critical growth stages. Even relatively small deviations in rainfall timing can significantly reduce yields. Small and marginal farmers face the greatest risk. They constitute nearly eighty percent of India's farming community and often possess limited financial capacity to withstand repeated climatic shocks. Crop failures increase indebtedness, reduce purchasing power, and affect rural consumption. Livestock owners also suffer as fodder shortages emerge due to reduced

pasture growth and declining water availability. The livestock sector deserves far greater attention in climate planning. During El Niño years, drying ponds and depleted reservoirs reduce drinking water availability for cattle. Scarcity of green fodder lowers milk production and weakens animal health. District-level fodder banks, improved veterinary infrastructure, and emergency fodder reserves should therefore become essential components of agricultural contingency planning. Similarly, fisheries are increasingly vulnerable to changing climatic conditions. Rising sea surface temperatures alter fish migration patterns, pushing several commercially valuable species into deeper waters. Cyclones and rough sea conditions further reduce fishing days, directly affecting the livelihoods of coastal communities. Improved marine weather forecasting and effective communication systems for fishermen have therefore become increasingly important. Public health is another often-overlooked dimension. Heatwaves increase cases of heatstroke and dehydration, while prolonged water scarcity reduces drinking water quality, increasing the incidence of water-borne diseases. Conversely, sudden heavy rainfall can trigger outbreaks of mosquito-borne illnesses. Strengthening rural healthcare systems and ensuring timely public awareness campaigns should therefore accompany climate preparedness strategies. Fortunately, India today possesses significantly better scientific capabilities than it did during previous El Niño events. Advances in satellite technology, Doppler weather radars, artificial intelligence, numerical weather prediction models, and remote sensing have substantially improved forecasting accuracy. However, accurate forecasts alone are insufficient. Scientific information must reach farmers in simple, timely, and actionable forms. Village-level advisories through mobile phones, community radio, agricultural extension officers, and Farmer Producer Organizations can help farmers make informed decisions regarding sowing dates, irrigation schedules, fertilizer application, and crop protection. Climate-resilient agriculture offers perhaps the most effective long-term solution.

Agricultural universities and research institutions have developed drought-tolerant, heat-resistant, and short-duration crop varieties capable of performing better under uncertain rainfall conditions. These innovations must be rapidly transferred to farmers. Crop diversification should receive greater policy support, encouraging cultivation of millets, pulses, and oilseeds that require relatively less water compared with traditional water-intensive crops. Water management has become equally critical. Every drop of rainwater must be conserved. Restoration of tanks, ponds, village lakes, canals, and traditional water bodies should become a nationwide mission. Community-led rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, watershed development, and micro-irrigation technologies such as drip and sprinkler systems can significantly improve water-use efficiency. Agricultural experts estimate that micro-irrigation alone can save up to half of irrigation water while simultaneously increasing productivity. Soil health also deserves greater attention. Excessive dependence on chemical fertilizers has reduced soil organic matter in many regions, lowering its ability to retain moisture. Increased application of compost, organic manure, biochar, crop residues, and integrated nutrient management practices can substantially improve soil structure and drought resilience. Food security requires equally proactive planning. Strengthening grain procurement, expanding storage infrastructure, maintaining adequate buffer stocks, and ensuring flexible import-export policies will help stabilize food prices during poor monsoon years. The Union Government, State Governments, local bodies, agricultural universities, disaster management authorities, and scientific institutions must function as an integrated system rather than isolated agencies.



Dr. Rakkireddy Adireddy
Kakatiya University

Gujarat HC Upholds
Death Penalty for 38 Convicts

Ahmedabad, July 8: The Gujarat High Court on Tuesday upheld the convictions and sentences awarded in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts case, confirming the death penalty for 38 convicts and life imprisonment for 11 others. A Division Bench comprising Justice Alpesh Y. Kogje and Justice Samir J. Dave dismissed the appeals filed by the convicts and upheld the February 2022 judgment of the special court, which had convicted 49 persons for their role in one of India's deadliest terror attacks. The High Court directed the state government to pay ₹10 lakh each to the families of the 56 victims who lost their lives. ₹1 lakh each to over 200 people injured in the blasts. The serial bomb blasts occurred on July 26, 2008, when 21 explosions ripped through Ahmedabad within about 70 minutes. The blasts targeted Public places, City buses, Two hospitals treating blast victims. The coordinated attacks killed 56 people and injured more than 200, leading to one of the country's biggest terror investigations.

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Spain End Ronaldo's World Cup Dream

Dallas, July 8: Spain booked their place in the FIFA World Cup quarter-finals after edging Portugal 1-0 in a tense Round of 16 clash, with substitute Mikel Merino scoring a dramatic stoppage-time winner to bring an emotional end to Cristiano Ronaldo's illustrious World Cup career. Merino struck in the 90+1st minute, calmly finishing a through ball from fellow substitute Ferran Torres, as Spain broke Portuguese

hearts after a fiercely contested encounter. The defeat marked the end of an era for 41-year-old Ronaldo, who had already confirmed that the 2026 FIFA World Cup would be his final appearance on football's biggest stage.

The Portuguese legend made his 27th World Cup appearance, equalling the record while becoming one of the few players to feature in six World Cups. Despite an illustrious in-

ternational career, Ronaldo finishes with UEFA Euro 2016 and two UEFA Nations League titles as his only major honours with Portugal. Spain captain Rodri praised his team's patience and singled out Merino for making an instant impact.

"We knew it would be a difficult match. Portugal are dangerous on the counter-attack, but we managed the game well. Credit to Mikel Merino for com-

ing off the bench and making the difference," Rodri said. Spain, the 2010 FIFA World Cup champions and reigning European champions, have now gone five consecutive matches without conceding a goal in this tournament, extending their defensive dominance. Portugal created opportunities through Ronaldo and Nuno Mendes, who struck the crossbar in the first half, while Spain also came close through Mikel Oyarz-

abal, Lamine Yamal, and Alex Baena.

With extra time looming, Merino's late strike proved decisive. Portugal nearly forced a dramatic equaliser when Bernardo Silva headed over in injury time, but Spain held firm. After the final whistle, an emotional Ronaldo saluted the crowd before leaving the field in tears, bringing the curtain down on one of football's greatest World Cup careers.

Portugal coach Roberto Martinez also confirmed that the match would be his final game in charge of the national team. "We can be proud of the players. It was an even contest, but luck wasn't on our side. This is definitely my last match as Portugal coach," Martinez said. Spain will now face Belgium in the quarter-finals on Friday near Los Angeles after Belgium defeated co-hosts United States 4-1.

England Thrash India, Take 2-0 Lead



Nottingham, July 8: England delivered a dominant all-round performance to crush India by 125 runs in the third T20 International at Trent Bridge, taking a commanding 2-0 lead in the five-match series after the opening match was washed out. With only two matches remaining, England have already ensured they cannot lose the series against the reigning T20 World Cup champions. Opting to bat first, England posted a formidable 201/7 in 20 overs. Opener Phil Salt starred with a fluent 70 off 44 balls,

while Sam Curran provided the late flourish with an unbeaten 41 off 24 deliveries. Captain Jos Buttler also contributed 36, helping the hosts cross the 200-run mark despite losing a few wickets in the middle overs. For India, debutant Prince Yadav impressed with figures of 2/30, dismissing both Harry Brook and the well-set Phil Salt. India also effected three run-outs but failed to curb England's aggressive scoring in the final overs. In reply, India's batting collapsed spectacularly under relentless pressure

from England's pace attack. Chasing 202, the visitors were bowled out for just 76 in 11.4 overs, registering one of their heaviest defeats in T20 International cricket. Fast bowler Josh Tongue led the demolition with 4/28, while Jofra Archer claimed 3/29 and spinner Adil Rashid chipped in with 2/14 as India failed to build any meaningful partnerships. The emphatic victory puts England firmly in control of the series, leaving India needing to win the remaining two matches to avoid a series defeat

Afghan Cricket Mourns Shapoor Zadran

New Delhi, July 8: Former Afghanistan fast bowler Shapoor Zadran, one of the pioneers of Afghan cricket, passed away in New Delhi after a prolonged illness. He was 38 and would have celebrated his 39th birthday on Wednesday. The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) confirmed his demise, expressing deep sorrow over the loss of one of the country's earliest cricket heroes. Zadran had been undergoing treatment in New Delhi after being diagnosed with Stage IV Haemophagocytic Lymphohistiocytosis (HLH), a rare and life-threatening immune disorder that causes severe inflammation and damages vital organs, including the bone marrow, liver, spleen and lymph nodes. He had been admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) since May. His health problems began in October last year, following which doctors advised advanced treatment in India. With assistance from Afghanistan star Rashid Khan and ACB chairman Mirwais Ashraf, his medical visa was expedited, and he was admitted to a Delhi hospital on January 18. Former Afghanistan captain Asghar Afghan frequently travelled between Dubai and Delhi to support Zadran during his treatment, while Rashid Khan and several Afghan cricketers remained in regular contact with his medical team and family. Although his condition initially showed signs of improvement, repeated infections, dengue and a sharp decline in red blood cell count worsened his health. A left-arm fast bowler, Zadran represented Afghanistan in 44 One-Day Internationals (ODIs) and 36 Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is) between 2009 and 2020. He played a key role in Afghanistan's rise on the international stage and was regarded as one of the architects of the country's cricketing success. Paying tribute, the Afghanistan Cricket Board said Zadran served Afghanistan cricket with honour, courage and pride, adding that his contributions would remain an important chapter in the nation's cricket history.



SKY Denies Fake Viral Statement

New Delhi, July 8: Former India T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav has dismissed a fake statement circulating on social media, urging fans not to believe or share unverified information. The clarification came after a fabricated quote, claiming Suryakumar was unhappy over losing the T20I captaincy and being ignored by selectors, went viral online. The fake post alleged that the star batter was disappointed over not receiving clarity about his future and felt he had not been given the respect he deserved after India's T20 World Cup triumph. Responding on social media platform X, Suryakumar categorically denied making any such remarks.



Payal Rajput



Khushi Kapoor Shares Emotional Moments from Anshula Kapoor's Wedding

Mumbai, July 8: Actress Khushi Kapoor has shared heartwarming moments from the wedding of her sister Anshula Kapoor, giving fans a glimpse of the family's emotional celebrations. Taking to social media, Khushi posted a series of photographs from the intimate wedding ceremony, where she and sister Janhvi Kapoor were seen lovingly performing their bridesmaid duties. One of the most touching moments captured the traditional sindoor ceremony, where groom Rohan Thakkar applied vermilion on Anshula's forehead. Khushi stood beside the bride, gently adjusting her hair and helping ensure the rit-

ual was performed smoothly, while Anshula was seen smiling and laughing during the emotional occasion. Another photograph showed Khushi and Janhvi posing with the newlyweds, while other images highlighted the sisters supporting Anshula throughout the wedding rituals. Sharing the pictures, Khushi captioned the post: "And then they were married and lived happily ever afterrrrr." Earlier, actor Arjun Kapoor also shared an emotional message for his sister as she embarked on a new chapter of her life. Posting pictures from the wedding festivities, he wrote: "To me you will al-

ways be mine, but now I have to let you go... Today you start your new journey with your partner, and my heart, mind and soul are so happy seeing you smile. I have seen you grow up into this wonderful woman who represents our Mom every step of the way. I'm always here, always got your back, and always making sure the smile never leaves. Love you. Your Arjun Bhaiya." The wedding celebrations were attended by close family members and loved ones, with the Kapoor siblings sharing several memorable moments from the joyous occasion on social media.



Venkatesh Joins Sets of #VenkyAnil5

Hyderabad, July 8: Telugu star Venkatesh has joined the ongoing shoot of director Anil Ravipudi's upcoming entertainer, tentatively titled #VenkyAnil5 (also referred to as #NKRAR2), as the team gears up to film crucial sequences in Hyderabad. According to industry sources, a specially constructed massive set has been erected for the current schedule, where important scenes featuring Venkatesh, Nandamuri Kalyan Ram, Keerthy Suresh, and Krithi Shetty will be shot. Recently, the film's unit celebrated Nandamuri Kalyan Ram's birthday by cutting a cake on the sets. The makers also unveiled a stylish new poster of the actor, wishing him on the occasion. The production house Shine Screen Studios announced that the film is slated for a Sankranti 2027 release. Earlier, the makers cautioned the public against a fake casting call circulating online. In an official statement, Shine Screen Studios clarified that no casting process was being conducted through unofficial channels and urged aspiring actors not to share personal details or money with fraudsters. They emphasized that any genuine casting announcements would be made only through the production house's verified social media accounts. The film was formally launched with a traditional pooja ceremony, with veteran producer Allu Aravind giving the inaugural clap. The makers have confirmed that Keerthy Suresh and Krithi Shetty play the female leads. National Award-winning composer G.V. Prakash Kumar has been roped in to compose the music. Director Anil Ravipudi recently welcomed the composer with a humorous promotional video inspired by the classic comedy Aha Naa Pellanta. The project marks Anil Ravipudi's fifth collaboration with Venkatesh, following successful films such as F2, F3, Sankranti Vasthunnam, and Venkatesh's extended cameo in MSG. It is also the director's second film with Nandamuri Kalyan Ram after the blockbuster Pataas. The film is being planned as a wholesome family entertainer that blends comedy, emotion, and action, bringing together stars from the Daggubati and Nandamuri families. The makers are targeting a Sankranti 2027 theatrical release.



Chiru Shoots Massive Action Scene for #Mega158

Hyderabad, July 8: Megastar Chiranjeevi has begun filming a massive action sequence for his upcoming film, tentatively titled #Mega158, directed by Bobby Kolli, according to industry sources. The high-octane sequence is being choreographed by renowned stunt masters Ram-Lakshman and is expected to showcase Chiranjeevi in a vintage, larger-than-life action avatar. The film's second shooting schedule commenced in Hyderabad on June 22 after the successful completion of the first schedule in Pollachi, Tamil Nadu. Announcing the new schedule, producer KVN Productions had posted on social media that the film was progressing at a "blazing pace," promising spectacular moments featuring the megastar. Director Bobby Kolli also confirmed the completion of the Pollachi schedule, describing it as an electrifying phase that laid the foundation for several important sequences in the film. The action entertainer features Anaswara Rajan and Nivetha Thomas in key roles. The project has generated significant buzz since its announcement on Chiranjeevi's birthday last year. Ahead of the film's launch, Chiranjeevi had shared a workout video on social media, revealing his rigorous fitness preparations for the role. "Every day is another opportunity to push beyond limits... Charged up and excited for another memorable journey with my dear Bobby for #Mega158," the actor had written. Produced by Venkat K. Narayana under the KVN Productions banner, #Mega158 marks Chiranjeevi's second collaboration with Bobby Kolli after the blockbuster "Waltair Veerayya." The makers are expected to announce the film's official title and release date in the coming months.

'Oh Sukumari' Gets U/A Certificate



Director Bharat Dharshan's upcoming family entertainer 'Oh Sukumari', starring Aishwarya Rajesh and Thiruveer in the lead roles, has received a U/A certificate from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) ahead of its theatrical release. The film is scheduled to hit cinemas worldwide on July 17 in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada. Announcing the certification, production house Gangaa Entertainments posted on social media: "It's U/A for #OhSukumari. Get ready for a heartwarming family entertainer packed with fun, love and laughter. Grand release in cinemas on July 17, 2026." The film generated considerable buzz after the release of its entertaining teaser. The teaser introduces Thiruveer as a cheerful young man eager to get married. He dreams of finding a gentle, delicate bride who gives him "goosebumps" at first sight. His family eventually finds the perfect match in Aishwarya Rajesh, and the wedding takes place.