



Ola's Giga Plans

Bhavish Aggarwal says Ola Electric will initially invest \$100 mn for the development of its Gigafactory **BOTTOM LINE >> 3**

magazine

To order your favourite newspaper, call 1800 1200 004 toll free or visit subscribe.timesgroup.com. To advertise with us, call 1800 120 5474

Inside Story

Deep Dive P 4, 5

- Dry is Wet, Wet is Dry: Monsoon's Changing
- Google's Search Supremacy is Getting Diminished

Sunday Chatter P 6

- Musk Black, A Colour Maketh the Man

World Play P 10

- Why aren't England's Riches Paying Off at Euro 2024?

- Pure Politics, Bottom Line & Around the World

Five Soldiers Killed in Ladakh Flash Floods

In a training-related accident near the China border, five Army soldiers died when their tank got washed away due to a sudden rise in water levels during a crossing exercise. **>> 2**

Excise Case: Kejriwal Sent to Judicial Custody till July 12 >> 2

ET WEALTH ON MONDAY

8 MISTAKES IN REDEVELOPMENT

TRADE PACTS, G7 TALKS ON TRACK

Confident of \$800 b Exports in FY25: Goyal



Commerce minister feels record likely on 3% YoY increase in spite of global crises

Kirtika.Suneja@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: India's goods and services exports could cross \$800 billion in FY25, 3% higher from the previous fiscal year, despite the persistent geopolitical challenges, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said Saturday.

The global situation is serious, with two ongoing conflicts, apart from the Red Sea crisis and elections in about 60% of

the world's democracies this year and the next.

"We are confident we will get over \$800 billion exports this year, with both goods and services growing — we will create a record," Goyal said at an event organised by the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council. India's goods and services exports in FY24 hit an all-time high of \$778.2 billion. Outbound shipments in the previous month were up 9.09% from the year earlier. "It is a good signal if India's exports have increased (in May)," he said.

The ministry is working on setting specific export targets for various sectors, with promotion councils and embassies abroad.

Global Agreements >> 7

₹31,000-CR PROCUREMENT

Railways to Revise Wagon Plan

Indian Railways has been forced to revise its ₹31,418 crore wagon procurement plan after supplier Modern Industries failed to fulfil the order. **Twesh Mishra reports. >> 3**

ICICI PRU & HDFC LIFE GET GST NOTICES, TO APPEAL >> 3

SHIFT FOR HINDUSTAN COCA-COLA BEVERAGES

Coca-Cola Uncaps Board Control of Bottling Ops

Bottling Investments shutters today; Henrique Braun-led board to oversee India assets

Ratna.Bhushan@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: The Coca-Cola Company is, on Sunday, shutting down its Bottling Investments Group (BIG), under which the US beverage maker operates its worldwide bottling operations, including in India.

"The BIG corporate office will close June 30. The timing is right to sunset BIG's headquarters and to oversee our remaining bottling investments in a more streamlined way," Henrique Braun, Coca-Cola president, international development, said in an internal note, a copy of which was seen by ET. The note said India, Nepal and Sri Lanka will be under the "oversight of its (Coca-Cola's) internal board."

The move directly impacts India as Coca-Cola India's wholly-owned bottling company, Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB), was controlled by BIG.

Re-bottling Ahead

India fifth-largest market by volumes for Coca-Cola globally

Global bottling ops a mix of listed & privately held cos

Top 5 bottling partners worldwide contributed 42% of total unit case volumes in 2022

CORE BRANDS

Coke, Sprite, ThumsUp aerated drinks

Minute Maid, Maaza juices

Georgia coffee

Kinley water

HCCB IN FY23 Revenues from ops up 40% YoY at ₹12,840 cr

Net profit 116% higher yoy at ₹809 cr

As reported by ET on June 18, Coca-Cola has reached out to at least four large Indian business houses and their family offices to sell a significant minority stake in HCCB — a move to unlock value ahead of its initial public offering (IPO).

'Simplification and Strengthening' >> 7

'Imported' Sales Events Boosting Demand

Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Valentine's Day are part of a growing list of 'imported' sales events in India. **Navneeta Nandan & Writankar Mukherjee report. >> 3**

India Inc Now Picks its C-level Champions from Indoor Pool

Inside Information

WHAT'S THE BUSINESS CASE FOR INTERNAL HIRING?

Cost advantage

Speed of hiring

Knows co better, cultural fit, greater acceptance

Helps in talent retention

Cos looking to fill up to 80% top jobs internally in a marked shift from competitive poaching

Rica.Bhattacharyya@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Large Indian corporates are increasingly looking in-house to fill C-suite and other top roles. Top company officials said India Inc is experiencing a resurgence in

internal leadership hiring, with a focus on providing seasoned professionals with the opportunity to have longer and more fulfilling job tenures.

This shift comes after years of intense external hiring and competition-driven poaching efforts. Leading conglomerates like Aditya Birla Group, Mahindra Group, Vedanta, Larsen & Toubro, RPG Enterprises are increasingly feeding in their CXO or top talent demand with in-house pros, marking a shift in strategy of high reliance on external search.

Building Talent Pipeline >> 7

CS Setty Gets FSIB Nod to be Next SBI Chief



Challa Sreenivasulu Setty has been selected as the next chairman of State Bank of India by the Financial Services Institution Bureau (FSIB), an arm of the central government. The other contenders were Ashwini Tiwari and Vinay Tonse. Setty will succeed current chairman Dinesh Khara. **>> 3**

Delhi Airport Ops Hit Hard by T1 Closure

IndiGo cancelled about 90 flights on Saturday as Delhi airport's Terminal 1 remained closed for a second day. Flights of SpiceJet have been diverted to Terminal 2 and 3. Meanwhile, the soft canopy at Rajkot airport also collapsed after heavy rains. **>> 3**

Mumbai Realty Registrations up 12% YoY in June

India's biggest and priciest real estate market set a new record in June with 11,538 registrations, undeterred by higher loan rates and property prices. **Kailash Babar reports. >> 3**



Late Vaidyraj Krushnashastri Puranik (1839-1905)



Late Vaidyraj Vishnushastri Puranik (1864-1914)



Late Vaidyraj Rambhau Puranik (1883-1933)



Late Vaidyraj Gangadhar Puranik (1907-1980)



Late Vaidyraj Mahadev Puranik (1912-1987)

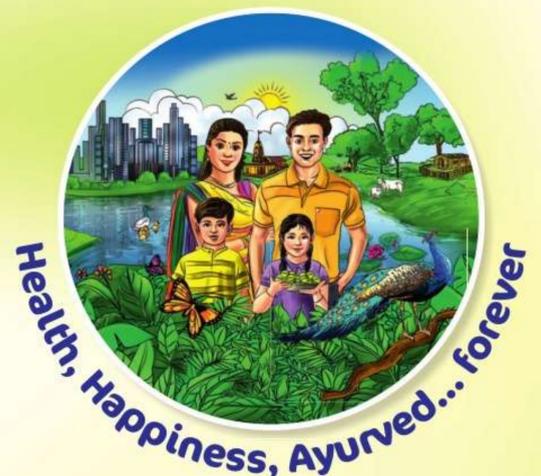


Late Anand Puranik (1937-2023)



“Always keep Good company in Life, In Ayurved, Shree Dhootapapeshwar Limited

Over 150 years of traditional excellence in Authentic, Standardised, Safe & Efficacious Ayurved Medicines”



Know your Ayurved Physician today, take charge of your health.

Scan to view the video

Shree Dhootapapeshwar Limited

135, Nanubhai Desai Road, Khetwadi, Mumbai - 400 004. Tel.: +91-22-6971 5000 /01 /02 E-mail: healthcare@sdlindia.com | www.sdlindia.com

T-72 TANK WASHED AWAY WHILE CROSSING SHYOK RIVER

Five Soldiers Killed in Ladakh Flash Floods

Troops were taking part in training activity near China border; sudden increase in water level led to incident

Our Political Bureau

New Delhi: In a training-related accident near the China border, five Army soldiers died when their tank got washed away due to a sudden rise in water levels during a crossing exercise.

The soldiers were deinducting from a training exercise when their T 72 tank got stuck in the Shyok river, near Saser Brangsa in Eastern Ladakh. The notoriously dangerous river recorded a sudden increase in water late evening when the tank was crossing over.

"Rescue teams rushed to the lo-

cation, however, due to high current and water levels, the rescue mission didn't succeed and the tank crew lost their lives. Indian Army regrets loss of five brave personnel while being operationally deployed in Eastern Ladakh," officials said.

The army has not yet disclosed names of the personnel but has said that one of them was a Junior Commissioned Officer.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressed his grief over the incident. "Deeply saddened at the loss of lives of five of our brave Indian Army soldiers in an unfortunate accident while getting the tank across a river in Ladakh. My he-



Tanks on banks of Pangong Tso lake

artfelt condolences to the bereaved families," he said.

Over 50,000 Indian troops have been deployed in Eastern Ladakh

since 2020, when China built up an aggressive force in the region in the guise of a training exercise. Indian troops, which include ar-

moured formations, artillery units and infantry soldiers, have maintained a constant deployment at extreme altitudes in Eastern Ladakh, even pushing through three straight winters.

There have been no combat related deaths since June 2020 when Indian and Chinese troops clashed in the Galwan Valley. However, there have been losses related to training and health complications for both the Indian and Chinese side.

Nine soldiers, including a JCO were killed in Kiari, Ladakh last year in August when their truck skidded off the road and fell into a river.

Sanjay Jha is JDU Working President, Expected to Boost NDA Coordination

Reiterated party's demand for Bihar's special category status or package

Sanjay.Singh2 @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: The Janata Dal (United), a key partner of the BJP-led NDA, named Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Jha working president. The party reiterated its demand for Bihar's special category status or package.

The JDU's national executive meeting in New Delhi on Saturday appointed Jha as working president. Jha's selection boosts the ruling NDA due to his close relations with BJP's top leadership. He leads the party in Rajya Sabha.

"Now that JDU is in the BJP-led central government, Nitish Ji may need to communicate with them. Jha is a good working president candidate in the current environment," a source in JDU stated.



JDU president Nitish Kumar along with other party leaders in New Delhi—IANS

Another crucial resolution requesting special category status or package for Bihar was passed at the party's national executive meeting. Jha told reporters after his appointment that Prime Minister Narendra Modi always paid attention to Bihar and hoped the party's request for special category status or a package would

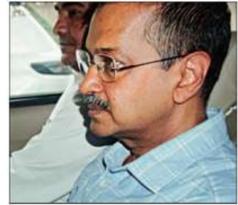
be granted.

The party also passed a resolution seeking a strict law to deal with cases of paper leaks at the national level.

However, the party apparently showed its soft stand on its old demand for caste census at the national level. The party has passed a resolution requesting the central government to

include the Act, which was recently passed by the Bihar assembly for raising reservation for OBCs, SCs and STs in government jobs and higher educational institutions in Bihar, in the 9th schedule of the Constitution. Recently, the Patna High Court set aside the Bihar government's amendments to increase the reservation for OBCs, MBCs, SCs and STs in government jobs and education institutions. The Bihar government has already taken a decision to file a revision petition in the Supreme court against the HC's judgement.

In its resolution, passed by the national executive, the party said that JDU believes in politics and coordination and cooperation, the party's coordination and partnership with BJP is more than two decades old. The party said it will contest the 2025 assembly polls under the leadership of Nitish Kumar in the NDA.



Excise Case: Kejriwal Sent to Judicial Custody Till July 12

Our Political Bureau

New Delhi: A local court here remanded Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to judicial custody after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) refused to seek his further custodial interrogation.

Kejriwal was arrested by CBI earlier this week in connection with its ongoing probe into the Delhi Excise scandal. He was remanded to three days of custodial interrogation by the CBI.

The CBI urged the court to remand Kejriwal to 14 days of judicial custody. The counsel for CBI argued that Kejriwal is an influential politician who could tamper with evidence and influence witnesses if he is not remanded to judicial custody.

In its application, the CBI argued that although Kejriwal has been evasive and not truthful in answering the agency's questions, his further custodial interrogation is not required for the present.

Kejriwal's counsel urged the Court to examine if there was any material to remand Kejriwal at all to judicial custody. He further urged the Court to direct the CBI to place on record the material the agency has unearthed against Kejriwal which could justify his arrest.

Asking Kejriwal to file a bail plea instead, the Court verbally said that the material collected by the CBI cannot be disclosed to the accused.

Avoid Stifling Policy in Early Stages by Entangling it in Rules: PM To Secretaries

PM open to suggestion by secretaries to restructure govt departments

Jatin.Takkar@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: In the first interaction with Narendra Modi after he became Prime Minister for the third consecutive time, top officials suggested that there is need for rationalisation and restructuring of the departments in the Union government.

Modi was open to the suggestion and said a study should be carried out looking at the restructuring of the departments, sources told ET.

In a free-wheeling interaction with the Prime Minister, more than 12 secretaries spoke and gave their suggestions for overall improvement in governance and delivery system.

One of the secretaries suggested that there are several departments which don't have much work. While there are a few smaller Departments in the Central government having a lot of work. So, there is a need for rationalisation and restructuring of departments, sources said.

The suggestion was to rationalise human power, not close any department, sources said.

Modi instantly agreed to the suggestion and said a study should be conducted for restructuring of the Departments in all Union Ministries.

Talking frankly with Secretaries, Modi told them that "Niyam Ke Jal Ke Karan Niti Ki Baal Mrityu Mat Kariye (Don't kill the policy in its initial stages by trapping it in the rules), sources said.

The Prime Minister wanted to convey to the Secretaries that policies in their initial stages should not be sacrificed for rules and regulations. Rather regulations should be made according to the policies, sources said.

Secretaries also made suggestions on simplifying the citizen interface with the government and faster decision-making, sources said.

Echoing similar sentiments, Modi spoke about ease of living, ease of doing business and strengthening grievance redressal system, in the meeting which lasted for nearly three hours, they said.

Talking about making India the third largest economy, Modi underlined that not only in terms of GDP, but the schools, hospitals and infrastructure in the country should also be world class, sources added.

Secretaries also congratulated Modi for becoming Prime Minister for the third consecutive time. Responding to their gesture, Modi said if someone comes back to power for a third time it is because of the work done by his government and for that credit goes to you all also, sources said.

Kazakhstan Requests Modi's Virtual Presence at SCO Summit on July 4

NEW DELHI: Kazakhstan has requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi's virtual presence at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit to be held in the Central Asian country on July 4, according to people with knowledge of the matter, even as the Indian PM decided to skip the event owing to the Parliament session at home and chill in ties with fellow member China.

Leaders of other SCO member countries will be present physically at the summit.—OPB

ring of departments, sources said.

The suggestion was to rationalise human power, not close any department, sources said.

Modi instantly agreed to the suggestion and said a study should be conducted for restructuring of the Departments in all Union Ministries.

Talking frankly with Secretaries,

Modi told them that "Niyam Ke Jal Ke Karan Niti Ki Baal Mrityu Mat Kariye (Don't kill the policy in its initial stages by trapping it in the rules), sources said.

The Prime Minister wanted to convey to the Secretaries that policies in their initial stages should not be sacrificed for rules and regulations. Rather regulations should

be made according to the policies, sources said.

Secretaries also made suggestions on simplifying the citizen interface with the government and faster decision-making, sources said.

Echoing similar sentiments, Modi spoke about ease of living, ease of doing business and strengthening grievance redressal system, in the meeting which lasted for nearly three hours, they said.

Talking about making India the third largest economy, Modi underlined that not only in terms of GDP, but the schools, hospitals and infrastructure in the country should also be world class, sources added.

Secretaries also congratulated Modi for becoming Prime Minister for the third consecutive time. Responding to their gesture, Modi said if someone comes back to power for a third time it is because of the work done by his government and for that credit goes to you all also, sources said.

Biren Confident BJP Will Return to Power in Manipur

Bikash.Singh@timesofindia.com

Imphal: Despite losing the two seats of Manipur in the Lok Sabha polls, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh said the BJP will come back to power in assembly polls in 2027.

Talking to ET in Imphal on Friday he said work of erecting fencing along the Indo-Myanmar border has started along the 389 km long border.

Congress wrested the Inner Manipur seat from the BJP and Outer Manipur seat from its ally, the Naga People's Front (NPF).

"The border fencing work has started, and BRO is ent-

rustured by the Centre to carry out the work. The Deputy Commissioners are making available requisite land," Singh said.

Singh exuded confidence that BJP will come back to power in assembly polls and the recent defeat is not going to hamper the prospects of the party.

"Due to the prevailing situation, we are not talking much about the work done by us. Once the situation normalises, we will go all out and tell people about the work done by the government. Nothing can stop BJP owing its work done here is unstoppable," Singh said referring to the killings last

May between Meitei and Kuki tribes in some districts of Manipur.

AFTER UNION MIN'S LETTER ALLEGING BIAS AGAINST OBC, SC CANDIDATES

Interviewers Don't Have Access to Candidate's Quota Info: UP Govt

Our Political Bureau

Lucknow: The interview process for government jobs is based on "coding" wherein aspirants' personal information such as reservation category and age are hidden from the council of interviewers, the Uttar Pradesh government said in a reply to Union minister of state Anupriya Patel over concerns raised by her regarding alleged bias against backward, scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) aspirants.

Patel, the chief of Apna Dal (S), an ally of the BJP in UP, had said in a letter to chief minister Yogi Adityanath that in recruitment to government jobs, reserved category vacancies were sometimes being filled by general candidates and the reason cited was that "no suitable reserved category candidate was found for the post" and the seats were then declared unreserved. She requested the CM to stop this practice as it gave rise to anger among aspirants from such categories.

"The interview process is based on coding through which aspirants' serial number, name, registration number, reservation category and age is hidden. This ensures personal details of the aspirant is not known to the council," a two-page government reply said.

"Interview council does not mention 'not suitable' but the grading. And, on the principle of averages, it is changed into marks and mentioned in the marksheet."

The state government further said that if aspirants belonging to any category do not get the average qualification marks, then the commission does not have the right to change the unreserved vacancies into a different category and that these vacancies are "carried forward".

Unfilled vacancies are 'carried forward', says state govt

The interview process is based on coding through which aspirants' serial number, name, registration number, reservation category and age is hidden. This ensures personal details of the aspirant is not known to the council," a two-page government reply said.

"Interview council does not mention 'not suitable' but the grading. And, on the principle of averages, it is changed into marks and mentioned in the marksheet."

The state government further said that if aspirants belonging to any category do not get the average qualification marks, then the commission does not have the right to change the unreserved vacancies into a different category and that these vacancies are "carried forward".

EXAM LEAKS

Russian Hackers to Coaching Centres to One Weak Link

Anubhuti.Vishnoi @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: It may be national level entrance exams like pen and paper-based NEET or a computer-based test like JEE that promise admission to leading medical and engineering institutes respectively. Or it may be a test to recruit 2nd grade teachers in Rajasthan or even the UP Police constable recruitment exam.

Widely different exams and yet they all have something in common. It is the 'food chain' traced back by investigative agencies which is near identical in all cases of exam leaks so far—desperate students, coaching centres, agents, 'solvers' and a king-pin—all looking for the weakest link.

FOOD CHAIN

"There are the kingpins at the top and there are several nowadays. He has his agents who are on the lookout. And their natural habitat is the coaching center which offers a diverse catchment of students and candidates—all desperate to crack that exam which promises a secure, well-paying career ahead. The rest is taken care of by expert 'solvers'—often the products of some of the coaching centres as well. This is the food chain to almost every exam leak investigated by us so far", a top official from the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force who has closely tracked several exam leak cases told ET on condition of anonymity.

"Most important in the food chain is the money. There is a king's ransom to be earned by every single exam leak which has spawned several such gangs across the heartland and even beyond. The latest NEET-UG leak itself is worth hundreds of crores with just 1-2 sets of paper leak. The huge money involved and the desperation or readiness of some candidates is the fuel of this industry which has only grown due to the demand supply mismatch", the official added.

The money and skill set required explains the diverse and mostly educated set which is found involved in the 'exam leak' rings stretching across the heartland but with tentacles from Maharashtra to Telangana.

IN ACTION

"The Modus operandi is simple once the weakest link is found—it could be a peon or a supervisor or sometimes even principals at an exam centre or someone in the printing press where the paper is printed. Once this is achieved, the paper stands compromised. The leak is planned 8-10 days before the exam and the deal is done in stages with some money exchanged, certificates of candidates taken in as collateral and a compromised exam centre chosen. The final deal happens hours before the exam", an official well versed with 'exam gang' investigations explained.

The pen and paper based exam leak is, in fact, well tested by now usually involving a secretly photographed paper set that is often leaked either a day before the exam or sometimes even 1-2 hours before the exam to select candidates.

This is exactly what happened in the NEET-UG Bihar case this year when students are said to have been taken around in cars to a school where expert 'solvers' helped them memorise most answers. It is this 'car-ferrying' which alerted cops. The same script has played out across several exams and across states.

Government insiders told ET that it is also a misconception that only paper-pen tests are vulnerable to leaks.

"Many believe that the computer-based test is above leaks. That is simply not true. In fact, it may even be more vulnerable. Take the case of a national level exam like JEE Main of 2021 which was hacked at a Haryana centre with the help of a Russian expert. This is despite the fact that the National Testing Agency (NTA) which conducts the JEE Main has a specific protocol deploying observers to closely look at candidate's test screens and keyboard movements in a computer based test", an official well versed with the JEE Main 2021 case told ET.

The ongoing CBI probe in the alleged JEE Main 2021 leak case indicates that some compromised exam

The Different Methods

Exam leak arrests so far range from coaching centre owners and their teaching staff to an uncannily high number of MBBS degree holders, Vice Principals, engineers and staff at the paper printing press, to property brokers, self-taught data experts and even a Russian hacker.



JUNE 2024 UGC-NET Exam paper shared over Telegram

MAY 2024 NEET-UG paper leaked to students in Bihar centres a day before and on day of exam

APR 2024 VIT Entrance exam—two suspected to have remotely hacked exam centre server through an app

FEB 2024 UPPSC's Review officer/assistant review officer preliminary exam compromised as mechanical engineer at the printing press took out a paper in a water bottle

FEB 2024 UP Police constable recruitment exam—several candidates taken to a Manesar resort for exam paper exposure two days before exam

2022 Rajasthan government's 2nd grade teacher competitive examination 2022 cancelled after the vice principal of a Jalore school, shared the question paper with candidates two hours before exam

JEE MAIN 2021 CBI probe on Russian hacker and top brass of a coaching firm in the net

Feb 2021 CTET Agra—a Delhi ASI involved in the leak

centers in Sonapat were hacked with the help of a Russian expert allowing remote access to candidates' online test.

The CBI even arrested a Russian national who had allegedly come to 'train' members of the 'leak' gang at the behest of a coaching centre—indicating the kind of money involved.

Domestic 'solvers' and agents are, however, fast learning to do it on their own.

Earlier this year, the Special Operations Group of Uttarakhand Police in collaboration with the Meerut Unit of UP police's Special Task Force (STF) apprehended two suspects for 'hacking' the online entrance exam of Vellore Institute of Technology from a Dehradun based exam centre—helping students solve the paper using an app.

BREAKING THE FOOD CHAIN UP STF says it has studied the gangs and now deploys a very static driven approach to identify leak sources and mafia rings—provided the testing agencies are willing to share data.

However, that alone is not going to be enough.

"It is clear that the exam mafia is not going away anywhere as there is demand-supply pressure and often high-stakes single exam format so people are willing to pay up and bend rules. The only way is to bring down the pressure for students and parents. The two-stage exam for IITs with lesser numbers and multiple exam windows has worked out much better. Ideally, we should have 3-4 windows in a year. The same needs to be done for NEET too", said an official.

THIRD EYE



Showing the Position on Map

In a noteworthy move ahead of SCO summit and Indian PM's Moscow visit, Russian state-owned media Sputnik has published a map of SCO member states and dialogue partners that displayed PoK as part of India. Clearly, the message can't be missed, and the move may not go down well with either Pakistan or China, both SCO members. Russia has always maintained that the entire Kashmir is part of India.



No Walls, No Ears: It's Safe to Talk

Uddhav Thackeray and Devendra Fadnis were once on friendly terms. However, they are now bitter political enemies, thus their simultaneous entry into an elevator in the state legislature building sparked conjecture. Thackeray dismissed any such speculations and even joked with journalists later. "I'm informed that even walls have ears. We will conduct quiet talks in lifts from now on because they do not have walls," he explained.



Saying it With Fruit and Sweets

It's pineapple and mango diplomacy between India and Bangladesh. Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina sent mango, hilsa fish and sweets to Tripura CM Manik Saha. The gifts included 400 kg of exquisite Hariavanga (Haribhanga), the most famous mango of Dinajpur and Rangpur region of Bangladesh, 50 kg of delectable hilsa fish and 50 kg rassgulla (sweets). On the other hand, Tripura CM sent 500 kg pineapples as a "gift" to Bangladesh Prime Minister.

KHARA TERM ENDS IN AUG CS Setty Gets FSIB Approval to Head SBI as Next Chairman

Our Bureau



Mumbai: Challa Sreenivasulu Setty has been selected as the next chairman of State Bank of India (SBI) by the Financial Services Institution Bureau (FSIB), an arm of the central government. The two other contenders were Ashwini Tiwari and Vinay Tonse. Setty will succeed current chairman Dinesh Khara, whose term ends on August 28. Setty is managing director at SBI, the country's largest state-owned bank. Tiwari and Tonse are the other two MDs who were called for interview by the FSIB on Saturday. "Keeping in view their performance in the interface, their overall experience and the extant parameters, the Bureau recommends Challa Sreenivasulu Setty for the position of chairman in SBI," the FSIB said.

The FSIB is headed by Bhanu Pratap Sharma, former secretary of the Department of Personnel and Training, while a deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India is a member.

Setty, who has worked for SBI for about 35 years, heads international banking, global markets and technology at the lender. A career banker, he took charge as MD of SBI in January 2020. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and is a certified associate of the Indian Institute of Bankers.

ICICI Pru, HDFC Life Receive GST Notices

Our Bureau

Mumbai: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance and HDFC Life Insurance have received notices from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) department for the period between 2017-18 and 2022-23. Both companies said that they will take appropriate steps in due course and contest the matter.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance on June 27 received a GST notice of ₹365 crore, including interest. The GST authority has demanded GST along with applicable interest and penalty for the 2017-18 to 2022-23 period for all GST-registered states. The notice pertains to amounts recovered from insurance agents as per commercial terms, which the department alleges should have been deposited as GST.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance said it plans to file an appeal against the order before the Commissioner of Appeals within the prescribed time frame.

HDFC Life Insurance informed the stock exchanges that it had received a GST notice of ₹132 crore, with interest to be applied as applicable.

The alleged violations include the wrongful deduction of amounts towards GST from commissions paid to insurance agents, which should have been deposited with the government. The company said it is planning to file an appeal against the order before the appellate authority within the specified period.

Top Brands Bank on 'Imported' Sales Events to Boost Demand

Experts say brands rely more on such western-style campaigns to woo consumers to buy 'something'

Navneeta Nandan
& Writankar Mukherjee

New Delhi | Kolkata: When technology giants Apple, Lenovo, HP and Dell rolled out their 2024 editions of back to school or campus sales in India earlier in June, it underscored the rapid growth of this US sale event 'imported' to India over the last five to six years.

The sales campaign currently spawns more than a fourth of retail laptop sales, second only to the Diwali festive season's contribution of 30-35%, as per industry estimates.

Back to school, small business days, Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day are part of a growing list of 'imported' sales events in India. Brands, retailers and e-commerce platforms are increasingly relying on such events 'imported' from the West to drive sales with discount shopping emerging as a notable trend among Indian consumers, especially since the pandemic.

Laptop brands are not the only ones taking to such sales events. Amazon, Flipkart, Croma, Tata Neu, Reliance Retail, Nykaa, Vijay Sales, Samsung, Xiaomi, Vivo and

Driving Premiumisation

MAJOR SALES EVENTS

Back to School ● Small Business Days
Black Friday ● Cyber Monday ● Mother's Day ● Father's Day ● Valentine's Day

TOP BRANDS & RETAILERS

Amazon ● Flipkart ● Croma ● Tata Neu
Reliance Retail ● Nykaa ● Vijay Sales
Samsung ● Xiaomi ● Vivo ● Tata Cliq

BLACK FRIDAY

IT'S NOW the fifth-largest sales generator of electronics in India after Diwali, Republic Day, Independence Day and Onam

BACK TO SCHOOL/CAMPUS

IT ACCOUNTS for 25-30% of the consumer market demand



MAHESH B

Tata Cliq are among many brands and retailers using such sales campaigns to generate demand. Last November, several malls in metro cities across India, even ran offers during 'singles' day, a popular sales event in China.

"Sales events trigger conversion of the back-of-mind desire of consumers to buy something into action," said Santosh Desai, a social commentator and brand expert.

"West has been ahead to create consumption-linked events but now brands are catching up in India. If it's a western influence, it's of course easier to market. But then even Akshaya Tritiya has, of late, become a national consump-

tion event too," he said. As global sale events increasingly gain prominence, they are also driving a premiumisation trend among Indian consumers.

FSN E-Commerce Ventures told analysts recently that business generated during Black Friday sale period, which it calls the Pink Friday sale, on its online platform Nykaa has grown ten times for beauty and personal care products over the last five years.

Black Friday, which marks the start of the Christmas shopping season in the US, is now the fifth largest sales generator of electronic products in India after Diwali, Republic Day, Independence Day and

Onam sales. Meanwhile, back to school/campus sales are also expanding rapidly, thanks to the growing connection with young consumers.

Dinesh Nair, director, consumer business at Lenovo India, said back-to-campus sales event contributes 25-30% of the company's consumer market demand in India. He added that there has been comparatively stronger demand for pricier gaming-related, ultra-thin laptops and AI PCs during this two-month sale period.

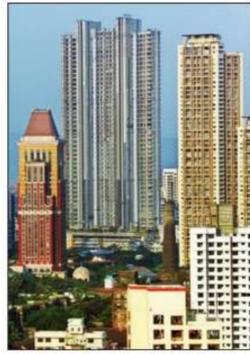
FOR FULL REPORT, GO TO
www.economictimes.com

OVER ₹998 CR COLLECTED AS STAMP DUTY

Mumbai Property Registrations Rise 12% in June

Around 11,538 properties registered during month as demand continues to be strong

Kailash.Babar
@timesofindia.com



Mumbai: Mumbai, India's biggest and priciest real estate market, set a new record, registering its best June ever amid robust demand for residential properties undeterred by higher loan rates and property prices.

The country's financial capital saw 11,538 property registrations during the month, a 12% rise from a year earlier. The strong performance helped the state exchequer collect more than ₹998 crore in stamp duty revenue, a 16% increase, showed data from the Inspector General of Registration (IGR) and Controller of Stamps, Maharashtra.

Homebuyer optimism propelled property sales above the 10,000-unit mark every month in the first six half of 2024.

Property registrations in Mumbai have been on the upswing for the past 11 months since August 2023. This surge is attributed to economic growth and a favourable sentiment towards homeownership.

"The continuous on-year growth in registrations underscores the resilience of Mumbai's property market. In the backdrop of higher property prices, home registrations have maintained their momentum, reflecting the market's strong appetite and confidence buyers have in the country's economic trajectory," said Shishir Bajjal, chairman and managing director, Knight Frank India.

He expects this positive trend to continue, driven by strong economic growth, rising income levels, and a favourable interest rate environment, creating an encouraging atmosphere for potential homebuyers.

Apartments measuring 500-1000 sq ft accounted for 46% of all property registrations in June. In

comparison, apartments up to 500 sq ft comprised 36%, declining from 41% in June 2023, underscoring a trend towards larger apartments.

Apartments measuring 1,000 sq ft and above comprised 15% of total registrations.

Notably, average registrations of 12,044 units in the first six months of 2024 were higher than the previous 12-month average of 10,578 units. This indicates the resilience of Mumbai's residential market and confidence among homebuyers.

Also, average government revenue collection of ₹974 crore in the first half of this year was 8% higher than the average of Rs 906 crore in calendar 2023. This can be attributed to several factors including increased volume and value of properties being registered.

"The key factor for this upward trajectory of housing demand continues to be the connectivity boost across the city along with the redevelopment projects redefining the skyline of the financial capital. Along with these factors, a robust economy fuelling liquidity in the hands of the masses, and the need for a lifestyle upgrade continues to propel demand with a major inclination towards the mid and luxury segment," said Dhaval Ajmera, director at Ajmera Realty & Infra India.

He believes the upbeat sentiment will continue and demand will amplify across all segments and micro-markets in the region.

TERMINAL 1 CLOSURE

IndiGo Cancels Nearly 90 Flights as Disruptions Continue in Delhi

Our Bureau

New Delhi: IndiGo, the largest airline operating from Delhi airport's Terminal 1, cancelled about 90 flights on Saturday as the terminal remained closed for the second day following a roof collapse.

Flights of SpiceJet, the second airline operating from T1, have been diverted to Terminal 2 and 3, according to airline officials. The number of SpiceJet flights shifted to the other terminals couldn't be ascertained immediately.

While T1 flights have been relocated to T2 and T3, the two terminals lack capacity to accommodate all of them, causing the disruption in



IndiGo's operations.

In another incident, the soft roof of the canopy outside the passenger pickup and drop area at Rajkot airport in Gujarat collapsed after heavy rains on Saturday. The new airport was inaugurated by state-run Airports Authority of India last year.

At least one person was killed and six others injured after a portion of the roof of T1 collapsed on cars, including taxis, amid heavy rains on Friday morning in the national capital. The government has set up a committee under Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi to find the cause of the accident.

The airport, owned by the GMR group, has also set up its own committee to probe the roof collapse.

T1 is currently home to only domestic flight operations of budget airlines IndiGo and SpiceJet. It handles about 1,400 flight movements daily. IndiGo said on Friday flight operations were impacted as passengers were not able to enter T1 due to the incident.

Railways to Revise ₹31k cr Wagon Procurement Plan

Move comes after Modern Industries, one of the suppliers, fails to fulfil contracted order

Twesh.Mishra@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: The Indian Railways has been forced to revise its ₹31,418 crore wagon procurement plan after one of the suppliers, Modern Industries, failed to fulfil the contracted order, said officials.

The Centre had placed orders for 79,800 wagons with seven suppliers in July 2022, in the largest such exercise by volume, aimed at supplementing the 300,000 existing wagons on the Indian Railways network.

Titagarh Wagons, Texmaco Rail and Engineering, Hindustan Engineering Industries, Commercial Engineer and Body Builders (now Jupiter Wagons), Oriental Foundry, Besco and Modern Industries were the successful bidders. The wagons - which are used for transporting crucial commodities such as coal and iron ore on the rail network - were to be supplied at Rs 31.94-36.35 lakh per unit depending on the specifications issued by the railways.

The largest order was placed with Titagarh Wagons for 24,177 units, followed by Texmaco Rail and Engineering for 20,067 units.

Modern Industries was supposed to supply 9,242 wagons to the national transporter for ₹3,776.35 crore in July 2022, the officials said. However, they said, the order was scaled down to 3,151 wagons for ₹1,287.54 crore last month, with no financial repercussions on either side, under force majeure condition by a Railway Board order.

Force majeure - a contract clause that absolves a party of liability in case it is unable to fulfil the contract owing to unforeseeable events - was sought by Modern Industries due to a sustained labour unrest stunting production, according to the officials. The company has supplied 71 wagons to the railways so far, they said.

ET's queries emailed to Modern Industries did not elicit a response till press time.

"The orders placed with other wagon suppliers will be scaled up to meet the shortfall," said a senior railways ministry official, who did not wish to be identified.

In February this year, the railways decided to procure 343 more wagons from Hindustan Engineering Industries, taking the orders placed with the company to 7,506 units.

Ola Electric to Invest \$100 m in First Phase of Gigafactory, Says Aggarwal

Electric scooters maker to use own battery cells in its vehicles as early as next year

Soumyajit.Saha1@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: IPO-bound Ola Electric plans to invest \$100 million (about ₹34 crore) in the first phase of building its Gigafactory for producing lithium-ion battery cells, founder Bhavish Aggarwal said on Saturday. He added that Ola's electric scooters will feature the locally-produced battery cells as early as next year.

The investment will be used for 'phase 1A' of the Gigafactory for setting up 1.5 GWh (gigawatt hour) of cell manufacturing capacity. Aggarwal said the aim is to expand capacity to 5 GWh in 'phase 1B'. Ola Electric recently received certification from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for the battery cells, he said.

"Early next year, you can expect to see our own cells in our own products... we have some work to do around finalising the production process and commercialisation, but we are on our way," he added.

Ola Electric is developing a 4680 form of battery cells, which is more energy-dense and advanced than the 2170 form of battery cells it currently sources for its electric scooters, according to Aggarwal.



He said the company will likely supply cells to third-party firms like other electric two-wheeler makers and renewable energy firms from the new factory. The firm is also working on solid-state batteries, he added.

"About 35-40% of the two-wheeler EV cost goes into the battery... there is a fair amount of margin benefit that we will get as we start using our own cells," Aggarwal said.

Last August, Ola Electric raised \$240 million from State Bank of India for building the Gigafactory as part of a \$384 million financing round that saw participation from Singapore's sovereign fund Temasek.

In its draft prospectus with Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), Ola said it intends to use ₹1,226 crore (\$147 million) worth of proceeds from its initial public offering to expand the Gigafactory's capacity from 5 GWh to 6.4 GWh through FY25 and FY26. The firm will replicate its policy of using only female workers on the manufacturing floor at its scooter assembly factory, called the Future Factory, at its new battery cell factory too. "We have had a great experience with the all-women team and that policy will continue... We don't have any policies like Foxconn and I don't want to comment on other company policies," Aggarwal said.

Reuters reported on June 25 that Foxconn was rejecting married women from working at its Tamil Nadu factory, where it assembles iPhones.

On the opening of a new factory in neighbouring Maharashtra by rival Ather Energy, which drew protests from Karnataka lawmakers, he said Karnataka also has ample supply chain firms to support new factories. "We only went with Tamil Nadu at the time of setting up our factories because we got a better deal from them at that time," he added.

DR. SURINDER KAPUR

Founder, Sona Group
(1943 - 2015)



"Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

A leader of high integrity and exceptional selflessness, you always stepped forward to share your knowledge with all. Your wisdom led the way through numerous business challenges.

As an inspirational guide and mentor, you built aspiring teams that worked together to achieve success. Your persona motivated many to transcend the impossible and achieve world-class performance.

We come together to celebrate the life and work of our leader, who will always be remembered for his innovative thoughts and futuristic vision.

Mrs. Rani Kapur and Family
Sona Parivar



SONA COMSTAR

Dry is Wet, Wet is Dry

The worrying changes in India's monsoon patterns have implications for everything from agriculture to health

Shambhavi Anand

BIHAR, 2023

On July 15 last year, Mahendra Sharma, a paddy farmer in Bihar's Sitamarhi district, posted pictures of his farmland on the social media platform X. The images showed a dusty brown land, with deep cracks—something that doesn't scream arable. Around July, the land should be lush green with transplanted paddy saplings.

Rainfall deficiency between June and July has become the norm in Bihar. The state, which is in the critical Indo-Gangetic plains known for its agricultural bounty, had to form a crisis management group in the wake of scanty rainfall last year.

About 64% of the state's tehsils are witnessing decreased rainfall in June and July, with 40% getting reduced rainfall to the tune of more than 10% in the four monsoon months.

RAJASTHAN, 2023

Cut to Rajasthan, a state known for being dry and arid. Three of its districts—Jalore, Sirohi and Barmer—were reeling from heavy rainfall caused by Cyclone Biparjoy on June 18 last year.

CHANDIGARH, 2023

The plight of one of India's most planned cities last year was as strange—floods all around, traffic snarls, disrupted water supply. And this after it received nearly half of its total annual rainfall in just 50 hours—less than three days.

On July 10, 2023, for the first time ever in Chandigarh, two of the three floodgates holding back the Sukhna Lake—which had never been opened beyond three inches—were opened to a height of nearly 5 ft, after water level crossed the danger mark by nearly 2 feet.

There is a worrying thread connecting these three situations—the change in the pattern of monsoons.

While the country's dry areas are getting more rains, the agricultural belt, which used to get a lot more, is getting less.

Not just that. The rains aren't evenly spread through the season. It falls in short bursts, punctuating dry spells.

A PATTERN EMERGES

Around 55% of tehsils in India witnessed an increase in the southwest monsoon rainfall in the past decade (2012-22), by more than 10%, compared with the climatic baseline (1982-2011). These are mostly in traditionally drier states such as Rajasthan and Gujarat, according to a study called "Decoding India's Changing Monsoon Pattern" by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), a policy research institute.

Nearly 11% of Indian tehsils witnessed a decrease, particularly in the past decade (2012-22), by more than 10% compared with the climatic baseline of 1982-2011. These are in

Nupur Amarnath

Is Beyoncé fashion's ultimate influencer? Quite possible. The singer has time and again proven her acumen in predicting the next big thing. Kinritra Brooks, an English professor at Michigan State University, said in an interview to *Time*: "One of her great talents is being able to see the cultural zeitgeist coming and being able to catch that wave by putting her twist on it in a way that's interesting." Back in 2020, fashion editor Nicky Briger said: "Whatever Beyoncé wears, the world takes notice. She will put designers and trends on the map."

So when, in August 2023, the singer wore not one, not two, but three looks from Indian designer Gaurav Gupta in the Atlanta leg of her Renaissance tour, you knew something shifted in the great Indian fashion crossover story. That India has been having a moment in global fashion is a story that has been keeping everyone on the edge for some time now. Maybe, in 2024, it will finally tip over.

At the Paris Haute Couture Week, Rahul Mishra made his ninth appearance and Vaishali Shadangle released her collection 'Satori'. Kartik Kumra showcased at the Menswear Fashion Week in Paris while Dhruv Kapoor returned to the men's fashion week in Milan. And Mayyur Girotra showcased at the New York Pride.

This is the runway. The red carpet is another story. And Hema Bose is the lead writer of that tale. The founder of Maison Bose, she has put Gupta and Anamika Khanna on some of the world's most coveted carpets. Maison Bose, started in 2022, is an independent brand consultancy that provides personalised and curated solutions. Bose, who works as an image architect for brands, realised the need for a more diverse design representation in the fashion and celebrity landscape. "One

Breaking into the international market is no small feat. Despite the growing visibility of Indian fashion globally, achieving lasting success demands strategic marketing, understanding diverse consumer preferences and establishing a strong brand identity"
GAURAV GUPTA, designer



Farmers waiting for rain in Patna in 2019

the Indo-Gangetic plains, which contribute to more than half of India's agricultural production, the Northeast and the Indian Himalayan region, the study says.

"Monsoon patterns have changed drastically. Long dry spells and short spells of heavy rainfall have become quite common," says Dr Roxy Mathew Koll, climate scientist, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune.

Long spells with no rain and weeks' worth of rainfall in a few hours are typical of global warming and India is witnessing this phenomenon play out. Last year, August was the driest and warmest for India in over a hundred years since record-keeping began in 1901, with a country-wide rainfall deficiency of 36%.

Just a month later, in September 2023, after rainfall exceeded 13% of the Long Period Average, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) announced a "near-normal" monsoon, with September replenishing the deficiency of the previous month.

"What about the spatial distribution?" asks Vishvas Chitale, Senior Programme Lead, CEEW.

WATER AND ROTI

The changes aren't just about where the rain is falling. It is also when.

The June-September season is important for kharif crops—paddy, pulses such as tur and urad, sugarcane, cotton, soybean. Sowing takes place in most parts of the country around June and continues till July

Several critical areas considered the breadbasket of India—Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh—are witnessing a pattern of little rain in June-July and peak rainfall in September/October, when the southwest monsoon should be withdrawing

Putting the Desi in Design

With A-list outings, international runway takeovers and growing retail presence, India seems to be the flavour of global fashion



Beyoncé in Gaurav Gupta's in the Atlanta leg of her Renaissance tour



Rihanna wearing a Manish Malhotra choker and a Sabyasachi necklace at Fenty haircare launch in LA

of the most significant moments of my career was seeing my client Gupta's creations grace the Met Gala, Oscars and Grammys, which represent the pinnacle of fashion and glamour," says Bose. If Mindy Kaling wore Gupta at the Met Gala, it was Cardi B at the Grammys and Megan Thee Stallion at the Oscars.

BEST FOOT FORWARD

"Getting western celebrities to wear Indian designers requires meticulous planning and a well-oiled machinery of strategy and foresight," says Bose. "These moments are not just fashionable, but impactful, even financially, for a brand and the Indian market in general," she adds. Bose gives credit to the fact that the organisation within Indian fashion has significantly improved, thanks to advancements in digitalisation. "This progress has enabled quicker learning and adaptation, allowing Indians to compete more effectively on the global stage," she says.

Gupta acknowledges Bose's role in building his brand internationally. "Despite the growing visibility of Indian fashion globally, achieving lasting success

demands strategic marketing, understanding diverse consumer preferences and establishing a strong brand identity," he says.

Mishra says presenting at the Paris Haute Couture Week "has helped our business, as the outreach of our products has increased

How Indian Monsoon Has Changed in the Past Decade

55% tehsils, mostly in arid parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat and central Maharashtra, got more SW monsoon rainfall in 2012-22

64% tehsils had higher frequency of heavy rainfall days in June-September 2012-22

11% tehsils, in the breadbasket of India, had less SW monsoon rainfall

80% tehsils in Tamil Nadu, 44% in Telangana and 39% in Andhra Pradesh got more rainfall from NE monsoon in 2012-22

Note: All comparisons are with the climate baseline of 1982-2011
Source: "Decoding India's Changing Monsoon Patterns" by CEEW

Unequal Rain

Inequitable distribution of the southwest monsoon in India in June-Sept 2023

Region	Departure (%)			
	June	July	Aug	Sept
NW	47	25	-37	-11
NE	-15	-32	2	-26
Central	-6	22	-47	49
South	-45	45	-60	24
Country	-9	13	-36	13

Source: IMD

Extreme Weather Events

318 No. of days in which India recorded extreme weather events in 2023

3,287 human deaths
1,24,000 animal deaths
22,10,000 hectares of crop area damaged

Source: Centre for Science & Environment

Bengal and Uttar Pradesh—are witnessing the same pattern. Little rain in June-July and peak rainfall in September/October, when the southwest monsoon should be withdrawing, he adds.

Worse still, 2024 might be following in the footsteps of 2023.

Delayed rainfall during June, despite the timely onset of the monsoon, like last year, is the main cause of extended heatwave in parts of the country, reckon experts.

The question is simple: should we still consider June-September as the monsoon and follow traditional cropping patterns?

In the age of climate change what is the new normal for the monsoon?

MENTAL HEALTH TO FOREST FIRES

Is it just rainfall and agriculture that are affected by monsoon variability? A study in *The Lancet Planetary Health* that focused on Bangladesh says that

even an increase of 1 degree above normal in ambient temperature leads to a higher probability of depression and anxiety. "Climate-related shocks and other stressors have an important association with the burden of depression and anxiety in Bangladesh," the study says. The research might have focused on Bangladesh, but the findings apply globally.

According to a 2018 study by Stanford economist Marshall Burke, published in *Nature Climate Change*, a 1°C (1.8°F) rise in average temperatures in the US and Mexico is associated with a 1% increase in suicide rates. This equates to thousands of additional deaths annually.

It is not just mental health that takes a toll when it comes to climate change.

This year in May, north India wilted as the number of heatwave days increased by 125%. While the June numbers aren't in yet, 2024 is most likely to

Long spells with no rain and weeks' worth of rainfall in a few hours are typical of global warming and India is witnessing this. Last August was the driest for India in over a hundred years with a rainfall deficiency of 36%. But September replenished the deficiency of August

emerge as the year with the most intense heatwave ever in the country.

This, in turn, resulted in extremely low water levels in the top reservoirs that serve as a source of daily water usage. According to the Central Water Commission's latest data, live storage availability in 150 reservoirs is just 21% of total capacity of these reservoirs.

No wonder then that water scarcity in top cities such as Bengaluru and Delhi made headlines this year amid the scorching heatwave.

The short, wet spells come with their own set of problems. Vector-borne diseases thrive during that time.

In the last two years, typhoid, dengue, malaria, scrub typhus and influenza have become a huge public health concern, according to data shared by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

Typhoid, a water-borne disease, has

been the most prevalent between 2022 and 2024, followed by vector-borne diseases such as dengue and malaria, says NCDC.

Despite a decline in occurrence, scrub typhus remains a significant concern, especially in South India, where climate change-influenced factors, such as temperature, rainfall and humidity, are exacerbating its spread, it adds.

Heatwave and dry weather conditions have also increased the number of forest fires in Uttarakhand this year, according to reports.

According to data from the Forest Survey of India (FSI), Uttarakhand has experienced a fivefold increase in major forest fires since January this year compared with the same period in 2023. This surge is attributed to a combination of heatwave conditions, dry weather and inadequately equipped first responders.

FIGHTING BACK

So how do we deal with all this change? What should be the first step? Better data gathering would be a good place to start.

When policy makers look at monsoon data, they take into consideration aggregate data of the entire country, says Dr Akshay Deoras, research scientist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Science and the Department of Meteorology, University of Reading, UK. What they need to consider is local data, he adds.

A new metric, including rainfall, hydrological aspects and a crop component, is what he suggests.

"Intraseasonal variability, climatology and standard deviations do not reflect in the current metric, where we measure monsoon rainfall in terms of percentage of Long Period Average," he says.

"We need to look at block-level data and zoom into local variability," agrees Koll.

"We recommend developing district-level climate action plans, integrating this information with socio-economic and sector-specific data for detailed climate risk assessments in critical sectors like agriculture, water and energy," suggests Chitale.

Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director general of meteorology, IMD, agrees that there cannot be one normal for the monsoon. "There has to be a normal for the week, the month, the season. Similarly spatially also there has to be a normal for the country, homogeneous regions, even for stations," he says. The weather office also keeps updating its normal every 30 years and for rainfall every 50 years.

India's Ministry of Earth Sciences launched the National Monsoon Mission Plan (NMM) in 2012, spending ₹290 crore in developing more accurate climate prediction models, which are now operational.

The models developed under the NMM have shown capability in predicting important weather events on different time scales. However, it is time for the next step with a new focus to zoom in on local variability, say experts.

shambhavi.anand@timesofindia.com

One of the most significant moments of my career was seeing my client Gaurav Gupta's creations grace the Met Gala, Oscars and Grammys. Getting Western celebrities to wear Indian designers requires meticulous planning and a well-oiled machinery of strategy and foresight"
HEMA BOSE, founder, Maison Bose, independent brand consultancy

Be it Birla, Reliance or Anita Dongre's AND getting investment from General Atlantic, entry of money in fashion via corporates has been a game-changer for Indian fashion"
SUJATA ASSOMULL, fashion editor and author

Presenting at the Paris Haute Couture Week helped our business, as the outreach of our products increased manifold. It opened up new avenues for growth and collaboration"
RAHUL MISHRA, designer



Actress Zendaya in a sari-look by Rahul Mishra

COURTESY: RAHUL MISHRA

WHAT'S CHANGED

Indian fashion is no longer confined to stereotypes
• Global appreciation for Indian craftsmanship
• Network of South Asians wanting to support designers
• Placement agents who liaise and connect designers with clients
• Strategic collaborations and participation in fashion events
• Digital platforms democratising access
• Social media amplifying reach, impact
• Projects like NMACC showcasing Indian fashion to the world

Mishra, whose work has found favour with current it-girl Zendaya, says, "I attribute the surge of Indian designers on the global stage to a growing appreciation for authenticity and craftsmanship. Digital platforms have also democratised access, enabling us to reach a global audience directly." Social media has amplified reach and impact by providing constant visibility and a broader audience.

But there's more to it and it's linked to the India growth story. In January 2024, the finance ministry said India is expected to have a GDP of \$5 trillion in the next three years. Statista estimates that luxury goods market in India will generate a revenue of \$7.86 billion this year. Even international fashion

brands are investing.

Expanding internationally needs financial backing. According to Vogue Business, General Atlantic's investment in 2013 helped spur Anita Dongre's move to New York in 2018, the first Indian designer to set up a flagship store there. Yash Dongre, president, business operations, House of Anita Dongre, says the decision to expand overseas was driven by a desire to be closer to their global consumers. "The timing felt right with an increasing diaspora of affluent South Asians who wanted to celebrate their roots. Another factor was the demand we were seeing through our online channels," he says. In 2023, Dongre opened at Dubai Mall. "Our international

sales have been growing by 30% annually," says Yash.

The surge in interest is due to changing perceptions about India, he says. "The growing affluence of South Asians globally has tilted the scales in our favour. While breaking into the global scene is still challenging, the barriers to entry have eased."

Celebrity stylist Akshay Tyagi attributes it to a major PR push. "People with the resources are putting the network in place," he says, adding that South Asians are stepping up to support South Asians internationally.

Mishra, too, says: "We must appreciate the increased organisation within Indian fashion, all thanks to established stylists, PR agencies and inter-

national liaisons."

The barriers that once confined Indian fashion to a niche category don't exist any longer. Says Bose: "This isn't just a fashion phenomenon. It is part of a larger movement where Indian talent across sectors—entrepreneurship, technology, cinema—are celebrated globally." She adds that "key global fashion houses have made the overdue and necessary efforts of being diverse and inclusive, specifically when it comes to Indian representation". She emphasises that India is no longer boxed into some categories like a place to get embroidery or traditional attire.

MONEY IS IN

The entry of corporates has given Indian fashion a big push. Since 2021, Reliance Brands and Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail have been busy adding designers to their cart. Fashion journalist Sujata Assomull says corporate investment has been a game-changer for Indian fashion: "Corporates have entered fashion because they believe there is money to be made in the fashion industry."

Prasad Bidapa, fashion commentator and curator, says the Indian market needs to become a minute that needs to be an hour. But to keep that going, designers need to attract major investments. He says, "Isha Ambani [who is leading the expansion of Reliance Retail] could be a game-changer; for it is not easy to get the market penetration these designers need to become international players."

Assomull says the ones who will make it big are those with the right understanding of what's missing in the market and what people are looking for from India.

Gupta says the end game for any designer is to build a lasting brand that resonates with a global audience. He says, "This involves creating a signature style that is both unique and adaptable to different markets."

It may take a little more time for an Indian designer to develop into a truly global brand. As Mishra says, "Initially, one anticipates a more linear path to international recognition, but the reality is that it requires persistent effort and adaptation to different markets." What makes the difference are innovation and resilience. And Indian fashion is just digging its heels in.
nupur.amarnath@timesofindia.com

A BRIEF HISTORY OF eSEARCH

1990 Archie, first internet search engine, is created by **Alan Emtage**, to index information in the form of large files on the web



1993 World Wide Web Wanderer, a web crawler developed by **Matthew Gray**, lays the foundation of modern-day web search tech



1994 Yahoo!, WebCrawler, Lycos launched as popular search engines



1998 Google officially launches. Founders **Sergey Brin** and **Larry Page** introduce PageRank algorithm to web search

Search Party

Google's supremacy in internet search is getting diminished due to queries on apps such as Amazon, TikTok and Instagram, even as AI looms, posing a further threat

Shephali Bhatt

Autam Mehra isn't on any social media platform. "Google Discover is my equivalent of Instagram's Explore tab," he says. Google Discover is a personalised content feed that suggests articles and news based on a user's interests and search history. Lately, his Google Discover feed is showing headlines such as: "Google's dominance of the global search advertising market is being challenged: WARC"; "TikTok comes for Google as it quietly rolls out image search capabilities in TikTok Shop"; and "Gen Z ditches Google, turns to Reddit for product searches".

Mehra, cofounder of ProfitWheel, an ad analytics platform, isn't surprised. Until a year ago, Google was the go-to place for 100% of his searches. "Now, it's about 40%," he says. For the rest, he goes to platforms like Amazon for product searches, Reddit for unique problems, food and grocery apps, and ChatGPT.

After reigning as the undisputed king of internet search for two decades, Google's dominance has been diminishing in the past three-four years. Specialised platforms like Amazon for product search, Spotify/Apple Music for music, Roblox for gaming, Booking.com for travel, and social media apps like TikTok, Instagram and Reddit are gaining ground.

According to a March 2023 report by PowerReviews, a ratings enhancement consultancy, 50% of US consumers, mainly millennials, start product searches on Amazon rather than Google. Also, 5% of Gen Z users in US are likely to begin their shopping journey on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Over the past seven years, the contribution of search to Google's overall ad revenue has been fluctuating. It fell from 73.97% in 2017 to 70.8% in 2020. There was a slight bump to 73.6% in 2023, but it was still below the 2017 level. In April 2023, a WARC report forecasted that Google's share in the global search advertising market would drop from 51% in 2021 to 50.4% in 2023.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

In essence, these days you turn to Google only when you are unsure where to look for something. For everything else, you head to specialised platforms, which Himanshu Khanna calls "mindshare platforms". Khanna is the founder of Openvny.com, an online community platform. He notes that Google acknowledges losing some search market share to platforms that dominate user attention for specific activities. "Users visit IMDb or Rotten Tomatoes for movie reviews and ratings. Consequently, Google now prioritises displaying these results prominently at the top of its search pages," he says. Last week, some X users shared that Google is now showing Instagram posts within its Perspectives feature in the Search results.

However, these "mindshare platforms" are trying to outperform Google's search capabilities. Today, when it comes to finding where to watch something, Google is often the go-to choice. Khanna says IMDb has started displaying this information. "It now provides details on where a show or a movie is available in your country," he says.

Mehra, who has been following Google's search story from the beginning, recalls the changes that have happened over the decades.

Archie was the first internet search engine. Created by Alan Emtage in 1990, it would index information in the form of large files on the web. By 1994, Yahoo!, WebCrawler and Lycos expanded the search landscape. Google officially launched in 1998. Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin introduced PageRank algorithm to Google's web search. It ranked web pages based on multiple factors and displayed



AI-GENERATED

search results accordingly. "It revolutionised modern-day internet search," says Mehra, recalling his days navigating the web on a dial-up connection, all the while hoping no one would pick up the landline and interrupt his net surfing. In 2007, Google introduced Unified Search. "From 10 blue links, you started seeing images, news and videos as part of search results." Two years later, Microsoft launched rival Bing but it remained a small player.

The early 2010s saw the rise of mobile- and voice-based queries. Voice assistants such as Siri and Alexa emerged as did image-led search. Since 2020, search has evolved towards personalised, AI-driven experiences.

Soon, search engines will be replaced by search assistants, says Aditya Agrawal, founder of superU, an ad network for the AI world. He cites a Gartner report that predicts that "traditional search engine volume will drop 25% by 2026, with search marketing losing market share to AI chatbots and other virtual agents".

This shift is under way. Last week, Amazon Beauty launched a personalised recommendations tool called SkinCare Advisor. Agrawal is developing search assistants that trawl the net for data, especially in sectors like healthcare.

A Gartner report predicts that traditional search engine volume will drop 25% by 2026, with search marketing losing market share to AI chatbots and other virtual agents

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR GOOGLE?

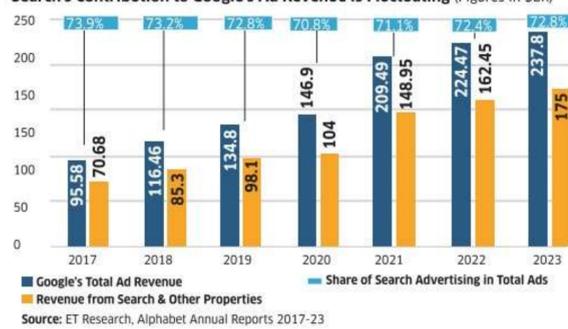
Mehra says that while Google's search influence may be waning slightly, it still gathers abundant user behaviour data from Gmail and invoices from e-commerce transactions and travel itineraries. "YouTube, Android and Chrome are all mammoths of data signals for 'signed-in' data," he adds. Further, Google's Pixel has introduced AI-powered features, like "Circle to Search" what's on your screen without switching apps. "I'm not selling my Google shares anytime soon," says Mehra, who has recently launched consumrai, an AI-led consumer intelligence platform.

In an email, a Google spokesperson tells ET: "Over the past 25 years, we've continued to re-imagine and expand what Google Search can do. Years ago, it might have seemed like science fiction to pull out a phone, take a picture of a broken bike part and ask, 'How do I fix this?' Today, you can use Google Lens, find out what's broken, where to pick up a replacement part and how to repair it yourself, all in a matter of seconds." The spokesperson also mentions "Multisearch" (where people can search naturally using pictures and text for things that are hard to describe) and "Circle to Search" as examples of the company's advancements in search in recent years.

Significantly, Google's rival search interfaces have fallen short. Vikrama Dhiman, SVP of product at an on-demand tech conglomerate, says the infinite scroll feature on platforms like Instagram and TikTok negatively affects search functionality. "These platforms excel at keeping you scrolling with strong recommendations, but their limitations become clear

AD MINUS ADD

Search's Contribution to Google's Ad Revenue is Fluctuating (Figures in \$bn)



Source: ET Research, Alphabet Annual Reports 2017-23

Google's Share in Global Search Ad Market

2021: 51%
2023: 50.4%

Source: WARC report forecast in April 2023

Outside Google

50% US consumers, largely millennials, start product searches on Amazon over Google

5% Gen Z users in US likely to start shopping journey on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram

Source: PowerReviews, March 2023

Platforms are now trying to eliminate our need to search. Food and grocery delivery apps highlight your most-visited restaurants, favourite dishes and previously bought items at the top of the home page

when you ask a direct question," he says. For example, while Instagram offers a variety of recommended audio options for Stories and posts, searching for a specific place or piece of music on the app is still a hassle, says Dhiman.

IMPACT ON PEOPLE

How has the evolution of online search impacted end consumers?

"People expect platforms to know the context of their search now. They want the search process to reduce the cognitive load of decision-making in as many aspects of their life as they can," says Agrawal of superU.

So platforms are now trying to eliminate our need to search. Food and grocery delivery apps highlight your most-visited restaurants, favourite dishes and previously bought grocery items at the top of the home page.

"This has been done to reduce the decision-making time on these apps," says Riti Malhotra, director of product at a hyperlocal delivery firm. She recalls an inside joke from her stint at a food delivery startup: it takes longer to decide what to order than it does to deliver it. However, personalised search results have some limitations. "Even if an item is rarely bought or low-ranked, if you bought it last, it will appear at the top for you, marked as previously bought, until the model learns that this is not what the user wants anymore."

At some level, these recommendation engines make you accustomed to letting a machine take decisions for you. Agrawal admits that he now decides what food to order only 5-10% of the time. The rest of the time, he relies on his app's recommendations.

What are we doing with all the time saved by not making these low-stakes decisions? "Maybe we watch Instagram Reels," he quips.

There are concerns about social media-driven search. "Grocery or food recommendations are based on what the algorithm knows about you, so it doesn't force changes in your choices," says Gayatri Sapru, anthropologist and founder of brand consultancy Folk Frequency. But platforms like Instagram that don't have search capabilities built into them are being used for search intuitively, she adds. "It doesn't always have what you need, so it points you to the closest thing it has on offer, thus redirecting your attention and restricting your world view."

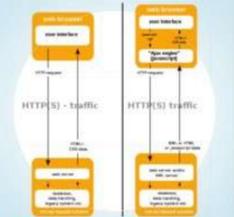
Sapru cites American sociologist and MIT professor Sherry Turkle to strengthen her argument. "Turkle wrote about how the very presence on a screen of multiple windows requires you to assimilate different information and parts of yourself so the sources are diverse and you can see that your identity is a tapestry of ideas from multiple points of view. This critical skill is lost when you are living, liking, scrolling within apps that create a world of their own," says Sapru. "It is hampering basic research skills in the younger generations."

At a broader level, AI's tendency to prioritise quantifiable results can overshadow more esoteric or indigenous ideas, warns Sapru. "Over time, AI might create a world where the latter ideas disappear entirely from search results, which is alarming."

Now, more than ever, end consumers need to provide feedback to these apps for improvement, says Roopa Rao, a product management professional with search deployment experience dating back to the days of Boolean search, which involved using phrases like "And", "Or", and "Not" to refine search results. "Tools like ChatGPT constantly ask if their responses are helpful. Without feedback, AI assumes this is what you want," she explains.

Mehra, too, believes that while platforms continue to evolve their search capabilities, individuals also need to reflect on how their search habits have changed over time and how they feel about these changes. "The less I search," he says about himself, "the less I think."

shephali.bhatt@timesofindia.com



2005 Ajax, a programming concept, is introduced to efficiently load new content on web page

2007 Unified Search rolled out by Google to show images, videos, news articles as part of search results



2009 Bing launched by Microsoft

2010 Mobile-based search becomes prominent

2011-17 Voice search assistant Siri emerges, followed by Alexa, Google Assistant

2019 onwards: Search becomes personalised, AI-driven

Garima Manon & Nirmal John

In the urban sprawl of Bengaluru, Hennur Road has all the signs of an up-and-coming neighbourhood. Apartment complexes, in various stages of construction, jostle next to new supermarkets. The road itself is being rebranded as the New Airport Road, offering an alternative route to the city's airport in Devanahalli. Nestled just off this road is a grey-and-white building where a bunch of elderly people stay.

Many spend their days unaware of the hustle and bustle of the city they had once helped build, talking to other seniors and caregivers, eating specially curated food, watching the telly and singing songs from their youth.

This is KITES Senior Care's dementia and Alzheimer's care centre, a 100-bed facility, run by LifeBridge Senior Care, founded by CEO Rajagopal Gand COO Reema N. It is among a clutch of companies that are looking beyond the narrative that India is a young country and building businesses for ageing Indians. These companies specialise in real estate for older people, offering post-hospital care, palliative care and home care, as well as age-tech.

Ranjan Pai, chairman of the Manipal Education and Medical Group, has invested ₹45 crore in LifeBridge. Pai is one of India's most influential investors. Over the years, he has invested in Byju's, PharmEasy, Firstcry, Bluestone, Purple and Meolaa, among others. He was among the first to realise the

business potential of combining education and technology before edtech became a buzzword.

So, Pai's investment in senior care looks astute for many reasons, one of which is the rise of the grey economy. 1. NITI Aayog says the elderly is about 10% of the population, or 104 million, and is projected to reach 19.5% by 2050. One in five Indians is a potential customer for senior care businesses.

2. Migration has propelled the rise of nuclear families. Consequently, the elderly are increasingly living independently, highlighting the need for specialised products and services that help maintain their quality of life.

3. Affluent seniors and their kids can spend to ensure better quality of life. The senior care industry is estimated at \$7 billion by NITI Aayog, with the sector, including senior living and out-of-hospital senior care, expected to breach \$30 billion by 2030. That is a juicy market, waiting for smart entrepreneurs.

"As India moves from a \$4 trillion economy to \$20 trillion, the kind of problems the seniors will have will be in the same direction as what has happened in the West," says Pai.

He is meshing his latest investment in KITES with adjacent businesses. He has already facilitated the merger of KITES Senior Care with Columbia Pacific Communities, a real-estate play aimed at seniors and a company Pai knows well, having acquired its parent company Columbia Pacific Investment's hospital assets in India. Nate McLemore, MD of Columbia Pacific Investments, says the inte-

Silver Age

Ranjan Pai's investment in senior care points to the opportunity in the sector that could touch \$30 billion by 2030



gration of senior living and senior care can offer a better quality of life to the aged.

Columbia Pacific manages over 1,750 residential units across south India and plans to add 2,200 units over the next couple of years. It is also likely to offer rentals.

If these seem like small numbers, they are. India is just scratching the surface of grey economy. Retirement communities are a \$95 billion market in the US, with assisted living adding \$97 billion to that.

The demand for secure post-retirement life in India is only expected to grow.

According to a report from real-estate consultancy firm CBRE, key players in the senior living segment are Ashiana Housing, Covai Care, Columbia Pacific, Paranjape, Primus Life and Antara, which contribute to around 40% of the total inventory in India. In senior care and assisted living, leading companies include Athulya Assisted Living and Kites Senior Care. Some players in the sen-

AGEING INDIA

2020	2024 (E)	2030 (F)	2050 (F)
Total Population (mn)			
1,060	1,442	1,515	1,670
Senior Population (mn)			
73	159	195	348
Senior Population Share (%)			
6.9	11	12.9	20.8

E: Expected F: Forecast
Note: Senior population means 60 years & above
Source: UN World Population Prospects, 2022

Share of Senior Living Units in India

South Zone: 62% (Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala)
North Zone: 25% (Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh)
Central Zone: 13% (Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh)
Source: CBRE report, Apr 2024

ior living segment also offer senior care as add-ons. Many of these businesses target the affluent. The monthly fees at the dementia care facility in Hennur are above ₹50,000.

The audience targeted by senior care and senior living is different. Says Rajagopal: "When it comes to sickness management, most of the decisions are taken by children and in 96% of our cases, children pay for it. On the retirement home side, there is a great amount of participation from seniors themselves."

Reema says the senior care part of the business will have three buckets—transitional care, which is post-hospitalisation rehabilitation and recovery; palliative care; and dementia care.

The CBRE report highlights that the senior care land-

scape in India is rapidly evolving, with 18,000 units across the country. The south, known for its favourable climate, improved connectivity, prominent healthcare providers and a high share of NRIs, holds a market share of 62%. Most senior living projects are concentrated in Coimbatore, Bengaluru and Chennai, which contribute to 40% of the nation's total inventory.

RISE OF AGE BIZ

The realisation that India is an ageing society is permeating into a broader ecosystem. This is most apparent in the case of senior living where the likes of Ashiana Housing have been building a strong play for over a decade.

The demand will only

Ranjan Pai has invested ₹45 crore in LifeBridge Senior Care. India's senior care industry is estimated to be \$7 billion by NITI Aayog



go up. As Reema says, a person who is 60 could have 30-40 years left.

Startups too are taking notice of the opportunity, with specialised plays popping up along with buzzwords like age-tech.

"Take the case of Ivory, which focuses on 'early detection of neurodegenerative risks' and on providing 'personalised brain-health solutions'. Its cofounders Issac John and Rahul Krishnan, don't have a medical background; the former had a marketing career and the latter a product-management career before becoming entrepreneurs in age-tech.

Wearables are another area with significant potential. Reema says KITES has been exploring the possibility of developing wearables for seniors.

Meanwhile, the government has to come up with a comprehensive senior care policy. Changes have been happening in bits. Previously, people over 65 could not buy new health insurance policies. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India removed this age limit from April. In February, a NITI Aayog paper stressed the need for financial and social reforms to improve senior care in India.

Currently, the government provides healthcare for the elderly through the National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly and the National Action Plan for Senior Citizens. However, there are no national provisions for old-age homes, and the benefits under various senior schemes are insufficient to keep up with rising costs.

The private industry is aimed at the more affluent part of the population. The real challenge for senior care will come when the government makes it a policy priority.

garima.manon1@timesofindia.com

A Democracy Where You Can Abuse a Politician – & Not Be Jailed?!

For all its decline and fall that Ed Gibbon would have gasped at, British parliamentary elections are scandalously frank and open for an electorate and political class like India's

FUNNY BUSINESS



ANUVAB PAL

London: Britain's general elections are on the day America annually celebrates its independence—from Britain—July 4. And the most significant issue doing the rounds is betting. I don't mean the public's betting on who will win or lose, but members of the Conservative Party betting they will lose. Those who believe betting against themselves/the party is bad for self-esteem, clearly haven't met Rishi Sunak's team members.

Last week, Britain's two main political parties, Labour being the other, withdrew

support for candidates being investigated over bets. The Gambling Commission will release new ethics rules about who can and cannot bet based on what insider information they possess. This means the gambling people are now setting rules on what morals a government should follow, rather than the other way around.

British bookmakers allow gambling on politics. The timing of an election is a popular bet. But placing bets with insider knowledge is a crime. The commission has not named anyone in its investigation yet.

Now, imagine if Dream 11, a fantasy cricket league in India, were setting rules before the general election on whether Narendra Modi's aides could bet on his rise or fall. Nobody knows how the public thinks—as we saw in our recent exit polls. We've all been bad at predicting the future, or have had a bad day at work, but none of us had to weep on primetime as one pollster had to after the actual results came out.

Britons have a different situation. Being a pessimistic people, they are overconfident that the Tories, having run the country for 15



COUNT BINFACE, STANDING UP TO RUBBISH POLITICS BY RUNNING IN RISHI SUNAK'S SEAT ON JULY 4

years (many say to the ground)—and having changed five PMs in that time, including one's tenure outlasted by a lettuce—are facing inevitable defeat. So, why not bet on that happening? If the ethics committee didn't exist, Sunak, a wily financier, could probably bet against himself. If he won, it'll probably shock him more than the country. Not to mention, leaving quite a few of his colleagues a few pounds poorer.

In many ways, their election is the opposite of our election. Here in India, everyone bet (whether by putting down cash or not) that it'd go a certain way. God had other plans. Nobody would have been stupid enough to bet against Modi. And nobody clever enough to

Brits are betting the house that Sunak is gone. As in betting the house with a receipt to prove it

think they could have made a few lakhs if they had. If they had these dark thoughts, they'd be in private, hush-hush.

Once the unthinkable became fact—barely 260, instead of the 400+ seats—we carried on, sheepishly.

Here in Britain, they're betting the house that Sunak is gone. As in betting the house with a receipt to prove it.

However, through all of this, what is to be admired is that I, a foreigner, a visiting comedian, have the freedom to make these jokes without being deported. Or jailed. Or lynched.

The openness with which the public mistreats their political class in Britain is an art. Senior politicians visiting constituencies are often met with, 'Get out,' or far worse abuse. The media treats politicians like dirt. Ex-PM Boris Johnson was once asked, 'You've lost it, haven't you?' The stuff the British public directly asks their MPs would be unthinkable in India.

On Question Time, a popular BBC TV programme, a citizen asked an MP, 'Are you just a stupid liar, or are you a petty stooge for the Far Right?' The parliamentarian didn't jump out of his seat to rush up and smack the questioner. He composed himself and flubbed an answer in some half-measure to defend himself.

This level of informality would be unthinkable to us. It could explain why Indian MPs roam with a phalanx of sidekicks and bodyguards, speak only to thousands of people at once from a dais miles away from the public, and then immediately jump into an Innova or helicopter to avoid any single individual with an opinion.

In many ways, however broken the British election may be, this reverse treatment of the political class as actual servants of the people—as opposed to how we treat them as VIP messengers of god—makes democracy win. I'd bet on it.

FILM FATALE



ANNA MM VETTICAD

A Gutsy Take That Opens an Eye To Blind Faith

Maharaj finds echoes in battles being fought today by feminists, reformers

'The devotee who does not ask questions is as incomplete as the dharma that is unable to give answers.' With these words, a community elder in the Hindi-Gujarati film Maharaj advocates rebellion against immorality in the religious establishment.

Directed by Siddharth P Malhotra, Maharaj is based on a libel suit filed by a religious leader, Jadunathji Brijrajnath Maharaj, in 1862 against social reformer and journalist Karsandas Mulji in the then Supreme Court of Bombay. This information is shared through text on screen. The source material is a book of the same name by Saurabh Shah. Mulji is played by debutant Junaid Khan, son of Aamir Khan.

Maharaj dropped quietly on Netflix on June 21, a week after its planned date, without a customary marketing campaign or any fuss over Junaid's pedigree. The delay was due to a stay order from the Gujarat High Court on a petition by members of a Hindu sect who felt the film would defame their group and hurt sentiments. Apart from this legal challenge, Maharaj has also faced threats from militant Hindutva bodies and boycott campaigns on social media. Even after the court okayed the release, the producers have kept it low-key.

This is an unusual debut for a star child, both in terms of the film's theme and minimal promotions. The latter is a smart move though.

The team behind Maharaj perhaps understood that in this moment of time, with the debate over nepotism refusing to disappear; not doing PR for the son of a star as big as Aamir might generate more curiosity than any publicity blitzkrieg would. Their decision makes double the sense keeping Maharaj's subject in mind, as majoritarianism is rampant across many parts of India, and works of art come under attack not only for what they contain, but also due to the religious identity of the artists involved.

In the news cycle, Maharaj is of particular significance because it comes right after a general election that has buoyed the liberal ecosystem.

Critiques of religion and its torchbearers have al-



BUT CAN YOU HANDLE IT?

ways had the potential to charge up emotions. In Maharaj, Mulji's own family is enraged when he objects to the sexual exploitation of women in the community by JJ (Jaideep Ahlawat), the character modelled on Jadunathji. Over 150 years since the episode chronicled in the film, the current combustible atmosphere in India has left little room for scrutiny of any aspect of religion.

When viewed through this lens, Maharaj is remarkable—gutsy, unequivocal in its stand against JJ, unapologetic about Mulji's non-conformism. Junaid has a screen presence and comes across as sincere. The glimpses of rawness in his craft do not detract from his charm. Ahlawat embodies arrogance and lasciviousness. In his adapted story and screenplay, writer Vipul Mehta makes no bones about his denunciation of blind faith and manipulative religious authorities.

Having said that, Maharaj gradually becomes more preoccupied with the causes it has taken up than the human beings affected by them, thus diminishing its emotional resonance. While it spells out certain points more than necessary, in certain areas it lacks clarity. It especially falls short in articulating a definition of consent in sexual relations when one party has the might of religion backing him, and in deconstructing Mulji's saviour complex, which leads him to bulldoze a woman into fighting her oppression while indulging in horrifying victim-blaming, instead of being a sensitive ally.

Maharaj remains arresting despite these failings for two reasons. First, because Mulji's battles back then find echoes in battles being fought by feminists, religious reformers and rationalists even today. Second, because no work of art can be viewed in isolation, outside the circumstances in which it has been created.

Coming as this film does from the Hindi industry that has by and large been genuflecting before the government and all right-wing forces in the past decade, it is impossible to look away from its courage.

The writer is author of *The Adventures of an Intrepid Film Critic*

Musk Black, A Colour Maketh the Man

He wears black as a semiotic device to be power-casual, while distancing himself from the 'softwear' West Coast lot

RED HERRING



INDRAJIT HAZRA

Last week, Elon Musk was at the Cannes Lions Advertising Festival in black. He is always in black. If Musk told off advertisers who were boycotting X to 'go fuck yourself' last year, many years ago, another technologist had said something similar; not to advertisers but customers seeking a wider range of his product, the Ford Model T: 'Any customer can have a car painted any colour that he wants so long as it is black.'

Wearing a black jacket and black t-shirt—bearing a steel-grey owl design that he had earlier shared on X referencing a character in Ridley Scott's SF classic, Blade Runner—Musk looked the polar opposite of his interviewer, WPP CEO Mark Read, who was in his just-out-of-bed slacker white 'dad collared-tee'. The Tesla boss' power coding in sharp-lined black was, as almost always, reassuring in its AC/DC's 'Back in Black' casualness, but formidable in its Jesuit habit grim-lines.

A few weeks ago, Musk was at the Texas Tesla annual shareholder meeting. Here, he was more at home than in the Darth Vader-in-the-Riviera surroundings of Cannes. He even did a jig before the (easily?) awed audience, radiating his trademark 'pathological optimism' in the over-

done laughs-punctuated speech that followed where he played Arthur C Clarke on steroids. He was in a black tee.

But here he allowed himself a bit of colour—a four-pocket tan grey safari jacket. The jacket channelled Hemingway on a Hunt, Clark Gable in Mogambo—casually wearing alpha-ness like the latest valuation, while tipping an invisible (Canadian?) trapper hat to his 'un-Gatsby' South African safari roots.

But Musk Black is now officially on the colour palette. It accentuates Musk's Roaring Twenties 'Armani black suit-iridium white shirt' power chic, as well as casual t-shirt and sheepskin aviator

Eugène Delacroix's Louis-Auguste Schwiter may well be the precursor to Musk's Black power dressing



DARK MATTER

flying jacket look. The two blacknesses are complementary, lying outside the binary of formal-informal other 21st-century menswear flaunt.

'I have said that black has it all. White too. Their beauty is absolute. It is the perfect harmony,' is how Coco Chanel saw the ying and yang of couture colour. To think that Musk, Texan and as un-Coco as Coca-Cola can get, is blind to such aesthetics is to make a cardinal, indeed papal, error in both business semiotics and powerplay chic.

Musk Black not only visually matches the man's self-positioning as a Blade Runner-style aristotechnocrat, but also performs another important function: it situates

him away from the nerd herd. The 'cyber rodeo' neon-lit backdrop at the Texas AGM was a far cry from Google-Meta-Microsoft's pristine, antiseptic whiteboard stages that are more Ikea than Nuts 'n' Bolts Chaps.

'Black, for Musk, is not 'black tie'. It's an insistence on coming across as 'power casual'—with the operative word being power, and not going to lengths to display casualness. Cargo pants couture of the 'softwear' West Coast brigade is attacked by Musk Black. Musk wants to be the 21st century Gary Cooper, not a post-hippie techie.

Steve Jobs famously asked Issey Miyake to make him his iconic 'subtle' black turtleneck for everyday use. But it became more of a 'replacement tux'. The dynamics are different outside California in the Lone Star State of SpaceX.

Musk may not have modelled himself on the figure in Eugène Delacroix's 'Portrait of Louis-Auguste Schwiter' hanging at the National Gallery in London. But the young man in the painting, wearing a white cravat and a simple, ink-black frock coat may well be the precursor to Musk Black power dressing. In control, but aware of the dangers of coming across as a control-freak dandy.

Musk, purveyor and practitioner of both American pop and cult culture, must know that famous exchange from Quentin Tarantino's 1992 multi-coloured black comedy crime flick, Reservoir Dogs: 'Mr Pink: Why can't we pick our own colours?'

Joe: No way, no way. Tried it once, it doesn't work. You get four guys all fighting over who's gonna be Mr Black.

Fact of the matter is, Elon Musk wants to be Mr Black.

indrajit.hazra@timesofindia.com

Der Euro is the Currency In Fußballing Germany

Avoiding the ongoing football games while in the Euro 2024 host country is hard

NO FILTER



RUCHIR JOSHI

Frankfurt/Berlin: Coming out of Frankfurt central station, I'm startled at how different the place feels from 12 days earlier. Everywhere, there is football-related imagery. The crowds are different, replacing the usual station marginals with strange people in colourful clothes. Most joints have huge TV screens, showing Euro 2024.

German fans are recognisable in their white tops and black shorts, with some combo of Deutschland black-red-yellow on the shirts. Croatians are in the red and white checks, as though someone has miscoloured Grand Prix racing flags. This other small bunch of lads are... Scottish. Kilts are a giveaway. After a while, I place the Albania and Switzerland kits, satisfied at having ticked off all the teams playing on the day.

In marked contrast to some other countries, there is no absurd compartmentalisation between drinking alcohol, smoking, and watching sport on TV. 'Here you are on a warm early

summer day, attending a festival of football in a country with one of the best beer traditions in the world,' the city seems to be saying. 'So why would you deny yourself any of the attendant pleasures? Sit outside in the perfectly warm sun! Eat! Drink! Smoke! And cry as your team loses to us, as it inevitably will!'

The first match is Croatia v Albania. As I get to my hotel, I can hear cries and groans triggered by almost-goals, un-given fouls and hair-follicle off-sides. Later in the afternoon, while crossing the river, I have a good view from the bridge—the entire riverbank is a mela, a series of beer gardens, and two-storey-high screens. The home team is about to play Hungary, and people of all ages are out, wearing the tricolour-striped Mannschaft kit.

It's all very jolly, except there's serious police bandobast. Frankfurt's finest are out in force, sporting full intergalactic combat gear. What are they worried about? 'Maybe terror attack,' says a friend. Germany win 2-0, and by 10 pm everything is kind of quiet. The police have gone, as have many fans. Walking back to my hotel I'm passed by five young men on electric scooters.

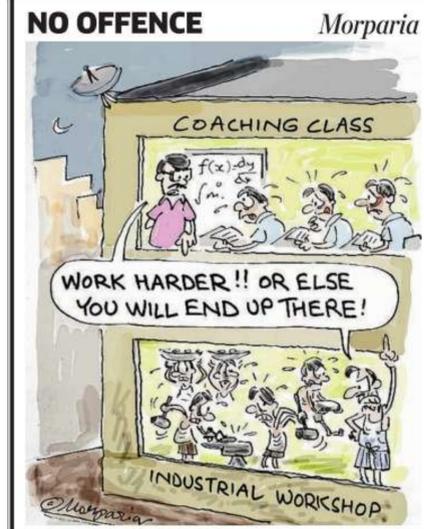
'Piss off, myate, jus' fakkin' piss awwwwf!' Laughs one of them at another. I get the Scouse accent before identifying the kit with the three blue dachshundised lions. The following day the hotel breakfast is taken over by a peculiar red kit with white letters and lining. Hundreds of men, a few women, all polite and cheerful. I check the fixtures. Ah, today it's England vs Denmark in Frankfurt.

A few days later, I'm back in Berlin. Germany is playing again. Again the janta is out, fully dressed in the national kit, horns blaring, funny headgear. Again, the police in full gladiator gear walk about slowly and intently. Berlin thullas this time, even though the match is in another city.

I've decided to save my football-watching for the knockout stage. But I can't help checking out scorelines on pavement screens. I notice that the Swiss are a goal up on the so-far-undefeated Germany. Ah, a lucky opener. No doubt the well-drilled Germans will manschaft the Swiss manschaft. Half an hour later, the match comes to a finish. The score is still 1-0. I can feel the despair and stilled-hubbub silence from the pavement tables.

Nearing home, I give in. The match is on in a doner shop, and I go in, get a beer, and settle down to watch the last 15 minutes. It's Germany v Switzerland all right, except Germany is playing the role of Switzerland, and the Swiss are swamping the German defence with the metro-nomic regularity of a... oops, almost at the last minute it's suddenly an undeserved 1-1!

Merwan, the Doner shop guy, is in despair, having just turned to take out a basket of freshly done French fries, secure in the knowledge that his Switzerland has secured a historic victory. Whatever the case, I know my non-watching days of this tournament will soon be over.



LET'S TALK ABOUT...

\$20,000 Virtual Necklace

Is this for real? Virtually! In May, Adidas sold a \$20,000 digital necklace via its store on Roblox, the popular online game platform. It is a diamond and gold necklace that was created in collaboration with 25-year-old Cleveland-based Roblox creator Jonathan Courtney.

Who bought it? The necklace was purchased by Simon Burgess, a high-end collector on Roblox, for 2 million Robux which is equivalent to \$20,000.

All that real money for a virtual necklace? Well, Burgess also received a physical pair of customised F-50 Elite Laceless Fast Reborn FG Boots and Campus 00s from the sportswear brand.

Ahan, how much is that worth? About \$200 or thereabouts.

Unbelievable. One would think the era of buying virtual things was over... Oh, absolutely not. In 2021, Gucci's virtual Dionysus bag was sold on Roblox for \$4,000, roughly \$800 more than what it costs in the real world. And these aren't even NFTs (non-fungible tokens). So, they have no value or transferability outside the Roblox world.

Conspicuous consumption... in this economy? It is timeless, my friend.

Text: Shephali Bhatt



CENTRE-FORWARD, BOTTOMS UP!

ET Sunday Crossword 0070

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9				10			
12			13				
15			16		17		
18							
19			20	21			
23			24		25	26	
						27	
28					29		
30					31		

ACROSS

- 1 Amazingly, Bush didn't forget name for believer (8)
- 2 Poet's merry, staggering around harbour (6)
- 3 Severely abbreviated dance programme (8)
- 4 Colourful shrub produces a beer in South Africa (6)
- 5 Smooth First Lady's name (4)
- 6 They contain best candidates' lost shirts in bits (5,5)
- 7 Expletives? They're old appearing during drug deliveries (1,3)
- 8 I get train over ground—it's a matter of asking (13)
- 9 Purgative soaps smell awful (5,5)
- 10 Old song offers great delight (4)
- 11 Develop a question that's somewhat obscure (6)
- 12 Pilot had a nice big house in Spain (8)
- 13 Cigarette about 11 roughly (6)
- 14 Rest and perhaps take shortbread? (3,5)
- 15 I get train over ground—it's a matter of asking (13)
- 16 Purgative soaps smell awful (5,5)
- 17 Old song offers great delight (4)
- 18 Develop a question that's somewhat obscure (6)
- 19 Pilot had a nice big house in Spain (8)
- 20 Cigarette about 11 roughly (6)
- 21 Rest and perhaps take shortbread? (3,5)

DOWN

- 1 Old volume of blues played round
- 2 It's sung finally in dreadful circumstances (5)
- 3 Wine joint (4)
- 4 Element found in plush, rambling old Biblical city (7)
- 5 Bet this girl dressed up as Elizabeth (5)
- 6 Monet's arranged to nurse sick—a heavy burden (9)
- 7 Reappear donkeys in middle of deserts, climbing (8)
- 8 Unobstructed Force Ten evens out (4)
- 9 Begin backing off celebrity (4)
- 10 Trendy sort of square property making heirs argue? (9)
- 11 Prison vessel (3)
- 12 Grass tiny 27 (4)
- 13 Small do-or-die criminal and where he broke in? (4,4)
- 14 Sort of exam tutor always restricts (4)
- 15 Expert grips tight back to get going (7)
- 16 Comment on stain (6)
- 17 Colour's ultraviolet in West (5)
- 18 Suddenly move forward with energy after breather (5)
- 19 Pound writer's lodged in branch (4)

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD 0070

ACROSS: 1. Old volume of blues played round (13) 2. It's sung finally in dreadful circumstances (5) 3. Wine joint (4) 4. Element found in plush, rambling old Biblical city (7) 5. Bet this girl dressed up as Elizabeth (5) 6. Monet's arranged to nurse sick—a heavy burden (9) 7. Reappear donkeys in middle of deserts, climbing (8) 8. Unobstructed Force Ten evens out (4) 9. Begin backing off celebrity (4) 10. Trendy sort of square property making heirs argue? (9) 11. Prison vessel (3) 12. Grass tiny 27 (4) 13. Small do-or-die criminal and where he broke in? (4,4) 14. Sort of exam tutor always restricts (4) 15. Expert grips tight back to get going (7) 16. Comment on stain (6) 17. Colour's ultraviolet in West (5) 18. Suddenly move forward with energy after breather (5) 19. Pound writer's lodged in branch (4)

Landslides in Nepal Claim at least Nine

Kathmandu: Landslides triggered by heavy rainfall on Saturday killed at least nine people including an entire family while they were sleeping in Nepal's mountainous districts, officials said. The landslides buried houses in three separate areas in the country's mountainous region, about 250 km west of Kathmandu, according to Nepal's National Disaster Rescue and Reduction Management Authority. Five members of the same family were killed when their house was swallowed by a landslide while they were asleep at Malika village in Gulmi district. The victims included a couple, their daughter-in-law and two grandchildren. AP

China Warns of Severe Rainstorms

China warned of more rainstorms across the country, urging people to prepare for potential landslides as a prolonged bout of severe weather threatens travel and agriculture. The country on Saturday issued a red alert for rainstorms, the most severe in its four-tier weather warning system. Xinhua News Agency reported. It cited the National Meteorological Center, which warned about possible geological disasters occurring in some rain-hit regions. Bloomberg

PEZESHKIAN, A HEART SURGEON, TO FACE FORMER NUCLEAR NEGOTIATOR JALILI ON JULY 5

Iran Presidency Runoff Pits Reformist against Hardliner

The sole reformist in Iran's presidential election, Masoud Pezeshkian, will face the ultraconservative Saeed Jalili in a runoff, authorities said on Saturday after a vote marred by record low turnout. Pezeshkian, 69, secured 42.4% of the vote, while Jalili, a 58-year-old former nuclear negotiator, came second with 38.6%, according to voting figures announced by Mohsen Eslami, spokesman for Iran's elections authority. Conservative parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf was next with 13.8% of the vote, while the only other candidate, conservative cleric Mostafa Pourmohammadi, received less than one percent.

"None of the candidates could garner the absolute majority of the votes," Eslami said, adding that those who finished first and second would face each other in a runoff next Friday.

Only slightly more than 40% of the 61 million electorate took part in Friday's first round, a historically low turnout for the country. The electoral authority said over one million ballots were spoiled.

Out of Iran's 13 previous presidential elections since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, only one has led to a runoff, which occurred in 2005.

The poll had been scheduled to take place in 2025 but was brought forward by the death of ultraconservative president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash last month. The Guardian Council, which vets candidates, had originally approved six contenders.

But a day ahead of the election, two of them — the mayor of Tehran Alireza Zakani and Raisi's vice president Amir-Hossein Ghazi-zadeh-Hashemi — dropped out.

Both candidates, after the release of the final results, asked their supporters to vote for Jalili in the July 5 runoff. Ghalibaf followed suit later, asking "all revolutionary forces and supporters" to get behind Jalili's bid for the presidency.

In the 2021 election that brought Raisi to power, the Guardian Council disqualified many reformists and moderates, prompting many voters to shun the election.



Mahmoud Pezeshkian (right) secured 42.4% of the vote while Saeed Jalili (left) came second with 38.6% AP

The turnout then was just under 49%, at the time was the lowest in any presidential election in Iran.

Friday's vote took place amid heightened regional tensions over the Gaza war, a dispute with the West over Iran's nuclear program and domestic discontent over Iran's sanctions-hit economy. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had called on people to participate in the vote. Opposition groups, especially in the diaspora, meanwhile called for a boycott, questioning the credibility of elections.

Pezeshkian is a heart surgeon who has represented the northern city of Tabriz in parliament since 2008. He served as health minister under Iran's last reformist president Mohammad Khatami, who held office from 1997 to 2005 and has endorsed Pezeshkian's bid in the current elections.

Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, had been arrested for allegedly violating the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

In recent campaigning, Pezeshkian called for "constructive relations" with Washington and European countries in order to "get Iran out of its isolation".

Jalili, Iran's former nuclear negotiator, has maintained his uncompromising anti-West stance. The 58-year-old has held several senior positions in the Islamic republic, including in Khamenei's office in the early 2000s. He is currently one of Khamenei's representatives in the Supreme National Security Council, Iran's highest security body.

On Saturday, the reformist newspaper *Sazandegi* ran the headline "Long live hope" on its front page, while the state-run Iran daily hailed what it called a "strong" turnout. Regardless of the result, Iran's next president will be in charge of applying state policy outlined by the Supreme Leader, who wields ultimate authority.

CRITICAL OF 2022 PROTESTS

Pezeshkian criticised Raisi's government for a lack of transparency during nationwide protests triggered by the September 2022 death in police custody of Mahsa Amini.

Earlier, the *Tasnim* news agency said militants in southeast Iran attacked a vehicle carrying ballot boxes in Sistan-Baluchistan province. Two policemen were killed and others were injured in the attack, the agency added. AP

Will 'obliterate' Israel if Lebanon is attacked, Warns Tehran



Mourners carrying the coffins of Hezbollah fighters killed by Israeli strikes in South Lebanon, Saturday AP

Iran on Saturday warned that "all Resistance Fronts", a grouping of Iran and its regional allies, would confront Israel if it attacks Lebanon. The comment from Iran's mission to New York comes with fears of a wider war between Israel and Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah group.

The two sides have engaged in near-daily exchanges of fire since the war in Gaza began. Such exchanges have escalated this month, alongside bellicose rhetoric from both sides. Israel's military said plans for a Lebanon offensive had been "approved and validated", prompting Hezbollah to respond that none of Israel would be spared in a full-blown conflict.

In a post on X, the Iranian mission said it "deems as psychological warfare the Zionist regime's propaganda about intending to attack Lebanon". But, it added, "should it embark on full-scale military aggression, an obliterating war will ensue. All options, incl. the full involvement of all Resistance Fronts, are on the table". AFP

TWO POLICEMEN KILLED

Earlier, the *Tasnim* news agency said militants in southeast Iran attacked a vehicle carrying ballot boxes in Sistan-Baluchistan province. Two policemen were killed and others were injured in the attack, the agency added. AP

Democrats anxious after US President comes up short in Thursday's debate

Biden Proved His Critics Right



SEEMA SIROHI

Washington: The polite verdict on the first US presidential debate: Joe Biden's performance was shaky but his record and values speak for themselves. At a rally the next day, Biden came out swinging, drawing a sharp contrast with Donald Trump who remains a fountain of untruths and half-truths even if appearing more robust.

The impolite verdict: Biden blew the debate. Plain and simple. There's no way to spin the 90-minute train wreck, the blank looks, halting delivery, disjointed answers, missing punches, and gingerly exit. He couldn't deliver a knockout line even on abortion rights — the strongest issue against Trump.

Anxiety among Democrats is palpable. Devoted friends in the media (Thomas Friedman, Joe Scarborough et al) have asked him to bow out in favour of a younger, more vibrant candidate. Quit while you are ahead and be remembered for a good, solid one-term presidency.

Thursday's debate was meant to convince voters that Biden was up to the job, perfectly able and in fine fettle at 81 years. Well, he proved the opposite in the first few minutes of the encounter with Trump. If Democrats eschewed questions about his age and frailty before, they no longer can.

Although Trump is only three years younger at 78, and also mixes up names and numbers, the age question doesn't dog him to the eternal chagrin of Democrats. Trump, already slightly ahead in polls, was uncharacteristically disciplined, mostly focused and confident in his replies. He avoided rants and hit Biden on inflation, immigration, the two ongoing wars, the Afghanistan withdrawal and weirdly enough even his golf handicap.

Trump made several claims — Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan "encouraged" Russia to attack Ukraine, Biden was "paid by China" — without hindrance or fact checks. Most importantly, he gave only a qualified answer to whether he would accept the election results. He dodged and ducked and stayed on the offensive.

"Regrettably, Trump was more convincing in his lies than Biden was in his truths," a Democrat-leaning analyst told me, his voice pained and manner resigned. Another Democrat went further

and said Biden's performance was "a disaster". Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan "encouraged" Russia to attack Ukraine, Biden was "paid by China" — without hindrance or fact checks. Most importantly, he gave only a qualified answer to whether he would accept the election results. He dodged and ducked and stayed on the offensive.

"Regrettably, Trump was more convincing in his lies than Biden was in his truths," a Democrat-leaning analyst told me, his voice pained and manner resigned. Another Democrat went further

and said Biden's performance was "a disaster". Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan "encouraged" Russia to attack Ukraine, Biden was "paid by China" — without hindrance or fact checks. Most importantly, he gave only a qualified answer to whether he would accept the election results. He dodged and ducked and stayed on the offensive.

"Regrettably, Trump was more convincing in his lies than Biden was in his truths," a Democrat-leaning analyst told me, his voice pained and manner resigned. Another Democrat went further

and said Biden's performance was "a disaster". Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan "encouraged" Russia to attack Ukraine, Biden was "paid by China" — without hindrance or fact checks. Most importantly, he gave only a qualified answer to whether he would accept the election results. He dodged and ducked and stayed on the offensive.

"Regrettably, Trump was more convincing in his lies than Biden was in his truths," a Democrat-leaning analyst told me, his voice pained and manner resigned. Another Democrat went further

and said Biden's performance was "a disaster". Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan "encouraged" Russia to attack Ukraine, Biden was "paid by China" — without hindrance or fact checks. Most importantly, he gave only a qualified answer to whether he would accept the election results. He dodged and ducked and stayed on the offensive.

"Regrettably, Trump was more convincing in his lies than Biden was in his truths," a Democrat-leaning analyst told me, his voice pained and manner resigned. Another Democrat went further

and said Biden's performance was "a disaster". Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan "encouraged" Russia to attack Ukraine, Biden was "paid by China" — without hindrance or fact checks. Most importantly, he gave only a qualified answer to whether he would accept the election results. He dodged and ducked and stayed on the offensive.

"Regrettably, Trump was more convincing in his lies than Biden was in his truths," a Democrat-leaning analyst told me, his voice pained and manner resigned. Another Democrat went further

and said Biden's performance was "a disaster". Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan "encouraged" Russia to attack Ukraine, Biden was "paid by China" — without hindrance or fact checks. Most importantly, he gave only a qualified answer to whether he would accept the election results. He dodged and ducked and stayed on the offensive.

"Regrettably, Trump was more convincing in his lies than Biden was in his truths," a Democrat-leaning analyst told me, his voice pained and manner resigned. Another Democrat went further

and blamed Biden's hubris in insisting he alone can defeat Trump and scotching all competition. Judging by his debate performance, campaigning vigorously and winning seems excruciatingly difficult.

DEMS IN PANIC MODE

Whether Trump's attacks and insults rattled Biden into incoherence or was it simply the age factor is hard to say. What is not hard to decipher is that the Democrats are panicking, supporters are in despair and well-wishers want Biden to consider voluntary retirement.

In 2020, Biden had said he would be a transition president and a bridge to a new generation, implying he would not seek another term. The fact that he changed his mind is seen by some Democrats as selfish and putting his own and his family's interests above the needs of the party.

They can like it or lump it but he is the presumptive Democratic Party nominee having secured 99% of the delegates in the state primaries. The delegates are expected to vote for him at the party convention in August but they are not legally obliged to. Mass defections?

The easiest way for a different nominee to emerge would be for Biden to voluntarily step aside because party rules make it hard to change nominees without their consent. If he does — although at this time there's no indication he would — others can come out and compete. Some of the names doing the rounds include California Governor Gavin Newsom and Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. But Democratic Party bigwigs are trying to scotch all speculation about a new nominee.

On the other side of the aisle, the Republicans are buoyed, striking often and hard in the aftermath. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump acolyte and ever ready with barbs, wondered on camera whether Biden should be commander in chief for the remaining six months, let alone for another full term. "The bad guys are watching, too," said Graham, raising the spectre of an axis of China, Russia, North Korea and Iran getting stronger were Biden to win a second term.

Aside from a terrible performance, Biden is faced with a fractured party, angry young voters and thinning support among Blacks and Hispanics. Polls are on knife-edge but give Trump a narrow lead in battleground states where a few thousand votes will decide the winner.

UPPER HAND FOR GOP

On the other side of the aisle, the Republicans are buoyed, striking often and hard in the aftermath. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump acolyte and ever ready with barbs, wondered on camera whether Biden should be commander in chief for the remaining six months, let alone for another full term. "The bad guys are watching, too," said Graham, raising the spectre of an axis of China, Russia, North Korea and Iran getting stronger were Biden to win a second term.

Aside from a terrible performance, Biden is faced with a fractured party, angry young voters and thinning support among Blacks and Hispanics. Polls are on knife-edge but give Trump a narrow lead in battleground states where a few thousand votes will decide the winner.

On the other side of the aisle, the Republicans are buoyed, striking often and hard in the aftermath. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump acolyte and ever ready with barbs, wondered on camera whether Biden should be commander in chief for the remaining six months, let alone for another full term. "The bad guys are watching, too," said Graham, raising the spectre of an axis of China, Russia, North Korea and Iran getting stronger were Biden to win a second term.

Aside from a terrible performance, Biden is faced with a fractured party, angry young voters and thinning support among Blacks and Hispanics. Polls are on knife-edge but give Trump a narrow lead in battleground states where a few thousand votes will decide the winner.

On the other side of the aisle, the Republicans are buoyed, striking often and hard in the aftermath. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump acolyte and ever ready with barbs, wondered on camera whether Biden should be commander in chief for the remaining six months, let alone for another full term. "The bad guys are watching, too," said Graham, raising the spectre of an axis of China, Russia, North Korea and Iran getting stronger were Biden to win a second term.

Aside from a terrible performance, Biden is faced with a fractured party, angry young voters and thinning support among Blacks and Hispanics. Polls are on knife-edge but give Trump a narrow lead in battleground states where a few thousand votes will decide the winner.

On the other side of the aisle, the Republicans are buoyed, striking often and hard in the aftermath. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump acolyte and ever ready with barbs, wondered on camera whether Biden should be commander in chief for the remaining six months, let alone for another full term. "The bad guys are watching, too," said Graham, raising the spectre of an axis of China, Russia, North Korea and Iran getting stronger were Biden to win a second term.

Aside from a terrible performance, Biden is faced with a fractured party, angry young voters and thinning support among Blacks and Hispanics. Polls are on knife-edge but give Trump a narrow lead in battleground states where a few thousand votes will decide the winner.

On the other side of the aisle, the Republicans are buoyed, striking often and hard in the aftermath. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump acolyte and ever ready with barbs, wondered on camera whether Biden should be commander in chief for the remaining six months, let alone for another full term. "The bad guys are watching, too," said Graham, raising the spectre of an axis of China, Russia, North Korea and Iran getting stronger were Biden to win a second term.

Aside from a terrible performance, Biden is faced with a fractured party, angry young voters and thinning support among Blacks and Hispanics. Polls are on knife-edge but give Trump a narrow lead in battleground states where a few thousand votes will decide the winner.

On the other side of the aisle, the Republicans are buoyed, striking often and hard in the aftermath. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump acolyte and ever ready with barbs, wondered on camera whether Biden should be commander in chief for the remaining six months, let alone for another full term. "The bad guys are watching, too," said Graham, raising the spectre of an axis of China, Russia, North Korea and Iran getting stronger were Biden to win a second term.

Aside from a terrible performance, Biden is faced with a fractured party, angry young voters and thinning support among Blacks and Hispanics. Polls are on knife-edge but give Trump a narrow lead in battleground states where a few thousand votes will decide the winner.

On the other side of the aisle, the Republicans are buoyed, striking often and hard in the aftermath. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump acolyte and ever ready with barbs, wondered on camera whether Biden should be commander in chief for the remaining six months, let alone for another full term. "The bad guys are watching, too," said Graham, raising the spectre of an axis of China, Russia, North Korea and Iran getting stronger were Biden to win a second term.

Aside from a terrible performance, Biden is faced with a fractured party, angry young voters and thinning support among Blacks and Hispanics. Polls are on knife-edge but give Trump a narrow lead in battleground states where a few thousand votes will decide the winner.

Attacker with Crossbow Killed near Israeli Embassy in Belgrade

A Serbian police officer on Saturday killed a man who shot him in the neck with a crossbow in front of the Israeli embassy in Belgrade, in what the prime minister called a "terrorist act".

Police identified the assailant as being a "convert" to Islam, who was born in 1999 in the town of Mladenovac, some 50 km from Belgrade. The attack happened around 11:00 am (0900 GMT) on Saturday morning in the Serbian capital, when the attacker shot the officer who was on duty outside the Israeli embassy.

The policeman "used a weapon in self-defence and defeated the attacker, who died as a result of his injuries", said Interior Minister Ivica Dacic. Authorities said some arrests had been made and a number of people known to the security services were suspected of being linked to the attack. Police also said they were carrying out searches in several locations.

The officer, who underwent surgery in hospital, was in his guard booth when the attack happened. According to authorities, the assailant had moved to live in Novi Pazar, which is a historical and political centre of the Bosnia



Police officers lift the body of a person, at the scene of an attack, near the Israeli embassy, in Belgrade, Serbia on Saturday Reuters

Muslim minority in Serbia, and a centre of Islam in the country.

Dacic told reporters that there were early indications connecting the attack with people suspected of being linked to the Wahhabi movement — an ultra-conservative branch of Islam that dominates in Saudi Arabia.

He said several people had been arrested for "prevention reasons" and that overall security had been stepped up in Belgrade. Special prosecutors had taken over the case, added Dacic.

Serbian Prime Minister Milos

Vucevic strongly condemned what he labelled a "heinous terrorist act". "This was an act of insanity, which cannot be attributed to any religion and any nation. It is a crime of an individual," he said, according to quotes from the Beta news agency. Vucevic said his country would firmly respond to the threat of terrorism and stressed Serbian citizens could "feel safe".

The Israeli foreign ministry called it an "attempted terrorist attack in the vicinity" of the country's embassy in Serbia. AFP

Security Concerns Rise over Paris Pride ahead of Elections

Poll favourite far-right RN has voted against laws in favour of LGBTQIA+ groups

Paris: The French interior ministry called for security reinforcement around LGBTQIA+ events ahead of elections, including Saturday's Paris Pride, in a letter to police and local authorities sent on Friday.

As France heads to the polls on Sunday for the first round of a snap parliamentary election that could bring the far-right to power, there has been an increase in discriminatory acts that could target events organized by the LGBTQIA+ community, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin's letter said. It was sent ahead of the Pride event, which is the country's largest march.

"We are on the rise. There are messages on social media calling on people to interfere with the march," president of rights group

Inter-LGBT, James Leperlier, told Reuters earlier this week. LGBTQIA+ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual, and the + symbol describes other parts of diverse sexual and gender identities.

Leperlier said that since far-right National Rally (RN) party scored big in the June 9 European elections, there has been a rise in hate speech and violent acts.

"Having the far-right so close to power legitimizes hate speech." The RN didn't immediately reply to Reuters' request for comment.

The party has previously said that it has no links to violent far-right groups. But it has voted against legislation that gives more rights to LGBTQIA+ groups, including in the European Parliament. The Inter-LGBT and other rights groups have called on people to march in numbers on Saturday to oppose far-right ideas and protect LGBTQIA+ rights.

The Paris march organisers have doubled the number of volunteers handling security according to Leperlier. Reuters



At a rally following Thursday's debate, however, US President Joe Biden came out swinging, drawing a sharp contrast with Donald Trump Reuters

Global Agreements

From Page 1

"India's growth journey is on a roll when international trade is falling," Goyal said. The minister said India's import dependence will reduce as the oil economy gets replaced with electric vehicles.

"The focus is now on plantation boards such as rubber, tea, spices and coffee, and how to increase their production, value addition and improve quality," he said.

On India's proposed free trade agreement (FTA) with the European Union, the minister said, "We are confident we will make fast progress." Commerce and industry ministry officials were in Brussels during June 24-28 for the eighth round of negotiations on the accord.

The minister also exuded confidence over progress on FTA talks with the UK, adding that he has also held discussions with the shadow trade and labour ministers of that country. General elections in the UK are set to be held on July 4, with the Labour party widely expected to defeat the ruling Conservatives.

The minister said talks are ongoing with the European Union and Group of Seven (G7) countries so their ban on indirect imports of Russian diamonds does not impact India's exports.

EU has delayed the start of the mandatory full-traceability scheme for imports of rough and polished diamonds to the bloc till March 1, 2025.

India is home to almost 90% of the world's diamond cutting and polishing business. G7 countries — the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada — are major markets for India's diamond exporters.

Building Talent Pipeline

From Page 1

Many are looking to fill as much as 70-80% of senior leadership positions internally compared with about 40-50% internal hiring 5-6 years ago, said the officials.

Anish Shah, group CEO and managing director of Mahindra Group, said, "There is more emphasis to feed leadership positions with in-house talent." "With focused initiatives on attracting best talent and nurturing leadership teams

within, we aim to provide leaders of tomorrow the right exposure and create a ready pool of high-potential talent to promote."

"We're getting to the vision of filling up 80% of the roles internally in the future," Shah said. "Through Future Shapers — which is the leadership journey for our top management, we've been able to achieve a total of 71% rotations. For example, 15 leaders have taken up larger roles in Mahindra Group companies. These leaders went on to be promoted to

handle CXO level roles." Earlier this year, Mahindra Group appointed Manoj Bhat, former Group CFO, as the MD & CEO of Mahindra Holidays & Resorts, while Amarjyoti Barua, former Executive Vice President - Group Strategy, was appointed Group CFO.

Aditya Birla Group's Director-HR Ashok Ramchandran said: "We are deeply invested in building our internal talent pipeline, across levels, including for senior management roles."

"We tend to follow a 70:30 ratio of internal to external for leadership roles. This allows us continuity within a business, diversity from within our conglomerate

and outside," said Ramchandran, one of the top internal moves. He succeeded Sanjiv Misra, who held this role till last year.

FACTORS FUELLING TREND A combination of reasons is leading to this trend including cost advantage, shorter time to hire, cultural fitment, greater acceptance, and talent retention.

"Earlier, whenever growth spurts would come, companies would go externally and hire for leadership roles. However, in the last 3-4 years as many of these large groups have grown at an unprecedented rate, the demand for leaders and

war for talent has increased," said Sandeep Bhalla, head of consulting business at Korn Ferry India.

Among other top recent moves, Naveen Tahilyani (ex-CEO of Tata AIA Life Insurance) was appointed CEO of Tata Digital; Ravindra Kumar GP (former Tata Motors) joined as CHRO Air India; and Vipul Chandra was appointed as CFO of LTI Mindtree.

One of the key reasons to groom internal talent is significant cost advantage. "Companies end up paying at least 40% higher to acquire talent from outside — which includes a one-time cost paid to the search firm and salary hike given to the external candidate," said Bhalla.

'Simplification and Strengthening'

From Page 1

Starting Sunday, Coca-Cola's bottling investments and operations will be managed through an internal board, which will oversee the performance and strategy of the bottling business.

The board will be chaired by Braun, with participation from senior executives managing global functions, including Monica Howard Douglas, Murat Ozgel, Enrique Rapetti, Tapaswee Chandele and John Murphy.

"The evolution aims to further simplify decision-making and strengthen capabilities across all markets," Braun said in the note.

In recent months, Coca-Cola has announced a series of transactions that significantly reduce the footprint of BIG, as it implements its plans to gra-

dually divest asset-heavy bottling operations to focus more on brand building, go-to-market, innovation and competitive strategy.

STRATEGIC SHIFT In January, HCCB had sold some company-owned bottling operations in the northern, eastern and north-eastern parts of the country to three of its existing franchise bottlers — Moon Beverages, SLMG Beverages and Kandhari Global Beverages. The company had said it gained \$293 million from refranchising these bottling operations. After the sell-off, HCCB has been operating 16 factories, spread mainly across western and southern India.

In 2006, Coca-Cola had brought together its company-owned bottling

operations to form Bottling Investments Group.

At the time, it had said the consolidation was aimed at ensuring those bottling operations received appropriate investments and expertise.

"By strategically investing in select bottling operations, temporarily taking them under Coca-Cola ownership, and utilising the leadership and resources of the company, BIG can drive long-term growth in critical markets and address major structural or investment challenges," the company had said at the time.



Coca-Cola will simplify decision making and strengthen capabilities across markets

NP AV

PC, Laptop
Tablet, Mobile

सुरक्षा

INTERNET
SECURITY

www.npav.net

92.72.70.70.50
98.22.88.25.66

The draft of the Digital Competition Bill, 2024, has turned the unlikely of foes into close friends and the thickest friends into perhaps industry colleagues who no longer see eye-to-eye. It is not the usual government-versus-industry cat-and-mouse fight this time though.

A narrative that started as the draft of the Digital Competition Bill (DCB) being bad for foreign-controlled big tech and therefore a good regulation for the growth of Indian companies and startups has now flipped on its head. Today, even homegrown firms have taken a stand against the draft DCB, arguing that it will hurt the digital ecosystem in the country.

On February 27, the Committee on Digital Competition Law (CDCL) submitted its report to the ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) after working on it for more than a year. The idea was to recommend laws that can control the dominance of large technology companies in the country and their impact on smaller firms and startups.

The 10-member committee suggested that an ex-ante framework must be introduced to complement the current ex-post policy approach, especially to avoid oppressive behaviour in the digital space.

The committee also recommended that companies which had a turnover of ₹4,000 crore or more for the past three financial years, global turnover of \$30 billion, or domestic gross merchandise value of at least ₹16,000 crore be classified and considered as systemically significant digital enterprises (SSDEs).

Significant additional obligations of compliance have been added to such SSDEs to "catch" them if they pursue anti-competitive and dominant behaviour.

"At present, it is not clear whether the CDCL has considered the future impact of an ex-ante law on the innovation ecosystem in India."

— Nasscom

OPPOSITE SIDES

Once these details were out and studied meticulously by public policy executives, several Indian startups realised that the proposed regulations would also hamper their growth prospects.

They teamed up with big tech companies and formed Team Blue. In their opposition to the bill, these startups called it a "ceiling to the potential scalability of businesses".

For example, the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), the largest domestic industry body representing both big tech companies and digital startups, wrote to the MCA in May, arguing that implementing a parallel ex-ante competition regulation only to regulate digital markets, while other markets continued to be governed by the Competition Act of 2002 would be "unfair" and make digital businesses "untenable".

"The criteria for designating enterprises as Systemically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDEs) are subjective, all-encompassing and self-contradictory, and could potentially cover the entirety of India's digital sector," the IAMAI said in its letter.

Friends, Foes & Fireworks

India's Digital Competition Bill has turned previous foes in the tech industry into unlikely allies and sparked a polarising debate on market practices, finds **Aashish Aryan**



Some IAMAI members, however, diverged from this stance publicly and said that the industry body's view was not reflective of the entire digital startup ecosystem or IAMAI's diverse membership of over 540 companies.

This splinter group, which includes startup executives, gaming companies and their industry groups such as the All India Gaming Federation, has now become Team Red. Overall, this group believes that the draft of the DCB is a step in the right direction to address long-standing concerns hindering the growth of young businesses.

"Look at the case which started against Google 12 years ago. It has still not found closure and is going on. Small companies do not have the

wherewithal to fight this abuse of dominance. It is important that digital competition law should become reality," Murugavel Janakiraman, CEO of Matrimony.com, told ET.

OPPOSING VIEWS

The All India Gaming Federation (AIGF), an industry body that represents more than 150 interactive entertainment startups and gaming companies, most of which are also startups or very small firms, echoed similar views.

In its submissions to the ministry of electronics and information technology's closed-door consultations held about a week ago, the AIGF said that the "ex-ante" provisions of the draft DCB were "imperative" for a fair and open digital market,

Draft DCB: A look

Provision	Possible impact
Designation of companies as SSDE may require change of product architecture, products and services available in one place may need to be accessed individually.	May hamper user interfaces, need changes to design thereby increasing costs, users may find it difficult to access services with change in UI design.
Restrictions on data use across the app especially in cases of companies being SSDEs.	Likely to hamper seamless access to products, increase unproductive time spent by users on the app, limit personalisation of services.
SSDEs must seek the consent of users if they need to access their data for any service other than what is their core digital offering.	May lead to consent fatigue, loss of user base for SSDEs, smaller companies as well.
Ex-ante reporting of combinations if base value up to ₹4,000 crore.	Will lead to increased compliance on smaller companies, and may lead to startups misreporting numbers to avoid additional compliance.

where Indian startups had equal opportunities to grow.

"However, we also believe that there is a need to relook at the thresholds for identifying SSDEs and certain language in the draft to ensure that it does not have unintended consequences for the country's thriving tech ecosystem," AIGF's chief executive officer Roland Landers said in a post on LinkedIn.

Prateek Jain, associate director for startups and alliances, ADIF, on the other hand, told ET, "The legislation strikes the right balance between promoting innovation and ensuring fair competition. This framework will empower homegrown innovators, safeguard consumer interests and foster an environment conducive to sustainable growth."

SPLITTING OPINIONS

The support and opposition to the bill hinges on several terms and conditions, with a we-will-cross-the-bridge-when-it-comes-to-that attitude, a public policy advocacy group founder told ET, asking not to be named.

"This is one of the most contentious bills where the industry itself is split. And therefore, the industry groups are also divided, depending on who runs the show in these groups," he said.

Consider, for example, the comments made by the representatives of a travel aggregator during the closed-door consultations at the IT ministry. The company supported views that the draft bill "should be passed as is without any changes."

"They, however, also asked not to paint companies of all sizes with the same brush. They proposed that a company should be classified as an SSDE only if it could cause 'significant harm' in the digital markets," a source who attended these meetings told ET.

Other public policy advocacy groups, such as The Dialogue, tech industry body Nasscom, and the CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition (CIRC) have called for a "more careful and in-depth examination of market realities".

"The need of introducing a new ex-ante law should be credibly demonstrated through extensive empirical evidence. This is particularly relevant in the Indian context. At present, it is not clear whether the CDCL has considered the future impact of an ex-ante law on the innovation ecosystem in India," Nasscom said in its submission.

Similarly, the CIRC has questioned the "timing" of the introduction of the ex-ante provision as it could be detrimental to the growth of the Indian digital ecosystem, and said that the bill is likely to overlap with existing laws such as the Information Technology Act of 2000, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023 and the Competition Act of 2002.

"The bill mentions policy overlaps but does not provide any roadmap to address the regulatory overlaps with other regulations. Inter-governmental regulatory mechanisms to set guardrails of various regulations can be initiated to address the challenges arising out of the regulatory overlap," CIRC said.

A public policy executive at a big tech firm said that there needed to be better "rationalisation of thinking" between the ministry of electronics and information technology and MCA, which is anchoring the bill.

"If you look at the regulations in the recent past, especially in the technology sector, there has been a clear and conscious government decision that India will not follow the US or the EU line on policy decisions. The draft of the DCB right now seems heavily inspired by the EU's DMA (Digital Markets Act)," the executive said.

However, almost all public policy executives that ET reached out to said that ex-ante or not, the government should conduct more consultations.

"We feel that at this stage of the digital economy... widespread adoption of an ex-ante framework should be carefully studied, given that other jurisdictions like Australia are conducting a five-year inquiry on competition and consumer issues of digital platforms," TV Ramachandran, president of Broadband India Forum, told ET.

Sustainability agenda for tech firms should be driven from top

Annapurna Roy

In their quest to be environmentally sustainable and increase their pace of de-carbonisation, tech companies in India must execute a multi-phase transformation programme, which involves their top leadership.

They must also accurately measure the impact of work done and have proper communication with stakeholders, industry body Nasscom has suggested.

"As the shift from awareness to action in sustainability grows, it is evident that the success of decarbonisation efforts relies on more than just resources — it demands leadership commitment, operational integration and effective communication."

— Sangeeta Gupta, chief strategy officer, Nasscom

In a survey of 40 tech companies, including Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Tech Mahindra, Happiest Minds, HCLTech, SAP Labs and others, Nasscom found that reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions remained the top priority for all companies.

Conservation of water also figures high on the to-do list to achieve sustainability goals and most tech companies have implemented measures that have helped them meet these targets. These companies are now working with non-government organisations to execute water conservation projects in local communities near their office locations.

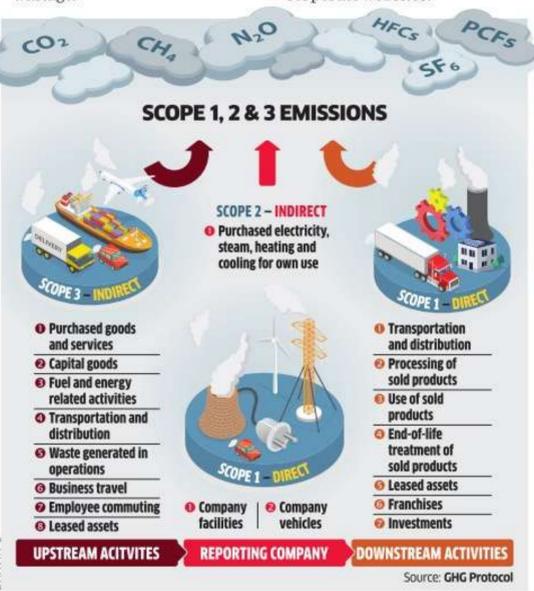
WHAT ARE COMPANIES DOING RIGHT?

- Conserving energy by:**
 - Adjusting heating, ventilation and air-condition temperatures.
 - Using LED lights and sensor-based lighting.
 - Pushing employees to keep devices in sleep mode when not in use.
- Saving water by:**
 - Installing flow restrictors in office taps, using low-flush toilets.
 - Using proximity sensors in wash-room, wash-basin taps.
 - Placing drinking water jars and dispensers instead of bottles.
- Minimising wastage by:**
 - Sensitising employees about food wastage.

- Minimising paper usage in cafeteria and restrooms.
- Investing more in re-usable ceramic mugs, glasses.

BEING ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE: NASSCOM SUGGESTS

- Involve chief executive officer, chief operations officer in interactions on sustainability.
- Push employees to participate in sustainability programs.
- Explore partnerships with academia, research institutes, think-tanks, startups.
- Ensure all sustainability points and data points are updated on corporate websites.



KEY DATA POINTS

95 per cent have a specific sustainability vision/mission statement or have incorporated sustainability in the organisation's existing statements.

1/3rd of respondents have 50 per cent or more of their India operations powered by renewable energy.

43 per cent of the respondents have linked their CXO performance with the company's sustainability targets/achievements.

73 per cent have conducted a risk assessment involving climate change factors.

70 per cent of respondents have set greenhouse gas reduction targets but just half of these have validated them with SBTi (Science-Based Targets Initiative).

Source: Sustainability Playbook for the Tech Industry by Nasscom

AI: The supercharger for India's MSMEs

Artificial intelligence is not only reshaping India's landscape, but also fostering economic growth through innovative tech solutions



SANDHYA DEVANATHAN

The promise of artificial intelligence (AI) as a powerful force multiplier for small businesses is no longer a pipe dream. It is already beginning to level the playing field and is enabling emerging businesses from across India to compete more effectively.

According to Stanford University's annual AI Index report, India saw the fifth highest investments last year in startups offering AI-based products and services. As India's techade takes shape, AI could prove to be one of the most game-changing technologies propelling growth for the nation's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Over 63 million MSMEs contribute to roughly one-third of the nation's (gross domestic product) GDP, about 45 per cent of the manufacturing output and over 40 per cent of both direct and indirect exports. Given their pivotal role in driving equitable economic development, AI-enabled growth of MSMEs will have a cascading impact on the economy.

SKILL DEFICIT

On the occasion of World MSME Day, NASSCOM and Meta released a white paper on using AI to unlock the next phase of growth for India's

MSMEs: Across five workshops that NASSCOM held with more than 300 MSMEs, a resounding 94 per cent of MSMEs acknowledged the transformative potential of AI for business growth, and 87 per cent expressed confidence in its ability to enhance overall productivity.

While these businesses are keen on AI-led tech upgrades, 65 per cent of MSMEs surveyed said they lack awareness about the deployment of AI tools and resources. More than half of surveyed MSMEs also struggle with a shortage of technical expertise necessary for implementing AI solutions.

This skills deficit hampers their ability to fully utilise these advanced technologies, as they often lack the in-house capabilities to develop, integrate and manage AI systems or even simple AI tools.

It is no surprise that 91 per cent, as per the report, advocate for accessible and affordable AI technologies, underscoring the demand for easy-to-use AI tools.

EASY ACCESS Generative AI tools such as image generation can enable businesses of all sizes to create multiple ad creatives at the click of a button, without spending large sums.

For example, imagine the owner of a local food catering business needs an ad creative. In the past, the prospect of having to hire an outside expert and waiting days for them to design a few suitable options might have seemed prohibitive for an MSME.

A generative AI tool, on the other hand, is able to illustrate steaming plates of food, and varied cuisines, as well as provide various alternatives for stylishly laid out tables and appealing combinations of dishes all within seconds.

COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Another strong use case for AI and Generative AI can be seen within business messaging. Where it could take days to respond to customer queries, bots and assistants on messaging platforms are now doing that in seconds. This is crucial for small enterprises for whom the value of each lead is that much more critical.

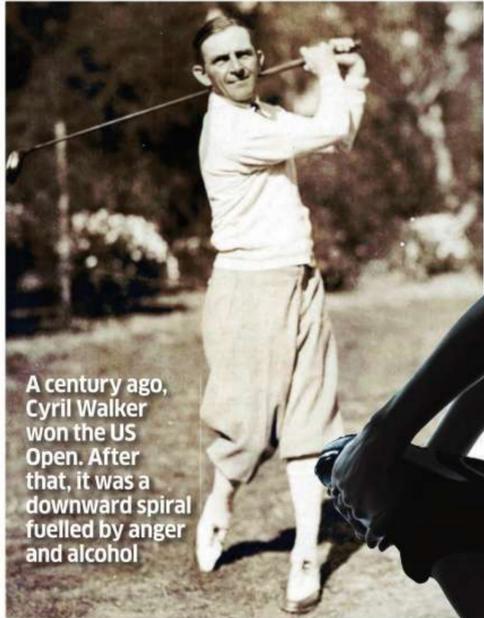
Generative AI presents a massive opportunity for MSMEs to gain traction by strategically adopting these technologies and setting the stage for early success and valuable learnings triggering meaningful transformation in the years to come.

Collaborative initiatives will cultivate an environment that ushers AI enablement into the MSME ecosystem. By facilitating synergy between industry leaders, policymakers and technology providers, we can empower MSMEs to harness the transformative potential of AI tools and technologies.

This collaborative approach on AI will equip MSMEs to navigate obstacles and unlock sustainable business growth via innovation to make this techade an MSME-powered one.

The author is vice-president (India) at Meta. All views expressed are personal

The Golf Champ Who Ended Up Penniless and Died in Prison



A century ago, Cyril Walker won the US Open. After that, it was a downward spiral fuelled by anger and alcohol

The course that greeted Cyril Walker a century ago for the US Open was a beast, the longest yet in the history of the national championship, and upon seeing it, the diminutive Englishman predicted that the winner would be "a big fellow with the physical strength to stand the strain". It turned out to be a man so slight a stiff breeze seemed as if it would blow him over.

Over four rounds played across two brutal days at Oakland Hills, US, the unsung Walker bested defending champion Bobby Jones. It was the pinnacle of his career, if not his life, because what followed was a downward spiral fuelled by anger and alcohol. It ended in a New Jersey jail cell, where the penniless former pro had sought refuge from the rain and cold, only to be found the next morning dead from pneumonia.

AN UNEXPECTED CHAMPION

Walker was born in Manchester, England, in 1892, and the few records left describe a typical youngster: He was drawn to cricket and soccer, and he played both well. How he found golf was by sheer happenstance: One day, the 11-year-old wandered through a gate looking for a lost ball and found himself on the grounds of the Clayton Golf Club.



In the stock market crash of 1929, Walker lost almost everything. He slipped into irrelevance

He began caddying for sixpence a round and used the money to buy some clubs, and soon was among the best players around.

After leaving school, Walker began clerking at a brokerage firm. But against his father's wishes, he decided to become a golf pro. He spent his days at Hoylake, repairing golf clubs before emigrating to the US, where a letter of recommendation from US amateur champion Jerry Travers helped him land his first job.

'CRACKING A WHIP'

Walker was slight; five-foot-six and 118 pounds. But the famed sports writer Grantland Rice described his swing as if he was "cracking a whip". He won the Indiana Open and Pennsylvania Open, and in 1921, finished 13th in the US Open and made the semi-finals of the PGA.

Walker wasn't even sure he was

going to play the US Open in 1924. He was on vacation in Michigan and decided, almost on a lark, to enter the tournament. He had been playing well and was feeling confident, telling his soon-to-be estranged wife Elizabeth that he would win, despite saying publicly, "It's too much for me. The course is too big."

Walker went on to hoist the US Open championship trophy, which would later be held aloft by the likes of Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Tiger Woods.

THE STRUGGLE

Walker earned a gold medal and \$500 for the triumph, but he would make much more money. He played lucrative exhibitions with Bobby Cruickshank, endorsed 'Correct Golf Grips' and wrote a syndicated newspaper column that offered advice, even though he loathed fans for being noisy and distracting.

Most disliked the combustible Walker in return. He played so slowly that fellow pros flatly refused to play with him. Then in 1929, the stock market crashed, and Walker lost almost everything. He slipped into irrelevance.

CHAMP TO CADDY

By the time a reporter found Walker years later, the fortune of about \$150,000 that he amassed after the US Open — about \$2.75 million these days — was gone. Walker was caddying in Miami, where a man who once dressed smartly in a vest and linen plus-fours was wearing the same ratty turtleneck every day because it was the only shirt he owned.

On good days, Walker paid 25 cents to stay in a Salvation Army home. On bad days, he slept on a park bench.

Walker eventually moved to New Jersey, close to where he once served as the club pro at Englewood Country Club. He spent his last years trying to make ends meet as a dishwasher at a diner. Whatever money was left over after paying for room and board at the local YMCA, was often squandered on alcohol.

One rainy night in 1948, Walker walked into a Hackensack police station. He asked the sergeant, Ralph Pinot, if he could sleep in a jail cell to escape the cold. He still had a slightly crooked smile, but otherwise little was left of the US Open champion.

The next morning, officers found Walker slumped over on a chair. The official cause of death was pneumonia and he was buried in a potter's field, where no gravestone was left to mark his body. He was 55 years old.

— AP

People lose bone mass or density as they age. But a few simple workouts can help keep you strong and resilient

Lovely Bones

The New York Times

You don't have to run marathons or lift heavy weights

to protect your bones. Simply adding a few strategic exercises to your routine can support them — now and in the future.

"People think of bone as this static thing," said Dr Andrea Singer, the chief medical officer of the Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation, US. But "it's a living, dynamic organ that is constantly remodelling".

As with your muscles, the more you strategically stress your bones with exercise, the stronger they become, she said.

Everyone's bones weaken with age, but 80 per cent of Americans with osteoporosis are women, and half of women older than 50 will break a bone because of the disease. Women reach their peak bone density in their early 20s. The biggest decline happens in the five to seven years following menopause, when levels of estrogen, which help to keep bones robust, plummet.

The earlier in your life you start building bone strength, the better — but it's also never too late, experts said. If you have already been

Resistance training strengthens your bones in addition to your muscles — which, in turn, strengthen your bones more by putting additional force on them, say experts



diagnosed with low bone density, if you've fractured bones in the past or if you have osteoporosis, speak to your doctor about the best workout plan.

FOR CARDIO, GRAVITY IS YOUR FRIEND

While most exercise is good for your bones, workouts that require your body to support its own weight are especially effective for bone strength, experts said. This helps explain why astronauts' bones weaken in space and why they spend two hours a day exercising.

"Bone is very, very adaptive," said Rebekah Rotstein, a Pilates instructor. "It responds to external forces by getting stronger, and the lack of force will weaken it."

If you're new to aerobic exercise, or getting back into the swing of it — or if you've already been diagnosed with low bone density — start by walking, said Dr Mary O'Connor, emerita professor of orthopaedics at US-based the Mayo Clinic and the chief medical officer for the telehealth company Vori Health. Carrying hand weights can help strengthen the bones in your upper body as well.

If you work out regularly and haven't been diagnosed with low bone density, cardio that puts more force on your body is ideal for preserving or strengthening bone. Running and jumping exercises (for example, box jumps or jumping jacks) are good options. Workouts that involve moving in multiple directions — think dance, tennis or pickleball — are even better.

"Surprising your body with new movements, in different directions, has a better effect in building bone than doing hours and hours of repetitive activity," said Dr Kathryn Ackerman, an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, US, who studies bone health.

If your bones are already fragile, high-impact exercises may put you at greater risk of fracture, "because they're putting more stress on the bone", O'Connor said. So, speak with your doctor about what your body can handle.

Regularity is also key, since bones must be stressed constantly to stay strong. Rather than stacking workouts on the weekends, do roughly

30 minutes of daily weight-bearing cardio to support bone health.

BUILD MUSCLE

Resistance training strengthens your bones in addition to your muscles — which, in turn, strengthen your bones more by putting additional force on them, experts said.

"We used to be really nervous about older women, in particular, and having them do too much" or lift too much, Ackerman said. "We did them a little disservice because they got nervous to move, because they thought they would break."

Rotstein recommends regular squats, hip hinges, lunges, calf raises, planks and push-ups — pay extra attention to form, so that your joints and bones are in proper alignment.

These exercises strengthen the muscles that are essential for daily activities, Rotstein said, including sitting and standing, bending to pick up objects and reaching for items on a shelf.

Consider free weights or machines as well, Ackerman said, but start slow. As you age, these activities can lead to fractures.

BOOST YOUR BALANCE

A well-rounded bone health workout should also include exercises designed to keep you stable on your feet. This can help to prevent falls, which can be particularly devastating to your bones as you age, Ackerman said.

Single-leg balances, weight shifts, Pilates and yoga are all helpful for cultivating balance, experts said. And research suggests tai chi may be particularly effective.

AVOID BENDING AND TWISTING

Finally, if you've already been diagnosed with osteoporosis, avoid movements that involve bending all the way forward from the waist and quick twists. "Most hip fractures in older, osteoporotic women — what we would call fragility hip fractures — happen before the fall," O'Connor said. "So, someone stands, they turn, their hip breaks, and they fall."

"Our bones are weakest in torsion," she added.

But don't let fear discourage you, she said. With a few precautions, staying active now will keep you active for years to come.

Three Defining Brat Pack Movies

The New York Times

The 1980s: When the hair was crimped, the pants were parachute and the movie stars were as fresh-faced as could be. The decade produced a surprising volume of hit coming-of-age movies, featuring actors often in their late teens and early 20s. Some of these charismatic stars would come to be known as the Brat Pack, a term coined by writer David Blum in a 1985 *New York Magazine* article about the youth movie phenomenon.

At the time, the stars who were considered a part of the Brat Pack were offended by the term, one that seemed dismissive of their work and painted them as careless and unprofessional. Actor Andrew McCarthy had been grappling for decades with how the term changed the trajectory of his career, and he recently made a documentary about it.

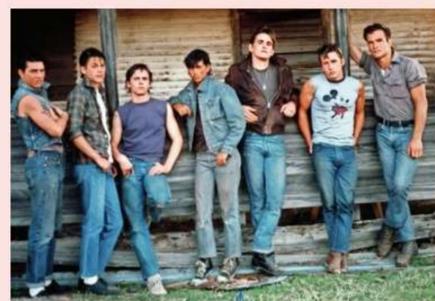
Despite the negative connotations of the term, the Brat Pack movies did define a generation. Here's a look at three defining films:

THE BREAKFAST CLUB (1985)

Detention has never been as fascinating as it is in this John Hughes classic, about



five archetypal students forced to endure a Saturday together in the school library: The brain (Anthony Michael Hall), the athlete (Estevez), the basket case (Ally Sheedy), the princess (Molly Ringwald) and the criminal (Judd Nelson). They trade jabs, laugh, cry and share personal stories that allow them to see one another as individuals rather than as the convenient labels placed on them. It continues to be a



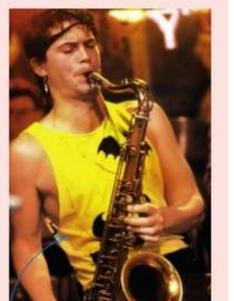
kind of guidebook on how to endure as a teenager, especially when under pressure to act or present oneself in a certain way.

THE OUTSIDERS (1983)

Francis Ford Coppola's film adaptation of the 1967 SE Hinton novel is, in many ways, the godfather of the Brat Pack movies. Its ensemble cast includes actors who would become some of the biggest stars of the decade: Rob Lowe, Matt Dillon, Patrick Swayze, Emilio Estevez and a little-known performer named Tom Cruise. The Tulsa, Oklahoma-set film features C

Thomas Howell and Ralph Macchio as two "greasers" with tough backgrounds who find themselves in hot water after a tussle with wealthy "socs", short for "socials".

It's a joy to watch all of these stars at the beginnings of their careers, navigating a story that Coppola punctuates with Hollywood flourishes that imbue some John Ford Western energy into the mix. Even though many of these characters have never left Oklahoma, they seem to be carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders. The film gives teen alienation a bold canvas on which to be explored.



ST ELMO'S FIRE (1985)

This film, directed by Joel Schumacher, is another Brat Pack movie that sparks because of its eager ensemble cast. What makes it so interesting is that its young characters are trying hard for a level of responsibility. But they keep tripping over their flaws of immaturity in the process.

Lowe, McCarthy, Nelson, Estevez and Sheedy are all in the mix, but one of the standouts is Demi Moore. She really glows here as the character Jules, whose outgoing personality and garishness mask some deep psychological wounds.

Pakiza and the Simple Pleasures of a Plate of Curry-Rice

FOOD FABLES



VIKRAM DOCTOR

It's easy to miss Pakiza in Panjim. It's in Fontainhas, recently included in a list of the world's prettiest neighbourhoods. Which means you can barely move for all the influencers making reels and tourists looking for cute places for a drink. This modest restaurant in a side-lane can be hard to spot.

Pakiza, which seems to be run by multiple generations of women, is worth finding. It has been supplying simple, deli-

cious food to Panjim residents for ages, and appears to find no reason to change, despite the tourist invasion. As a result, its menu is a snapshot of a stage of development that the more ambitious places have left behind.

As repeated food surveys show, biryani tops Indian food preferences — even in the face of attempts by some politicians to undermine this choice by tying it, disparagingly, to a particular community. Pakiza serves vegetarian and non-vegetarian biryanis, but also *anda* biryani. This is an option many biryani sellers drop because it isn't acceptable to strict vegetarians, but also not meaty enough for committed non-vegetarians. Yet, beyond this binary, it's delicious and affordable, especially when made with fried eggs as Pakiza does.

Pakiza also offers an even more affordable option — plain biryani rice, without meat pieces. This is how many people started eating biryani, and still do, dished up from giant handis and eaten while standing in the street. You get the rice, which



To justify overheads and customer expectations, especially in more affluent areas like Fontainhas, restaurants are expanding from simple rice-plates to a more extravagant thali model

many Indians find imperative for stomach-filling satisfaction, with a flavour of the meat that many want but can't afford.

The non-rice equivalent of this is a plate of plain gravy, to be eaten with roti, also

available at Pakiza. Again, this is how millions of people still fill their stomachs across India, but increasingly rarely in sit-down restaurants, even really simple ones like Pakiza. To justify overheads

and customer expectations, especially in more affluent areas like Fontainhas (or Goa, in general), restaurants are moving to expand their offerings.

This means a move from a rice-plate to thali model. Instead of the basics of rice, gravy and maybe one *bhaji*, you now need more options. In Goa, this has got systematised into rice, curry or dal, dry *bhaji*, sweet, pickle, salad, *solkadi* (a digestive drink flavoured with *kokum*) and one showpiece item like a piece of fried fish. This is the model now available across the state, and while standards vary, you rarely get a bad one.

How this selection has evolved is a mystery, especially the salad, which is often just chopped cabbage and left untouched by many. But the elements have become almost sacrosanct. You can't serve less, but you can serve more, and this is the next stage of development. To stand out amid all the Goan fish thalis, restaurants are expanding into what are called, variously, *Bhatkar* (landlord), *Ravan* or *Maharaja*

thalis, which add on many more fish, chicken, sweets and other items.

These mega-thalis are monuments to excess, but they find takers, especially among tourists. Sometimes people attempt to eat the whole thing themselves, but more rationally, these mega-thalis are shared. At which point something curious happens. The thali takes its essential form from the aversion to contamination by touch which runs deep in many Indian communities. Instead of sharing food from common dishes, in the Western style, the thali provides a safely individualised meal.

But when people start sharing from one thali, it becomes its opposite — the *thali*, where many people eat from one very large plate, in a perhaps deliberate declaration of equality and connection.

It's unlikely that people sharing a mega-thali think explicitly in these terms, but these changes in how we eat are happening across India and show how our food habits are always in flux. There is neither right or wrong in this, but it does help one appreciate places like Pakiza, which still allow you the simple satisfaction of a plate of curry and rice.

VITALS

T20 World Cup Closes Gap on ODI World Cup: Survey
MOST IMPORTANT ICC EVENT?

Year	WTC	ODI WC	T20 WC
2019	NA	85%	15%
2024	15%	50%	35%

WHAT UNDER 26 PLAYERS PREFER

Year	WTC	ODI WC	T20 WC
2019	NA	86%	14%
2024	10%	49%	41%

MOST IMPORTANT FORMAT

Year	Test	ODI	T20
2019	82%	7%	11%
2024	48%	22%	30%

Survey conducted by the World Cricketers Association (WCA), formerly FICA. It included responses from around 330 professional players from 13 different countries. Majority of respondents were current international players. Higher proportion of female respondents in 2024. Players from India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan were not represented as they are not unionised.



WOMEN'S TEST

India Posts Record Total, South Africa Fight Back
 India posted the biggest ever total in the history of women's Test cricket by scoring a mammoth 603 for 6 declared before South Africa Women fought valiantly through Sune Luss and Marizanne Kapp on day two of the one-off Test in Chennai on Saturday. The hosts resumed the day at the overnight score of 525 for 4 with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Richa Ghosh scoring fifties and added 143 runs for the fifth wicket. South Africa put up a spirited fight to finish the day at 236 for 4, trailing by 367 runs. **PTI BRIEF SCORES** India 603 for 6d (Shafali 205, Mandhana 149, Richa 86, Harmanpreet 69; Tucker 2/141) lead South Africa 236 for 4 (Kapp 69 batting, Luus 65; Rana 3/61) by 367 runs at stumps on Day 2

603 for 6d India's total against South Africa is the highest in women's Test cricket, bettering the 575 for 9 dec by Australia against Russia earlier this year

Russian Judokas to Boycott Paris Olympics

The judo competition at next month's Paris Olympics will not feature any Russians after the national federation announced a boycott of the Games over "humiliating conditions" set by the International Olympic Committee. The IOC on Friday gave the green light for participation in Paris to just four Russian judokas out of 17 who had met Olympic qualifying standard across 14 categories. "The Russian national team will not accept these humiliating conditions," it said, adding that the IOC's announcement hurt the credibility of the Olympic movement. **AFP**

AUSTRIAN GP

Verstappen Gets Third Sprint Win of the Season
 Red Bull's Max Verstappen held off a lively early challenge from McLaren to win the Austrian Grand Prix sprint race from pole position on Saturday and stretch his Formula One lead to 71 points. Australian Oscar Piastri finished second, 4.616 seconds behind, with McLaren team mate Lando Norris, Verstappen's closest championship rival, ending up third after starting on the front row. Norris passed Verstappen going into turn three on the fifth of 23 laps but could not hold the advantage and lost out to both drivers at turn four.

"That was spicy, wasn't it," said Verstappen over the team radio after taking the chequered flag for his third sprint win out of three this season and fifth in a row. **Reuters**



Carlos Alcaraz is the defending Wimbledon champion and owner of 3 Grand Slam titles at the age of 21

Most Wimbledon Titles (Open Era)

MEN'S	
ROGER FEDERER	8
PETE SAMPRAS	7
NOAK DJOKOVIC	7
BJORN BORG	5

Why aren't England's Riches Paying Off?

Matthew Brooker

The Three Lions may be suffering from too much talent. The solution? Don't worry, be happy

There's a rich literature on the lessons business can learn from sport, a controlled competitive environment that can serve as a laboratory for ideas on leadership styles, motivational culture and decision-making processes. Alex Ferguson's career as Manchester United manager was even the subject of a Harvard Business School case study a dozen years ago. Perhaps management theory can return the favour and explain why England's performances at the Euro 2024 have been so dismal.

It's a conundrum. England entered the tournament as one of the favourites with bookmakers. Under manager Gareth Southgate, who took over in 2016, the team has enjoyed its most successful period since winning the World Cup in 1966. England reached the World Cup semi-finals in 2018 and the final of Euro 2020 (played in 2021), the first time in six decades they had gone that far in a major tournament. In the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, England lost narrowly to holders France in the quarter-finals.

Yet the team's performances in the first round have been greeted with almost universal disappointment. Despite topping their group with one win and two draws to progress to the round of 16 — where England will play Slovakia on Sunday — the style of play has been condemned by pundits and former

What makes the situation more perplexing is that England entered the tournament with the strongest array of talent it has amassed in recent memory

players as shapeless, overly defensive and lacking in energy. BBC presenter and former England striker Gary Lineker, who won the "golden boot" at the 1986 World Cup, described England's performance in the 1-1 draw with Denmark as "s***," drawing a rebuke from the team's captain, Harry Kane, who is the country's all-time top scorer.

What makes the situation more perplexing is that England entered the tournament with the strongest array of talent they have amassed in recent memory. Kane has just had his best-ever season, scoring 44 goals in 45 games after moving to Bayern Munich in Germany last summer. Since the 2022 World Cup, Jude Bellingham has established himself as one of the world's brightest young superstars, becoming at age 20 the linchpin of a Real Madrid side that last season won La Liga and the Champions League. Back home in the Premier League, 22-year-old Cole Palmer at Chelsea and 19-year-old Kobbie Mainoo at Man United broke through to become two of the players of the season, leading a clutch of young players challenging England's first-team regulars for places.

Kane, Bellingham, Arsenal's Bukayo Saka and Manchester City's Phil Foden are all valued at more than \$100 million, and earn the equivalent of more than \$250,000 a week. The English Premier League, where the bulk of the squad plays, is the richest and most-watched domestic football competition in the world. How can a team featuring so many multimillionaire star athletes underwhelm so badly?

"The too-much-talent effect suggests that in team sports such as football where interdependence is key, too much talent can impair performance," says Martin Kilduff, a professor of organisational behaviour at University College London, whose research has included studying coaches' careers in the US National Football League. "Teams with too many dominant individuals produce disputes over within-group authority and status that ultimately undermine performance."

Perhaps the biggest issue isn't tactics or an excess of talent, but something simpler: the burden of expectations. The 1966 World Cup win and the country's status as the birthplace of the modern game gave English supporters the unrealistic view that the national team would always be a contender for tournament glory. This was a lot of weight for successive generations of footballers to carry. A 2018 study in the Academy of Management Journal found that when tennis players with high external performance expectations encounter early setbacks, they may be less likely to persist than those with low expectations.

The study doesn't offer a solution, so this armchair pundit will: Care less. Have more fun. Football careers are short, and the high points pass quickly; so don't waste time worrying. England are still in the tournament, and the team may yet click. It's all still to play for. **Bloomberg**



FACE-OFF
 England v Slovakia
 9:30pm Sony Ten & Sony LIV

FORM
 D D W L W D L W W W

HEAD TO HEAD
 ENG 5 SLO 0 Draw 1

England's Kyle Walker injured his nose against Denmark

Yamal Passes Spanish Test, Georgian One Awaits

16-year-old striker clears his school exam ahead of La Roja's last 16 clash with Georgia

Spain are focussed on defeating debutants Georgia on Sunday to reach the Euro 2024 quarter-finals and so is their 16-year-old starlet Lamine Yamal after receiving some good news to clear his head.

Before La Roja tackle their last 16 assignment in Cologne Yamal discovered he had passed his own — the country's compulsory

100% RECORD
 Spainaced their "group of death" examination, overcoming Croatia, Italy and Albania to finish the opening phase with a 100 percent record and three clean sheets. No other team managed either feat and after Spain came into the tournament without the favourites tag worn by France and England, now many are starting to believe in La Roja.

"Everything we've done in the group phase serves for nothing if on Sunday they knock us out," warned Yamal. "We have played against them before, but we know that it won't be the same game."

Spain thrashed Georgia 7-1 in Euros qualifying in September 2023, in a match where Yamal became both the country's youngest ever player and goalscorer at barely 16.

If the Barcelona winger, who turns 17 on July 13, the day before the Euros final, manages to find the net against Georgia or any prospective future rounds, he will become the youngest goalscorer in Euros history.

NEW APPROACH
 The record is currently held by Switzerland's Johan Vonlanthen, who scored at 18 in 2004, whisking it away from England's Wayne Rooney just four days after he had claimed it.

Joint record three-time winners Spain dominated international football between their 2008 and 2012 Euro triumphs, playing possession football and dominating their opponents with the ball.

In the years since they continued to attempt the same but the world had grown used to it and Spain struggled badly.

As recently as the 2022 World Cup Spain enjoyed high possession but badly lacked cutting edge in attack, which with Yamal and his left wing counterpart Nico Williams, now they have in abundance. "When you have wingers like that, it makes the other team worry about them," Spain defend-

er Alejandro Grimaldo told AFP.

"They create you advantages in every moment because in one-on-one battles they are unstoppable. They give the national team this ability to be direct and put a fear factor into any attack."

With the daring duo in the side, under coach Luis de la Fuente Spain have not kept the ball as much. They have the 10th most possession on average at the tournament.

Against Croatia in their 3-0 group stage victory, Spain had less than 50 percent possession, for the first time in 16 years.

It mattered not as they split their opponents open, with Yamal's

FACE-OFF
 Spain v Georgia
 12:30am Sony Ten & Sony LIV

FORM
 W W W W W W D L W W

HEAD TO HEAD
 ESP 6 GEO 1 Draw 0

Everything we've done in the group phase serves for nothing if on Sunday they knock us out. We have played against them before, but we know that it won't be the same game

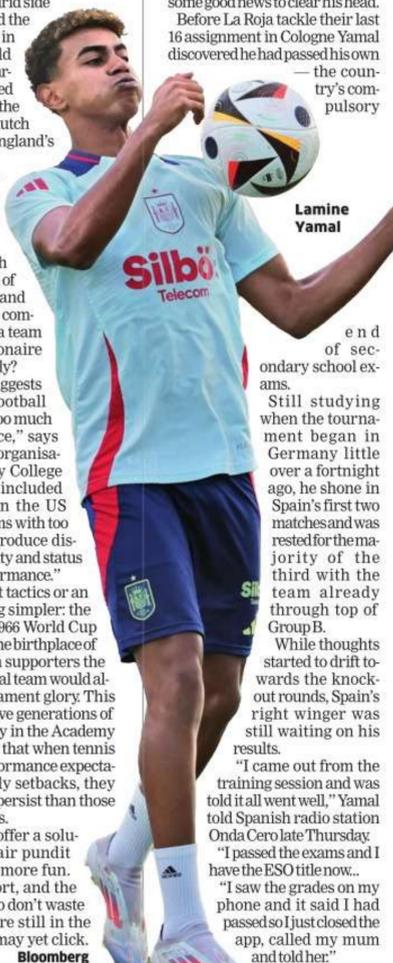
LAMINE YAMAL said ahead of the game against Georgia

peach of a cross creating the third goal for Dani Carvajal.

Yamal's ascension has been so quick and impressive that his more established peers are stunned by it. "I'll report him to the police after 14 July. Let him help us win it first," Yamal's Barcelona and Spain team-mate, Ferran Torres told the Guardian.

Should Spain progress to the quarter-finals they could face hosts Germany, which would be arguably the biggest game of Yamal's career to date, a career that started at 15 when he made his Barcelona debut.

The youngster has risen to meet every challenge in his path thus far, be it mathematics and history, which he admitted are the hardest school subjects, or elite defenders on football's biggest stages. **AFP**



Lamine Yamal

Migrants Breathe Life into Copa

Expats are flocking to stadiums from all corners of the US to support their native teams



(Clockwise from left) Yellow-clad Colombia fans, green-shirted Mexico supporters and Venezuelan fans bedecked in burgundy **AFP/USA Today**

Moisés Ávila

Whether it's a sea of yellow-clad Colombia fans, multitudes of green-shirted Mexico supporters or hordes of Venezuelan spectators bedecked in burgundy migrant fans are providing a raucous, passionate backdrop to the on-field action at the Copa America.

For only the second time in history, South America's continental championship is being held at venues across the United States this year, offering a taste of what North America can expect when the 2026 World Cup is staged in the region in two years' time.

Gleaming, state-of-the-art stadia mostly used to the violent, bone-crunching collisions of the NFL, are instead pulsing to the rhythms of the beautiful game, with migrant fans an integral part of the spectacle.

At an eve-of-tournament warm-up game at the Maryland home of the Washington Commanders NFL team, Colombian fans turned a friendly against the US into a virtual home fixture, roaring on 'Los Cafeteros' to a 5-1 thrashing of the Copa America hosts.

Those kinds of scenes have been replicated across the group phase of the Copa America, with migrant spectators flocking to venues from all corners of the United States. "Thousands of compatriots who have arrived tell me. I come from Florida, I come from New York, Atlanta,

Everyone can be united through football. These types of events help us to have hope

ALEJANDRO QUINTERO a Colombian fan

from everywhere," said Alejandro Quintero, 48, a Colombian fan who has lived in North Carolina for three years. "Everyone can be united through football," added Quintero, who has sought asylum in the US due to security issues in his homeland. "These types of events help us to have hope."

In addition to the 10 teams from South America who usually take part in the Copa America, this year's tournament has been expanded to include six teams from the CONCACAF region — North America, Central America and the Caribbean.

Many of the Latin American CONCACAF teams can draw on large pools of support from migrant fans that span several generations in the United States. "I have lived in Houston for two years. Latin Americans put more emotion into Copa America matches," said Alex Angulo, a 39-year-old Colombian who lives in the US with his wife and two of his children.

Angulo is part of a Hispanic population in the United States estimated at around 63.7 million according to 2022 figures, or 19.1% of the total population.

For those involved in club football in the United States, the strong migrant support for Copa America teams comes as little surprise. Major League Soccer executive Alfonso Mondelo says the league's growing attendances have been driven by migrant populations.

"The growth of fans in recent years has been incredible and unparalleled in the history of football in this country," he told AFP. "This has a lot to do with the Latin community, which embraces football as part of its culture."

"At least a third of the fans in (MLS) stadiums are of Latin origin. American fans see that atmosphere of partying, of fun and want to be part of it." **AFP**

Vinicius Unleashed

Winger scores twice in Brazil's 4-1 win against Paraguay

Fernando Kallas

He played an almost perfect match. He was dynamic, very effective and straightforward and direct

DORIVAL JR., Brazil coach praises Vinicius Jr

Vinicius Jr unleashed his inner beast in a little over 45 minutes of pure Brazilian football mayhem to guide the five-time World Cup champions to their first 2024 Copa America win against Paraguay on Friday.

The 23-year-old electric winger scored twice and delivered a much-needed statement performance that Brazilian fans have long been waiting for. The Real Madrid rising star may be one of the best players in the world but until now that fiery spark has not been seen in his national team performances.

Even in Brazil's Copa America opener this year — a goalless draw against Costa Rica — Vinicius ended up being substituted halfway through the second half after not managing a single scoring attempt. After that, Brazil manager Dorival Jr changed tack and that decision paid back in a major way.

Instead of being deployed as more of

an orthodox winger wide on the left against Costa Rica, Dorival gave Vinicius the freedom to roam across the front line on Friday against Paraguay and fans were shown why he is a strong contender to win the Ballon d'Or after guiding Real to a La Liga-Champions League double.

After their disappointing opener, Brazil were initially struggling against another defensive opponent and almost lost their composure when Lucas Paqueta badly missed a penalty halfway through the first half.

But instead, they were rescued by Vinicius, who took charge and was all over the field, striking twice and creating another chance that allowed Savinho to score, helping Brazil to go to the break with a comfortable 3-0 lead.

That was more than enough for a Brazil that were playing under huge pressure with the hopes of 215 million compatriots on their shoulders. **Reuters**



WATCHOUT! Tomorrow
 Jamaica v Venezuela 5:30am
 Mexico v Ecuador 5:30am

Tennis' Youth Movement is Here

Wimbledon 2024 Alcaraz and Sinner, Swiatek and Gauff are taking over tennis

Howard Fendrich

There is a real shift happening at the top of tennis, a youth movement that long seemed inevitable but never actually arrived until now.

As the sport's attention shifts to the grass of Wimbledon, where play begins Monday, Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff are the players whose names are on everyone's lips.

Alcaraz is the defending men's champion and owner of three Grand Slam titles at the age of 21 after his triumph at the French Open. Sinner, 22, is the top-seeded man at Wimbledon and won the Australian Open in January. Swiatek, 23, is the top-seeded woman and just earned her fourth championship at Roland Garros and fifth major overall. Gauff, the youngest of the bunch at 20, is ranked a career-best No. 2, has reached at least the semifinals at the past three Slam tournaments and won her first such trophy at last year's US Open.

Total prize money at Wimbledon 2024 is rising to a record \$54 million (about \$64 million) — an increase of nearly 12% from last year. The singles champions will receive £2.7 million pounds each (about \$3.45 million)

At No. 1 in the women's game, and is now 11-1 against Gauff, neither has been past the quarterfinals at Wimbledon, and there is a much more closely contested and intriguing rivalry developing between Alcaraz and Sinner (Alcaraz leads 5-4 after winning their semifinal at the French Open in five sets). Then there's this: For so long, people won-

dered when the men's game would evolve from the extended dominance of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, owners of a combined 66 majors, and that trio would cede space to others.

That time, it seems, is now — and Alcaraz and Sinner are beginning to separate themselves from the rest.

"These two guys will win many, many Grand Slams. How many? That's the question. Of course, they will be the best for 10 years, I imagine — Alcaraz and Sinner. I have no doubt about it," said Richard Gasquet, a three-time major semifinalist, including twice at Wimbledon. "The new generation is coming."

Gasquet, a 38-year-old Frenchman who got to No. 7 in the rankings, knows all too well the difficulties of being a professional tennis player during the era of the so-called Big Three of men's tennis. The opponents in his three losses in Grand Slam semifinals: Federer, Nadal and Djokovic, once each.

But Federer, now 42, played the last match of his 20-Slam trophy career in 2021. Nadal, 38, lost in the first round at the French Open and then opted to miss Wimbledon so he could focus on preparing for the Paris Olympics that start in late July; he has dealt with

a string of injuries that included a hip operation last year.

And Djokovic? The owner of a men's-record 24 Grand Slam titles needed to pull out of the French Open before the quarterfinals after tearing the meniscus in his right knee and having surgery.

Sinner was eliminated by Djokovic at Wimbledon each of the past two years, in the 2022 quarterfinals and 2023 semifinals. But Sinner won their two most recent matchups, at last year's Davis Cup Finals and in this year's Australian Open semifinals.

Both Alcaraz and Sinner excel at court coverage and big hitting. Both bring excitement, too, whether it's Alcaraz's creative shot-making or Sinner's all-out dives along the way to his first career grass-court title at Halle, Germany, in June, a rare instance of a man winning his first tournament after making his debut at No. 1. "No one has ever played like Alcaraz. No chance. And Sinner? The same thing," said Mats Wilander, a seven-time Slam champ in the 1980s. "They're like, 'Whoa! What and where did they come from?'"

Alcaraz and Sinner realize they are well-positioned to take over. **AP**



World No. 1 Jannik Sinner

World No. 2 Coco Gauff



Iga Swiatek is just 23 and has won 5 Grand Slam titles

Most Wimbledon Titles (Open Era)

WOMEN'S	
MARITNA NAVRATILOVA	9
STEFFI GRAF	7
SERENA WILLIAMS	7
VENUS WILLIAMS	5

To Get All The Popular Newspapers.
Type in Search Box of Telegram

@sharewithpride

If You Want to get these Newspapers Daily at earliest

English Newspapers»»»

Indian Express, Financial Express, The Hindu, Business Line, The Times of India, The Economic Times, Hindustan Times, ET wealth, Business Standard, First India, Mint, Greater Kashmir, Greater Jammu, The Himalayan, The Tribune, Brill Express, The Sikh Times, Avenue Mail, Western Times, Millennium Post, The Statesman, State Times, The Pioneer, Hans India, Free Press, Orissa Post, Mumbai Mirror, Mid-Day, Deccan Chronicle, Deccan Herald, Telangana Today, Financial Times, The Asian Age, The Telegraph, Oheraldo, Gulf of Times, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian, The Times

Hindi Newspapers»»»

दैनिक जागरण, राजस्थान पत्रिका, दैनिक भास्कर, दिव्यभास्कर, हिंदुस्तान, नवभारत टाइम्स, बिज़नस स्टैंडर्ड, अमर उजाला, जनसत्ता, द पायोनीर, राष्ट्रीय सहारा, प्रभातखबर, लोकसत्ता

Others»»»

Hindi & English Editorial, Employment News, Malayalam Newspapers, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Gujarati

Type in Search box of Telegram https://t.me/Magazines_8890050582 And you will find a Channel named @Lalit712 join it and receive daily editions of all popular epapers at the earliest

Or

you can click on this link

<https://t.me/sharewithpride>