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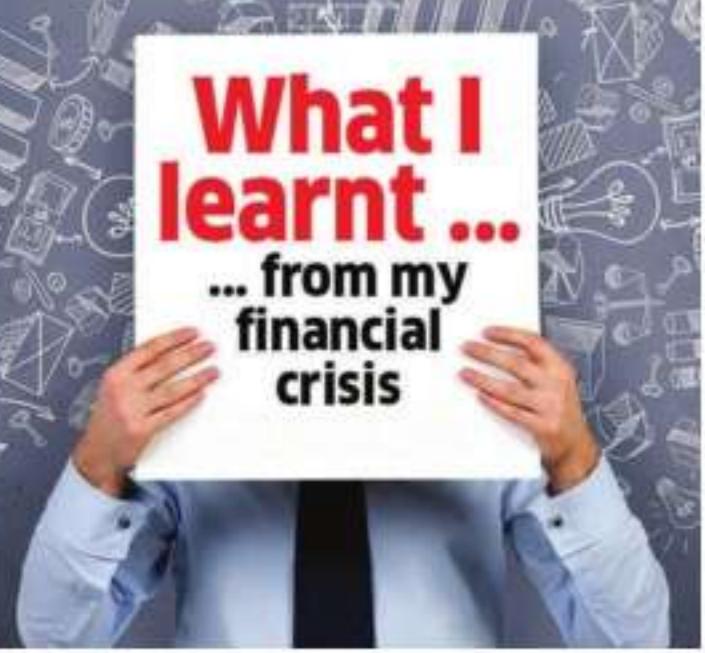
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**Pure Politics & Around the World**

### ET WEALTH ON MONDAY

## wealth



### PURE POLITICS PAGE ▷ 2

### Kolkata Murder Set to Dent Mamata's Women Votebank

Mamata Banerjee, whose women votebank has brought her two major victories in 2021 assembly polls and 2024 Lok Sabha poll, is in a tight spot after the rape and murder of the RG Kar Medical College trainee doctor. Jayati Nag reports.

### Haryana Assembly Polls now on Oct 5 instead of Oct 1: EC

The Election Commission on Saturday deferred the Haryana assembly poll date to October 5 from October 1, keeping in mind a centuries-old festival of the Bishnoi community. The counting of votes will now be held on October 8.

### CPM Strongman Removed as LDF Convenor in Kerala

CPM's Kerala leadership on Saturday removed EP Jayarajan as the convenor of the ruling LDF, in the wake of an exposé that he had held an unprivileged meeting with the BJP in-charge of the state, Prakash Javadekar.

### KHARIF CROPS LIKELY AT RISK Most Parts of India may See Above-normal Rainfall This Mth: IMD

India is likely to see above-average rainfall this month and a delayed withdrawal of monsoon showers, the weather office said, raising concern that it may hit output of kharif crops such as pulses, oilseeds, and fruits and vegetables. ▷ 3

At the inaugural edition of **The Economic Times World Leaders Forum**, PM Narendra Modi says India is a land of opportunities and in its prosperity lies the prosperity of the world

# PM MODI'S CLARIION CALL...

- **I Promise To Facilitate, You Must Promise To Innovate**
- **I Promise Stable Policy Regime, You Must Promise Positive Disruption**
- **I Promise Reform, You Must Promise To Perform**
- **I Promise High Growth, You Must Promise High Quality**



Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed India's growth story and said that his government was working toward taking full advantage of the opportunities that the future brings. He called on business leaders to work with the government to make Viksit Bharat (Developed India) a reality by 2047, the 100th anniversary of Independence.

He assured them that the Centre would ensure a stable policy regime, provided they match it with "positive disruption".

The Prime Minister reiterated his pledge that the government will work at a faster pace in his third term, while addressing industry captains, thought leaders and policymakers from India and abroad at The Economic Times World Leaders Forum on Saturday.

He underlined that India is a beacon of hope and prosperity amid global uncertainty and the world's economic success hinged on that of India. The government will do its bit and he asked India Inc to respond in kind.

"It is our promise that we will facilitate, you promise you will innovate. Our promise is that we will reform, you promise that you will perform. We promise we will give a stable policy regime, you promise you will engage in positive disruption. We promise we will focus on high growth, you promise you will focus on high quality," the Prime Minister said, inviting applause from the audience.

He said that India's growth trajectory will come through teamwork, with the private sector working in tandem with the government.

"Think big—we have to write together several success stories for the country," Modi said. "Today's Bharat is the biggest land of possibilities in the world. Today's Bharat respects wealth crea-



STAY TUNED FOR COMPLETE COVERAGE OF THE POWER-PACKED EVENT IN THE PAGES OF THE ECONOMIST TOMORROW

**GRABBING HEADLINES**  
Today, India's progress is making global headlines... This is like a lift-off decade for India

**LOCAL GOES GLOBAL**  
We want more companies in India to become global brands... for India to become a leader in every sector

tors. A strong Bharat can develop the whole of humanity. A prosperous Bharat can create paths for the prosperity of the whole world. We have to remember the mantra of innovation, inclusion and international cooperation."

He called on overseas Indians to join the march of progress. "I would appeal to all Indians living in the country and outside it, to all able Indians, that come, let's walk together in this journey," he said. "Come, let's make India developed because in India's prosperity lies the prosperity of the world. I am confident that we can achieve this target."

'Making Policies with Eye on Future' ▷ 7

### MODI'S MINISTERS SHARE VISION & PLANS

## China a Unique Problem and Not Just for India: Jaishankar

It's common sense that investments from China would be scrutinised, says EAM

Team ET

New Delhi: India isn't against investments from China or doing business with companies from there, but it's common sense to have the investments scrutinised because there is a "general China problem", external affairs minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday.

"It has never been the government's position... But on the investment issue, it is common sense that investments from China would be scrutinised. I think the border and the state of relations between India and China call for it," Jaishankar said at a session on 'New India's

Risks, Reforms, and Responsibilities' at The Economic Times World Leaders Forum.

China in many ways is a unique problem because of its distinct political and economic systems, and it's not just a problem for India, he said. "We are not the only country that is having a debate about China. Go to Europe, and ask them what is today among your major economic or national security debates? It's about China. Look at the US. It's obsessed with China, and rightly so in many ways. So, the fact is, let's not make out as though it's only India which has a China problem," the minister said.

'No Risks with US' ▷ 7



The issue is not, do you have investments from China or not, it is not a yes-or-no answer, it is what should be the appropriate level of scrutiny and how should you handle it S JAISHANKAR External Affairs Minister

### 'NEW SCHEMES IN WORKS TO ENHANCE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE'

## Indian Tourism Destined to Go Places

Contribution to economy will exceed global avg of 10.4% in 5 yrs: Shekhawat

Team ET

New Delhi: The contribution of tourism to India's economy will exceed the global average of 10.4%, up from 7.9% now, in five years as the government is working to unlock the endless possibilities in this space, tourism minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said on Saturday.

In post-Covid world... people want to experience the cultural diversity of their own country. We need to cater to those changing preferences & needs

GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT Tourism Minister



By 2047, when the vision of Viksit Bharat will be realised, one of the most crucial agents for driving that vision will be tourism," Shekhawat said at The Economic Times World Leaders Forum here. "The world is looking at India with a new sense of curiosity."

Speaking on 'Destination India: Driving tourism to new heights', he said tourism contri-

butes about 10.4% to the global economy. "Our 7.9% contribution to the economy is going to be more than 10%. And we will exceed the global average in the next five years," he said.

The minister said the government is working on new schemes on improving the experience of tourists, engaging inbound tourists further, and extending their duration of stay in the country.

"We are working on all this alongside the relevant stakeholders," he said.

States Vying for More Tourists ▷ 7

## AFTER MOBILE PHONES AND CHIPS Electronics Parts Set to Plug into Make-in-India Play

Vaishnav says trials of Vande Bharat sleeper trains to start within seven days



Team ET

New Delhi: The government will launch a new scheme to help set up a sustainable electronics component ecosystem in India, union minister for electronics & information technology Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

Vaishnav, who is also the minister for railways and information & broadcasting, said more than 99% of all mobile phones used in the country are being made in India.

"This year, Apple will be manufacturing its latest model in India," Vaishnav said at The Economic Times World Leaders Forum. "The value of electronics manufacturing in India had increased to \$105 billion as of 2022-23, up from \$29 billion in 2013-14. We are preparing a programme where the component ecosystem can expand in India in the same

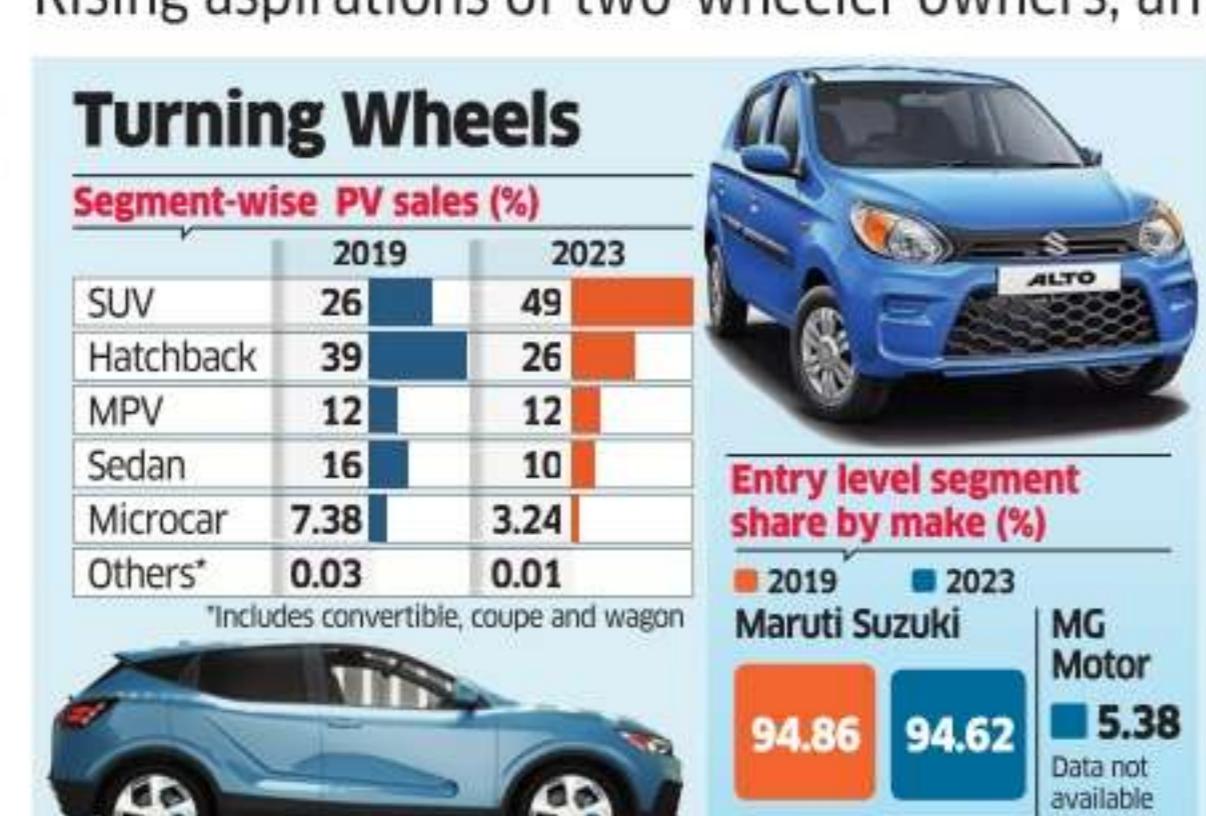
way as electronics and mobile manufacturing has expanded."

The government is likely to allocate up to ₹40,000 crore to an electronics component manufacturing scheme, which is expected to be launched later this year. It expects successful applicants under the scheme to invest around ₹62,000 crore, while the total value of components produced by these firms could be between ₹1.95 lakh crore and ₹2 lakh crore during the course of the scheme.

Focus on Infrastructure ▷ 7

## Why Motown's Betting Big on the Grand Re-entry of Small Cars

Rising aspirations of two-wheeler owners, affordability, practical solution for urban congestion likely to fuel demand; 2026 revival expected



Lijee Philip

Mumbai: Once the driving force behind India's automobile industry growth and then pushed to the sidelines by SUVs in recent years, small cars are set to make a strong comeback, say experts.

A recent surge in two-wheeler sales is an indication of improving sentiment at the entry level of the personal mobility market, according to the experts. An expanding pool of two-wheeler owners looking to upgrade to four-wheelers, and the need for affordable and efficient mobility solutions in metro cities and

urban areas also suggest that demand for small cars is set to pick up, and they expect the segment to return to the path of growth by 2026.

Maruti Suzuki, the car market leader for which small cars were the bread and butter until a few years ago, is expected to enhance its portfolio of such models beyond the Alto, offering a mix of petrol, CNG and electric options. Some reports say the local unit of Japan's Suzuki Motor is already testing small electric vehicles.

"We firmly believe that low-cost and small cars are necessary in our economic and social conditions," Maruti Suzuki

chairman RC Bhargava said at its recent annual general meeting, indicating the automaker's stand on the segment. "A temporary setback in demand is not going to change our strategy. We do expect the small-car demand to revive. The nation has a need for small cars," he said. "We are waiting, maybe by the end of fiscal 2025-26, we should have the demand coming back."

The share of small cars in India's passenger vehicle market has reduced to 3.24% from 7.38% five years ago and around 50% two decades back. Meanwhile, the average price of vehicles increased to ₹6.98 lakh from ₹3.48 lakh in 2019, show data

collated by automotive consultancy firm Jato Dynamics.

The sharp price increase, primarily due to the introduction of BS-VI emission standards and compulsory safety features, is seen as one of the reasons for the slump in demand. Several automakers, including Tata Motors and Datsun, have also completely exited the segment.

But with city roads getting increasingly congested and parking space becoming limited, small cars have again started finding favour with many buyers.

Several Drivetrain Options ▷ 7

OTHERS NEWS  
OF THE DAY

**Rahul Gandhi to Visit US From Sept 8 to 10**

 Chicago: Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi

will visit the US from September 8 to September 10 during which he will hold numerous interactions in Washington DC and Dallas, including at the University of Texas.

Incidentally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is slated to visit the US late September.

Chairman of Indian Overseas Congress, Sam Pitroda on Saturday shared details of Gandhi's first visit to the US after becoming the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. "Since Rahul Gandhi has become the leader of the opposition, I as chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, with a presence in 32 countries have been bombarded with requests from Indian diaspora diplomats, academicians, businessmen, leaders, international media and many others for interactions with Rahul Gandhi," Pitroda said in a video statement.—OPB

**Ex-JMM MLA L Hembrom Joins BJP**

 Ranchi: A day after former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren joined the BJP, ex-JMM legislator Labin Hembrom on Saturday crossed over to the saffron camp.

Hembrom was given membership of the BJP by the party's state chief Babulal Marandi in the presence of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

"The JMM has changed from what it was in Guruji's (JMM supremo Shibu Soren) time. Now, there is no respect for senior leaders in the JMM. So, I decided to join the BJP for development of Jharkhand and uplift of tribals," the former Birori legislator said at the saffron camp's state headquarters here.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarma said, "All big leaders, who were part of separate Jharkhand movement, are now joining the BJP." —PTI

**Should Listen to Farmers: Phogat to Govt**

 Chandigarh: Olympic wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Saturday joined protesting farmers at the Shambhu border between Punjab and Haryana and said the central government should pay heed to their demands and make it a priority to address their issues.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha held a 'kisan mahapanchayat' during the day to mark the completion of 200 days of their 'Delhi Chalo' agitation to press for their demands, including a legal guarantee for MSP.

The farmers have been protesting at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13, when their march was stopped by security forces. Phogat was felicitated by the protesting farmers.—PTI

# Haryana Polls Pushed to Oct 5, Votes to be Counted on Oct 8 Along with JK

**Our Political Bureau**

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India on Saturday announced rescheduling of polling day for Haryana from October 1 to October 5, 2024.

While no changes have been made to the Jammu & Kashmir polling calendar, counting day for assembly elections in both J&K and Haryana has been moved from October 4 to October 8, 2024.

The poll panel cited representations received from the All India Bishnoi Mahasabha in Bikaner of Rajasthan for rescheduling of Haryana poll on account of the **Asoj Amavasya festival**, a celebration in remembrance of their Guru Jambeshwar.

The move also comes days after a representative from BJP and some other parties from Haryana requested the poll panel for deferring the Haryana polls by a week citing a string of holidays around the original October 1 poll day.

They had expressed concerns that this could result in a lower voter turnout.

ECI, however, said that it was informed that numerous Bishnoi families of Punjab, Rajasthan and Haryana have observed a long-standing tradition of visiting their native village Mukam in Rajasthan during the Amavas "for their annual festival in Bikaner, which falls on October 2, this year.

Accordingly, the poll panel has adjusted election dates, as has also been done in the past - in 2022 Punjab



assembly polls were postponed by a week to accommodate devotees traveling to Varanasi for **Guru Ravidas Jayanti**; similarly in Manipur poll dates were changed in 2022 to respect the Christian community's **Sunday prayers** as was done

in 2023 Rajasthan assembly elections on account of **Devuthani Ekadashi** which sees a mass weddings in the state on the day. In UP assembly elections 2012, the poll date was changed due to **Barawafat**.

The officials claimed that the revised polling day would also resolve any concerns of a six-day holiday by taking a one day leave on Sep 30, 2024.

While the Haryana BJP welcomed the EC move, the state's Congress and Aam Aadmi Party indicated doubts on the revision but said they were ready for polls either way.

Former Haryana Chief Minister and Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that the poll postponement indicated the BJP's nervousness.

# One Month of Protests Against Medic's Murder Dent Mamata's Women Support

Students, doctors, regular people, artistes, sportspersons, and actors among protesters

**Jayatri Nag**

**Kolkata:** The rape and murder of a trainee doctor at the RG Kar Medical College, and the events that followed including a surge in non-political protests, have caused fresh challenges to West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, who rode on her popularity among female voters to post two major poll performances in the state: in the 2021 assembly and 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The state capital has been witnessing protests, with students, doctors, political parties, common citizens and even artists and sportspeople hitting the streets almost everyday since the PG trainee doctor was found raped and murdered on August 9. Outrage has also been pouring in on social media.

While opposition parties have been mounting their attack on the Trinamool Congress administration, the Calcutta High Court slammed

the state government over the incident and handed over the case to the CBI. The court also ordered the central agency to probe vandalism and alleged financial irregularities at the medical college.

Banerjee, on the back foot, has been trying to deflect some of the blame. Her government has been say-

## WOMEN SUPPORT CRITICAL

 Lakshmir Bhandar and other women-focused social welfare schemes played a big role in Trinamool Congress' recent poll victories

ing that the local police were quick in arresting the accused. She also accused the CPI-M and BJP for the August 14 vandalism of the medical college. She also tried to pacify the protesting medical students, but her statement that she did not take action over the protest was perceived

as a veiled threat by junior doctors. She then had to clarify her stand that she stood by the students.

A major concern for the ruling Trinamool is that the protestors include a large number of women, a big vote bank for the party.

among women.

The Trinamool won 29 seats from the state in this year's LS elections, against 12 by the BJP and one by the Congress.

In the aftermath of the murder, many puja committees, a number of them run by women, have denied assistance provided by Banerjee—a worrisome development for the Trinamool.

Many women have received benefits under the programmes of the Trinamool government, a political analyst said. "Lakshmir Bhandar alone has 21.8 million female beneficiaries. Lakshmir Bhandar is one of the main reasons behind their (Trinamool) victory," a political analyst said.



Trinamool swept West Bengal riding on its female vote bank. The Banerjee government's welfare programmes like 'Lakshmir Bhandar' have been big hits



Sayan Lahiri after his release, in Kolkata, on Saturday—PTI

## Chhatra Samaj's Sayan Lahiri Freed From Police Custody, Vows to Keep Fighting

**Jayatri Nag**

**Kolkata:** Kolkata Police on Saturday released Sayan Lahiri, convenor of the Paschimbanga Chhatra Samaj who had called a protest march to the Secretariat on August 27 over the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at a city hospital earlier in the month. The Calcutta High Court had ordered his release on Friday.

"The fight we started got meaningful on Nabanna Abhijan and it will be considered a success the day we get justice for our sister," Lahiri said after his release.

Leader of Opposition Suvedu Adhikari has extended legal support," Lahiri said, adding that he was arrested at night after he participated in a television show.

Apart from directing Kolkata Police to arrange for the release of Lahiri by 2 PM on Saturday, the single-judge bench of Justice Amrita Sinha also instructed that no coercive action should be taken against him in the matter.

Meanwhile, the protesting doctors of Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital—where the trained doctor was killed—have set up a telemedicine clinic that will function for four hours every day (10 am to 2 pm), starting August 31. The strike being observed by the junior doctors in all government-run hospitals of the state, entered its 21st day on Saturday.

The clinic, named 'Abhay Clinic', is operational in several hospitals, including Medinipur and Medical College & Hospital and RG Kar Medical College.

This decision amounted to rejecting CPI-M politburo member Brinda Karat's demand for Mukesh's resignation as an MLA. Mukesh, however, will be eased out of the less-important state cinema policy-making body.

The decision to take disciplinary action against Jayarajan was made by the CPI-M state secretariat at a meeting on Friday, and the party state committee removed him from the LDF convenor position on Saturday. A CPI-M central committee member, Jayarajan is considered among the most important state party leaders and has been a close ally of chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Another senior leader, TP Ramakrishnan, will be the next LDF convenor.

The expose of the Jayarajan-Ja-

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The expose

## Emami Acquires Remaining 49.6% Stake in Helios Lifestyle

Our Bureau



Kolkata: Emami Ltd on Saturday said it has entered into a binding agreement with Helios Lifestyle to acquire the balance 49.6% stake in the company, which will make it a wholly-owned entity. Emami will pay ₹177.63 crore for this stake in an all-cash deal.

Emami already owned 50.4% in Helios, which sells men's grooming brand The Man Company. Helios has been a subsidiary of the company. In 2023-24, Helios had a turnover of ₹183 crore. ET had reported about this deal in July.

Harsha V Agarwal, vice chairman & MD at Emami, said the company has adopted the route of strategic investments in new-age startups very early to leverage online opportunities brought about by rapid digitalisation to incubate new engines of growth. "These strategic investments help us to have footprints in emerging segments that align with evolving consumer preferences," he said.

The Man Company is a digital-first lifestyle brand offering head-to-toe range of premium men's grooming products in categories like fragrances, skin care, hair care, body care and beard management.

Emami said the completion of the acquisition will strengthen its presence in the fast growing digital-first premium male grooming segment. The company already has a presence in the segment through its brand Fair and Handsome.

The Man Company brand was Emami's first strategic investment in 2017 with the company becoming its subsidiary in 2022. Agarwal said Emami continues to explore more such opportunities for strategic investment that have synergies with the existing line of businesses.

**ET Q&A**

**BHAJAN LAL SHARMA**

Chief Minister, Rajasthan

## Deals Worth ₹4.5 lakh cr Signed at 'Rising Rajasthan'

Rajasthan chief minister Bhajan Lal Sharma said his government signed preliminary investment deals worth ₹4.5 lakh crore during a roadshow meeting with investors and industrialists in Mumbai on Friday. It was the first roadshow for the 'Rising Rajasthan' Global Investors Summit 2024 to be held in Jaipur in December. In an interview to ET's Krishna Kumar, Sharma said his government is taking unique and offbeat steps to boost investments and create jobs in Rajasthan, unlike the previous Congress government that he claimed focused on freebies. Edited excerpts:

**Rajasthan is known for tourism. Which sectors did the roadshow focus on, and how much interest did the investors show?**

We have signed ₹4.5 lakh crore of MoUs (memoranda of understanding). Besides solar power, we have got a lot of interest from investors in pump storage, battery manufacturing, battery storage, electric vehicles, medical equipment manufacturing, (and) textiles.

**You have created a large team of bureaucrats to get investments**

## September to Witness Above Average Rainfall

IMD says rainfall may be over 109% of 50-year average, which could impact output of kharif crops such as pulses and oilseeds

Our Bureau

New Delhi: India is likely to see above-average rainfall this month and a delayed withdrawal of monsoon showers, the weather office said, raising concern that it may hit out of kharif crops such as pulses, oilseeds, and fruits and vegetables.

Rainfall is likely to be more than 109% of a 50-year average, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director-general of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Saturday.

Above-normal rainfall is likely

over most parts of India, except some parts of the extreme north, many parts of south peninsular India, and most parts of the northeastern region where normal to below-normal rainfall is likely.

Government data shows that so far this year, India has received 749 mm of precipitation against the normal 701 mm since the start of the monsoon season in June. The country received about 16% excess rainfall in August, the second highest since 2001.

The Southwest monsoon brings almost 70% of the rain India needs



to water farms and replenish reservoirs and aquifers. However, excessive and prolonged rainfall can damage standing crops.

A normal monsoon boosts agricultural productivity and has a bearing on rural demand for consumer goods, gold, cars, motorcycles, tractors, farm equipment, and inputs such as pesticides, fertilisers and seeds. It is also important for keeping food and overall inflation under check.

Food inflation, which accounts for about half the overall CPI basket, increased to 9.55% in June from 8.69% in May and 4.55% in June 2023.

## MaxiMum City's Real Estate Growth Trajectory on Upswing

Mumbai sees best ever Aug in deals with 31% YoY revenue rise from stamp duty collection

Kailash Babar

**Mumbai:** Mumbai's real estate market, the country's largest and most expensive, recorded 11,628 deal registrations last month and a 31% year-on-year increase in revenue from stamp-duty collection, making it its best-ever August for property transactions.

August's registrations marked a 7% year-on-year increase in deals and helped the state exchequer collect more than ₹1,061 crore in stamp duty, according to data from the Inspector General of Registration (IGR) and Controller of Stamps, Maharashtra.

The property sales momentum was driven by sustained buyer confidence, which helped surpass 10,000 units in monthly registrations for the first eight months of 2024. This marked Mumbai's 11th consecutive month of annual growth in property sales.

"Mumbai's residential market has maintained strong momentum in 2024, with monthly sales showing consistent on-year growth. August stood out, recording the highest growth in revenues compared to the rest of the year," said Shishir Bajaj, chairman and managing director of

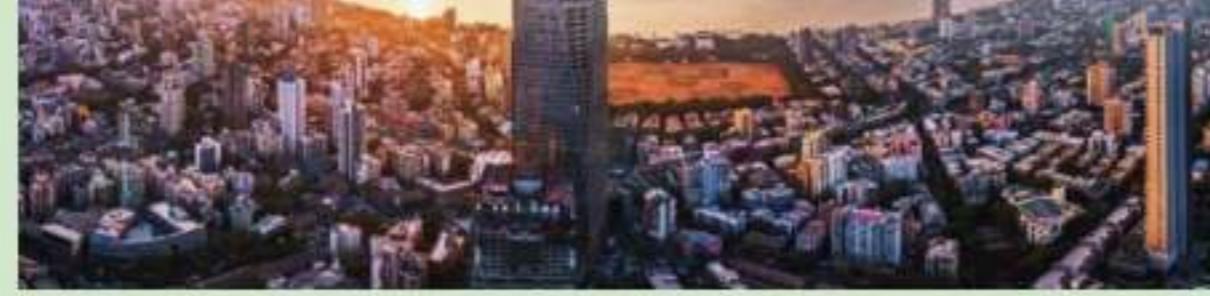
### Mumbai High

Sustained buyer confidence drives registration growth

Eleven successive months of annual growth since August 2023

Over 10,000 deal registrations for 8 consecutive months in 2024

January-August stamp duty revenue up 10% at ₹8,010 Cr



property consultant Knight Frank India. "The strong economic outlook and stable interest rates have kept homebuyer sentiments positive, fuelling steady sales."

For Mumbai, January to August saw record property registrations and revenue collection. The eight-month stretch saw 96,601 property registrations, up 16% YoY, and generated 10% higher revenue at ₹8,010 crore.

Property sales in Mumbai's western and central suburbs accounted for 83% of the total market share in August, which industry experts attribute

to the ongoing infrastructure overhaul.

"Due to the strong demand across Mumbai's suburbs, largely driven by the government's significant infrastructure boost in key areas of the city, we are witnessing a major influx in the western suburbs," said Parth K Mehta, chairman and managing director of Paradigm

Realty. "As properties in south Mumbai have become overpriced, these western areas — Andheri, Malad, Kandivali, and Borivali — are set to experience substantial growth."

According to him, with enhanced connectivity through new roads and coastal projects, these suburbs offer considerable upside potential. Additionally, these regions have relatively larger land parcels and redevelopment opportunities, which will likely create a favourable price arbitrage over the coming years.

Demand for high-ticket-sized properties saw a significant increase, with the proportion of properties priced at ₹2 crore and higher rising to 23% in August from 14% a year ago. Total transactions in this price bracket surged by 77%, reaching 2,699. Meanwhile, the share of properties valued at less than ₹50 lakh more than halved to 21% from 44% in a year ago.

August also saw a noticeable increase in the registration of apartments sized 500-1,000 sq ft, accounting for 49% of all property registrations. Meanwhile, apartments of up to 500 sq ft made up 33% of the registrations, down from 38% in August 2023, indicating a shift towards larger apartments.

**CAPITAL CALL** In his first roadshow, Rajasthan CM says his government is taking unique steps to boost investments and create jobs for the state

### MORE EMPLOYMENT

In 5 years, we plan to create 10 lakh jobs – 4 lakh jobs would be in the govt and 6 lakh in private sector

no policy for garment (manufacturing), warehousing policy, we don't have a 'one district one product' policy... So we will be making these policies and tabling them before the cabinet. In some sectors like MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises), we have a policy, but we need to amend them to encourage more MSMEs. We want MSMEs to be more resilient, we want them to be competitive. In the budget, we have announced measures to support technological upgradation, skilling, upskil-

ling, (and) giving more credit and finance. We are going to be building cluster development for MSMEs as many times MSMEs do not have a testing facility, so we can have a common testing facility at these MSME clusters.

### What is your target for job creation?

In five years, we have plans to create 10 lakh jobs, out of which four lakh jobs would be in the government and six lakh would be in the private sector. We want the youth in our state to not go out of the state looking for jobs. The government jobs would not just be for high-end roles but also for class four employees.

### What are the emerging industries and sectors you are focusing on for investments?

We are focusing on encouraging companies to manufacture medical equipment, semiconductor devices, component manufacturing... We are looking at all those sectors which we never looked at earlier. In five years, we want to double our economy.

### Did the previous government's promises like free electricity and a free cell phone for each family cause

### fiscal problems for your government?

The power bill itself caused a ₹90,000 crore deficit in our budget. They have created a mess. There was no budget allocation for what they announced. Just six months before elections they announced all these. Why did they not do it earlier? What were you trying to prove? It was all unnecessary. We have put a stop to all of that.

In spite of the fiscal burden, our capital budget this year is 46% more than the last year. When we invest in the capital, it is for the future. When you give sops like handing cash to someone, it gets finished today, but if you give someone a job, he can take care of his family. This is a difference.

Also, many of their (previous government's) promises were on paper... They announced that more colleges would be built (and) of building an industrial area in every tehsil, but they never delivered on anything. It was never their intention.

### What is your stand on the old pension scheme approved by the previous Congress government?

I will talk about that in the future. Right now, we will talk about investments.

## Indian CEOs Highest among Execs Suffering from Imposter Syndrome

### Being Overwhelmed

Rica Bhattacharyya

**Mumbai:** A rising number of corner-room occupants in India are feeling "overwhelmed".

According to a CEO survey conducted by global executive search and leadership consulting firm Korn Ferry, increasing pressure from company promoters and boards, heightened regulatory risks, constant scrutiny in a digital age and a disruptive business environment are leading to many top bosses experiencing an "impostor syndrome"—a feeling of being stretched too far beyond their abilities. Nearly three quarters of the CEOs surveyed in India acknowledge having faced this problem, show the findings shared with ET. This number was 58% globally.

The survey reached out to 1,250 CEOs globally, including 238 from India. Out of the six markets covered in the survey (the US, UK, Middle East, Brazil, Australia and India), India and the US showed high imposter syndrome, with

Besides, regulatory pressure and the risk environment is also getting tougher day by day," said Singh. However, 89% of the Indian CEOs affirmed that they are fully competent and deliver what their roles demand, the survey showed. Additionally, 84% of them reported feeling fulfilled in their current roles.

"The findings do not imply a lack of competence or performance. The imposter syndrome among CEOs

seems to arise from the vast array of responsibilities they face—economic pressures, driving performance while leading organisational transformation, integrating artificial intelligence, serving as cultural leaders, and addressing evolving work environments. With the convergence of all these pressures, many CEOs are occasionally feeling overwhelmed," said Singh.

Beyond the traditional responsi-

bilities of driving growth and satisfying investors, CEOs are now expected to be visionaries, change agents, and even public voices on complex social issues, said Vivek Gambhir, venture partner, LightSpeed Ventures. "Today's CEOs are navigating a perfect storm of pressures unlike any faced before."

"The 24/7 scrutiny of the digital age, coupled with the speed of business disruptions—from technological upheavals to geopolitical tensions—adds layers of complexity that can leave even the most experienced leaders feeling overwhelmed. The weight of these evolving demands and the pressure to project confidence at all times often fuel a nagging sense of self-doubt," said Gambhir.

Indian findings indicate that the imposter syndrome is felt more acutely higher up in the corporate ladder: CEOs—73%, senior executives—65%, senior leaders—60%, mid-level leaders—57%, first-level supervisors—60%, and individual contributors (non-leader)—50%.

Anil Sachdev, a CEO coach and chairperson of School of Inspired Leadership, said: "It is true to some extent but varies from person to person. For instance, there are some CEOs who know they have to leverage AI but may not exactly know how to do so. And as a result, they are feeling overwhelmed seeing the rest of the world move so rapidly leading to a sense of inadequacy."

Many CEOs are also in a dilemma over how to address the issue of modes of work—work from home, from office or work hybrid—take a bold call and lose some talent or go for a softer stance, he said.

However, some like Arun Duggal, chairman of ratings firm ICRA and an independent director at several companies, are of the view that CEOs have historically been subject to a lot of pressure and conflict situations, and it is the nature of the job to be able to deal with all that. "They have to adapt and prioritise action. Today the world may be more complex with things like AI and ESG and others, but CEOs must know how to navigate that," he added.

### Imposter Syndrome among CEOs Globally

India 73%
US 71%
UK 45%
Australia 47%
Brazil 39%
Middle East 57%

### Putting Up A Visage

Economic pressures, driving performance while leading organisational transformation, integrating artificial intelligence, serving as cultural leaders and addressing evolving work environments
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### Indian findings indicate that higher the corporate ladder, more acute is the imposter syndrome

CEOs 73%
Senior executives 65%
Senior leaders 60%
Mid-level leaders 57%
First - level Supervisor 60%
Individual contributor (non-leader) 50%

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# Casino on Steroids

Prevalence of smart phones, cheap internet and the lure of quick money are drawing many amateurs to the sophisticated world of futures & options. The outcome is disastrous

Himani Kothari

**W**hen Vinay Sharma, 36, started trading options in August 2023, he was stunned by "how easy it was to make money". The rookie trader would earn up to ₹1 lakh on good days and lose as much on bad ones. But net-net, this Bengaluru-based techie's account would be in the green at the end of the month. "It was hard to believe, especially because I had no experience and had only started trading after Covid," says the Jharkhand-based IT professional, who was trading on the advice of influencers—called finfluencers—on YouTube and advisors on Telegram channels.

Trading quickly became a habit, and Sharma soon felt his dream of achieving financial independence—generating a corpus of ₹1 crore—was getting closer to reality.

But today, Sharma's account is bleeding red, having racked up losses of ₹60 lakh, roughly equal to his annual salary. Meanwhile, the habit that started as a cool hobby has now turned into pure addiction. "I just can't stop! I know I should stop trading for the day if it is not going according to my plan. I know the game is rigged, that most traders lose money... I have all the wisdom, but I am not able to turn my eyes away from the computer screen. I'm addicted to it now like a moth to the flame," says Sharma, who is the sole breadwinner in his family of five.

#### PLAYING WITH FUTURES

Sharma is among the millions of amateur Indian traders who have ventured into the risky futures and options (F&O) segment of the equity markets, hitherto reserved for professionals. The lure of making quick



India's IT capital.

Rohit Barua, a 35-year-old director in the TV industry in Mumbai, agrees that F&O play is like gambling, but avers that he isn't addicted to it. "It's a lot of fun but I don't have the time to do it every day." The last time he was extremely bullish on the Bank Nifty index, he scooped up some call options that were expiring on the same day and tripled his money in under an hour. "There's no other place on Earth where you can do that, except the casino. And F&O is a casino on steroids."

Indore-based Tanmay Sathe holds call options for an average of five minutes.

"I play small, usually with only one lot, and exit as soon as I make 50-70% on it," says the sales professional, who is otherwise financially conservative with about 70% of his portfolio invested in digital gold.

According to the Sebi paper, retail investors' average holding period is around 30 minutes, and expiry-day trading constitutes as high as 80-90% of overall notional turnover of the option in expiry week. Expiry-day trade refers to buying or selling contracts that are expiring on the pre-decided date.

Both are sophisticated financial tools meant to be used by professionals to hedge their positions. But retail traders are now using it mostly for speculation in what can be described as gambling-style trading—and losing.

In FY24, 9.25 million investors incurred a loss of ₹51,689 crore while trading in the index derivatives segment of NSE, according to a Sebi consultation paper released in July. Total loss including transaction costs—which is an additional 23%, or ₹11,888 crore—goes up to ₹63,577 crore.

#### GAMBLERS' PARADISE

The embedded leverage in options makes it a gambling ground, says Ashish Gupta, chief investment officer, Axis Mutual Fund. "Your payoff matrix looks very attractive. With a ₹50 bet, you are gaining exposure to an index with notional value of, say, ₹6-7 lakh. So theoretically if you have a favourable movement of even 1% during the day, you stand to make a very large percentage of your initial investment."

The effective leverage on an index option during expiry day is 500x, according to a report by Gupta, titled "Gamification of Indian Equities". "Also, the feedback is quick: you place the bet at 2 pm and at 3.30 pm you know what the outcome is," says

Gupta, adding that the lure of outsized gains makes it a lot like buying lottery tickets.

Not everyone agrees F&O is a menace to be dealt with.

Sudhakara Reddy, associate professor of finance at IIM-Calcutta, barks at the vilification of F&O. He agrees that it is similar to the lottery but points to the big picture.

"Lottery inherently means small-sized bets. So even if the retail traders are losing, they are losing small. I don't see that as a big problem or a systemic threat." He says since most retail traders are buyers of options and not sellers, their risk is limited.

"It's the sellers who have unlimited risk and they are the ones who move the markets."

A spokesperson for Zerodha Broking Ltd says to curb the speculation in the F&O segment, a "product suitability framework could be introduced", which will make it harder for non-serious people to trade. "This means making it mandatory for traders to demonstrate their net worth and experience in the market before being allowed to trade in the F&O segment."

Zerodha has introduced a few features, such as the kill switch, to encourage traders to take a break if they go through a loss-making streak.

"Additionally, the (Sebi) consultation paper suggests restricting the number of weekly expiries to one per exchange. This will reduce the surge in market activity," says the Zerodha spokesperson.

#### WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

ET spoke to dozens of amateur traders who all had similar stories to share. It started with small bets and, at some point, they got hooked to the game. While a Hyderabad-based scriptwriter borrowed money from friends and family to trade and lost it all, a cab driver in Thane says his habit started

affecting his work. Almost all agree that they were speculating and gambling.

"I initially lost sleep from excitement and now I can't sleep because of my losses," says another trader. Many of them say they believed they could make the money back if only they found the right strategy, which led them to overtrade.

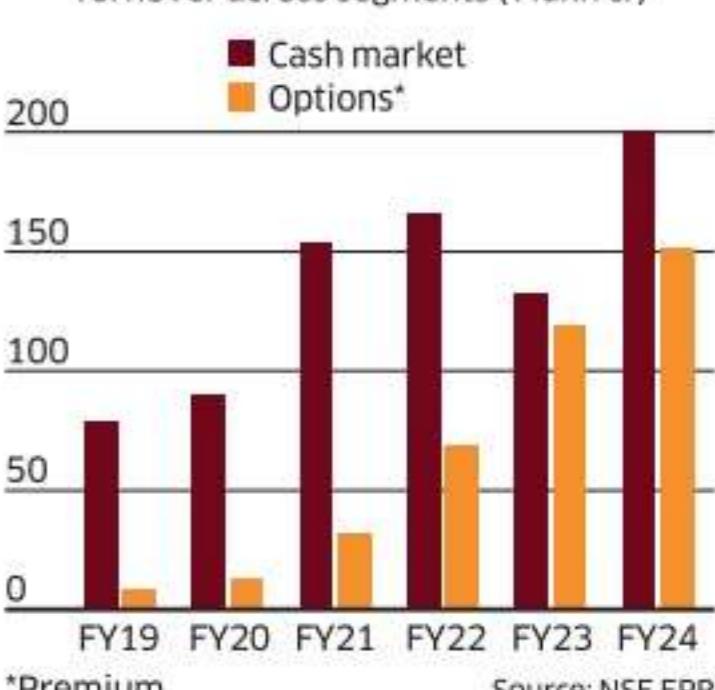
Hyderabad-based trader Murali Vijay has been dabbling in options for the past 13 years and claims to have lost ₹1 crore. Vijay recalls feeling agitated on weekends when the markets are shut. "I would pick fights with my wife for no reason. I couldn't wait for the break to be over and for the markets to open Monday." Vijay took the "difficult, but necessary" decision to shut his trading account two months back. "My problem was overtrading. You can have all the knowledge in the world but if you don't have the discipline, you will never make money in options."

Throwing good money after bad is another trait that makes F&O a gambling-like activity, say psychiatrists.

"Starting 2019, we have seen a subset of people who come in complaining about their excessive stock trading in a way that mimics gambling. The magnitude of losses is huge. There's a case I came across where a person lost ₹1.5 crore," says Dr Jayant Mahadevan, assistant professor of psychiatry, Centre for Addiction

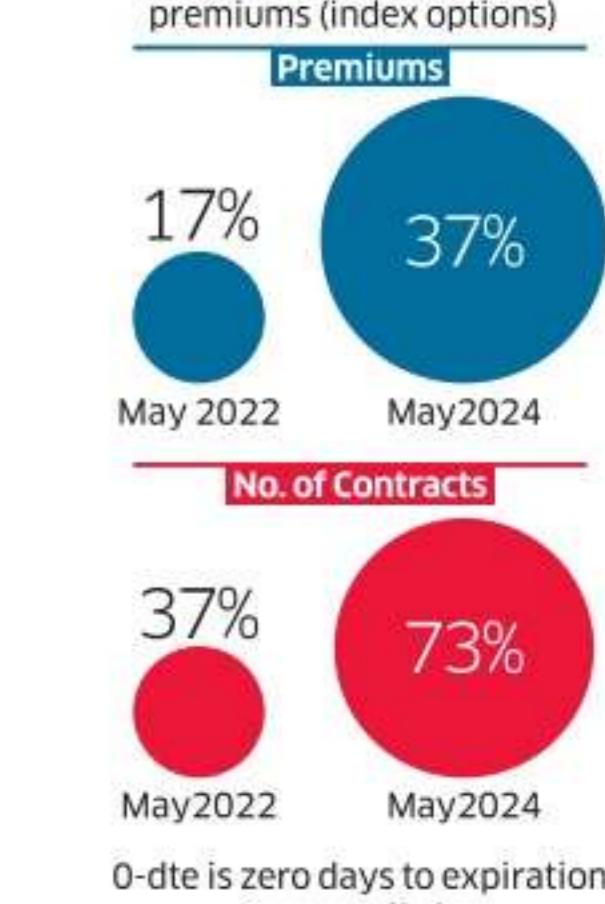
#### Explosive Growth in Options

Turnover across segments (₹ lakh cr)



#### Buy in the Morning, Sell in the Afternoon is a Hot Strategy

O-dte trades as a % of volumes and monthly premiums (index options)



#### WHAT MAKES F&O TICK

##### Hypothetical Trade of A:

- Trader A is bullish on Nifty, buys options that would benefit if index rises that day
- A pays ₹10 to buy an option of 100 shares that are worth ₹5,000 each
- Total amount invested: ₹1,000 (₹10x100)
- A is now exposed to options worth ₹5 lakh (₹5,000x100)
- If index rises 5%, A makes ₹25,000 (₹250x100) - ₹1,000 (paid already) ₹24,000

That's a 24x return in one day even though the index only moved 5%

#### PROMISE vs REALITY

How many traders make money?

Only 1 out of 10

Total loss by Indians in FY24: ₹63,577 crore Avg holding period of traders: 30 mins

\*Including transaction costs Source: Sebi consultation paper, July 2024

Medicine, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru.

He points to the ecosystem that enables this habit. "For instance, it is easier to seek out loans and keep on trading."

Those who could develop this habit are impulsive people, those who have a need for reward, those who seek out thrill and have a high risk appetite, says Mahadevan, who suggests identifying these behaviours early on and seeking treatment.

Sharma, the Jharkhand-based trader, doesn't believe in seeking help and that's probably why he hasn't been able to stop even after a loss of ₹60 lakh. "I will stop the day I make that ₹1 crore," he says, even as he admits he is hoping against hope. Addictive behaviour, did you say?

(Some names have been changed on request) himani.kothari@timesofindia.com

## 'In a Disposable World, Retro Motorcycles Have an Eternally Cool Factor'

**James Hewing**, museum director of the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham, UK, has spent most of his life behind the handlebars—or in front of them. The 58-year-old has done it all—from amateur racing to tinkering with his 1948 G80 Matchless to becoming the curator of the largest collection of British motorcycles under one roof. Hewing was recently in India for the relaunch of BSA and its Gold Star motorbike under Classic Legends by Mahindra. BSA is the third brand it is resurrecting after Jawa and Yezdi. Hewing spoke to **Lijee Philip** about his motorcycle journeys. Edited excerpts:

#### When did the motorcycle bug bite you?

It was all the fault of my older brother. He was always tinkering with bikes, and I was naturally curious. When I was 11 or 12, he convinced me to try out an old 175 CZ. Despite that rather challenging experience, my interest in motorcycling grew. The next bike I worked on was a 1936 350 New Imperial, exposing me to older bikes at an early age. By mid-teens, I got my first road-legal bike, the Yamaha FS1-E 50cc moped, thanks to the law that allows 16-year-olds to ride. At 17, I borrowed a Yamaha RS125, passed my test and got my full licence. Around that time, my brother offered me a 1948 G80 Matchless on the condition that I could mend it. The bike needed a total rebuild, which I attempted with minimal tools and experience. Despite my amateur efforts, the bike survived a trip to the Isle of Man Tourist Trophy (ITT) before succumbing to my less-than-perfect rebuild.

Over the years, I owned a wide range, from a 250 Honda to various superbikes, and went on numerous tours to France, Germany and Austria. The Isle of Man TT and the Manx Grand Prix were regular destinations, with nearly 20 visits. While I never reached the skill level of legends like Eddie Lawson or Freddie Spencer, it was great fun! In fact, once had the pleasure of taking Freddie, the three-time MotoGP winner, to my local pub. After seeing me ride on a track, he gave me a 30-minute tutorial over a pint, subtly suggesting that I had a lot to learn about racing!



#### How did this culminate in your role as museum director of the National Motorcycle Museum?

I became museum director at the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham in January 2014. It houses the largest collection of British bikes globally, with over 1,000 exhibits. October 2024 will mark 40 years since the late Roy Richards opened

the museum. The museum's collection appeals to families and casual visitors while continuing Richards' policy of maintaining operational bikes. A favourite is the museum-owned Norton Rotary 588 "White Charger" that won the 1992 Senior TT. I have put many miles on the new BSA Gold Star 650cc, a project I have been involved with since 2016. My career has also

afforded me memorable track experiences: Team Classic Suzuki lent me the Suzuki RG500 raced by Graziano Rossi (former MotoGP world champion Valentino Rossi's father), and I have ridden [former Australian motorcycle racer] Gary McCoy's Honda NSR500.

At the BSA launch in Mumbai, you spoke about the role you and the museum collection played in helping shape the Gold Star.

My involvement began in 2016 when the team from Classic Legends (CLPL) visited the museum to view our extensive collection of over 100 BSA motorcycles dating back to 1904. In

"Having seen Indian companies resurrect classic motorcycle brands, I can say that they manage to capture that elusive character; something even leading motorcycle-manufacturing nations like Japan sometimes struggle to achieve"

2017, CLPL held a design consultation meeting at the museum, bringing together industry partners, stakeholders and some BSA owners. I was part of the original group and recall that the new BSA Gold Star was just a design on paper at that time.

CLPL later set up a BSA office in Coventry, just a few miles from the museum. The team frequently visited the museum for design inspiration, as no other place offers such a comprehensive collection of BSA motorcycles. We were also honoured to host the UK launch of the Gold Star a couple of years ago. During our initial meetings, I suggested that the first new BSA should be a high-performance, twin-cylinder machine, contrary to prevailing opinion. I was happy to be proven wrong by

the success of the Gold Star 650 single, and I look forward to future projects, potentially including a twin-cylinder model.

#### What do you think of the classic retro motorcycling space?

For the past 50 years, motorcycles have been my passion and career. In the process, I have seen a lot happen, including the collapse of the original Triumph company in 1983, marking the apparent end of the British motorcycle industry. Never did I imagine I would see the revival of four of the big five British motorcycle brands—BSA, Triumph, Norton, Royal Enfield and AMC (AJUS/Matchless).

Motorcycle preferences have shifted over the years, reflected in feedback from visitors to the National Motorcycle Museum. Today's older riders aren't looking for 1000cc super-bikes like they did in the 1980s and '90s. Instead, they seek easier-to-ride and maintain machines that have character. Brands like BSA carry the image and history that appeal to these riders. With modern products like the Gold Star, BSA captures the essence of its heritage while offering contemporary appeal. Those preferences are also visible in the younger generation, whether it's classic cars, furniture, clothing, music, or motorcycles. Timeless style and durability are what they seek, and this isn't a fleeting trend. In a disposable world, retro motorcycles have an eternally cool factor.

#### What do you think brands are playing in bringing storied brands back to life?

Having worked with Classic Legends and seen other Indian companies resurrect classic motorcycle brands, I can say that Indian companies manage to capture that elusive character; something even leading motorcycle-manufacturing nations like Japan sometimes struggle to achieve. They comprehend the investment, passion and motivation needed to bring back brands with storied legacy like BSA and get it on a soul-deep level. They have a deep understanding of motorcycling and what it means to own a bike with a strong heritage.

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# Bridges to Nowhere

Shantanu Nandan Sharma |

Sultanganj, Siwan

**A**fter riding his motorcycle a few inches on the bridge, Munna Bharti decides it is best for his wife and daughter to dismount from the two-wheeler before he cautiously takes it across. The puliya (small bridge) over the Gandaki canal in Siwan, Bihar, is clinging to a single, wobbly pillar. "Even if we walk on it, the bridge shakes," says Pratima Devi, Bharti's wife, calling it a bridge to hell. "Hamara bank, bazaar sab udhar na hai, kiya kore (Our bank, market are all on that side, what can we do?)" she asks.

Then, a buffalo herder comes with his animals. He warily releases them in ones and twos across the bridge, wondering if it might collapse under their hoofs.

About 320 km southeast of Siwan, Ajay Yadav recalls witnessing a huge bridge collapsing not once, but thrice, in Sultanganj. Pointing towards the bridge that is under construction, he says, "I don't know if this bridge will ever be completed, but even if it does, I'll wait for months before I dare to use it." Yadav, a 51-year-old pakora seller at Jahaj Ghat, is not talking about some flimsy bamboo bridge in a remote village but about a ₹1,700 crore project over the Ganga, intended to link Sultanganj in Bhagalpur with Aguwani Ghat in Khagaria district. This 3.16 km, four-lane, cable-stayed bridge with a footpath has collapsed three times in the last nine years it has been under construction.

The state of Bihar's bridges has been a source of growing fear and caution, with over a dozen ones collapsing since mid-June and several others teetering dangerously. The frequent collapse of bridges has people pointing the finger at corruption and misgovernance in the state.

In the Maharaiganj sub-division of Siwan district, ET visited the site of one bridge that had been washed away and of two others that were shaking precariously. In Maharaiganj, four bridges have collapsed entirely, while two are in a state of disrepair, says Sub-Divisional Magistrate Anil Kumar. "The investigation is going on. But what we have discovered is that when the Gandaki canal was widened recently, the old bridges were left intact. When the floodwaters surged in June, the ageing structures could not withstand the pressure," he says, explaining why multiple bridges might have crumbled in the heavy rains of June and July.

According to information available with the executive engineer's office in Maharaiganj, 11 engineers have been suspended so far in the state. In addition to Siwan, bridges have collapsed in Madhubani, Araria, East Champaran and Kishanganj districts in the monsoon rains.

With over a dozen bridges collapsing in 10 weeks in Bihar and many teetering precariously, even daily commute has become hazardous



(Above) The bridge linking Bhikhaban and Parain Tola villages in Siwan has caved in the middle, but people still pass through it



The bridge between Nautan and Sikandarpur teeters on a tilted pillar over the Gandaki canal in Siwan

**Apart from Siwan, bridges have collapsed in Madhubani, Araria, East Champaran and Kishanganj districts in the monsoon rains**

The Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Ltd (BRPNNL), a public-sector enterprise specialising in bridge construction, has built over 2,000 bridges in the past five decades. Of the bridges that have collapsed, only one—in Sultanganj—has been built by them. "The other collapsed bridges were constructed by various departments like the water resources department and the rural works department," says Sunil Kumar, MD of BRPNNL. He explains that a "sudden increase in water levels" swept away several bridges that were built using an open foundation [which is shallow], a common practice in civil engineering for small bridges.

When questioned about the collapse of the Sultanganj bridge that is under BRPNNL, Kumar is quick to blame the contractor, SP Singla Constructions, a Panchkula-headquartered infrastructure company that has built bridges in

## 'A Bridge Maintenance Policy is Under Way'

Sunil Kumar, MD of Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Ltd (BRPNNL), a government agency responsible for bridge construction in the state, spoke with Shantanu Nandan Sharma on several pressing issues. Edited excerpts:

### On collapsed bridges:

The recently collapsed bridges in Bihar were built by different departments such as the water resources department, the rural works department etc. The foundation used in almost all the collapsed bridges was open foundation [which is shallow]. An investigation is on. We have constructed over 2,000 bridges but there is no incident of collapse except of the Aguwani bridge (that has collapsed three times during construction). Under the contract, contractor is solely responsible for the design and construction of the bridge.



### On early indications of design flaws:

The investigations made by IIT-Roorkee (in 2023) pointed to defects in design of the Sultanganj-Aguwani bridge.

### On financial loss due to repeated collapse:

In pursuance of a public interest litigation filed in the Patna High Court, the contractor (SP Singla Constructions) has given an undertaking to construct the collapsed structure at their own cost.

### On the lifespan of bridges:

The usual life of a mega bridge constructed by us is 100 years. But it depends on routine maintenance.

In the absence of a comprehensive maintenance policy in the past, the maintenance of bridges could not be carried out properly. However, inspection of all bridges constructed by us is on, and repair works are being carried out as per requirements. At the same time, preparation for a comprehensive bridge maintenance policy is under way.

The usual life of a mega bridge constructed by us is 100 years. But it depends on routine maintenance.

lapsing? "In pursuance of a public interest litigation at the Patna High Court, the contractor has given an undertaking to construct the collapsed structure at their own expense," says Kumar.

The bridge has collapsed three times—in 2022, 2023 and 2024. Says Gulshan Bhat, a shopkeeper: "On August 17, around 7 in the morning, I heard a massive sound. We all rushed to the river and saw that a large part of the bridge had vanished into the Ganga." The half-collapsed bridge has now become an unexpected backdrop for selfies for pilgrims gathering at Sultanganj's Jahaj Ghat to collect water from the Ganga before their foot march to Deogarh in neighbouring Jharkhand.

Meanwhile, Bihar's oldest bridge over the Ganga, the Rajendra Setu, which links Mokama with Begusarai, is under repair. Built in the late 1950s, this rail-cum-road bridge can no longer bear the burden of heavy vehicles. Due to its age and ongoing work, traffic is restricted to one direction at a time. It took over an hour for us just to cross the bridge. Incidentally, SP Singla Constructions, which is building the now notorious bridge in Sultanganj, is tasked with repairing Rajendra Setu.

What's the typical lifespan of a bridge, given that many of the collapsed structures in the state were constructed in the last 50 years? According to BRPNL's Kumar, a

mega bridge survives for 100 years. "But it depends on special maintenance, particularly of components like expansion joints and bearings," he says. He adds that a comprehensive bridge maintenance policy is being prepared to ensure that each bridge "lives up to its designed life".

### WEAKEST LINK

When a small bridge over the Gandaki canal at the Badka Teghra village in Siwan crumbled on a rainy June night, most villagers were fast asleep. "Early in the morning, we woke up to the milkman shouting, 'Pul gira, pul gira (the bridge has fallen)," recalls Soma Yadav, a motor mechanic. He says the river-widening project could have weakened the bridge as well.

Not too far away, another bridge connecting Nautan and Sikandarpur jiggles on a tilted pillar. It was battered by the rains the same night the bridge at the Badka Teghra village got swept away. The authorities have tried to close it off with bamboo barriers and a signboard that warns, "Cross the bridge at your own risk."

"But what choice do we have? Without the bridge, we face a very long detour," says Chandan Kumar Ojha, a clerk in Maharaiganj, as he navigates the rickety bridge on his bike.

Now, people inch their way across the bridge, everyone silently praying every minute that the bridge holds up till they reach the other end.

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**Alexey Fursin, head of the department of culture of Moscow, says, "Our objective is to create a platform where filmmakers from around the world can connect, collaborate and celebrate cinema"**

# Lights, Camera, Russian Action to Counter Hollywood

Moscow plans a cinema alliance of pro-Russia countries, including India and China, to stand up to the movie hegemony of US



**Charmy Harikrishnan | MOSCOW**

On the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a train to Kyiv, and Russia's business newspaper *Kommersant* led with the news of President Vladimir Putin's video conference on the "state of affairs in the Kursk, Belgorod and Bryansk regions"—cheekily adding that it "was attended by three heads of regions that were called border regions (the word 'with Ukraine' was omitted)—the city of Moscow put up a brave front and a resiliency face for a culture war. It opened its doors for a cinema alliance of friendly nations.

The inaugural Moscow International Film Week (MIFW), which began on August 23, had representatives from about 40 nations, including India and China. There were political and film representatives from Southeast Asia, West Asia, Africa, South America and members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Recep Erdogan of Turkey—where Russia is building a nuclear power plant and whose hyperemotional dramas are devoured by millions around the world—was possibly the only NATO member that was represented at the festival week.

In Moscow where one of the greatest communists, VI Lenin, lies in a mausoleum that is a bell's peal away from gold-domed churches, incongruities come together like they're wedged, many-shaped, multicoloured domes of St Basil's Cathedral. In this

city, warming under a late August sun, what could MIFW possibly mean?

When asked if this is the beginning of a cultural grouping against the US, Yuliya Slashcheva, CEO of Gorky Film Studio and head of SMF Animation, told ET: "This has never happened before. They have forced us now. Their domination is getting stronger and stronger, and we need to counter it. For that we need to unite our talents, competencies and resources. For example, if we unite China, India and Russia, we will be stronger."

This move towards a new movie entente comes against the backdrop of economic sanctions and a cultural boycott by the West. According to a Reuters report in March, about 1,000 foreign companies have exited Russia, suffering losses of about \$107 billion. Meanwhile, Muscovites say their own firms have stepped in, particularly in sectors like food and fashion, that they don't feel any difference.

Alexey Fursin, head of the department of culture of the City of Moscow, says the share of domestic brands in the Russian market has gone up from 56% in 2021 to 72% in 2023. According to a presentation by him, Uniqlo, H&M and Zarahave been substituted by local brands and retail chains such as Zarina, Befree and Trend Island. Can content be simi-

larly and easily substituted? The big American movie distributors have left Russia. The FIAPF, which is the International Federation of Film Producers Associations, has paused accreditation to the Moscow International Film Festival. Meanwhile, the share of domestic movies in the Russian cinema market went up from 22% in 2019 to 72% in 2023. Now, Moscow is trying to not just fill a gap but to prove that it can create a cultural world that is not dominated or dictated by the US.

Says Slashcheva: "Russia did not close its market to the US. They left. Almost all major studios have stopped distribution even though independent studios and distributors still send their content. They are making a big mistake. They are giving us a huge opportunity to grow. In 10 years, especially if we collaborate with industries in India, China and Latin America, we will be very, very strong."

**Major studios have stopped distribution. They are making a big mistake. They are giving us a huge opportunity to grow. In 10 years, if we collaborate with industries in India and China, we will be very strong!**

**YULIANA SLASHCHEVA, CEO of Gorky Film Studio & head of SMF Animation**

Yuliya Slashcheva, CEO of Gorky Film Studio & head of SMF Animation, believes that the hearts of Russian audiences. His work resonated deeply, symbolising the cultural and emotional connection between our nations. We are committed to reviving this association through the Moscow International Film Week."

It is an association that goes back 70 years. It was in September 1954, a year after Josef Stalin's death, that the first Indian film festival opened in the Soviet Union. There were movies like *Awaara*, *Do Bigha Zamin*, *Rahi* and *Andhiyan*.

KA Abbas, the Marxist writer-filmmaker, was the behind-the-scenes cultural conduit

### THOSE AWAARA DAYS

Moscow is tapping into the past glory of Soviet cinema and the current geopolitics to craft a future. The MIFW began with the Russian premiere of *Laapataa Ladies* at the celebrated cinema hall Khudozhestvenny where Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* had one of its earliest screenings.

In an email interaction with ET, Fursin recalls Raj Kapoor: "The association between Indian cinema and Russia is indeed storied, with Raj Kapoor's films holding a special place in the hearts of Russian audiences. His work resonated deeply, symbolising the cultural and emotional connection between our nations. We are committed to reviving this association through the Moscow International Film Week."

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He adapted Maxim Gorky's play *Lower Depths* for Chetan Anand's *Neecha Nagar* in 1946, which went to—and won at—Cannes. Abbas then wrote the story and screenplay for Kapoor's *Awaara*, which took the USSR by storm.

In Sudha Rajagopal's *Indian Films in Soviet Cinemas*, Igor Belotserkovskii, a Ukrainian living in Moscow, recalls how his entire village turned up to watch Indian movies. "The houses in our village were at quite a distance from each other so the postman cycled from door to door, announcing, 'Today! Indian film show!'" People rushed to get a seat at the film club. When the seats were filled, they lined up ladders against the wall and sat on the rungs. Some brought their own chairs. The "windows were opened so that people could watch the film while perched on their car roofs.... Speakers were placed outside the clubs so that those on the street could follow the film's dialogue and music." The songs resounded throughout the village, he says.

Rajagopal estimates that *Awaara* was watched by 63.7 million people in the USSR. Between 1954 and 1991, when the Soviet Union fell, about 210 Indian films were screened.

### QUIET FLOWS THE MOSKVA

That euphoria belongs to a different time and generation. Moscow is aware that this moment is vastly different from the Soviets under which Kapoor sang and Mithun Chakraborti danced and Geeta and Seeta separated. The Indian cinemas in a different place, having danced *Naukaat* at the Oscars and won the Grand Prix for *We Imagined a Light* Cannes. "When the Soviet Union was divided, Russia stepped into the market economy, the states suddenly stopped financing the film industry. There was no time to transition," says Slashcheva. "Meanwhile, the Indian film industry was smoothly developing. It did not have to suffer the economic changes that downshifted the Russian film industry. The Indian movie industry has become huge and we need to catch up. These kinds of events can lead to possible collaborations," she adds.

Moscow wants to roll out the red carpet for filmmakers—financial incentives and infrastructure that includes a 1,000-hectare film city that is being developed called the Moskino Film Park. "Our primary objective is to create a platform where filmmakers from around the world can connect, collaborate and celebrate cinema. We remain committed to engaging with the global film community and demonstrating Moscow's role as a leading centre for cinematic innova-

tion," says Fursin, who hopes this will also lead to a significant number of tourists trooping into the capital.

While film parks and film cities run the risk of becoming anachronistic in the age of AI, MIFW remains gungho about them—from the Hengdian World Studios and Qing Dao Movie Studio in China to the Mumbai Film City and the Ramoji Film City in India.

Away from the big Hindi movies and art-house films from Kerala and Bengal that lit up the Soviet screens, it is the Telugu industry that is now getting ready for a show. Priyanka and Swapna Dutt, coproducers of *Kalki 2898 AD*, say they will be releasing a dubbed version of the film in Russia in September.

Moscow remains nonchalant. As the Moskva flows quietly under bridges that look like hanging gardens of blue and purple flowers, teenagers zip past on e-scooters, people swipe Mir cards instead of Mastercard and youngsters move to *Living la vida loca*. Here, Ukrainian Night is a black-and-gold Koinji painting that glows in the Tretiakov Gallery and the only Kiev that is publicly mentioned is bread-crumb, uncontroversial and begins with a bird's name.

*The reporter was in Moscow at the invitation of the Moscow International Film Week*

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# When One Heard Lata Mangeshkar Sing 'Patjhad, Saawan, Vasant Vihar'

You can be a Hindi movie nerd, but comprehending filmi song lyrics can be a different, and difficult, ball game altogether – and misheard lyrics can be too embarrassing to share in public

## VOX OFFICE



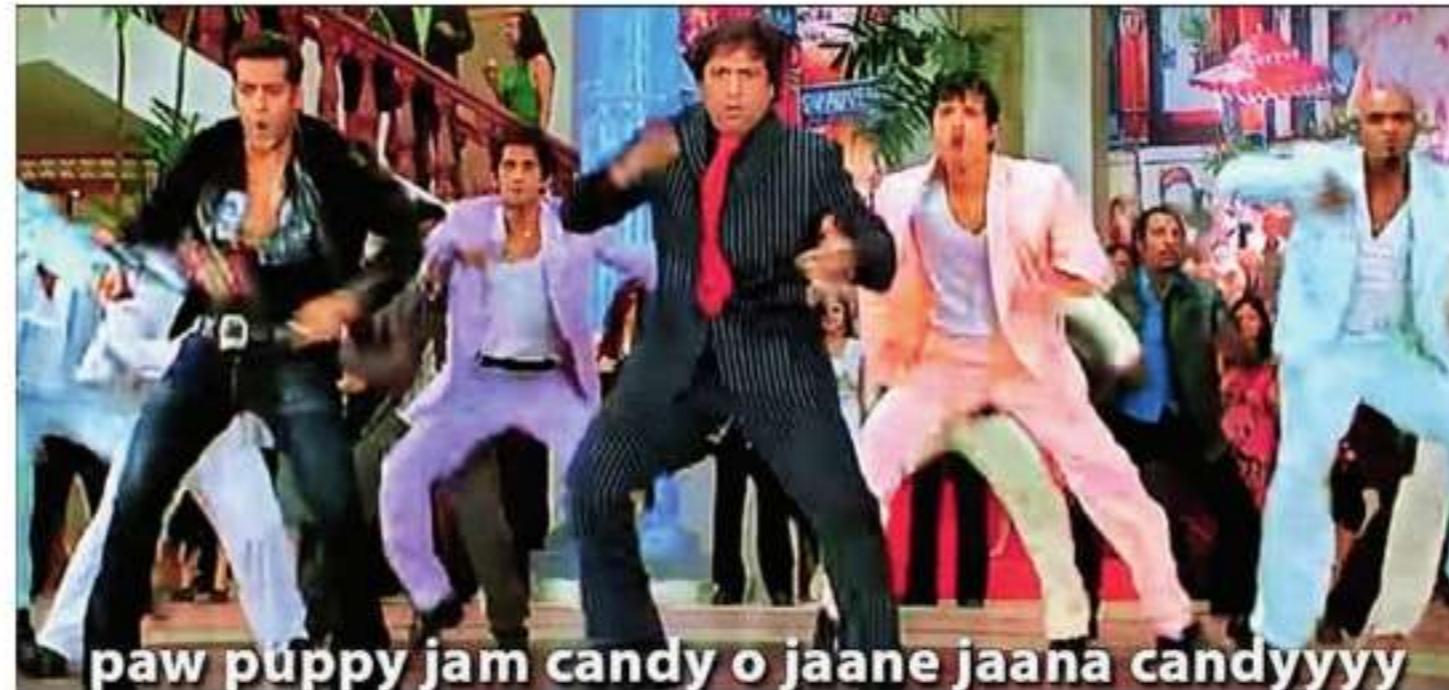
JAI ARJUN SINGH

min session where 5-6 movie nerds must condense their thoughts. There was camaraderie, unexpected links were made. During a tribute to Shyam Benegal, while speaking about his Charandas Chor, I took the opportunity to tell fellow panelist Ketan Mehta that his debut feature, Bhavni Bhavai, was one of my favourite films – artfully melding cinema with folk theatre in much the same way that Charandas Chor did.

But there was one session where I felt like an impostor – a talk about lyrics in our film songs. My own piece in the '70s book had centred on a song, 'O saathi re', from Muqaddar Ka Sikander – which I loved so much as a child that I tried to record myself singing it, before conceding that posterity would be better served by the Kishore Kumar version.

But much as I loved film songs while growing up, my engagement with them was more at the level of tune than lyrics. The music would often embed itself into my head even though I hadn't quite registered the words. I could, of course, understand an old lyric with the surface simplicity of, say, 'Mera joota hai Japani' or 'Nanhe munne bacche'. Closer to

All this was fun, given the constraints of a 40-



paw puppy jam candy o jaane jaana candyyyyy

### FRANKLY, DOES GETTING THE RIGHT WORDS EVEN MATTER HERE?

my own time, I loved the lowbrow wordplay of the Tom and Jerry song in Sharaabi – 'Khel raha tha danda gilli/ Choocha aage, peechhe bille'. Or lyrics that were accessible and integral to a narrative situation, like 'Chal mere bhai' from Naseeb.

But even today, I can say little of worth about

the differences in meter and philosophy in the poetry of Sahir Ludhianvi and Majrooh Sultanpuri. Loving masala Hindi cinema – with its dialogue-bazaar and dhishoom-dhishoom – was one thing. But it was quite another to process Hindustani or Urdu phrases of a certain complexity or literariness.

Much as I loved film songs while growing up, my engagement was more at the level of tune than lyrics

I don't know if this can be explained by the fact that I grew up in an Anglophone environment, with English as a first language. (Later, in my teens, encountering English lyrics by Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen or even Eminem, I memorised the words of entire songs without even consciously trying.) Or it may be because mainstream Hindi film songs of the 1990s tended to be lyrically formulaic, with endless permutations of 'pyaar', 'ikraar', 'deewana' and 'parwaana', encouraging laziness as a viewer.

As a child I loved romantic songs from films like Love Story, Betaab, and Ek Duuje ke Liye. But a line like 'Yaad aa rahi hai/ Teri yaad aa rahi hai...' couldn't be accused of lyrical amateurism.

One offshoot of this was the comedy of misheard lyrics when it came to more 'literary' songs. For instance, I spent years wondering why Amol Palekar in 'Ek akela iss shahar mein' was always searching for 'sabudana'. It

came as a relief to learn that other friends had made this mistake too – Gulzar's 'aab-o-aab' being too high-flown for us youngsters.

But there is one blooper that's unique to me. It involved a song from Sindoor, where Jaya Prada, using Lata's voice, lists the seasons thus: 'Patjhad, Saawan, Basant, Bahaar'. The first of those words was so indecipherable for me that I made no effort to understand the meaning of the line. And then, as an insular South Delhi kid, I figured that the last two words were 'Vasant Vihar'. For a few days, I felt a strange pride that a Bombay movie had acknowledged a posh Delhi colony in this timeless way.

Naturally, this was a disclosure I avoided making in the discussion last month, in the presence of Bhardwaj and many other maestros of song.

The writer is author of *The World of Hrishikesh Mukherjee: The Filmmaker Everyone Loves*

## FILM FATALE



ANNA MM VETTICAD

## Mind the Gaps in Magic Realistic Land of Nowhere

A Pakistan-India series has fantastical elements allude to present-day truths

**Politicians and bigots** may forever find ways to keep warring neighbours on edge. But as long as there is art, there will be collaboration, and as long as that happens, there is hope.

This season, hope has taken the form of Barzakh, an India-Pakistan venture produced by Waqas Hassan and Shailja Kejriwal, helmed by Pakistani-British director Asim Abbasi. Barzakh stars Pakistani actors Sanam Saeed and Fawad Khan who have been heartthrobs in India since they became known here through Pakistani serials in the 2010s.

Barzakh is on Zee5 in India, but was taken down from YouTube Pakistan last month – 'voluntarily withdrawn', said a statement by Zee's Zindagi channel, due to 'current public sentiment in Pakistan'. The reported reason: opposition to Barzakh's LGBT-plus content. In an India routinely subjecting art and artists to fundamentalists' diktats, this feels like a familiar story.

Barzakh is set in the Land of Nowhere where the wealthy Jafar Khanzada (Salman Shahid) has invited his estranged sons from earlier marriages to attend what he insists is his final marriage. This time the bride will be the ghost of his long-dead lover, Mahtab. Jafar has an acrimonious relationship with his boys, Shehryar played by Fawad Khan and Saifullah by M Fawad Khan. (Sigh, two Fawads!)

Jafar's caregiver, who also manages his resort, Mahtab Mahal, is a daughter-like figure of mysterious origins, Scherehaze (Sanam Saeed). Jafar is at loggerheads with the poor locals, ever since he constructed Mahtab Mahal on the graves of their ancestors. He isn't an alien though. He was once one of them. At the forefront of the campaign to reclaim their land is Jafar's brother, Jabbar.

In terms of genre and treatment, Barzakh is far removed from Abbasi's 2020 series Churails, a fast-paced thriller about a group of women vigilantes exposing unfaithful husbands in contemporary Pakistan. Barzakh is deliberately slow, steeped in magical realism, set in an unspecified time and a mythical realm where fantastical elements allude to present-day realities.

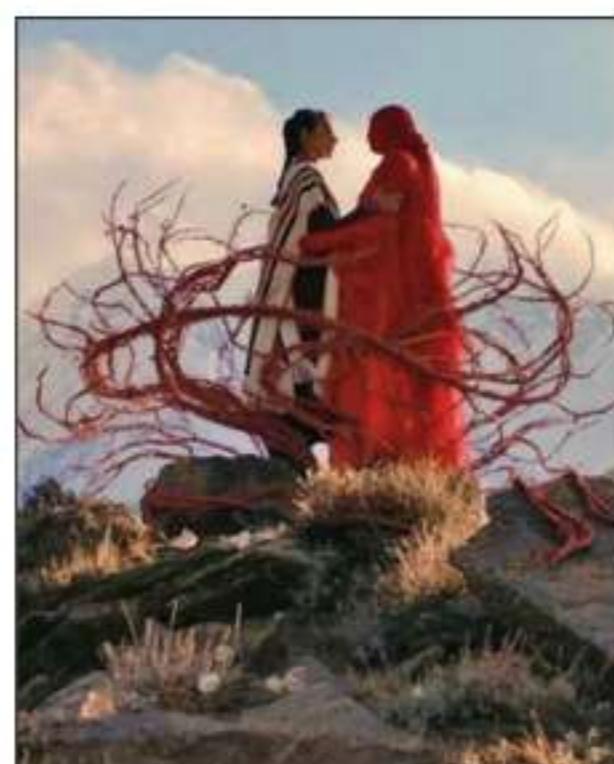
While I have still not bought into some of its more abstract imagery, I found myself being gradually seduced by Barzakh's soothing tone, exquisite visuals, a burst of unexpected song in the final episode, the charismatic cast, excellent acting and, above all, the multi-layered commentary. Jafar condemns Jabbar and the community for Mahtab's murder without introspecting about his role in it. Her end came because he set out to make his fortune and left her behind, no different from millennia of men before him leaving wives behind – literally or figuratively – in their quest for glory, fulfillment, riches or spiritual enlightenment. What her dreams and goals were, he did not ask.

'Barzakh' is Urdu for interval, connecting link or barrier. In Islam it denotes space between death and resurrection, akin to purgatory in Christianity. When this concept is juxtaposed against the metaphor of a mythical snake eating its own tail that gets repeat play in Barzakh, Jafar and Jabbar are India and Pakistan – siblings stuck on a plateau of all-consuming turmoil as we fight over a piece of land and past grievances. Is self-destruction the inevitable end? Will it lead to regeneration and rebirth?

Even bolder than this allegory is the constant reference to The Book in the narrative. 'It was written, therefore it must be,' is the mindset of pivotal characters in this saga. Yet, as the show reminds us, The Book has blank pages too. Ultimately then, what Barzakh bats for is interpretation, independent thinking and evolution, all of which are anathema to the religious Right everywhere.

Ironically, it's not this but Saifullah's reluctant surrender to his sexual orientation, a beautifully written and acted relationship between two men, that has angered conservatives. If this were a social media post and not a column, this is the precise spot at which I would place an eye-roll emoji.

### TANGLED UP IN VIEW



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

## Written Word Has Become Performance Art

People are reading less, but binge-watching shows and listening to lo-o-ong podcasts. So, attention spans haven't shrunk that much

### ON THE LEDGE



PALASH KRISHNA MEHROTRA

This piece is not a lament for the death of the written word. The written word is alive. For, try as you might, it's not possible to give up on language altogether. Doing that would plunge us into silence, and trust me, even though people say they crave silence, most find silence unbearable.

Which is why even those who indulge in solitary exercise like jogging, have earphones plugged. But the irony is: reading, as an act, is a form of silence. Perhaps that's why it's gasping for survival.

Let's just put it this way – people are, on average, reading less but watching and listening more than ever before. They are consuming words, which are obviously written by someone, but not reading them. Words have to be converted into image and audio. Otherwise, they die before they are born. Or they float alone in cyberspace, in someone's unread blogpost, like a dead astronaut in a space suit – persona non grata even in death – suspended in a faraway galaxy.

Think about what happens when

we watch a show on YouTube – John Oliver, Dhruv Rathee, or Trevor Noah. They all have to perform the piece, which is, in essence, a longish op-ed. This is what works nowadays. The hosts tackle weighty issues in their shows. Some of the material is written by them, the rest by a team of writers.

While consuming these shows/content, there comes a point when I start to wonder why I'm watching a reasonably pleasant-looking man, reading off a teleprompter/autocue, talking at express pace, rushing through the material, deploying forceful tonal voice modulation, manipulating facial expression and using a lot of hand gestures. I feel like a passive student in a non-interactive

classroom, with an energetic teacher putting on a jolly good show.

Reading, on the other hand, is interactive. One reads a bit, then stops, wanders, makes connections.

Writers will break up an article into 3-line paragraphs, which are then shared on Instagram stories, or threads on X. The fear is that otherwise no one will bother clicking on the 'link in bio'. The gist is what matters. No one cares about the intricate stitching and embroidery, the flow of argument, how one paragraph hangs on the baton to the next, the quiet punchline.

People will avoid reading as far as is possible. Even videos are headed in that direction, with the option to

speed up videos and voice now available.

While The Onion has announced a print edition, humour writing, in general, is on the way out. Standup comics, too, have to enact their written gags and jokes. The written word has become performance art.

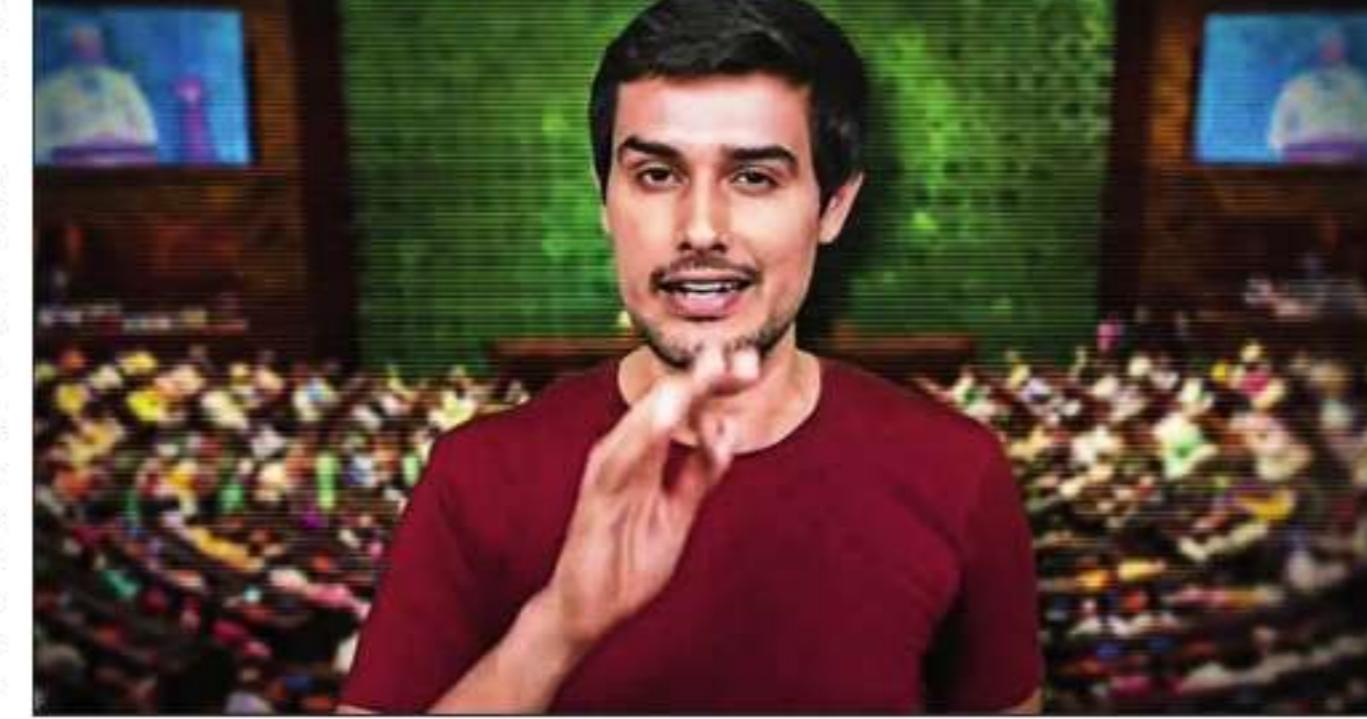
The paradox is that while reading is given short shrift, people love to consume podcasts that go on for hours and binge-watch seasons of OTT shows. Attention spans haven't shrunk that much.

One explanation offered by those who don't read is that reading is not for everybody. But there was a time not too long ago when everyone who was literate at least read the newspaper end-to-end. In Hindi, the phrase was: 'Paper chaat jaana' – literally lick the paper clean. On long-distance train journeys, one had to guard one's newspaper more than one's luggage. The passenger sitting next to you kept an intrusive eye on you when you'd reached the end of the sports page, which was his cue to politely request to borrow it. But before you had even opened your mouth, the paper would be snatched and shared with other passengers.

Then there's the argument professed by Very Busy People that one can listen to an audiobook or a podcast, while working or commuting – basically it aids multitasking. Except that when you're multitasking, you're reading Very Boring Puff, like email, memos, and bills. Or preparing PPTs. Might as well read the good stuff.

The writer is editor, *House Spirit: Drinking in India*

### When we watch Dhruv Rathee or Trevor Noah on YouTube, they essentially perform a longish op-ed



WATCH THEM READ OUT THEIR OWN WRITING

## Finding Oasis in a Desert Of Self-Righteous Twee

Return of the Brothers Gallagher isn't just about old fogeys reliving their hey-heydays

### ROCK'N'ROLL CIRCUS



INDRAJIT HAZRA

The biggest happening last week – after the ET World Leaders Forum yesterday, that is – was confirmation that Oasis is reforming to play again after 15 years. And by 'reforming,' I don't mean 'making changes to amend or improve', of course. This is Oasis. By 'reforming' I mean reconstituting, like putting back the rock with the roll.

Brothers Noel and Liam Gallagher – the Paul and John of arguably Britain's biggest mainstream musical enterprise since the Beatles – went down acrimoniously through their own personal Reichenbach Falls in 2009, after push came to backstage 'altercation' at the Rock en Seine festival in Paris, where Liam apparently tried to attack his brother with a guitar. Things had grown ugly after elder brother and songwriting engine Noel had blocked frontman Liam from a clothing advertising deal for a forthcoming festival. Yes, that's how the cookie crumbles for a band ...that created stunning, anthemic tunes like 'Wonderwall', 'Stand By Me' 'Don't Look Back in Anger', and 'Supersonic'.

Fact is, Oasis had turned to shite much before 2009, so you can't really blame UPA-2 this time. I saw them headlining at the 2004 Glastonbury Music Festival.

retrofitted nostalgia). So is this going to be one of those (monetised) opportunities where old fogeys on the cusp of retirement will get to relive their hey-heydays in the age of Taylor Swift rainbow friendship bracelets and nasal Coldplay ersatz by raising their cellphones (no one apparently possesses lighters anymore) and singing in unison as if in a Sound of Music Nuremberg rally. 'Because me-beeee/ Youggonnabetheone who saves me-eeee/ And afta aa-aall/ You're my wonder-wa-aaall'. Well, hell yes, and not totally. Since their

lighters anymore) and singing in unison as if in a Sound of Music Nuremberg rally. Insta-gratification and opinion-spieling could deliver a good dose of anti-self-righteous vaccine to the 2020s.

So, will I catch the Brothers Gallagher next summer in Cardiff, Manchester, London, Edinburgh, or Dublin? If for nothing else but to hear that scorching Noel opening guitar line in 'Cigarettes and Alcohol' and see/hear Liam tilting at the microphone like the Man from La Manchester and sneering away: 'Is it worth the aggravation? To find yourself a job when there's nothing worth working for?' Definitely maybe.

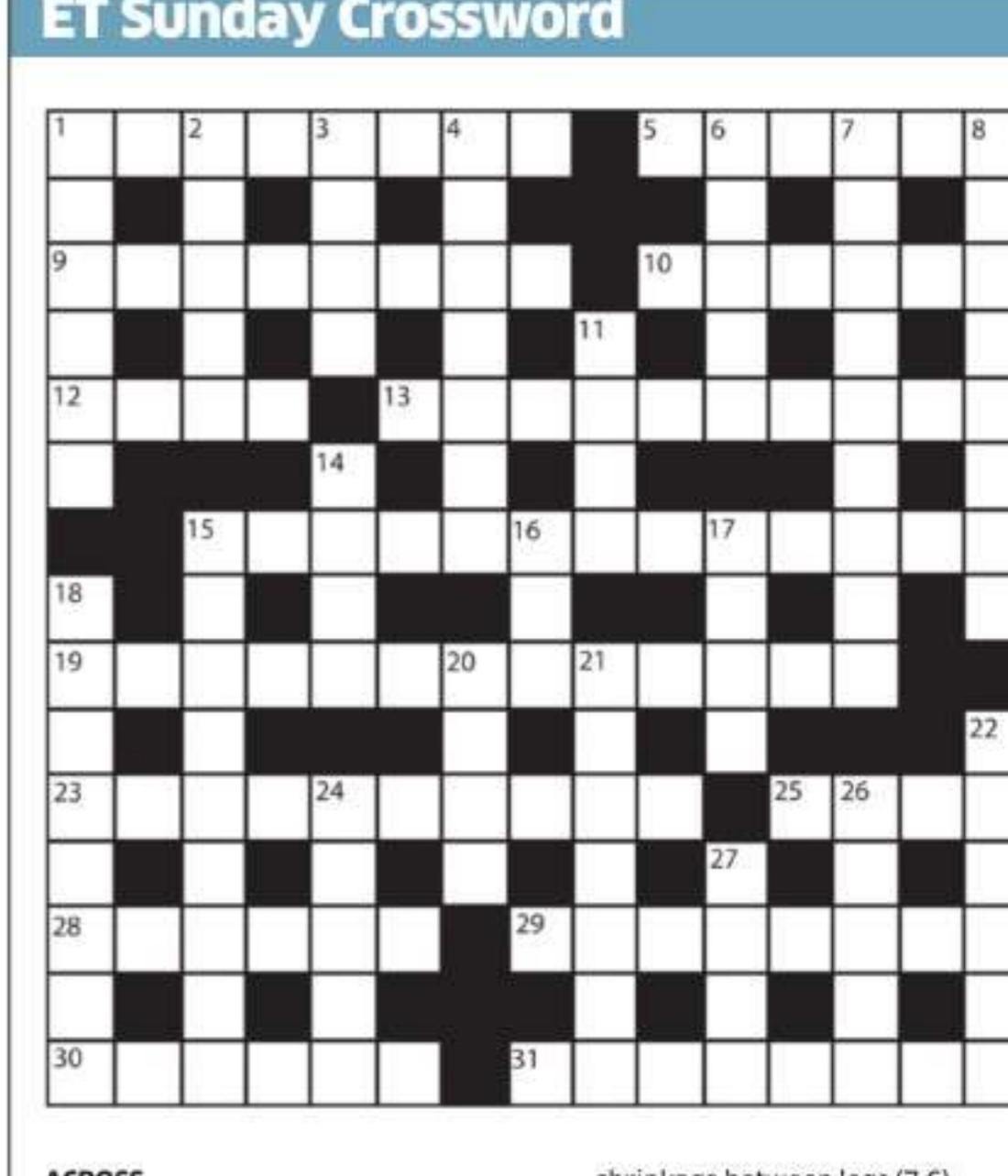
WHAT YOU LOOKIN' AT, TAYLOR TWATS?

Indrajit.hazra@timesofindia.com

### NO OFFENCE



### ET Sunday Crossword



**ACROSS**  
 1 Various names etc. in the frame (8)  
 5 Head of college pours out complete works (6)  
 9 Oddly cold new curate's easy to understand (5-3)  
 10 Singer allowed to entertain pub (6)  
 12 I could swear it's hidden in boathouse (4)  
 13 Does cutting up birds seem wrong? Money's taken in ... (10)  
 15 ... family butcher's shop contents (5,3)  
 19 Dressmakers use them to alter

**DOWN**  
 2 Copper company hires fine upstanding migrant (6)  
 3 Line in bed linen (5)  
 4 Spicy English house (4)  
 6 Wash hours in making up feed (7)  
 6 Hate platform with no front (6)  
 7 Thinks deeply about Open University – it's weighty (9)  
 8 Reject EU farm policy (3-5)  
 11 Topless ladies – good or bad sign? (4)  
 14 Some guidelines needed for food outlet (4)  
 15 Diversions replaces part in special kind of railway (9)  
 16 Fool a German bodyguard (3)  
 17 Sounds like an old South African pig (4)  
 18 Drug reduction's a blow (8)  
 20 Section of elevated flower-garden got bigger (4)  
 21 After ploughing, the acre becomes a larger area (7)  
 22 Pal's to finish after Friday (6)  
 24 Inaccurate story, say, about Belgian city (5)  
 26 Basket-maker's stockings topped and tailed (5)  
 27 Throw up small seat (4)

24 League 26 Oscar 27 Ripe 28 French 29 Dumb 30 Farce 31 New World 32 Downhill 33 Freshers 34 Dishes 35 Dishes 36 Dishes 37 Dishes 38 Dishes 39 Dishes 40 Dishes 41 Dishes 42 Dishes 43 Dishes 44 Dishes 45 Dishes 46 Dishes

## Ecomm Giant Alibaba Wins Beijing's Nod

**BEIJING:** Alibaba Group has secured the endorsement of China's antitrust watchdog more than three years after a landmark probe into its online behaviour, suggesting Beijing is keen to signal its support for the country's giant internet sector. China's e-commerce leader has ceased the monopolistic practices that prompted an investigation more than three years ago, the State Administration for Market Regulation said in a statement. It stopped forcing exclusive arrangements on merchants, improved services for shoppers and fostered competition among online platforms, the agency said. — Bloomberg

## Polio: UN to Vaccinate Gaza's Kids

**GENEVA:** The United Nations will start vaccinating some 640,000 children in the Gaza Strip against polio on Sunday, a campaign that relies on daily eight-hour pauses in fighting between Israel and Hamas militants in specific areas of the besieged enclave. The complex campaign, which is targeting children under age 10, follows confirmation last week that a baby was paralysed by the type 2 polio virus, the first such case in the territory in 25 years. WHO officials say at least 90% of the children need to be vaccinated twice with four weeks between doses for the campaign to succeed, but it faces huge challenges in Gaza, which has been largely destroyed by nearly 11 months of war. — Reuters

## 'Making Policies with Eye on Future'

► From Page 1

The Prime Minister emphasised that India has on several occasions outperformed both predictions and peers. The economy, he said, has almost doubled. "This is the sustained growth that we have achieved, this sustained growth is what we have promised, and this sustained growth will continue in future," he said.

Asserting that the government's theme of "reform, perform and transform" has been put into practice, he said there is trust in the policies, decisions and intent of his government. At a time when the people of several countries voted for change, his government was re-elected in June, scoring a hat trick as people voted for political stability and economic growth, he said.

"Today, India's progress is making global headlines," he said. "This third decade of the 21st century is like a 'lift-off' decade for India."

He said Indian businesses were eager to join in the development drive and encouraged them to achieve global scale and become world-beaters.

"Today's India is a land of opportunities," he said.

"We are confident that India's future will be much better. We have taken a pledge to make India Viksit Bharat by 2047. We are aware that you too want to enthusiastically take part in this growth journey of India. We want more and more companies in India to become global brands. We want India to become a leader in every sector."

The Prime Minister underlined that India aims to ensure inclusive growth in the Global South. The country is becoming a voice for these nations, a Vishwa Bandhu, he said.

"Today's world is dynamic and hence the strategies and policies of our government are also dynamic," the PM said.

"We are taking all necessary steps in keeping with all challenges... We are not making our policies on the basis of the past but with an eye on the future. Our focus is on the future. We are preparing the country for the challenges and opportunities of the future."

Modi said that making the country a global manufacturing hub is an aspiration for every Indian and it is also a global expectation.

## Ukraine Braces for Grim Winter amid Strikes on Power Plants

After unprecedented Russian air raids, Kyiv and nearby cities struggle to maintain power as the energy infrastructure crumbles

Bloomberg

**Kyiv:** A summer house in the countryside east of Kyiv now offers Hennadii Samofalov a safer and more stable life than his high-rise apartment in the Ukrainian capital. He doesn't need to use an elevator and has ac-

cess to an uninterrupted supply of water and other amenities.

"Power issues made it extremely challenging to reach the thirteenth floor," the 75-year-old retiree said. "It's a problem even to make tea, as everything runs on electricity."

Russia's massive attacks on Ukraine's power grid have forced many

### Ukraine's Incursion into Russia's Kursk Region Legitimate: NATO's Stoltenberg

**BERLIN:** Ukraine's incursion into Russia's Kursk region is legitimate and covered by Kyiv's right to self-defence, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told German weekly Welt am Sonntag in his first reaction to the advance into Russian territory. "Ukraine has a right to defend itself. And according to international law, this right does not stop at the border," Stoltenberg said, adding that NATO had not been informed about Ukraine's plans beforehand and did not play a role in them. — Reuters

### TORRENTIAL RAINS WREAK HAVOC ACROSS 11 DISTRICTS

## Students Mobilise Revolutionary Spirit into Flood Relief Efforts in Bangladesh

PTI

**Dhaka:** In the wake of severe flooding in Bangladesh, the student community, which led the people's uprising that resulted in the ouster of Sheikh Hasina, is channelling its revolutionary zeal into spearheading flood relief efforts for millions affected by the calamity.

"This is just about relief; it's about making a difference, just like we did during the Monsoon Revolution," said Rafiq, a student at Dhaka University, as he and fellow students formed a human chain at the heart of the campus, passing sacks of rice and other supplies hand to hand to load onto trucks bound for flood-stricken regions of Bangladesh.

The student community across Bangladesh has risen to the occasion, demonstrating their ability to lead and mobilise resources in a time of national emergency.

The recent floods have spurred a remarkable wave of student-led relief efforts, transforming their recent revolutionary fervour into a crucial force for recovery.

The torrential rains that triggered the floods have wreaked havoc across 11 districts, including Feni, Chittagong, and Sylhet, and the magnitude

### Death Toll Climbs to 59, 5.4 m+ People Affected



Bangladesh students engage in relief work for flood victims. — PTI

of the disaster has overwhelmed traditional relief mechanisms, elevating the role of students to that of primary responders.

In Dhaka, the capital, a surge of student activism has shifted from political protest to flood relief. Sara Khan, a third-year political science student at Dhaka University, has been a central figure in these efforts.

"Our recent struggles for democracy have proven our ability to effect

Dhaka: At least 59 people, including six women and 12 children, have died in the devastating floods which affected more than five million people in 11 districts of Bangladesh, officials announced on Saturday. The Disaster Management and Relief Ministry said the highest deaths were reported from Cumilla and Feni districts, both adjoining the border with Tripura in India on the Northeast side, with 14 and 23 deaths respectively. Monsoon rainfall-triggered floods in deltaic Bangladesh and upstream Indian regions have wreaked havoc in the country for about two weeks resulting in deaths and displacement of humans and cattle, and loss of property posing a huge administrative challenge to the newly-installed interim government. — PTI

change," Khan stated. On August 5, the student-led Monsoon Revolution under the banner of "Students Against Discrimination" succeeded in ousting Hasina's 16-year regime, propelled by fervent demands for change and accountability.

Immediately after the floods struck, student volunteers from Dhaka, Chattogram, and nearby areas mobilised to Feni with life jackets, basic food, drinking water, trucks, and

### Hasina's Extradition Key to Indo-Bangla Relations: Fakhrul

**DHAKA:** BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has said that it's crucial to start a new chapter in the Indo-Bangla ties, which should begin with the extradition of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, as her continued presence in India could further damage bilateral relations. The veteran leader, the second-in-command of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), emphasised his party's desire for strong relations with India, stating they are prepared to "move past previous differences and collaborate". — PTI

speedboats to rescue those stranded, driven by their recent activism and unified resolve despite the absence of formal organisation.

like him to consider their options as a grim winter without heating looms. This week's air raids on Kyiv and other cities across the country were the largest since Russia's full-scale invasion began two and a half year ago.

In June, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy estimated that such attacks cost his country 80% of its thermal power-plant capacity and one-third of hydro-power production, crucial for smooth electricity supplies. Diesel generators are becoming a normal part of life; this year prolonged blackouts, once a feature of fall and winter, persisted throughout the summer.

The recent air raids followed Ukraine's surprise incursion into Russia's Kursk region. The authorities need to restore damaged power plants and find a way to defend them — and do both while the barrages continue.

### Russian Strike Kills 5 People

**UKRAINE:** Five people were killed by Russian shelling in the town of Chasiv Yar on Saturday as Moscow's troops continue their push on Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region. The attack struck a high-rise building and a private home, said regional governor Vadym Filyashkin, who said the victims were men aged between 24 and 38. He urged the last remaining residents to leave the front-line town, which had a pre-war population of 12,000. — AP



Relatives show each other hand hearts next to an evacuation train to Western Ukraine, in Pokrovsk, Ukraine. — Reuters

## Several Drivetrain Options

► From Page 1

Also, unlike in the past when petrol was often the only fuel option in small cars, consumers may now get several drivetrains to choose from, including CNG and battery-electric.

MG Motors has already seen success in this price-sensitive segment with its small electric car, Comet.

"We recognise the crucial role this segment plays in making car ownership more accessible across cities. As urban populations expand and traffic congestion intensifies, there is a growing need for cost-effective, practical vehicle options," said Satinder Bajwa, chief commercial officer at JSW MG Motor that now makes MG-badged vehicles in India.

Introduction of similar models by other automakers, along with government support, especially for EV models, can attract more customers back to entry-level vehicles, say industry watchers.

### AFFORDABILITY IS KEY

Given that a new car typically takes a minimum of 24 months to be launch-ready, Maruti Suzuki chairman Bhargava's prediction of a 2026 revival suggests that new offerings are already in the development and testing phase.

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## Brazil Blocks X

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** X began to go dark across Brazil on Saturday after the nation's Supreme Court blocked the social network because its owner, Elon Musk, refused to comply with court orders to suspend certain accounts. Alexandre de Moraes, a Brazilian Supreme Court justice, ordered the telecom agency to block access to X across the nation of 200 million because the company lacked a physical presence in Brazil. — NYTNS

**TIMES TRIBUTE**

PAYING HOMAGE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL



In Rememberance of a Visionary Legacy  
On the occasion of 94th Birth Anniversary of

**Dr. Chhabil Dass Bhatia**

(Lalaji)

01.09.1930 - 05.05.2021

Founder - C. DASS GROUP

Visionary leader whose passion and dedication laid the foundation of C.Dass Group, his legacy continues to inspire us every day.

As we remember him, we reaffirm our commitment to the values and principles he cherished, ensuring his vision lives on in all we do.

Remembering

Lalaji

Every Moment

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## Focus on Infrastructure

THE MINISTER SAYS...



In railways, the govt has laid down more than 31,000 km of tracks in the last 10 years, with an average of 14.5 km per day in 2023-24

rement of social infrastructure. Speaking on the progress of physical infrastructure, Vaishnav said the government has approved rail, road, airport and port projects worth ₹2 lakh crore since coming to power for a third term.

In railways, he said the government has laid down more than 31,000 km of tracks in the last 10 years, with an average of 14.5 km per day in 2023-24. On India's first high-speed bullet train project, Vaishnav said 327 km of viaduct has been constructed

numbers further: That is amply clear," Shekharwati said. India has progressed rapidly in the last 10 years under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

"More than 150,000 kilometres of highways have been developed. New train tracks have been developed. We have electrified rail routes and have operationalised trains such as Vande Bharat and other high-speed trains," he said. "We have transformed the

aviation industry. The number of airports has doubled and the number of airline passengers has gone up by leaps and bounds." India is progressing in financial metrics as well through Modi's reforms, Shekharwati said. "Moody's has raised India's GDP growth forecast to 7.2% for 2024. The prime minister has worked on uplifting the poor and most reports concur that about 25 crore have been lifted out of poverty," he said.

"India is rising in the popularity charts," Shekharwati said.

"I met the Google CEO and APAC head and I told them I wished to understand about the subjects that drive people's curiosity about India post 2019 as per your trends. I am told searches on India's cuisine, cultural diversity and tourism possibilities have grown 48%."

gaged in a different competition, and India's issues with China are different from those of the US, he said. "The US-China relationship has many dimensions to it. Even business has a social obligation. We cannot be hollowed out in the name of globalisation. India's situation is very different. I've for years had global companies come into my country at the cost of my local players," Jaishankar explained. When asked about what transpired in the meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent trip to Kyiv, Jaishankar said: "What Zelensky said is between Zelensky and us."

Responding to a question about PM Modi's train ride to Ukraine, Jaishankar said, laughing: "I could have done with a Vande Bharat." The minister also discussed the broader global context, noting ongoing conflicts and rising tensions in various regions, which have heightened geopolitical risks.

## No Risks with US'

► From Page 1

"Decades ago, the world decided to overlook problems in China. Now everyone has a problem. India has a special China problem over and above the world's China problem... the sensible thing to do is take precautions which a country like India should be taking," he said.

Jaishankar said if people were complaining of a trade deficit with China and "we are too", it was because decades ago, "we consciously overlooked the nature of Chinese production and the advantages which they enjoyed in a system where they got a level playing field with all the advantages they brought to bed".

Understanding the uniqueness of China is crucial for formulating effective policies, he said. The US and China are very

# Circuit Breaker

India has plans to become a centre for sustainable electronics component manufacturing. Will a proposed new incentive scheme for the sector help in achieving that aim? **Aashish Aryan and Subhrojot Mallick** find out

In 2022-23, the world produced electronic goods worth \$4.3 trillion, of which China had a 59% market share. This was nearly two times the combined market shares of the next eight countries, which include the US, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, and developing economies such as Mexico, Malaysia and India.

But while the gulf is wide on paper, the post-pandemic world has presented the developing economies with a billion-dollar opportunity.

Experts said that apart from making its presence felt in the mobile manufacturing space and trying to enter the diversified semiconductor supply chain, India should also look to top the cake with the cherry of the electronic component ecosystem.

For this, they said, a new incentive scheme to help establish a sustainable electronic component manufacturing ecosystem in the country will go a long way in cementing India's role in global supply and value chains.

The government has proposed to allocate up to ₹40,000 crore for the electronics component manufacturing scheme, likely to be rolled out later this year. As per initial discussions between stakeholders, the scheme is likely to be a capital expenditure subsidy in some cases, an operational expenditure subsidy in others, and a mix of both as and where necessary. Of the ₹40,000 crore, about ₹19,800 crore is likely to be allocated as subsidy for operational expenditures and roughly ₹13,000 crore for capital expenditure subsidy.

However, to be successful, the new scheme needs to adopt a multi-pronged approach, such as having adequate capital expenditure support, providing necessary operational expenditure incentives, addressing non-tariff barriers, and providing access to global markets to allow Indian companies to compete globally, according to the experts.

"We have suggested two layers of support. One is for those components which require higher support and do not have an ecosystem in the country. The others are those which do not require much support because there is already some ecosystem still existing in the country, but highly inadequate," said Rajeev Goel, the secretary general of the Electronic Industries Association of India (Elcina).

**SKewed RATIO**  
Of India's total electronics imports, 60-70% are of components and sub-assemblies, which go into the making of products such as mobile phones, televisions, laptops and personal computers. One of the

biggest challenges that India's still-nascent electronics component sector faces is the investment-to-turnover ratio.

According to government estimates, an investment of up to ₹5 crore by a company operating in the finished products segment can yield a turnover of up to ₹100 crore, ensuring ample profits and keeping the cost of capital low.

On the other hand, an investment of ₹50-100 crore by a company making electro-mechanical components or lithium-ion cells for electronics products will yield a turnover of only up to ₹100 crore per year for the company.

**"There are larger, structural issues that need to be addressed. Can we set up clusters? Can we have a flexible labour policy?"**

— Atul Lall,  
MD, Dixon Technologies

This skewed ratio, Goel said, keeps the cost of capital high, necessitating the need for incentives and up to 40% capital expenditure subsidy for these companies.

Other challenges such as lack of scale, absence of original design manufacturers, high-gestation period and excessive import dependency also need to be tackled.

"There are also larger, structural issues that need to be addressed—can we set up clusters? Can we replicate and set up what the Tamil Nadu government has done in terms of setting up dormitories? Can we have a flexible labour policy? These are larger issues but also an extremely important element to build a component ecosystem," said Atul Lall, vice-president of homegrown electronics major Dixon Technologies and president of Elcina.

The ministry of electronics and information technology, the nodal ministry for the ideation and implementation of these schemes, estimates that going by the current trend, the domestic demand for electronic components is expected to reach \$160 billion by the end of 2028-29, up from \$41 billion in 2022-23.

In an internal note, the IT ministry has estimated that the component production ecosystem, along with exports, would have to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 53% to meet domestic demand. ET has seen a copy of the internal note.

"It battery packs, camera and display modules, printed circuit boards and electro-mechanical components for mobile phones, IT hardware or other consumer appliances, our import dependency is huge," a senior government official said. "Electronics import is the second largest commodity

import in India after oil."

Although these challenges seem insurmountable on paper, the solutions are well within the reach of the government, said Goel.

To begin with, the industry needs to create products where the components being produced can be used to create new markets. Existing domestic markets, which depend a lot on imports, will find it difficult to consume the domestic production, he said.

"From that point of view, we need access to global markets. For that, we need support for testing, getting global approvals and some export promotion support," Goel said.

Another industry executive said that apart from these, the government should also focus on reducing logistics and finance costs while removing tariff disabilities.

"These are not financial needs, but these other aspects required for setting up factories and continuing running them. That cannot be part of a policy, because one ministry cannot dictate to the other how to pass clearances. But if you are taking two days to clear customs, that hurts efficiency," the executive said, requesting not to be named. "These are indirect financial costs to companies."

#### CHANGING NEEDS

Another aspect that needs to be looked at when it comes to setting up a component ecosystem is the potential to create high-value jobs.

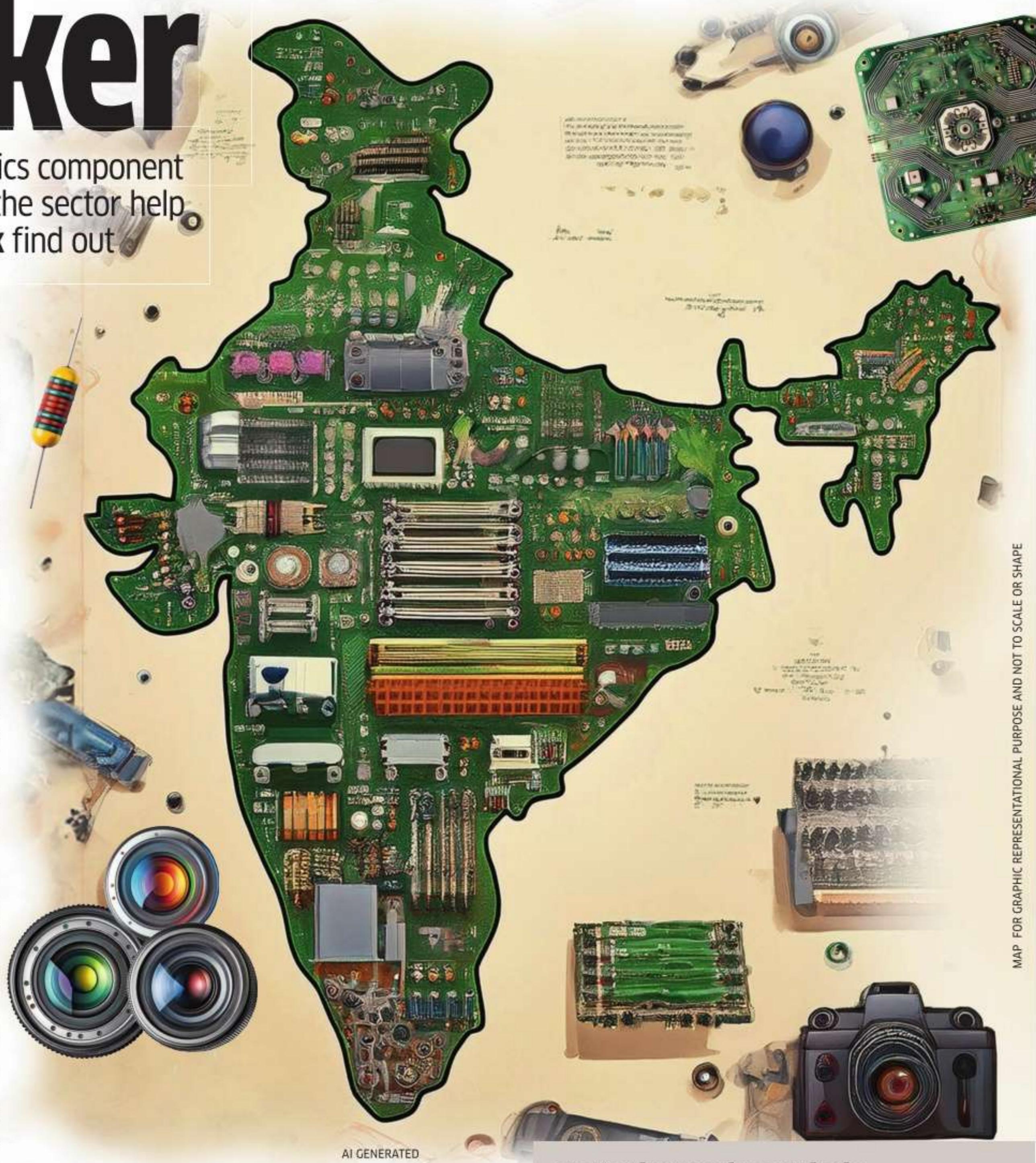
Unlike assembly of finished goods, where floor staff are required in large numbers to assemble products part by part on an assembly line, it's a lot more automated in the case of components and sub-assemblies, according to experts.

"Because of their precise nature, both sub-assemblies and components that go into a mobile phone require a high level of automation. Components require more automation, sub-assemblies maybe less," said an industry executive.

According to the executive, the employee distribution in the assembly business is around 80% floor staff and 20% technicians and associates. For sub-assemblies, nearly 50% of the jobs are of associates or operators, 30% technicians and only 20% floor staff. This number is far higher for component production, which is almost entirely automated and the need for floor staff is less, the executive said.

To facilitate this, the government is now also planning to link employment to the incentive component makers can potentially get, apart from being linked to investment and incremental revenues, said Lall.

Factors such as import dependency, though complex due to the nature of global supply chains, can also be



**"We need access to global markets. For that, we need support for testing, getting global approvals and some export promotion support."**

— Rajeev Goel,  
secretary general, Elcina

offset by tweaking the tariff structures. For example, raw materials such as laminate, copper foil, dry film resist, solder mask ink and pre-preg are not manufactured in India.

These products are used in the manufacturing of printed circuit boards (PCBs), camera modules, display assemblies and lithium-ion cells, among other electronic components. Most of these products, including laminate, copper foil, dry film resist and solder mask ink are manufactured only by some companies and are, therefore,

unlikely to be manufactured anytime soon by domestic companies, experts said.

"For example, there is aluminium-clad copper laminate required for manufacturing PCBs. Now, because there are duties on aluminium and copper, it is subject to import duty, which is causing a problem for PCB makers," Goel said.

The government also needs to ensure actual domestic value addition, which is still lagging despite the successes of plans such as the production-linked incentive scheme for smartphones.

Despite a sharp fall in imports of mechanics, vibrator motors, charger adapters, plastic parts, and other parts by value and volume, domestic mobile phone manufacturers imported more high-ticket items such as camera modules, display assemblies and battery packs last fiscal, underlining the need for

#### Parts that make a whole

Bare components	Raw material
PCB, flex PCB	Laminate, pre-peg, copper foil
Lithium-ion battery	Electrolyte, separator cathode/anode coating
Capacitors	Polypropylene film, spray wire
Camera module	Lenses, protective film
Display assembly	Glass cover, back light, contrast film, polariser film
Resistors	Electronics grade metal and metal alloy
Mechanics	Metal, metal alloy, auxiliary materials, plastic granules

deepening local value addition to make exports more competitive.

For instance, import of camera modules, which accounts for about 10% of the bill of materials (BoM) in a mobile phone, increased by 2.3% by volume, while battery packs, which account for about 6% of the BoM, increased by 12% by volume in the previous fiscal. This, even as the volume of import of plastic parts fell by 33%, and that of mechanical parts such as vibrator motors fell by 4%

last fiscal. Incidentally, both components saw a reduction in import duty from 15% to 10% in the interim budget presented in February.

Lall of Dixon Technologies said that to make the scheme a success, the government should focus more on getting companies that make PCBs, including flexible and high-end ones for mobiles, mechanical, electro-mechanical, display and camera modules.

## New Gen AI Use Cases Will Change the Future of Business



SANDIP PATEL

Across India and the globe, the democratisation of Gen AI is well underway. The idea that there is a foundation model for everyone represents a profound opportunity for productivity and workforce revolution. The ability to intelligently automate tasks and gain instant insights has the potential to reshape the nature of work and how businesses operate, creating a new division of work between humans and machines.

Based on IBM's global 2024 CEO study, 72% of top-performing CEOs agree that competitive advantage depends on having the most advanced Gen AI.

As we reach a tipping point, where the economics of AI for business becomes compelling, applying the technology is not so much about seeking moonshots or adding some short-term incremental benefit. Rather, as the following examples

show, customised foundation models offer the opportunity to return all fundamental business priorities and processes with AI at their core.

Ensuring a positive customer experience is vital for every organisation. As such, one of the primary business value opportunities involves leveraging AI assistants for customer support.

A third use case with far-reaching implications involves enterprise developers augmenting their work with AI coding assistants. High-quality code can be created using AI-generated recommendations, based on natural language requests or existing source code. One example involves transforming business services relying on COBOL into high-quality Java code. This can help developers and IT operators simplify their ability to assess, update, validate and test the right code, accelerating application modernisation efforts.

Similarly, we are also witnessing the emergence of Gen AI platforms that provide insights to thoroughly understand the application landscape. This enables IT teams to discover the connections, dependencies, gaps and opportunities within an organisation's application architecture.

As we explore new use cases, nowhere is the potential to create Gen AI-powered solutions greater than in India, fuelled by youthful demographics and a rapidly growing tech talent pool. But as we race ahead, for the technology to thrive, it has to be built on a foundation of trust — always remembering that the purpose of AI is to augment human intelligence and not replace it. That's why scaling responsible AI practices and policies that promote explainability, fairness, transparency, robustness and privacy are critical for AI systems to be universally accessible and applicable.

**ENSURING AVAILABILITY**  
**Scaling responsible AI practices and policies are critical for AI systems to be universally accessible and applicable**



pushing out travel and weather alert notifications. As much as 94% of our employee interactions now happen through an AI chat interface without human intervention. This has enabled our HR team to refocus on more value-creating tasks.

A fourth use case with far-reaching implications involves enterprise developers augmenting their work with AI coding assistants. High-quality code can be created using AI-generated recommendations, based on natural language requests or existing source code. One example involves transforming business services relying on COBOL into high-quality Java code. This can help developers and IT operators simplify their ability to assess, update, validate and test the right code, accelerating application modernisation efforts.

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*The author is managing director, IBM India & South Asia. All views expressed are personal.*

## The Cybersecurity Threat Facing SMBs



Aashish Aryan & Kumari Rajakshmi Singh

Cyberattacks against small and medium businesses (SMBs), especially in India, continued to grow in 2024. Globally, SMBs faced more than 559 million attacks between April and June 2024.

A survey of more than 1,400

IT professionals across these SMBs revealed that 88% of respondents experienced cybersecurity incidents in the past 12 months, while about 79% are concerned about ransomware attacks impacting them.

Moreover, 96% respondents said they would pay the attackers if an attack takes place.

Here are some additional numbers, as revealed by the survey:

**What lies ahead for SMBs?**  
50% Respondents who perceive nation-state attacks as a major cybersecurity risk  
63% Respondents who anticipate a rise in cybersecurity spending

SOURCE: ESET STUDY ON SMB IN INDIA AND ASIA PACIFIC  
PIC: GETTY IMAGES

Total attacks on SMBs: 559 million
Total DDoS attacks on SMBs: 56.9 million
Total bot attacks on SMBs: 276 million
Total cybersecurity incidents recorded in India: 2.03 billion

<b>Factors contributing to cyberattacks</b>
53% Critical high-level vulnerabilities
49% Inadequate security measures
48% Extensive use of cloud applications



9.9% of EV registrations in the region, down from 10.2% in July 2023, according to Dataforce. Overall demand for EVs continued to weaken after Germany, Europe's largest auto market, removed incentives. But Chinese automakers and their European counterparts that import battery-electric cars into the EU have been scrambling to adjust to the introduction of new tariffs, that raised duties on Chinese-made EVs to as high as 48%.

— Agencies

**Bits & Bytes**

**META FACES \$3.6-MN FINE IN BRAZIL FOR ALLOWING BOGUS ADS**  
Meta faces a fine of up to 20 million reais (\$3.62 million) after losing a lawsuit in Brazil, by a department store that accused the company of accepting paid advertisements that fraudulently used the retailer's name to deceive consumers. In her ruling, Judge Joana Ribeiro said it was unacceptable for Meta to sell ads in an insecure way.

**CHINESE EV MAKERS SUFFER SETBACK IN EUROPE**  
Chinese automakers registered fewer electric cars across Europe in July, as new tariffs amplified the impact of a broader slump in EV sales. Chinese brands accounted for





A figurehead of Admiral Nelson overlooks the structure housing HMS Victory as it undergoes a restoration project

PICS: AFP

## Deathwatch Beetles Threaten Admiral Nelson's Warship

HMS Victory has survived the cannonballs of Napoleon's navy, being rammed by a warship, a World War II bomb and several plans by the British Navy to scrap it. But nearly 260 years after it was launched, the ship is facing its most daunting challenge yet: The deathwatch beetle.

The warship is currently undergoing a 45-million-pound refit, one of the biggest of its kind being carried out. The renovation follows the unwelcome discovery that much of the wooden structure was affected by rot.

Surveys found that rain water had caused decay and created food for the dreaded beetles. Without urgent action, Victory would have continued to degrade, ending in "catastrophic structural failure", conservation project manager Simon Williams said.

On the ship, shipwrights painstakingly replace parts of the "frames" — described as the vessel's ribs. After that, "replanking" will see it given a new outer layer.

Shipwright James Haycraft said

much of the work involves the exact same techniques his predecessors would have used two-and-a-half centuries ago.

"The tools I'm using — they solve the problem," he said, pointing to his plane, a mallet and a chisel.

### STORIED SHIP

Victory's story is inextricably intertwined with that of Admiral Lord Nelson, who masterminded a string of victories over the French, culminating in the 1805 Battle of Trafalgar; in which he died defeating the combined French and Spanish fleet, thereby ending the threat of invasion by Napoleon.

The last time Victory underwent a revamp at this scale was in 1814. In 1922, a 'Save the Victory' campaign, spearheaded by the Society for Nautical Research, also led to major work and it was opened as a museum six years later.

If the current project goes to plan, it is hoped it will allow Victory to survive out in the open for at least another 50, maybe even 100, years.

— AFP

## Meet the Reigning Couple of Russian Literature

For Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, translating together is their life's work

The New York Times

The first time Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky translated a Russian novel together, it felt as if another man had joined their marriage: Fyodor Dostoevsky.

"It was a 'marriage à trois'" Volokhonsky said. "Dostoevsky was always in our mind. We just lived with him."

They were, Pevear recalled, pouring themselves into *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky's immense final novel.

### WORKING TOGETHER

After the translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, published in 1990, Pevear and Volokhonsky, 81 and 78 respectively, have become reigning translators of Russian literature, publishing an average of one volume per year, including classics by Leo Tolstoy and Anton Chekhov, as well as lesser-known books and works by contemporary writers including Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich.

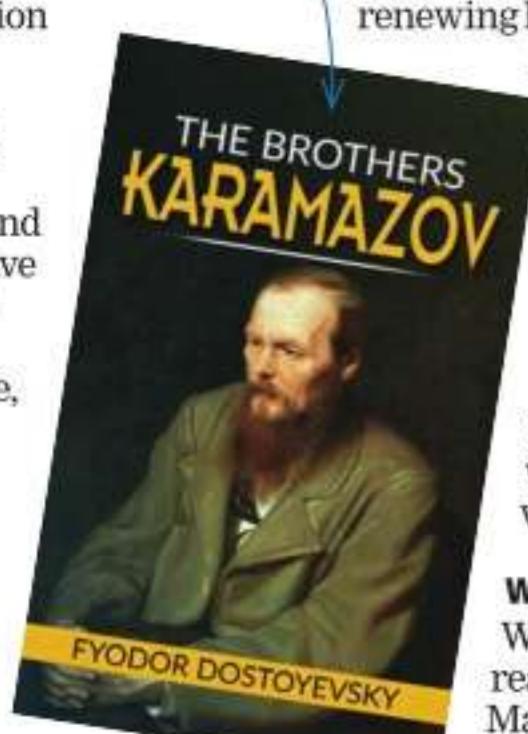
Their latest project is a translation of Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin's *Foolsburg: The History of a Town*. In Russia, the book is read in schools and regarded as a masterpiece of 19th-century satire.

**MEET CUTE**

Pevear, an American writer, had published an article that caught the attention of a Russian professor named Irina Kirk. She wanted to introduce him to a friend of hers who had emigrated from the Soviet Union: Larissa Volokhonsky, who, while a graduate student in



PIC: NYT



Leningrad (modern-day Saint Petersburg) in 1973, had moved to the United States by way of Italy.

Volokhonsky, a linguist by training, had enrolled at Yale Divinity School, Connecticut. Pevear, who was living in New York at the time, went to meet her, not knowing that she was actually in his city renewing her visa. "It was like Nabokov," Volokhonsky said with a laugh.

They eventually met in Connecticut, and when Volokhonsky moved to New York, it was to an apartment across the street from Pevear's building. It wasn't long before they were living together.

### WORD FOR WORD

When she saw that he was reading David Magarshack's translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, she decided to join him, reading the original in Russian. Sometimes, out of curiosity, she would ask how a seemingly idiosyncratic phrase was translated, only to find out that it wasn't. "Suddenly, a light went on," Volokhonsky said. "We decided that we'd translate it."

Before sending their translation to the publisher, Pevear read it aloud while Volokhonsky followed along with the original book.

After its success, they signed a contract for three additional Dostoevsky books, which sold well, then moved on to Nikolai Gogol, which didn't. They then made their way to Tolstoy.

— NYT

David Copperfield's neglect of his penthouse has left his neighbours upset, but he can't be found

# The Vanishing

The New York Times

For New Yorkers, living alongside celebrities is de rigueur. Sometimes, however, even for long-time residents of this glitz, cramped city, things can go wrong.

A lawsuit filed last month sheds light on one such problem: The story of when magician David Copperfield abandoned his penthouse apartment in a "trashed state", flooding the houses and common areas below. And it wasn't the first time.

### BEST TRICK EVER?

Copperfield grew up in New Jersey and has spoken of stealing into Manhattan as a boy to learn magic. Once successful, he set his sights on the stately Galleria building in Manhattan in the mid-1990s, and the tabloids took notice.

"How did David Copperfield get the owners of the luxurious penthouse apartment at the Galleria to drop their price from \$18 million to the paltry sum of \$11 million?" *The Daily News* asked in 1997. "Could be his best trick ever." He paid \$7.4 million, the lawsuit says.

### APARTMENT HISTORY

The price cut, the column suggested, perhaps owed to the layout of the idiosyncratic apartment. The 16,000-square-foot quadruplex was designed for Stewart R Mott, the son of a General Motors executive, whose passions included philanthropy and gardens.

The penthouse's unusual glass walls would allow him to "greet the sun on rising from his bed in the East Solarium and to watch it sink from a desk that faces west, all amid 10,000 square feet reserved for planting", *The New York Times* wrote in 1975.

But as building costs rose, including fortifying the building to accommodate the weight of the soil he wanted for planting, Mott's enthusiasm dwindled. He was also an otherwise busy man (When a newspaper reported that he had slept with 40 women over an eight-month period, he issued a correction, saying the number was 20.) He never moved in.

And then Copperfield arrived.

He was unquestionably a household name at that time. A string of prime-time TV specials culminated in what is perhaps his best-known trick, making the Statue of Liberty vanish.

But to his neighbours below, Copperfield was the guy with the penthouse. And an enigma. "Never saw him, never met him," said James Meyer, a former resident. "I don't know anybody who knew him in any sort of way."



The magician owns an estate in Las Vegas, a resort spanning 11 islands in the Bahamas, but for those in the Galleria, it seemed as if he had simply forgotten about the penthouse

### WATER FALLS

Copperfield's apartment began on the 54th floor. On his third floor — the building's 56th — he had a private pool, with a room containing the various pumps and machines directly below.

On March 8, 2015, a valve in this room "failed". Water rushed through his apartment and seeped more than 30 storeys below, soaking walls and knocking out an

alarm system.

PICS: NYT



## Three action movies to get your heart pumping

The New York Times

### THE ARCTIC CONVOY

Set in the summer of 1942, *The Arctic Convoy*, directed by Henrik Martin Dahlbakken, tells the story of a small vessel tasked with transporting arms to the Allies. When the fleet's British navy escort suddenly departs from the boat's fleet, leaving them to fend for themselves against the German navy, Skar (Anders Baasmo), the captain of one vessel, decides to continue his mission despite the protestations of his frightened first mate, Mork (Tobias Santelmann).

*The Arctic Convoy* is two tales of survival. The first is a power struggle between Skar and Mork. The other fight is with the Germans. Big sea battles and high-flying action between fighter planes provide visceral suspense to this psychologically rich war film.



### HOUSE OF GA'A

A lavish historical epic filled with plenty of backstabbing, *House of Ga'a* takes place during the 18th century in the Oyo Empire of West Africa. Bashorun Ga'a (Femi Branch) is considered not only a great soldier but also a respected prime minister. Ga'a, however, wants more power: He greedily decides to murder the empire's Alaafin (ruler), which sets off a chain

reaction with supernatural evils.

From director Bolante Austin-Peters, *House of Ga'a* features wonderful period details such as colourful costumes and precise set pieces, including Ga'a's lavish village.

### NON NEGOTIABLE

Alan (Mauricio Ochmann) is considered by many to be the best crisis negotiator in Mexico, but he can't seem to mend his marriage with his wife, Victoria (Tato Alexander), a psychologist. His disgraced colleague Vincente (Leonardo Ortizgris) — who's angry with Alan for not backing him after a hostage situation went awry — is looking for revenge and trying to take down a corrupt government. Vincente kidnaps the country's crooked president (Enoc Leaño) and takes Victoria captive, too. It's up to Alan to free them.

Director Juan Taratuto's *Non Negotiable* is a long standoff, unlike *Inside Man*. A vat of rom-com tropes, espionage mechanics and elaborate suspense-thriller set pieces result in a crowd-pleasing experience.



PICS: GETTY IMAGES

## Why Are Samosas Fighting Empanadas in the UK?

### FOOD FABLES



VIKRAM DOCTOR

At one end of a building in Porvorim, Goa, is a branch of Café Central, a Panjim institution famous for delicious mushroom samosas. At the other end is Mona's Coffee Shop which sells Peruvian snacks, like rich *alfajores* cookies and half-moon-shaped mini-pies called *empanadas*. This makes it one place in India where you can sample a culinary confrontation

taking place in the UK.

Rod Liddle in *The Spectator* recently noted that *empanadas* seemed to be everywhere in the UK, "so it's goodbye samosas, because there's only room for one savoury triangularish pastry on the counter". Liddle has built a career by being performatively rude to anyone he sees as an authority figure, so he naturally blames this change on "cultural shifts, accidents, busybodies and lobbyists".

But I think there might be more to this trend. It could show how migration from Latin America to the UK is picking up. Nearly every Latin American country makes *empanadas*, and it makes sense for new immigrants to sell them, to break into the UK's booming food scene. Snacks that are handheld and easy to take away are also easier to sell, and it helps if they resemble something familiar.

This is also how samosas first

established themselves, replacing Cornish pasties, another triangular savoury snack traditional to the UK. Adrian Mole, the hapless hero of Sue Townsend's books, was given what he thought was a Cornish pasty by his new Indian neighbours at a celebration for

Prince Charles and Lady Diana's marriage in 1981. "It was not a Cornish pasty," he writes, his mouth still burning with spices. Shrabani Basu writes in *Curry in the Crown*, her history of Indian food in the UK, that around this time, a bored housewife named

Perween Warsi, originally from Muzaffarpur, "made half a dozen samosas and took them to her local takeaway to sell". They did so well that Warsi started making *desi* snacks on a larger scale.

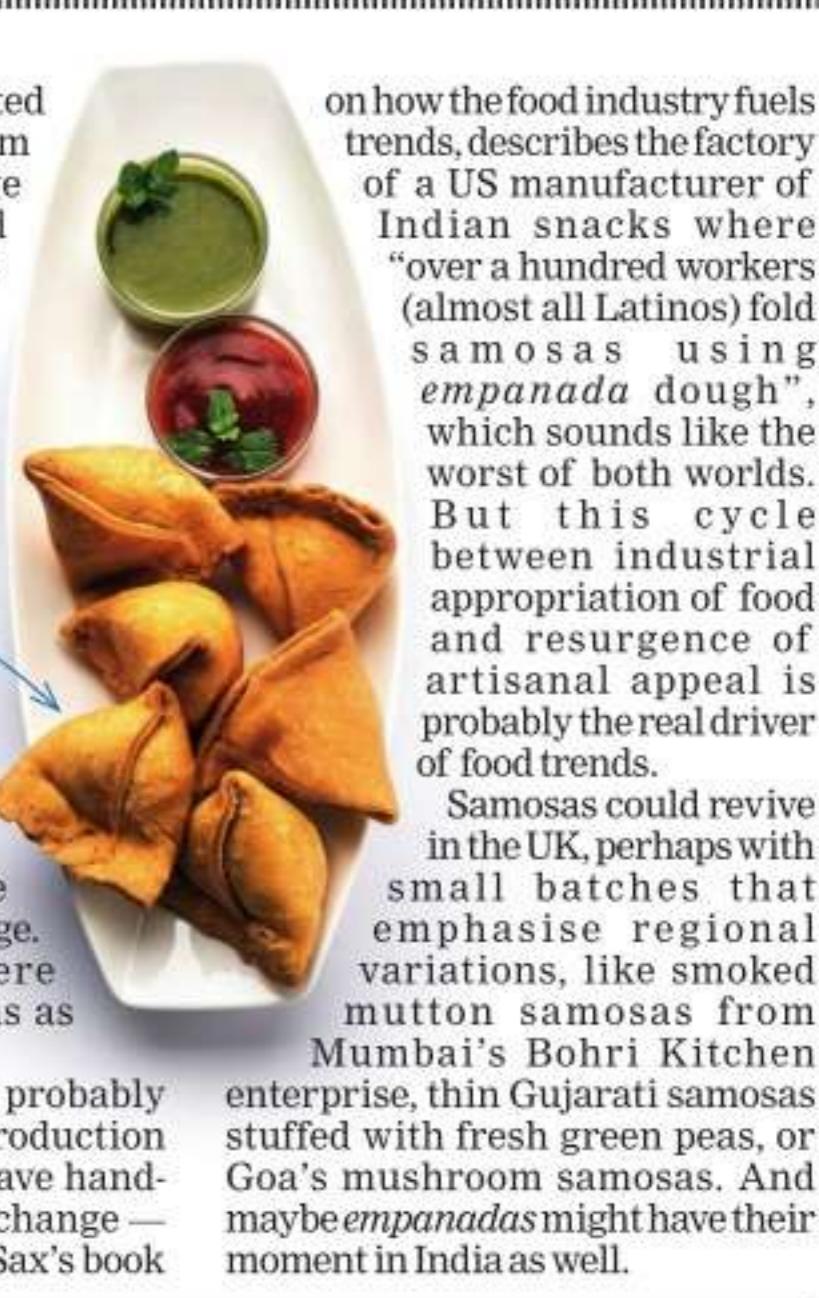
Supermarkets showed interest and she started making samosas on an industrial scale — and this, I think, is where the problems started. There are now robots that fill and fold 600 samosas an hour, and the results can be OK but not like hand-made, small batch samosas. (Warsi's company declared bankruptcy in 2015 after being dropped by a supermarket). I've seen this happen in Mumbai too, after samosas from one supplier started monopolising the market, particularly in cinema halls. They weren't bad and even gained a cult following, but without quite realising, I stopped eating them. Sitting in display cases, ready to be reheated, the samosas just didn't seem desirable.

It was only after I started organising Sunday film screenings in a college auditorium that I realised the difference. The canteen operator was happy to supply samosas which, he said proudly, he made really well since he came from Uttar Pradesh (implicitly casting shade on that major Mumbai supplier). And whether it was the hand-made pastries, or the fact that he only started frying after I alerted him 30 minutes before the end of a film, but the difference was really huge. Suddenly, people were coming for the samosas as much as the screenings!

*Empanadas* in the UK probably haven't reached mass-production scale yet, so they still have handmade appeal. This may change — *The Tastemakers*, David Sax's book

on how the food industry fuels trends, describes the factory of a US manufacturer of Indian snacks where "over a hundred workers (almost all Latinos) fold samosas using *empanada* dough", which sounds like the worst of both worlds.

But this cycle between industrial appropriation of food and resurgence of artisanal appeal is probably the real driver of food trends. Samosas could revive in the UK, perhaps with small batches that emphasise regional variations, like smoked mutton samosas from Mumbai's Bohri Kitchen enterprise, thin Gujarati samosas with fresh green peas, or Goa's mushroom samosas. And maybe *empanadas* might have their moment in India as well.



**VITALS**

**DURAND CUP**  
NorthEast United Beat Bagan on Penalties For Maiden Title



Goalkeeper Gurmeet Singh pulled off a couple of exceptional saves in the penalty shootout as NorthEast United overcame a two-goal deficit to stun Mohun Bagan 4-3 to win their maiden Durand Cup title after the regulation time ended with the score locked at 2-2 on Saturday. The 24-year-old judged brilliantly and showed superb footwork to deny Liston Colaco in the third strike, and then in the fifth attempt, he stood like a wall to deny Bagan captain Subhashish Bose and seal the match in his team's favour. Mariners who had to settle for their 13th runners-up finish in the Asian's oldest tournament that completed its 133rd edition. For actor John Abraham's team, this was their first-ever silverware since inception, and it couldn't have been sweeter, coming in front of a full, passionate Mohun Bagan fans at the iconic Salt Lake Stadium. PTI

**ITALIAN GRAND PRIX**  
**Norris Leads McLaren Front-Row Sweep**  
Lando Norris swept to his second successive pole position, and third in four races, in a McLaren front row sweep with team mate Oscar Piastri in qualifying for the Italian Grand Prix on Saturday. Red Bull's Formula One leader Max Verstappen qualified only seventh, one place behind Mercedes' seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton. Reuters

THE STARTING GRID		
#Driver	Car	Time (min)
1. Lando Norris	McLaren	1:19.327
2. Oscar Piastri	McLaren	1:19.436
3. George Russell	Mercedes	1:19.440
4. Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	1:19.461
5. Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	1:19.467
6. Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	1:19.513
7. Max Verstappen	Red Bull	1:20.022

**Italian teenager Andrea Kimi Antonelli will step up to F1 next season and replace Lewis Hamilton at Mercedes,** the team announced on Saturday. Antonelli, who turned 18 on August 25, will partner George Russell, another product of the team's junior programme, after Hamilton moves to Ferrari after this year. AFP

**Samit Dravid in India U19 Squad**  
Samit Dravid, son of former India captain and head coach Rahul Dravid, was on Saturday named in the India under-19 squad for the upcoming multi-format series against Australia. The three-match one-day series will be held in Puducherry from September 21 to 26. The series will then move to Chennai for two four-day matches beginning on September 30 and October 7. Samit, a pace-bowling all-rounder, is currently playing for Mysore Warriors in the ongoing KSCA Maharaja T20 trophy in Bengaluru. PTI

**INDIA U19 SQUADS**  
**One-day:** Rudra Patel, Sahl Parakh, Kartikeya KP, Mohd Amaan (C), Kiran Chormale, Abhigyan Kundu (wk), Harvansh Singh Pangala (WK), Samit Dravid, Yudhajit Guha, Samarth N, Nikhil Kumar, Chetan Sharma, Hardik Raj, Rohit Rajawat, Mohd Enaan.

**Four-day:** Vaibhav Survanshi, Nitya Pandya, Vihan Malhotra, Soham Patwardhan (Cn), Kartikeya KP, Samit Dravid, Abhigyan Kundu (WK), Harvansh Singh Pangala (WK), Chetan Sharma, Samarth N, Aditya Rawat, Nikhil Kumar, Anmoljeet Singh, Aditya Singh, Mohd Enaan.

## Beyond Wins and Medals

The Paralympics are important for the way they impact society



**Boria Majumdar**

After beating India's Sivarajan Solaimalai 21-13, 18-21, 21-15 in a group game on Friday, Hong Kong's Chu Man Kai went across the net and bowed to appreciate the efforts of his opponent. The two embraced each other before walking off the court while holding each other's hand. It was sport at its best. Although they had given their all on the court, the moment the match was over, it was all about spirit and values.

The Paralympics is not just about winning or losing. The essence of Olympism (or Paralympism, if we can call it that) is not in the medals won, records broken or television rights sold. The Paralympics, and its records and statistics, are important for the way they can impact society. Thus, when the para-athletes march in the opening ceremony even when some of them are competing under the refugee flag, or when Chu crosses over to the other side of the net to embrace Sivarajan, or when two armless archers, USA's Matt Stutzman and Mexico's Victor Sardina, do a 'feet five' after a hard-fought contest, the significance of such acts

# Popyrin Pops Djokovic

Defending champion crashes out of the US Open after losing to 28th-seeded Australian. Quest for 25th Grand Slam ends in 3rd round after 'worst tennis'

**Howard Fendrich**

**N**ovak Djokovic did not go easy on himself when assessing the listless way he performed from the start of the US Open, pointing to his sloppy serving as the main reason the defence of his 2023 title surprisingly ended in the third round. "I have played some of the worst tennis I have ever played, honestly," Djokovic said, just after midnight as Friday turned to Saturday. "Serving — by far — the worst ever."

"With 14 double-faults, raising his tournament total to 32, Djokovic bowed out with a 64-64, 24-6 loss to 28th-seeded Alexei Popyrin of Australia, another shocking result at Flushing Meadows one night after 2022 champion Novak Alcaraz exited."

If it's only the third time in the Open era that two of the top three men's seeds at the U.S. Open are gone before the fourth round, the other instances were in 1973 and 2000.

"It was just an awful match for me," No. 2 Djokovic said.

"I wasn't playing even close to my best. It's not good to be

in that kind of state where you feel OK physically and of course you're motivated because it's a Grand Slam, but you just are not able to find your game. That's it. The game

was going through my head."

Djokovic, who is 37, has reached the final in Ashe 10 times, leaving with the title in 2011, 2015, 2018 and 2023. On Friday, though, he was sluggish and emotionally flat, perhaps residual fatigue after collecting his first Olympic gold medal for Serbia by beating Alcaraz in the final at the Paris Games earlier in August.

"Obviously, it had an effect," Djokovic said. "I spent a lot of energy winning the gold, and I did arrive to New York just not feeling fresh mentally and physically. But because it's the U.S. Open, I gave it a shot and I tried my best. I mean, I didn't have any physical issues. I just felt out of gas. And you could see that with the way I played."

The No. 3-seeded Alcaraz entered the U.S. Open as the tournament favorite having won the French Open and Wimbledon, and a c-

knowledged his energy was lower than he realized after getting eliminated by 74th-ranked Botic van de Zandschulp 6-1, 7-5, 6-4 on Thursday night.

"I woke up this morning and showed my girlfriend straightaway in shock. It was crazy. Results like that happen," said Popyrin, who'd never set foot on the playing surface in 23,000-plus capacity Ashe until about 20 minutes before taking on Djokovic. "I thought to myself: Why not me today?"

Djokovic replaced Alcaraz as the money-line pick to take the men's title, according to BetMGM Sportsbook, but that status didn't last long at all. Now the only U.S. Open men's champion remaining before Week 1 is even over is Daniil Medvedev, whose lone Slam title came in 2021. He plays No. 31 Flavio Cobolli on Saturday in the third round.

For the 25-year-old Popyrin, this represents a real breakthrough: He had been 0-3 against Djokovic — including losses at the Australian Open and Wimbledon this year — and 0-6 in third-round matches at majors.

But the strong-serving Popyrin is playing as well as ever, coming off the biggest title of his career less than three weeks ago at a hard-court tourna-



is falling apart, and I guess you have to accept that tournaments like this happen."

Not often for him, though.

After all, Djokovic was trying to become the first player in tennis history with 25 Grand Slam singles titles. Instead, after knee surgery in June, he finishes a year without claiming at least one major championship for the first time since 2017. Before that, it hadn't happened since 2010.

Also of note: 2024 now becomes the first season since 2002 in which none of the Big Three of men's tennis — Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer — earned a Slam trophy.

The third-round exit equals Djokovic's worst showing at Flushing Meadows; the only other occasions he was beaten that early at the U.S. Open came in 2005 and 2006. The man who defeated Djokovic 18 years ago, International Tennis Hall of Fame member Lleyton Hewitt, is now Australia's Davis Cup captain and was sitting in Popyrin's guest box in Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Djokovic, Popyrin said, "wasn't playing his best tennis; I was waiting for him to kind of step up."

"I didn't want to be one of those moments where Novak kind of stepped up and came back from two sets-to-love down," Popyrin said. "That



ment in Montreal, where he picked up five wins against opponents ranked in the top 20.

Everything was working against Djokovic.

Popyrin was terrific at the net, going 10 for 10 on serve-and-volley approaches and 25 for 36 overall on points when he pushed forward. Djokovic, in contrast, only won the point on 19 of his 40 trips to the net, in part because Popyrin kept flipping passing shots by him.

Popyrin took big cuts with his powerful forehand, accu-

mulating 22 of his 50 total winners with that shot.

Now Popyrin will try to reach his first Grand Slam quarterfinal by getting past No. 20 Frances Tiafoe, who advanced Friday with a 46-7, 5-6(7), 6-4, 6-3 win over No. 13 Ben Shelton in a matchup between two Americans. AP

## With \$2.6 billion, EPL Leads Summer Transfer Spending

**Ken Maguire**

English Premier League clubs again flexed their financial muscles by spending about \$2.6 billion in the summer transfer window that closed Friday for Europe's five big domestic leagues.

And once again Chelsea was first in line with an outlay of \$290 million as owners Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital continue to look for a winning combination at Stamford Bridge.

The Saudi Pro League's window remains open for a few more days — enough time for more deals like the one announced early Saturday that will see striker Ivan Toney join Al-Ahli. The Saudi club agreed to pay Brentford a transfer fee reported to be \$52 million.

Chelsea reportedly agreed a deal to sign Jadon Sancho from Man United as Raheem Sterling left Stamford Bridge to join Arsenal also on loan at the 11th hour after a frenzied transfer deadline day.

United signed Uruguayan defensive mid-

fielder Manuel Ugarte from Paris Saint-Germain for an initial \$55.7 million. It takes the club's summer spending on new players to around \$240 million. United had earlier signed striker Joshua Zirkzee, center backs Leny Yoro and Matthijs de Ligt, and full back

Crystal Palace had a busy Friday spending that Michael Olise money. The club added striker Eddie Nketiah from Arsenal for a fee reported to be \$39 million. Nketiah is in search of playing time and grew up in south London. Arsenal might be clearing some space for a late signing. Earlier, Palace signed center back Maxence Lacroix from Wolfsburg for a reported fee of 21 million euros (\$23 million). The move reunites the 24-year-old French player with Palace manager Oliver Glazner, who coached the German club for two seasons.

Italy is back over the \$1 billion mark again in overall spending — the second highest in Europe.

A pair of Scotland midfielders — Scott McTominay and

Billy Gilmour — are headed to Napoli. McTominay joined on a fee of \$33 million from Man United, where the midfielder had been since he was five. United manager Erik ten Hag lamented the pressure that clubs are under to sell "homegrown" players — because of the good profit margin — amid the league's financial regulations. Gilmour arrives

from Brighton for a fee of about \$20 million.

Romelu Lukaku joined Napoli on Thursday, reuniting with manager Antonio Conte, who had coached Belgium's all-time record scorer at Inter Milan.

Bayern Munich signaled early Friday that it was done spending. The Bavarian powerhouse spent about \$110 million combined for Portugal midfielder Joao Palhinha and forward Michael Olise as it aims to recapture the German title it lost to Bayer Leverkusen last season.

The summer's biggest move came with no transfer cost at all when Kylian Mbappe joined Real Madrid after his contract expired at PSG. La Liga was on course to be the lowest spender among the big five — it entered the final week at just under \$600 million. Atletico Madrid was the league's biggest spender — by a wide margin — in the summer window by dropping more than \$200 million high-lighted by forward Julian Alvarez coming from Manchester City.

AP

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It is part of why Arsenal wanted to sell Eddie Nketiah and Emile Smith Rowe, why Manchester City sold Cole Palmer, why Chelsea sold Mason Mount. It might explain increasingly inflated fees in the transfers of young players, like Ian Maatsen and Omari Kellyman between Chelsea and Aston Villa this summer.

But PSR is just one piece of something broader: powerful market forces causing the gradual extermination of the one-club player. Take Jack Grealish, who left Aston Villa for Manchester City in 2021. Grealish might have been at the Euros this summer had he spent the past year firing Villa to the Champions League under Unai Emery. Instead he spent most of the season on the bench for City, and spent the summer in Ibiza.

Or Kelvin Phillips, who is somehow a worse footballer since leaving Leeds United two years ago. He is Leeds to his blood and bones. Both were the captains of their hometown clubs, rocks who represented their city. Would Villa, Leeds, England and football in general not be richer had they stayed?

That option was never likely given the vast financial chasm behind the Premier League's richest clubs. This is what happens when a squad player at City is paid double that of a star at Villa or Leeds. It is the inevitable result when football's authorities cram in so many fixtures that the biggest clubs acquire an entire substitutes' bench of elite players, gathering talent in stagnant pools. Meanwhile the lower club is weakened, and so the chasm grows.

The one-club player is being squeezed in every direction. These are the players who connect with a fanbase, who build bonds that take a shiny new signing years to forge. They add a layer of meaning to this gilded circus of millionaires. They still exist in the Premier League — Lewis Dunk, Marcus Rashford, Trent Alexander-Arnold — but they are increasingly an endangered species.

That was brought into focus on a recent episode of Monday Night Football in a discussion between Gary Neville and Jamie Carragher, two players who represented their local clubs and are still deeply entwined with their communities. Neville sounded pained recounting the departure of Gallagher and will no doubt feel the same way about McTominay, who wanted nothing but to play for United and made it happen.

The Independent



Rubina Francis shot down India's fourth medal from the shooting range, showing tremendous calm and composure in a high-class field to clinch a bronze in the women's 10m air pistol SH1 event in the Paris Paralympics on Saturday.

Competing in a top-class field consisting of the defending champion and world record holder among others, the 25-year-old Rubina held her own to score a total of 211.1 for a third-place finish in the eight-woman final. She had qualified for the final at seventh spot earlier in the day.

Iran's Javanmardi Sareh won her third successive Paralympics gold with a total score of 236.8 while world record holder Ozgan Aysef of Turkey took the silver with 231.1 in a fierce competition between the two favourites.

Rubina becomes India's first woman pistol shooter to win a Paralympics medal.

She had secured the Paris Paralympics quota under the bipartite (wildcard) rule a few days before the contingent's departure for the French capital.

In SH1 class, athletes are able to hold their gun without difficulty and shoot from a standing or sitting position in a wheelchair or chair.

A daughter of mechanic in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, Rubina was born clubfooted. She took up the sport, inspired by her admiration for legendary Indian shooter Gagan Narang's Olympic achievements.

Her story is an example of resilience, determination, and the transformative

power of sport in overcoming adversity.

She was competing in her second Paralympics, having finished seventh in the final in Tokyo three years ago.

Rubina was consistent all through the final. She was third at the end of stage 1 of