



How Rizzy! Talk Z to Me

Does the generation gap feel more like a language barrier? Here's the ever-evolving world of GenZ—one word at a time ETC >> 8

magazine

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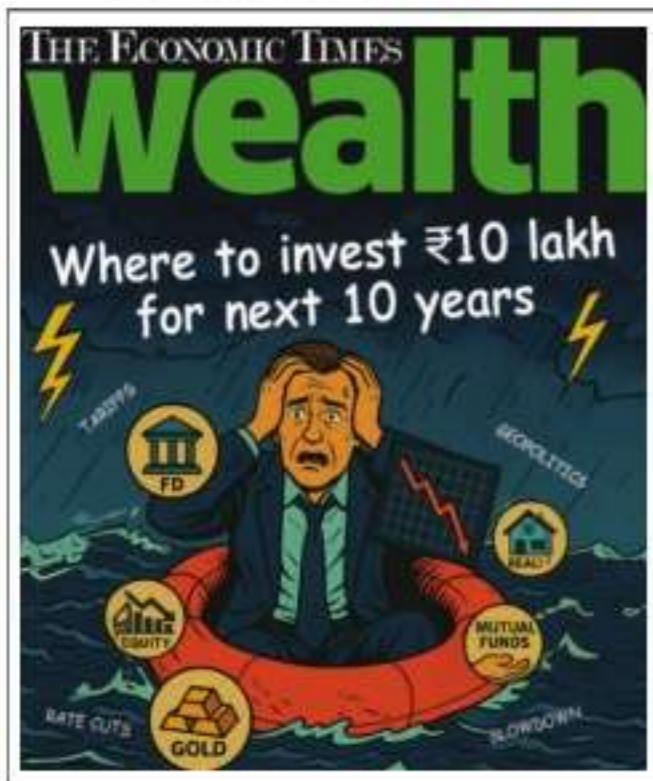
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ET WEALTH ON MONDAY



PURE POLITICS PAGE >> 2

India-Sri Lanka Ink Defence, Other Pacts; PM Modi Honoured

India and Sri Lanka signed seven MoUs in sectors including defence, energy, digital infrastructure, health and trade as Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a grand welcome in Colombo. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury reports.

Villages Where All Naxals Surrender to get ₹1cr: Home Min

Home minister Amit Shah said any village that gets all Naxals to surrender will be given a development fund of ₹1 crore, reports Rahul Tripathi. Shah has set a deadline of March 31, 2026, to rid the entire country of Naxals.

LOOKING TO RAISE ₹18,000 CRORE

DRHP Filed, Tata Cap in Line to Join Mega Listings Club

Files confidentially for IPO that will include OFS; in process of merging with TaMo Fin

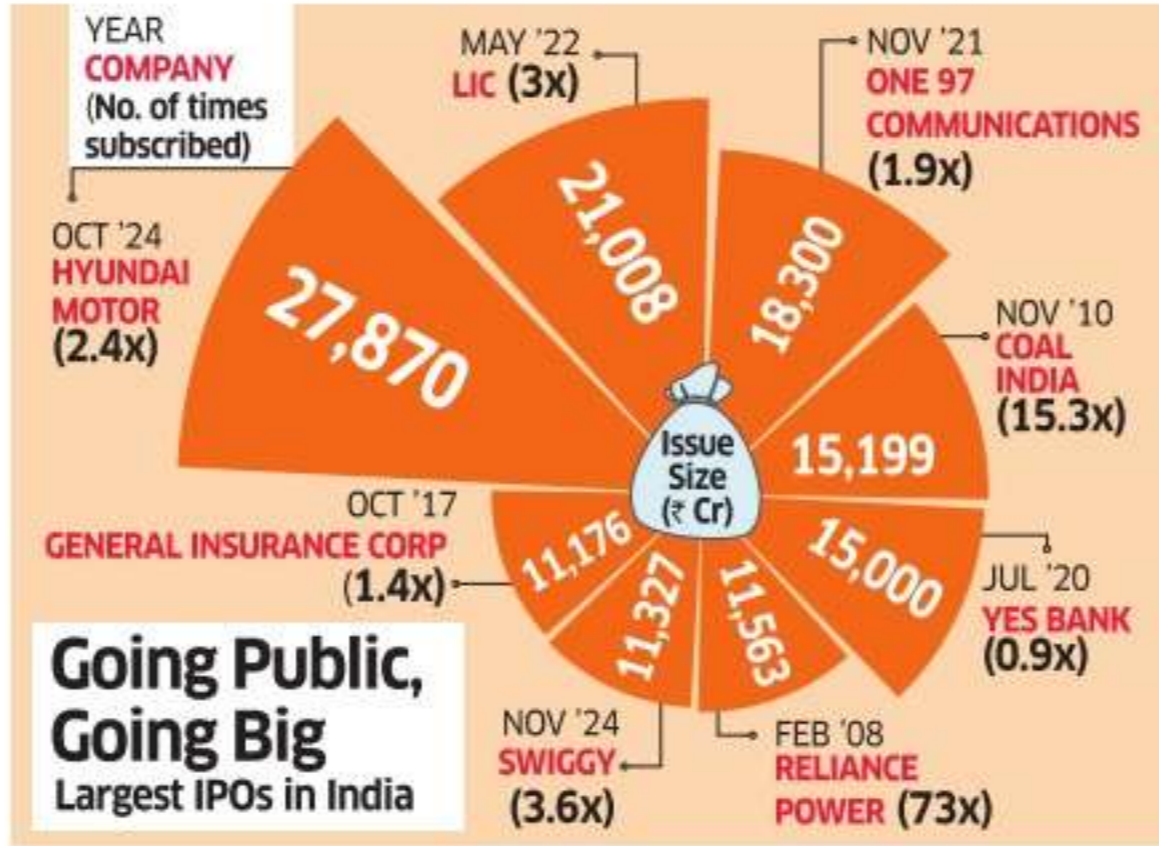
Rajesh Mascarenhas

Mumbai: Financial services firm Tata Capital has filed a draft red herring prospectus with the markets regulator for an initial public offering (IPO) of up to ₹18,000 crore (over \$2 billion), according to people with knowledge of the development. The DRHP was through the confidential route, they said. Tata Capital is currently raising a subsidiary of Tata Motors Finance, a subsidiary of Tata Motors, with itself.

Tata Capital's IPO could rank as India's fourth-largest, after Hyundai Motor India's ₹27,870-crore issue, LIC's ₹21,008-crore listing and Paytm's ₹18,300-crore offering.

The proposed issue will comprise a fresh issue of 23 million equity shares and an offer-for-sale by existing shareholders, including Tata Sons and IFC, said people in the know.

Kotak Mahindra Capital, Axis Capital, ICICI Securities, HSBC Securities, SBI Capital, Citi, JP Morgan, IIFL Capital, BNP Pa-



Going Public, Going Big
Largest IPOs in India

ribas and HDFC Bank are advising on the issue, they said. The confidential filing route allows companies to keep their DRHP private until their issue plans are finalised. This mechanism helps shield sensitive information like mergers or corporate actions and mitigates the risk of opportunistic litigation. In September 2022, the Reserve

Bank of India (RBI) classified Tata Capital Financial Services as an upper layer systemically important non-banking financial company (NBFC). This classification mandates the adoption of enhanced regulatory frameworks and listing within three years.

Upper layer NBFCs are selected by RBI based on certain ru-

Ministry Proposes to put M&As on Fast Track, Widen Scope

The corporate affairs ministry has proposed to relax rules that would make a larger number of companies, especially the small and medium ones, eligible for fast-track mergers, in line with an announcement in the Budget. The ministry seeks to include in it unlisted companies that have reasonable debt exposure and no default in repayment. >> 3

Another Major Tata IPO >> 7

IT'S ADVANTAGE INDIA ON TARIFF FRONT

'India to Be Patient in Trade Talks'

Officials say govt will protect sensitive sectors like dairy and agri, check dumping from China

Our Bureau

New Delhi: India will negotiate its trade agreements carefully and patiently in the wake of the tariffs imposed by the Donald Trump administration and protect its sensitive sectors like dairy and agriculture, officials said Saturday, citing the example of the US which is sensitive about peanut butter.

"We have to be patient. Trade pacts do not happen overnight. It is a careful and steady process. Things are analysed carefully," an official said on the condition of anonymity, adding that a slight impact on demand in the US could be a little challenging. India has "emerged a winner"

following the reciprocal tariffs imposed by the United States, officials said, pointing out that the country has a first mover advantage compared to its competitors owing to of the Bilateral Trade Agreement that the two are nego-

tiating and because Indian exporters are better positioned to deal with the additional US tariffs. They said the country will take all measures within the World Trade Organization (WTO) framework to check dumping of goods

from countries such as China which have been slapped with steeper tariffs. "The government is there to protect domestic industry from any possibility of dumping of goods in such a situation," said another official, who did not wish to be identified.

While the US has imposed 26% reciprocal tariffs on India, it has levied 34% additional import duties on China. India is also likely to gain from the US-China trade war, according to officials.

While certain exports such as fisheries could lose market share to Ecuador, which faces lower reciprocal tariffs, India can export more of the product to the European Union, they said.

Limited Impact on Pharma >> 7

Trumping Tariffs

Govt mulls support for exports that are impacted

New Delhi to protect sectors in trade talks

US is sensitive about items like peanut butter, officials say



BIG CONSOLIDATION MOVE

Delhivery Hops On To Ecom Express, Buys Co for ₹1.4kcr

Distress Sale for Gurgaon-based co which was valued at over ₹7,000 cr last yr

Our Bureau

New Delhi: New-age logistics firm Delhivery said it will acquire rival Ecom Express for ₹1,407 crore in what is among the biggest consolidation moves in the sector. The all-cash deal is a distress sale for the struggling Gurgaon-based company that cancelled its planned initial public offering (IPO) last year amid declining business. Once the closest competitor to Delhivery, Ecom Express was valued at more than ₹7,000 crore as of June 2024.

The nearly 80% cut in its valuation from its peak comes in the backdrop of a challenging time

Delivering the Goods

Operating revenue (₹ cr)

Net profit/loss (₹ cr)

Operating revenue (₹ cr) FY23 FY24

Net profit/loss (₹ cr) FY23 FY24

Number of ecommerce shipments (million)

*Includes return to origin shipments

Delhivery: 7,224 (FY23), 8,142 (FY24), -1,008 (FY23), -249 (FY24)

Blue Dart Express: 5,172 (FY23), 5,268 (FY24), 370 (FY23), 301 (FY24)

Ecom Express: 2,548 (FY23), 2,607 (FY24), -428 (FY23), -256 (FY24)

for ecommerce-focused logistics players and Ecom Express's inability to diversify beyond servicing online retailers. Private equity firms Warburg Pincus, Partners Group and British International Investment will fully exit their investments

in Ecom Express through the transaction, with Delhivery holding 99.4% stake in the company. For Delhivery, the acquisition will help enhance scale and improve its competitive position.

Long-term Profitability >> 7

Goyal Calls for Startups in AI and Deep Tech

Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal has encouraged young founders to lead the way in emerging sectors such as AI, semiconductors and deep tech. He also said the second Fund of Funds for Startups with a corpus of ₹10,000 crore has been approved. >> 3

ED Seeks Fund Trail Info from Singapore, HK

ED has sent a letter rogatory to Singapore and Hong Kong in its probe into laundering and forex violation allegations against Lalit Modi, reports Rashmi Rajput. It has sought details of the alleged money trail to trace the ultimate beneficiary, if any. >> 3

Greater Flexibility >> 7

REDRAWING THE TRADE MAP

China Electronics Casts Neighbourly EYE ON INDIA

Moving On, Moving to India

India's electronics exports in FY25 projected at \$37.5 b

US market largely led by Apple, will account for \$13.5 b

In FY24, India's US exports of electronics worth \$10 b

Smartphones contributed \$5.6 b

Of India's total smartphone exports, shipments to US are 36%

China wants India's FDI rules eased, highlights new opportunities

At present, China's electronics exports to US are from home or Vietnam

Haier, Lenovo & others look to move production from China, Vietnam to lower-tariffed zone

Writankar Mukherjee

Kolkata: US President Donald Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariffs are pushing Chinese electronics companies such as Haier, Lenovo and Hisense to actively pursue business transformation strategies. These brands are currently exploring the possibility of exporting products to the US from Indian factories to benefit from the relatively lower tariffs, compared to their production hubs in China and Vietnam.

They are also hoping the Indian government will ease stringent rules on manufacturing investments, amid recent efforts to reset diplomatic ties between New Delhi and Beijing.

Currently, Press Note 3 mandates government approval for any foreign direct investment (FDI) from an entity in a country sharing its land border with India, such as China.

Chinese companies have found it tough to get their investment proposals approved since a sharp worsening of bilateral ties after a border skirmish in 2020.

Two industry executives said Haier is exploring options to im-

port moulds from China to India for its products sold in the US.

These would be used for setting up new assembly lines at the Qingdao-based appliance maker's factories in Greater Noida and Pune for air conditioners sold under the GE brand in the US, microwave ovens and other household appliances.

Haier India president Satish NS declined to comment on the specifics, but said that in the long run, the tariffs are advantageous for India, and that some alignment can be done for US manu-

facturing and supply chains. Haier currently exports to the US from its facilities in China and Vietnam. Rajesh Agarwal, director at Bhagwati

Products—a contract manufacturer for Oppo and Vivo smartphones—said there is more pressure on manufacturing in Vietnam and China for US markets, as compared to India. He said the company is in talks with its partners and vendors to ascertain the possibility of shifting a portion of US production to India.

Trump slapped India with a 26% reciprocal tariff, though lower than other electronics manufacturing hubs in Asia.

More Exports Expected >> 7
RELATED REPORTS >> 7

LESSER TARIFF IMPACT THAN ON OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES

Mixed Bag for India: Exim Bank

Exim Bank has said the Trump administration's tariff on imports from India is a mixed bag, with sectors such as electrical machinery, textiles and apparel, leather and footwear benefitting, while machinery and mechanical appliances, automobiles, and iron and steel exports take a hit. >> 3

CHALLENGING THE WORLD ORDER

US Fires Starting Gun, Implements 10% Tariff

Baseline levy kicks off in US; next week's higher duty to replace this for some nations

Agencies

Washington: US Customs began collecting President Donald Trump's unilateral 10% tariff on all imports from many countries on Saturday, with higher levies on goods from 57 larger trading partners due to start next week.

The initial 10% 'baseline' tariff took effect at US seaports, airports and Customs warehouses, ushering in Trump's full rejection of the post-World War II system of mutually agreed rates.

"This is the single biggest trade action of our lifetime," said Kelly Ann Shaw, a trade lawyer at Hogan Lovells who was White House trade adviser during Trump's first term. She expected the tariffs to evolve over time as countries seek to negotiate lower rates. "But this is huge. This is a pretty seismic and significant shift in the way that we trade with every country on earth," she said.

Among the countries first hit with the 10% tariff are Australia, Britain, Colombia, Argentina, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Higher duties on some—which replace, rather than add to the baseline charge—are due from April 9. A US Customs and Border Pro-

Figure Trigger

Australia, Britain and Saudi Arabia face immediate 10% tariff

Higher 'reciprocal' tariff rates are due to take effect

Exemptions include crude oil, pharma and semiconductors

Vietnam, hit with a 46% tariff, agreed to discuss a deal

Trump sending mixed signals about willingness to negotiate

tection bulletin to shippers indicates no grace period for cargoes on the water at midnight on Saturday. However, it provides a 51-day grace for cargoes loaded on to vessels or planes and in transit to the US before 12:01 am eastern time on Saturday. These need arrive to by 12:01 am eastern time on May 27 to avoid the 10% duty.

Some world leaders, including from Japan and Israel, moved quickly to strike a deal with Trump to avert economic disruption while others weighed countermeasures.

Trump's administration also released a list of more than 1,000 product categories exempted from the tariffs.

Insurance for Pets, Exchanging GIFs... Cos Start Speaking GenZ

With youngest working cohort set to form a large chunk of employee base in coming years, India Inc tweaks policies



Prachi Verma

New Delhi: As corporate India starts to get younger, companies are increasingly offering greater flexibility and new-age perks such as pet insurance. The aim is to hire and retain the best talent among GenZ, the youngest cohort of workers born between 1997 and 2012, said HR heads in companies like Myntra and RPG Group, and experts at Aon and Bajaj Allianz General Insurance. "Gen Z has begun joining the workforce, especially those born between 2000 and 2004," Myntra's chief human resources officer Govindraj MK told ET.

Gen Z employees currently comprise nearly 35% of Myntra's workforce, and the figure is only likely to increase, reaching as much as 50% in the coming years, he said.

To engage with Gen Z effectively, Myntra has tweaked its communication strategy with shorter emails, and more casual sessions, etc.

"Instead, we use GIFs and pictorial messages to communicate key updates," said Govindraj.

Among its latest measures for Gen Z, the online fashion retailer recently introduced insurance for pets. "We have had the Pet Adoption Leave policy for some time now and

now...pet insurance. We recognise that Gen Z and Millennials often prioritise pet wellbeing," he said.

To attract Gen Z talent, quick commerce platform Swiggy rolled out initiatives around pets where an employee can report a missing pet directly on the Swiggy app. It also gives leaves and work from home to new pet parents.

Insurance provider Bajaj Allianz General Insurance is seeing a rise in companies interested in extending pet insurance to employees. "We have seen a significant uptick in enquiries," said Amarnath Saxena, chief technical officer, commercial, Bajaj Allianz.

COS BOOST FERTILITY BENEFITS >> PAGE 3

FASTER PROCESS

UGC Sets Rules For Easier Recognition of Foreign Degrees

Online portal, panel to ensure timely equivalence process

Our Political Bureau

New Delhi: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has notified the Recognition and Grant of Equivalence to Qualifications Obtained from Foreign Educational Institutions Regulations, 2025, a comprehensive framework aimed at streamlining the recognition of degrees, diplomas, and certificates awarded by overseas institutions.

Designed to enhance student mobility and promote the internationalisation of Indian higher education, the new regulations promise a transparent, online, and time-bound mechanism for applicants seeking equivalence for their foreign qualifications.

However, equivalence for professional qualifications in regulated fields such as medicine, law, and architecture will continue to fall under the purview of the respective statutory bodies.

Indian Navy Guards Against Domination In IOR: Rajnath

Defence minister inaugurates key infra at Karwar

Manu Pabby

New Delhi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday asserted that the Indian Navy plays a vital role in ensuring that no nation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is dominated or suppressed by another wielding overwhelming military or economic power.

Speaking at a naval event in Karwar, where he inaugurated infrastructure and marine utilities worth over ₹2,000 crore under Project Seabird, Singh emphasised India's commitment to upholding sovereignty, equality, and mutual respect among regional nations.

"It's not only about our national security and interests; it reflects the principle of equal rights and responsibilities among friendly nations in the region," Singh said. "Our Navy ensures that, within the IOR, no nation is allowed to dominate others based on superior economic or military might. We stand for protecting national interests without compromising on sovereignty."

India ensures no nation is dominated by another with military or economic might

IN PUSH TO END MAOIST TERROR BY 2026

Shah Promises ₹1 Cr to Villages That Go Naxal-Free

521 Naxalites surrendered this year; 881 gave up arms in 2024: Shah

Rahul Tripathi

New Delhi: Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday said that any village that gets all Naxalites to surrender will be declared "Naxal-free" and will be given a development fund of Rs 1 crore.

Shah was on a two-day visit to Chhattisgarh. He has set a deadline of March 31, 2026, to make the country free of left-wing extremists.

He said 521 Naxalites have surrendered so far this year, while 881 Naxalites surrendered in 2024.

"Shah expressed confidence that those Naxalites who lay down their arms will be able to join the mainstream and progress, but those who choose the path of violence by picking up weapons will be dealt with strictly by the security forces," said an official statement.

The home minister said no one wants to harm anyone, and therefore Naxalites should abandon violence and come into the mainstream, as both the Union government and the Chhattisgarh government will provide them protection. He also said that starting next year, artists from every tribal district of the country will be included in the Bastar Pandum, an annual event to showcase the traditions, culture and art of Bastar.

Shah said the government will be



Shah with Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai in Dantewada on Saturday—ANI

taking ambassadors from all countries on a tour of Bastar, and spreading it worldwide. The district administration and the culture department have allocated Rs 5 crore for Bastar Pandum.

The home minister said that the time has passed when bullets were fired and bomb blasts occurred here. He appealed to all Naxalites, urging them to lay down their weapons and join the mainstream because Bastar wants development. He emphasised that children should go to school, mothers' health

should be taken care of, tribals and youth should not suffer from malnutrition, arrangements should be made for children's education, every village should have a dispensary and there should be a hospital in every tehsil—only then can development happen.

Shah further said that when someone from Sukma becomes a sub-inspector, someone from Bastar becomes a barrister, someone from Dantewada becomes a doctor and someone from Kanker becomes a collector, then development will take place.

Centre Holds Talks With Meitei And Kuki Groups

COCOMI, an influential Meitei body, rejects the meet as 'façade'

Bikash Singh

Guwahati: The Centre on Saturday held a crucial meeting in New Delhi with representatives of Meitei and Kuki communities from Manipur, focusing on a roadmap for lasting peace and confidence-building between the two sides amid continuing tensions in the state.

Sources said the meeting emphasised the need to maintain law and order and defuse simmering tensions between the communities. Discussions also centred around restoring trust and stability in the violence-hit region.

A six-member Meitei delegation comprising representatives from the All-Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO) and the Federation of Civil Society Organisations (FOCS) participated in the talks. The Kuki side was represented by a seven-member delegation. The Centre was represented by its mediators, including A.K. Mishra, a retired Special Director of the Intelligence Bureau.

However, the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), a prominent Meitei civil society body, rejected the talks, calling them a "façade of peace talks" staged by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). COCOMI accused the Centre of projecting

a misleading narrative by portraying the crisis as a mere ethnic conflict, ignoring its deeper political and structural dimensions. It described the talks as a "stage-managed spectacle" and declined to participate.

Ten Kuki-Zo tribal MLAs — including seven from the ruling BJP — and leading tribal organisations have consistently demanded a separate administration or Union Territory status for the Kuki-Zo tribals.

Tensions in the state remain high. On March 8, violence erupted in Kangpokpi and other districts as Kuki-Zo tribal groups protested the resumption of bus services between Imphal and the hill districts.

Statement
Kumar Anshuman and Bikash Singh
It's Guv vs Govt in Karnataka Too

Karnataka is emerging as the next opposition-ruled state witnessing tensions between the Governor and the state government. Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot recently returned the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill, asking for clarifications. The bill proposes restructuring BBMP into seven corporations under a Greater Bengaluru Authority.

This is the seventh bill returned by the Governor since July 2024. Another flashpoint is the RDPR University Bill, passed in December, which seeks to replace the Governor as Chancellor. Gehlot not only returned the bill but also wrote to CM Siddaramaiah, urging him to invite applications for a new VC—warning that his office may proceed if the government doesn't act.



State law minister H K Patil said governors are increasingly "arm-twisting" governments by delaying assent. BJP's CT Ravi defended the Governor, saying he's within his rights and accused the Congress of using the Assembly for "appeasement politics."

Ludhiana Poll a Prestige Battle After Delhi Defeat

Following AAP's defeat in the Delhi assembly elections, the Ludhiana West bypoll in Punjab has gained strategic importance. The seat fell vacant after the death of AAP MLA Gurpreet Gogi. AAP has fielded Rajya Sabha MP Sanjeev Arora, sparking speculation that the move is aimed at freeing up a

seat for Arvind Kejriwal in the Upper House.

Congress has nominated former MLA Bharat Bhushan Ashu and sees the contest as a chance to weaken AAP's hold in the state. BJP and SAD are yet to announce candidates, but the seat is expected to witness a fierce four-cornered contest.

First Political Talks Since President's Rule

In a first since President's Rule was imposed in February, seven MLAs from BJP and its allies met Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati, seeking his help in restoring peace and exploring leadership options in Manipur. Sarma is likely to visit Manipur on June 10.

MLAs present included BJP's K Govind Singh, L Suresh Meitei, JDU's Abdul Nasir, and NPP leaders Shanti Singh and M Rameshwar

Singh. The meeting happened on the sidelines of a Thadou community festival.

Efforts to find a consensus CM have failed so far. CM N Biren Singh resigned on February 9 after prolonged ethnic violence. President's Rule was imposed on February 13. Multiple BJP leaders including Speaker Thokchom Satyabrata Singh and former minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh are said to be in the race for the top post.



Modi with Sri Lankan President Anura K Dissanayake in Colombo—PTI

MODI AWARDED TOP CIVILIAN HONOUR

India, Sri Lanka Sign Major Defence Pact

Dipanjana Roy Chaudhury

New Delhi: India and Sri Lanka on Saturday signed seven Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) across a slew of sectors including defence, energy, digital infrastructure, health and trade as PM Narendra Modi received a grand welcome in Colombo for the first foreign leader hosted by the Dissanayake government.

Modi was also honoured with Sri Lanka's highest civilian award, Mithra Vibhushana, for his exceptional efforts in bolstering the ties between the two nations and highlighting the spiritual and cultural heritage of both countries.

New Delhi and Colombo will move strategically closer in terms of joint maritime surveillance, military exercises, and equipment support with the defence agreement.

The other MoUs focus on implementing India's UPI payment system in Sri Lanka, enhancing renewable energy trade through a proposed grid connectivity project, and ferry and aviation services to improve people-to-people ties.

The Modi and the Lankan President virtually inaugurated the construction of the Sampur solar power project. They also inaugurated the recently completed temperature-controlled warehousing facility at Dambulla, which is possibly the first facility of its kind in the island, and a project for supply of solar rooftop systems to nearly 5,000 religious institutions across Sri Lanka.

Lauding the "resilience" of the Sri Lankan people, Modi, with President Aruna Kumara Dissanayake by his side, said, "I am proud that Sri Lanka is on the path back to recovery... We have always stood by Sri Lanka - be it during Covid, or the terror attacks or the recent economic crisis."

Modi said that he had also raised India's concerns and declared that Sri Lanka has agreed to the immediate release of Indian fishermen held for straying into Lankan waters and the prompt return of their boats.

Modi has said that India has converted loans worth more than USD 100 million into grants in the last six months and decided to reduce interest rates on existing credit, marking a shift towards providing more immediate and concessional aid to its crisis-hit neighbour.

"In the last six months alone, we have converted loans worth more than USD 100 million into grants. Our bilateral 'Debt Restructuring Agreement' will provide immediate assistance and relief to the people of Sri Lanka," Modi said.

The Indian Prime Minister described the debt restructuring agreement as a step forward in helping Sri Lanka navigate its economic crisis, signalling India's commitment to the country's recovery. "Today we have also decided to reduce interest rates. It symbolises that even today, India stands with the people of Sri Lanka," he added.



Cong Asks Govt to Take Oppn Into Confidence On US Tariffs

Our Political Bureau

New Delhi: The Congress on Saturday urged the government to convene a meeting of senior leaders of major opposition parties to take them on board and build a national consensus on India's preparations to deal with the challenges arising out of US President Donald Trump's tariff decree.

Spelling out the All India Congress Committee's structured views on the US "tariff war", former commerce and industry minister Anand Sharma also said the government must constitute a task force comprising Indian experts on international trade to frame the nation's calibrated approach in the negotiations.

Maintaining that the government should have discussed the US tariff move in Parliament and urging the government to come out with a strategy to deal with the situation arising out of "President Trump wrecking the entire global trading system", Sharma said, "It has to be a calibrated approach. It is the government's job to put in place a strategy. But there should be a national consensus on what that strategy will be. Therefore, the leaders of all major political parties should be taken into confidence by the government on its strategy. The stakeholders must also know what we are going to discuss before any concessions are made."

Build a national consensus on preparations to deal with challenges arising out of Trump's tariff decree: Cong

Spelling out the All India Congress Committee's structured views on the US "tariff war", former commerce and industry minister Anand Sharma also said the government must constitute a task force comprising Indian experts on international trade to frame the nation's calibrated approach in the negotiations.



Rahul Cites Article to Warn of 'Attacks' on More Minorities

Our Political Bureau

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi cited an article in the RSS-linked publication Organiser, which reportedly claimed the Catholic institutions too own huge properties like the waqf boards, to renew his allegations that "attacks on Muslims" through the waqf bill will set a precedent to target other communities. The publication removed the article after the row it stirred up.

"I had said that the Waqf Bill attacks Muslims now but sets a precedent to target other communities in the future. It didn't take long for the RSS to turn its attention to Christians. The Constitution is the only shield that protects our people from such attacks — and it is our collective duty to defend it," Gandhi said in a post on X on Saturday. His comments came amid the Congress party in Kerala taking extra care against the BJP showcasing the passage of the waqf bill to woo the Christian community in the backdrop of the Mumambam waqf land row.

In Mumambam in Ernakulam, around 600 families, mostly Christians, are protesting against the Waqf Board's claim on around 400 acres of land they have inhabited for generations.

A TRIBAL TOUCH: Founders Solve Problems, And Keep Culture Alive

From reviving native languages and music to creating eco-friendly products and tech solutions, these tribalpreneurs blend culture with work spirit

Nidhi Sharma

New Delhi: A young mother in search of a reliable nanny, an IT professional striving to preserve his native language, and a farmer's daughter bringing ancient tea from Mizoram to the world — these were among the inspiring stories of tribal entrepreneurs, or tribalpreneurs, who showcased their ventures at the StartUp Mahakumbh held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi from April 3 to 5.

More than 45 start-ups led by tribal founders took centre stage, presenting innovations that aim to solve everyday challenges in remote, tribal-dominated regions, while celebrating and sustaining their cultural roots. The Economic Times spoke to five tribalpreneurs about their journeys and the impact they are creating.

BREWING CHANGE
Laltha Muani, 26, from Leisenzo vil-

lage on the India-Myanmar border, founded Eco Far in 2019 to market her village's native tea — a wild green tea harvested from old forest trees and processed without chemicals or machinery. "We drink it to stay warm and for immunity," she said.

Her operation now supports 300 farmers and receives orders from Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong and parts of Africa. A farmer's daughter herself, Muani created

an instant version of the tea using leftover material. "I was clear I wanted to build something that supports local youth and our farming community."

REVIVING A LANGUAGE
Hercules Munda, a computer science graduate from BIT Mesra, was dismayed to discover that his cousins back in Khunti, Jharkhand, could no longer speak Mundari — their na-

tive tribal tongue. That experience led him to develop Trilingo, an app that helps tribal children learn in their mother tongue.

Initially discouraged due to his lack of a formal background in languages, Munda went on to study at SOAS and the University of Edinburgh, where he built the app. Trilingo recorded over 1,000 downloads in its first fortnight. "Ironically, it's those

who've moved away from Jharkhand who are most eager to reconnect with the language," he said.

CONNECTING HELP
Vanlalmuansangi Khenglawt, popularly known as Sangte, returned to Aizawl in 2014 and longed for a way to access trustworthy domestic help. The IIT Guwahati alumna turned that idea into Puitu — an app that connects users with verified workers such as electricians,

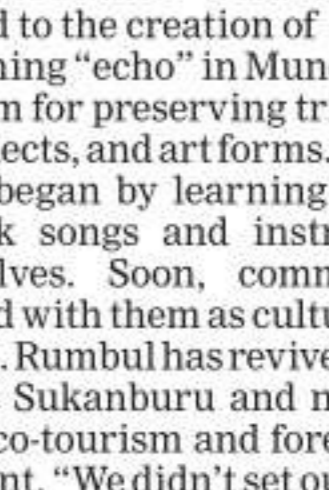
plumbers, and nannies in the informal sector.

With support from IIT Bhubaneswar, Sangte spent a year conducting workshops to understand workers' challenges. "We've been relying on WhatsApp and Facebook. Puitu brings structure, reliability, and accountability," she said.

ECHOING CULTURE

At IIT Roorkee, Gunjal Ikir Munda and his friends felt increasingly detached from their tribal heritage. This led to the creation of Rumbul — meaning "echo" in Mundari — a platform for preserving tribal music, dialects, and art forms.

They began by learning vanishing folk songs and instruments themselves. Soon, communities engaged with them as cultural custodians. Rumbul has revived festivals like Sukanburu and now supports eco-tourism and forest management. "We didn't set out to be a start-up," Gunjal said, "but self-



A Meditative Metamorphosis

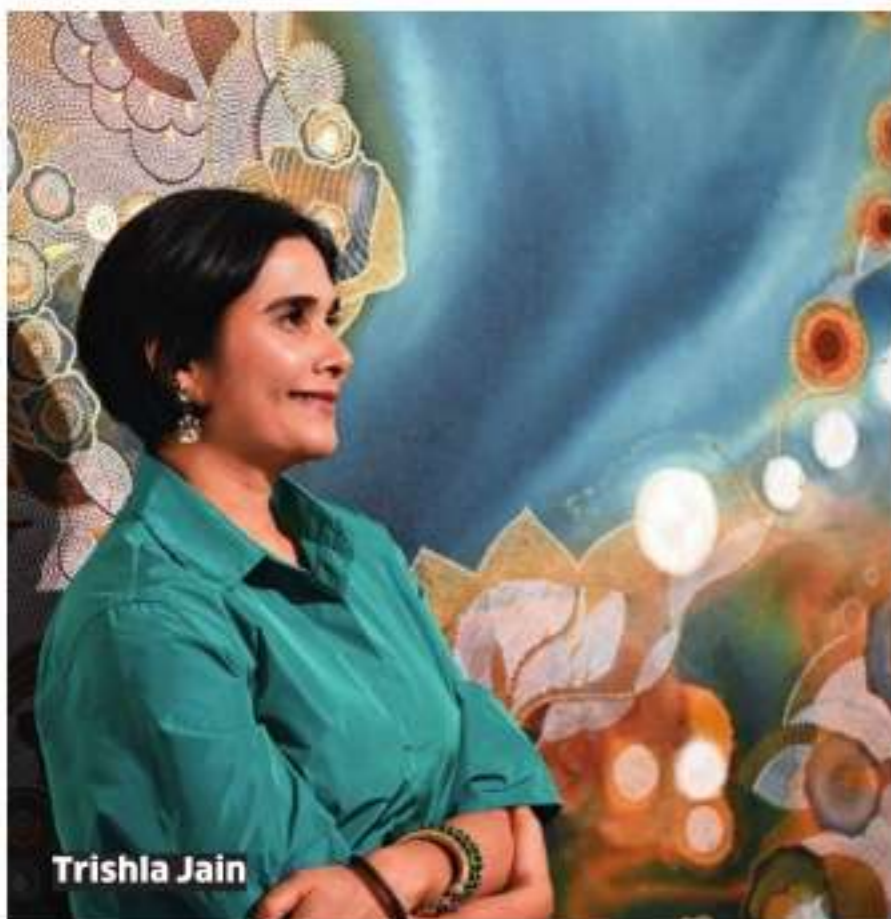
Reshmi Dasgupta

Between the noisy exertions of the vacuum cleaner on the matte black carpet and the gentle hubbub of artful conversation at the LTC Gallery of New Delhi's Bikaner House on a late spring evening, 'The Quiet Interlude' came into its own.

Reflective canvases beckoned, time expanded and contracted, and the solitary viewer got drawn into the *Yantra* and *Tantra*, the yin and yang, and the *madhya* point of stillness so central to Trishla Jain's artistic endeavour.

ORDER IN CHAOS

Jain's initial works were colourful expressions of playful whimsy, but her latest canvases reveal a confident maturity, a meditative metamorphosis — a conscious progression to seeking deeper meanings. Which is why the period of calm, the emptiness before the formal opening of Jain's exhibition was so central to understanding the language of her compositions, from the comforting structured grid patterns of *Yantra* to the unbound, infinitive universe of *Tantra*.



Trishla Jain

Those who read the introduction at the entrance were better primed to understand than those who did not. "Every line, dot and grid in *Yantra* is representative of the inhalation and exhalation of the artist's breath. The centre is clearly determined within the structure until, with a slow release, the breath is let go, in *Tantra*. By adjusting to the openness of *Tantra* and observing it with time, the breath gradually returns, to point out symmetry and order even in its chaos."

POOLS OF QUIETUDE

This euphonic rhythm is as essential to Jain's oeuvre as to quotidian life, if only people take the time to consider it. But for that, we need to slow down, breathe deeply and let the mind wander in that suspended space between breaths.

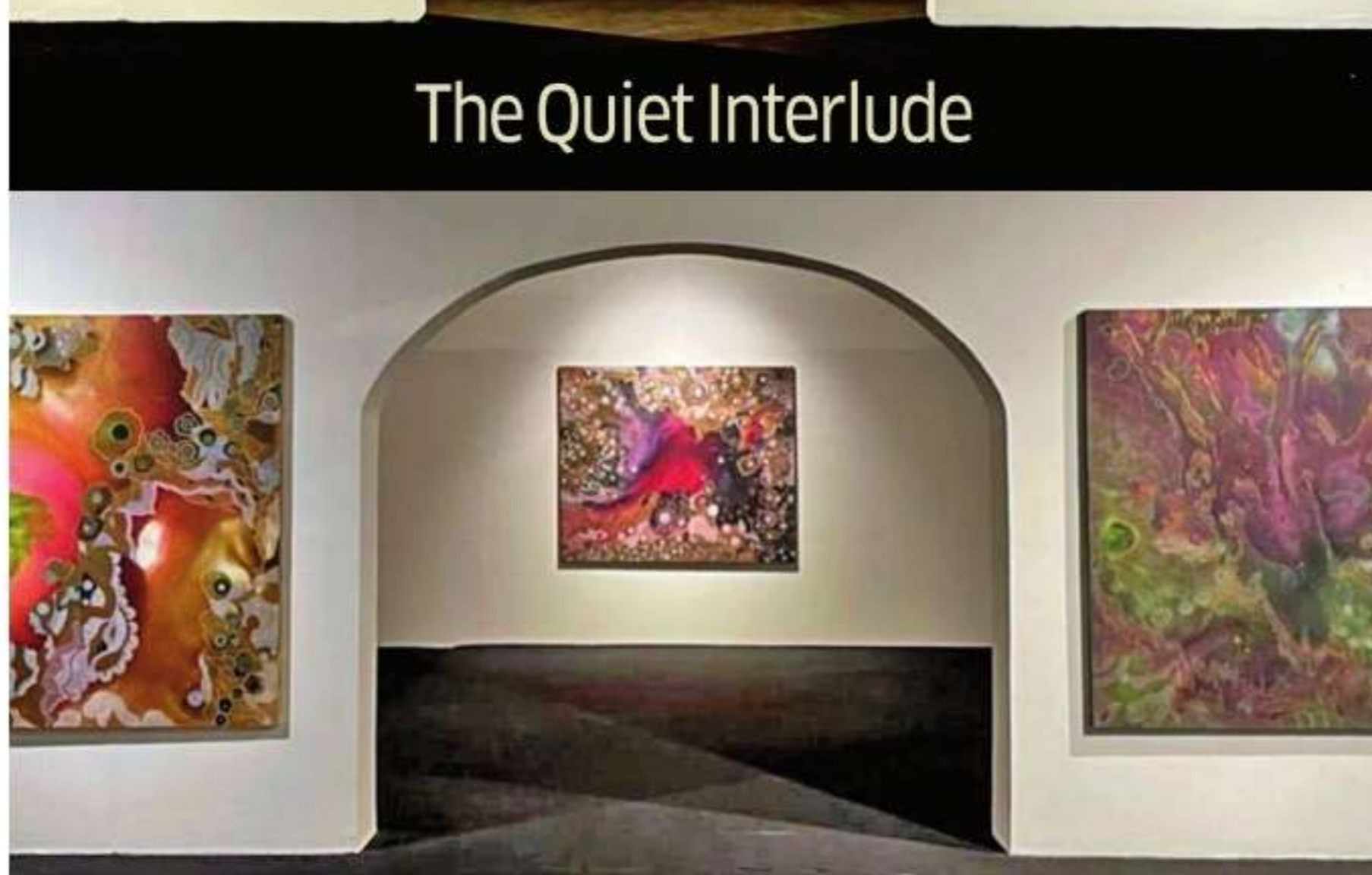
As the gallery gradually filled up and a kind of velvet noise pervaded, the canvases became magnetic pools of quietude, drawing individuals away from the crowd for moments of solitary close examination, if not introspection.

"For a form to be defined it requires space," advises the introduction. "It is only when there is

Trishla Jain's art explores the unique space between breaths, brought to life through her latest exhibition



The Quiet Interlude



distance that one begins to observe patterns, grids and structures. On coming too close, the detail takes over but then pushes the viewer back to create a space that allows one to be absorbed into the painting's entirety." As the evening drew to a close, that quiet interlude

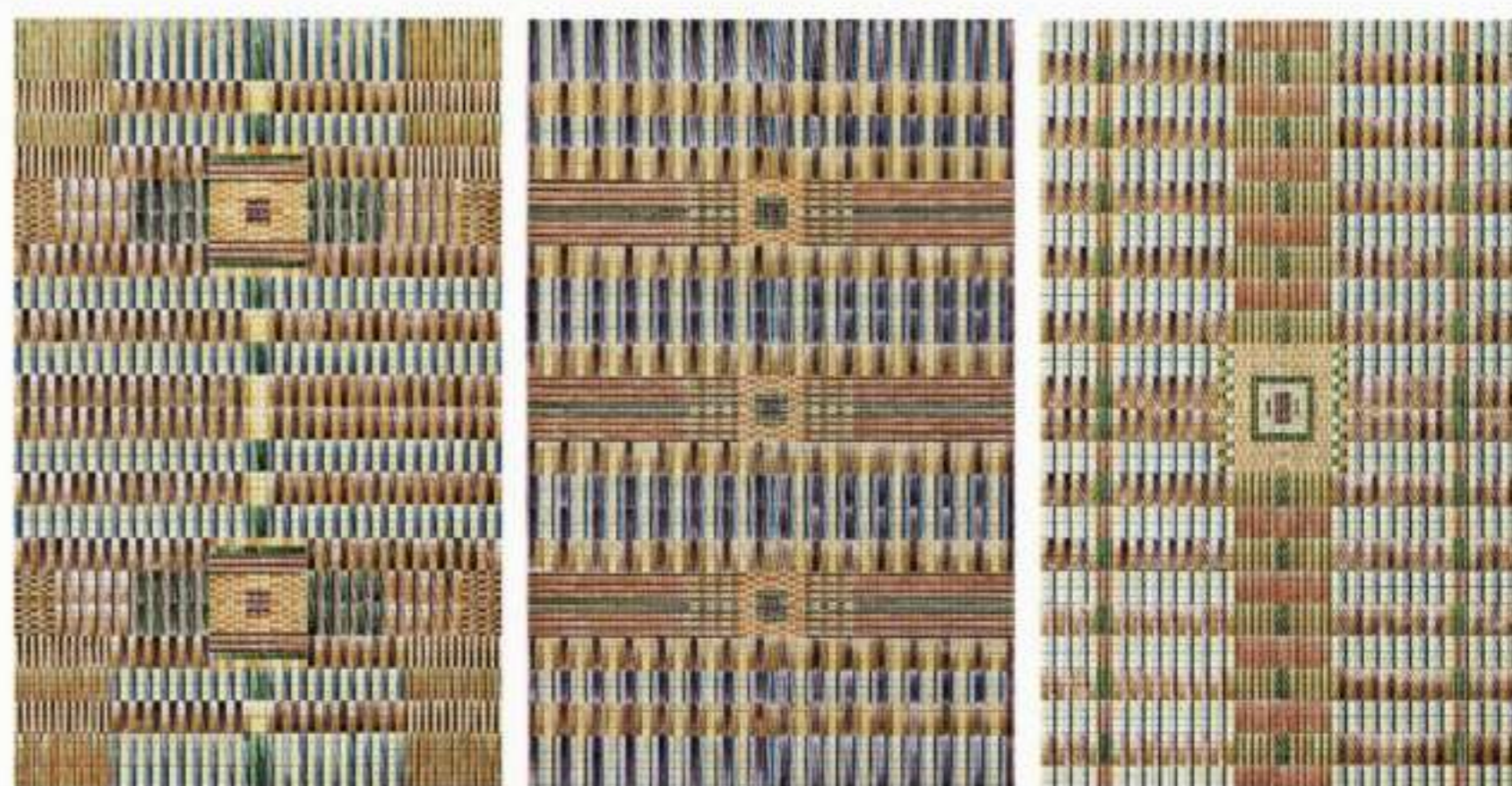
returned, offering another chance to contemplate in Jain's works, the duality of our lives, wherein the structured and the logical alternate endlessly with the discursive and boundless.

'The Quiet Interlude' is on till April 8 at LTC Gallery, Bikaner House, New Delhi



ARTISTIC IMPRESSION

The canvases became magnetic pools of quietude, drawing individuals away from the crowd for moments of solitary close examination, if not introspection



US Reciprocal Tariff on Indian Imports a Mixed Bag: Exim Bank

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) Saturday said the Trump administration's blanket 26% reciprocal tariff on imports from India is a mixed bag for the country with sectors like electrical machinery, textiles and apparel, leather, and footwear benefitting while impacting machinery and mechanical appliances, automobile, and iron and steel exports.

Given India is not an export-led economy with a less than 2% share of global goods exports, the tariffs would have a lesser impact compared to export-driven Asian economies like Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea, it said.

In electrical machinery, India may capitalise on the tariff differential with rivals such as China to boost its electronics exports to the US in the long run, the bank said, adding that for iron and steel, New Delhi can also explore its second-highest export market of the UAE.

The bank said that ongoing India-US talks for a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) is expected to result in a possible renegotiation of the high tariffs while also offering room to reassess non-tariff barrier issues flagged by Washington in the past.

Firms Boost Fertility Benefits as They Look to Retain Talent

Offer flexible work policies, introduce insurance for fertility & surrogacy treatment

Brinda Sarkar & Sreeradha Basu

Bengaluru: India Inc is rolling out a slew of benefits centred on fertility treatments — borne out of the recognition that the path to parenthood can often be fraught with complexity for many.

Companies like Google, Accenture, Diageo, Mynta, IKEA, and L'Oréal are including fertility treatments like IVF under insurance, offering emotional support through employee assistance programmes, organising seminars to drive awareness on infertility and available support systems. Egg and sperm freezing, too, are being added to medical insurance programmes for employees looking to delay their parenthood journey for career or personal reasons.

India has a population of as many as 27.5 million infertile people, including men and women, according to the Indian Society of Assisted Reproduction.

However, organisations are stepping up to drive the change. In November last year, Google India expanded its family building benefits in India, increasing reimbursements for expenses related to fertility treatments — including options like fertility preservation, IUI, and IVF.

"The programme also includes guidance on identifying high-quality fertility treatment options and con-

Growing Together

Employer Support
Counselling and mental health support, organising workshops and seminars about infertility

What's Driving These Initiatives
Employee feedback, a recognition that fertility treatments impose a substantial financial burden,

Cos Leading the Change
Google, Accenture, Mynta, Diageo, IKEA, L'Oréal, among others

and rising cases of infertility in society



HEMANT L

necting with mental health professionals specialising in these areas," said a company spokesperson. Employees are given access to a dedicated 'care advocate' who serves as a central point of contact and helps them find the right providers and clinics.

Accenture has also introduced coverage for fertility and surrogacy treatment as part of its corporate medical insurance programme to support employees looking to embrace parenthood. It has introduced egg and sperm freezing to its medical insurance benefits as well. Mynta covers egg retrieval and freezing under its insurance plan, empowering its female employees to embrace motherhood on their own terms. Infertility is a significant issue that affects many individuals and couples worldwide, and Indian employers are increa-

singly adopting inclusive employee benefits to support their employees, said Vinod VK, head of health and benefits, WTW India.

"Employers are also implementing flexible work policies that allow employees to manage their fertility treatment appointments and procedures without adversely affecting their work commitments, as well as revisiting their leave policies to accommodate employees dealing with infertility," he added.

At Diageo, employees can use the flexible benefits programme 'Blend' to avail reimbursement for fertility treatments, egg freezing and other procedures, Shilpa Vaid, CHRO at Diageo India, told ET.

FOR FULL REPORT, GO TO www.economictimes.com

Goyal Asks Startups to Lead the Way in AI, Semicon, Deep Tech

Our Bureau



New Delhi: Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal Saturday encouraged young founders to set ambitious goals and rise beyond the limitations of the present and

called upon the country's youth to lead the way in emerging sectors like AI, semiconductors and deep tech.

He also said that the Second Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) with a corpus of ₹10,000 crore has been approved and this year, ₹2,000 crore will be disbursed to SIDBI as the first installment. A significant portion of the fund will be reserved for seed funding of small startups and to support deep-tech innovation.

"The potential you hold will make you a great contributor to India's journey in this Amrit Kaal. Let the Startup Mahakumbh ignite aspirations that go beyond the current realm of reality," Goyal said while conferring the Startup Maharathi Awards at Startup Mahakumbh 2025. "We must unlock India's full potential through facilitation, not regulation," Goyal said.

Announcing a key initiative, Goyal revealed that a dedicated Startup India Desk will be set up in the commerce and industry ministry to serve as a helpline for startups across India, accessible via a simple 4-digit toll-free number in regional languages.

MCA Proposes to Relax M&A Rules, More Cos to Benefit

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The corporate affairs ministry (MCA) has proposed a relaxation of rules to make a larger number of companies, especially small and medium ones, eligible for fast-track mergers, in sync with an announcement in the Union budget for 2025-26.

In a public notice, the ministry sought to expand the scope of fast-track merger to include unlisted companies that have reasonable debt exposure and no default in repayment, among others. The borrowing of each of the companies involved in the merger must be less than ₹50 crore at the best 30 days prior to applying for the approval.

However, the relaxed rules won't apply to non-profit entities set up under Section 8 of the Companies Act, it said.

At present, the fast-track facility is available for a merger between two or more small companies, or betwe-



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en a holding company and its wholly-owned arm, or between two or more startups or between a start-up with a small company.

The ministry also proposed to allow fast-track merger of a company incorporated outside the country into its wholly-owned Indian arm.

In a big boost to the so-called 'reverse flipping', the ministry had in September last year decided to fast-track the approval process for the merger of only a startup incorporated outside the country into its wholly-owned Indian arm by doing away with the time-consuming clearance from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

LALIT MODI MONEY LAUNDERING PROBE

ED Issues Letter Rogatory to Singapore, Hong Kong

Rashmi Rajput

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) probing a money laundering and alleged citizenship violation case against Indian Premier League (IPL) founder Lalit Modi has recently sent a letter rogatory (LR) to Singapore and Hong Kong seeking details of the alleged money trail that the agency is investigating to trace the ultimate beneficiary, if any, sources in the know told ET.

Between 2008 and 2010, Modi was the IPL chief before being sacked by BCCI after allegations of financial misconduct linked to alleged proxy ownership of the franchises surfaced. In 2010, shortly after the IPL scam, Modi left In-

dia and since then has been living in London.

Earlier in March, India confirmed that Modi had availed citizenship of Vanuatu and had applied to surrender his passport at the High Commission of India in London. Following which the prime minister of Vanuatu ordered the cancellation of a passport issued by the island nation to the fugitive Indian businessman. According to media reports, Modi has challenged the order before the appropriate authority.

Modi wasn't immediately available for comments. In the past, he had denied the charges against him claiming that there has been no case pending against him.

After 40 Yrs, Defence Shipyard HSL's Net Worth Turns Positive

Ailing shipyard was acquired by defence ministry in 2010; PSU builds fleet support ships and undertakes refits

Manu Pabby

New Delhi: After a gap of 40 years, ailing defence shipyard Hindustan Shipyard (HSL) has turned its net worth positive, overcoming supply chain challenges as well as liabilities and pending legacy issues that had led it to the verge of closure.

The yard, which is currently manufacturing fleet support ships for the Indian Navy and undertaking submarine refits, was taken over by the defence ministry in 2010 when it was facing debilitating financial constraints.

In 2024-25, HSL achieved a provisional total income of ₹1,586 crore and a profit before tax of ₹295 crore, reflecting a 36% year-on-

Smooth Sailing

In 2024-25, HSL achieved a provisional total income of **₹1,586 cr**

Co recorded a profit before tax of **₹295 cr**, a 36% year-on-year growth

Established in 1941, HSL has been a crucial asset due to its location in Visakhapatnam

In Feb 2010, the defence ministry took over HSL and provided a grant of **₹452.7 cr** to help modernise the yard

In 2023-24, HSL achieved a record turnover of **₹1,413 cr**

year growth, officials said, adding that it was the first time in four decades that the company's net worth turned positive.

HSL is now poised to get a Mini-ratna status, according to officials. Established in 1941, HSL has been a crucial asset due to its location in Visakhapatnam and the expertise it gained in complicated refits of submarines. It is located close to the Ship Building Centre, where India's nuclear armed submarines are built, as well as the Eastern Naval headquarters.

After the takeover by the defence ministry in February 2010, the yard was provided a grant of ₹452.68 crore in 2010-11 to help it modernise. However, its net worth stayed at a negative Rs 628 crore and deepened to a nega-

tive ₹1,023 crore by 2014-15 due to a lack of orders and operational challenges.

HSL was also hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic but things started turning around over the past four years, with profits soaring on an annual basis on the back of a large navy order and other projects.

In 2023-24, HSL achieved a record turnover of ₹1,413 crore, nearly tripling its turnover from ₹478 crore in 2020-21.

The shipyard focused on cost reduction, productivity enhancement and fostering innovation, according to officials. It also resolved legacy issues and reduced its contingent liabilities worth ₹1,253 crore, they said.

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Breaking Bad

The famous ship-breaking yard in Alang is on the decline, with just over 100 vessels dismantled in FY2025 and a capacity utilisation of mere 25%. Stakeholders keep their fingers crossed, hoping for a global recycling boom

FILE PHOTO/ GETTY IMAGES

Shantanu Nandan Sharma | Alang, Gujarat

If a deal sails through, MV *True Confidence* will soon be towed to Alang for its final farewell. A year ago, this Barbados-flagged bulk carrier made global headlines when Houthi rebels unleashed a deadly missile strike in the Red Sea, killing three of its crew members and leaving the vessel doomed beyond repair. *True Confidence* is now a dead vessel, anchored in the UAE. An Indian buyer is set to win the bid and the vessel should beach Alang in the next two months, says Hareesh Parmer, scrapyard owner and secretary, Ship Recycling Industries Association (India).

Alang, which was a thriving ship-breaking hub on Gujarat's Gulf of Khambhat, still remains a key player on the global map, but its decline over the past decade is unmistakable. From a peak of 415 ship demolitions in FY2011-12, the number plunged to 113 in 2024-25, still trailing last year's tally of 125.

Parmer says the capacity utilisation across Alang's 131 scrapyards has plunged to a mere 25%.

The downturn is visible even in the second-hand bazaar set up for selling industrial gear and maritime collectibles salvaged from the ships. Now imported Chinese goods and locally sourced items have crept into the shelves. "With the sharp drop in ships, some shopkeepers have been forced to stock Chinese imports to stay afloat," says Parmer.

In Alang, tourists can wander through the bustling market, but entry into the scrapyards—gated plots where ships are dismantled—is restricted. One scrapyard owner grants ET access, but on the condition of no photography.

At least six ships stand in various stages of dissection—two of them are sliced open like a birthday cake. In the nearby yards where no vessels are being broken, maintenance workers and security guards sit idly, waiting for a beaching.

In the distance, a massive vessel looms. "It's waiting for the high tide to beach," says a caretaker of a yard owner. Beaching is a defining moment in Alang—ships are remembered by the day they touch shore. Scrapyards even frame photographs of each vessel, proudly marking its beaching date. Now those dates have become few and far between.

Nupur Amarnath

Sudha Sekhar, cofounder of handmade bag studio Subr, says there are two types of women: "One, the organised type; the other, the thriving-in-their-chaos sort." She identifies herself as the latter and loves a dump-on-the-go bag. And even though she admits it's not fun foraging for a lipstick in it, she would rather live in denial than change it. A reason why, a few years ago, Subr came up with its version of jhola—a slouchy hobo with short handles that is casual, fun and functional, what a jhola should be.

The jhola, the formless, traditional Indian shoulder bag, has its roots in the everyday life and culture of the country. The sack-like bag, made of natural materials like jute, khadi and cotton, with nearly no embellishments except a sturdy sling, has been lugged across centuries, regions and cultures.

The handbag has always been a hero segment in the world of luxury fashion. It's a statement-making piece, a status symbol and a personal-style calling card. Every luxury house has its own "it" bag. The desisting bag may not have entered the modern-day bag hall of fame but it's well on its way to get a contemporary facelift—reimagined as a weekend, a work bag or a gym bag.

SHOPS OF SHIP STUFF

Alang's second-hand bazaar is at the heart of its ₹10,000 crore ship recycling industry—an ecosystem that directly employs 15,000 workers and supports another 150,000 through ancillary trades. Stretching 10 km on either side of the road leading to scrapyards, this marketplace is still a treasure trove of salvaged goods. You can chance upon a made-in-America treadmill, buy a high-end Japanese projector at a bargain price, or pick up crockery and even refrigerators sold by the kilo.

Akash Bhai, manager of a second-hand shop named Maruti Enterprise—unrelated to the car brand—leads this writer through aisles of towering water coolers and hefty, four-door refrigerators. "We sell these by the kilo. Prices start at ₹260 per kg," he says.

His shop isn't stocked only with scrap from ship but brand-new furniture and mattresses. "Yeh samaan jahaz ka nahi hai, bahar se aaya hai (These are not from ships, but have come from outside)," he says, explaining how the dwindling number of ship breakings has compelled him and others to diversify with fresh inventory.

Laxmi Narayan Second has an array of wine glasses, likely salvaged from a cruise liner, some still bearing made-in-Thailand tags. "We don't know from which ships these items come—they arrive through auctions," says the storekeeper. "Only on bells do we sometimes find a ship's name inscribed." He adds that to fill the shelves, they

have imported wine goblets. While wine glasses are sold in sets, ceramic crockery is sold by weight, going for ₹200 per kg.

Shakti Chouhan, owner of Krishna Enterprise, says many of the items that look brand-new in his store are from ships. "These gumboots look new, but were likely stored as spares on board. We sell a pair for ₹300," he says. Transparency, he says, is key. "Here shopkeepers don't mislead customers," he says, pointing to a row of safety shoes. "These didn't come from a ship, but from Delhi."

ONCE UPON A HIGH TIDE

The story of ship-breaking in Alang began in the early 1980s, thanks to its unique geography. At low tide, the beach stretches dry for kilometres, while at high tide, waters surge to nearly 36 ft, making it an ideal scrapyard. Over 8,770 ships have met their end here.

A turning point came in 2007 with the dismantling of the controversial Norwegian vessel *Blue Lady*, reportedly laden with toxic materials. Even the Supreme Court's nod for its breakage was criticised by many environmentalists. Today, Alang's ship-recycling industry has undergone a transformation, with 105 of 131 scrapyards adhering to the Hong Kong Convention, an agreement to ensure that ship-breaking poses no undue risks to human health and safety.

Until recently, Bangladesh and Pakistan operated outside the Hong Kong Convention's framework, allowing their scrapyard owners

to bid more competitively for ageing or decommissioned vessels compared with their counterparts in Alang. Beyond South Asia, Turkey stands as the fourth major destination for ship-breaking, primarily handling Europe-registered vessels, as EU regulations prohibit their disposal outside the region. China was once a key player in the industry, but in 2019, it imposed a ban on dismantling foreign ships along its shores, effectively exiting the market.

Currently, Bangladesh is the global leader in ship-breaking. It accounted for 46% of the world's dismantled tonnage in 2023. India is a distant second, with a 33% share, while Pakistan—once a significant contender—has seen its industry shrink to 5%, largely due to the volatility of the Pakistani rupee against the US dollar. According to available data, 90% of recycling is done by four nations—the three South Asian countries and Turkey.

HOPE FLOATS

Though shipbreaking in Alang has hit rock-bottom, there's a flicker of hope among stakeholders—scrapyard owners, brokers and second-hand goods sellers. They antici-

pate a global recycling boom, as ageing vessels are expected to be retired ahead of their usual lifespans due to stricter green norms.

According to the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO), a Denmark-based global shipping association, over 15,000 ships, amounting to 600 million dead-weight tonnes (DWT), are projected to be recycled between 2023 and 2032. DWT represents the total carrying capacity of a vessel, including cargo, fuel and provisions.

Once a ship turns 25, its days on the high seas are numbered. Mounting insurance costs and stricter port regulations—especially in Europe, where ageing vessels are increasingly turned away—push owners to seek buyers for scrap.

This is when brokers from London, Singapore, Dubai and even Bhavnagar—just 50 km north of Alang—spring into action, quoting prices and sealing deals. Depending on weight and type, a vessel headed for recycling can fetch anywhere from a few crores of rupees to over ₹100 crore at prevailing auction rates. Container ships generally command

higher bids per tonne than passenger vessels. In some cases, an owner offloads a ship at a discount to an intermediary, who then resells it at a profit—adding another layer to the intricate web of ship-breaking deals.

While the global outlook for ship-breaking is poised to improve in the coming years, Alang's scrapyard owners believe they will remain at a disadvantage on the international stage. The reason? Ship plates—steel sheets used in the construction of vessels—whose metallurgical history is unknown are no longer recognised under the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

"This regulation, introduced a few years ago, has forced us to sell plates for melting at a lower price," says Parmer. He claims TMT bars rolled from these plates are often superior to those covered under BIS norms. TMT (thermo-mechanically treated) bars are high-strength reinforcement steel bars used for construction activities. BIS experts argue that TMT bars produced from unidentified sources could compromise the structural integrity of buildings, bridges and other infrastructure, making them more vulnerable during earthquakes.

For shopkeepers dealing in salvaged goods, a different set of challenges loom—particularly, a growing stockpile of unsold inventory. At Maa Hi Tide Enterprise, Jumed Bhai stands amid 50 lifeboats, each with a story of its own. One is salvaged from the cargo vessel *Odin* and can seat 150 people. "We acquired this through an auction in 2022," he says, leading this writer to the navigator's desk on the upper deck. "My asking price is ₹30 lakh but I am open to negotiations."

As Alang caters largely to bulk buyers of machinery rather than ardent collectors, Abhay Parmer, who runs a vintage shop, faces an uphill battle—how to sell a stirring cycle fan powered by kerosene or alcohol, even as it bears an East India Company tag from 1845?

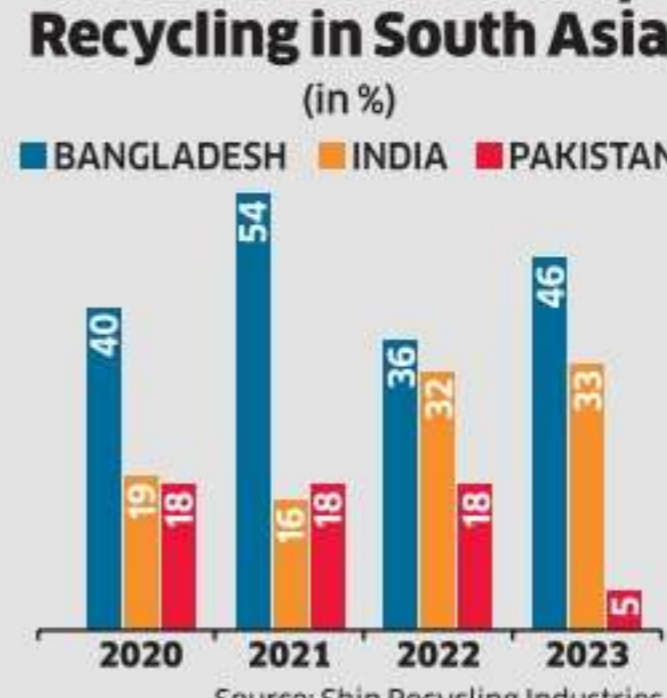
"We often have to modify antique pieces to make them appealing to our customers," he admits, gesturing toward a vintage telephone. "Look at this, we have added a working clock to give it a practical touch."

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No. of Ships Beached in Alang for Recycling



Global Volume of Ship Recycling in South Asia (in %)



Source: Ship Recycling Industries Association, India

Bag to Differ

How the common jhola and the hardy bazaar baskets are getting a makeover as the ideal casual bag

Instagram in 2021. She adds, "Today, the wire koodai is having its moment again, with endless new designs and innovations." Each region has its own version of the carry-all—from the Naga and Manipuri jholas that carry tribal colours and motifs to the "thol sanchi" of Kerala and the embellished Kutchi bag. Now, brands are trying to add a with-it twist. Frankly Wearing uses Bollywood references or quips like "Kaleshi Aurat", while Tamarind Chutney has a bag proclaiming, "Girls just wanna have fun-damental rights". Gautam Sinha of artisanal leather brand Nappa Dori says the tote has become like a calling card, a social muscle, if you will. He says, "Totes are making a comeback and not just for fashion brands. A lot of resorts, hotels, clubs and cafés are producing totes as a status symbol. It gives an in into a person's lifestyle." Sinha plans to launch totes for his F&B outlet, Café Dori. In fact, Nappa Dori rebranded its Dori tote, which retails at ₹3,650, five months ago and it is their bestseller. He adds, "It's an affordable option for those who want to buy into the brand." Sinha says the bag ranks

high on usability and functionality with its size, straps, zipper pockets and colours.

Burman says jhola works well with TBP's principles. "Just like the jhola, our design ticks all three boxes of functionality, durability and sustainability." They have given the totes a reinforced base by adding repurposed leather and inside lining and functionalities like pockets and zips. He says, "A jhola should be easy to carry, take the shape of whatever you stuff in it and should feel fluid."

Functionality is the cornerstone of the jhola bag, says Nidhi Singh and Apoorv Jain of Delhi-based creative studio Living Waters. The 12-year-old design house ventured into products in 2020 and one of their first pieces were the totes. Singh says, "When we were art students, jholas were our best friends. But we realised that even as fashions changed, the jhola didn't." The duo decided to brainstorm on a modern-day jhola. They added waterproof lining, inside pockets, back pouch for thingamajigs, a separate pouch and made sure it was able to bear weight. Jain adds, "We even added backstraps to convert it into a backpack but that didn't stick with our clientele which is mainly working women and col-

legest students." Living Waters' totes are priced at ₹1,555. Both Jain and Singh want the jhola to become the go-to bag for most and feel that quirky designs add a special touch.

The bag is the canvas, according to Motherland that packages Indian heritage for younger millennials and Gen Z. With minimalist and culture-specific designs, it has given the jhola a contemporary identity. It hasn't really reengineered the bag other than adding an inside pocket. The bags start at ₹500 and are made with white cotton. Their spokesperson says the totes further their agenda of promoting local talent.

Symbolism has always been part of the jhola. As Vritti Pasricha, director, product design and development, Vritti Designs, Mumbai, says, "The jhola, to us, is more than just a bag; it's a symbol of Indian heritage and simplicity." Their jholas start at ₹650. Pasricha says that while jholas are versatile, they often lack organisation, so she added internal pockets, sturdy handles, zippers and a structured base. She says, "The idea was to ensure it remains relevant for today's lifestyle."

The sustainable aspect of the jhola is what appealed to Praveen Premkumar and Priyanka Parswani, cofounders of No More—the Zero Waste Brand, to create their version of upcycled totes. They use pre- and post-consumer waste for their bags. Parswani says their brand narrative of sustainability and mindfulness drives their design philosophy. "When we launched, we thought Gen Z would be our consumer base, but our current clientele is the younger millennials (30-45 years)." Their totes start at ₹2,050. Their best-seller is a shoulder bag for ₹4,850 made from upcycled fabric remnants. Her advice: "While picking a bag, look for functionality. If it's something you will use daily, think of it as an investment. If your bag or T-shirt is cheaper than your cup of coffee, there's something wrong with the production cycle." The brand also offers lifetime repairs. Pasricha says the jholas and jute bags are the perfect summer

companions as they are lightweight, breathable and eco-friendly.

The styling possibilities of jholas excite fashion stylist and brand image consultant Rishi Raj. He says, "A quirky, printed jhola works beautifully with neutral, well-fitted clothes like a linen shirt and jeans, a cotton dress or even an easy kurta set." The key is balance: if the jhola is loud, keep the outfit subtle. He adds, "It's also best to avoid using overly worn-out or shapeless versions."

His jhola checklist: choose a tote that holds its shape well, is made from quality canvas, khadi or jute and pay attention to the stitching, lining and handle length that determine longevity and comfort. A summer-ready tote should feel light and breathable. Think natural fibres, colours like off-white, indigo, soft yellows or even handblock motifs. The tote is trendy again.



The wire koodai has been a staple of Tamil Nadu. I have used it for everything—grocery shopping, fabric sourcing, road trips, even international travel" SUDHA SEKHAR, cofounder, Subr

companions as they are lightweight, breathable and eco-friendly.

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A jhola has to tick three boxes: functionality, durability and sustainability. We recently launched our version of the Kolkata bazaar bags, which usually last generations in a family" SAMRIDDH BURMAN, founder, The Burlap People

Motherland's jhola for Gen Z

No More's upcycled carry-all

GAUTAM SINHA, founder, Nappa Dori

2025: A Disappointing Odyssey

Reality is disrupting the gleaming visions of the future that science fiction once painted

Jaideep Unudurti

My phone pings. Incoming message. "The robots arrive next week." It is from entrepreneur Isaac Jeremiah.

I'd read on Facebook that my favourite cafe in my hometown of Vizag was going to replace its staff with Russian robots. This was a line straight out of science fiction (SF).

Years ago, I had read a novel, *The Sheep Look Up*, by John Brunner. Steeped as I was till then in Isaac Asimov and Arthur C Clarke, this was a literary hand grenade. Brunner eschews conventional plotting; instead, we get postcards from the future, a world on fire, ravaged by climate change and ecocide.

His narrative strategy is to induce a kind of distortion in the reality field by interspersing text with newspaper headlines, snippets from articles and advertisements—what the critic Darko Suvin calls the "factual reporting of fictions". Somehow these artefacts from another reality, represented for me the frisson of encountering the future.

I texted Jeremiah, founder of the cafe. He explains that he and his Russian friend, who does R&D in robotics, figured there was scope for robo-baristas.

What gave him the idea, I ask. Jeremiah felt he was ahead of the curve: "Since the future is turning towards AI." He explains that there are issues in "finding and retaining staff" and with robots there is "no room for error, no reporting late, they will be working even when you are sleeping".

I think back to a few years ago when I met Fedor the robot at the entrance of the Cosmos Pavilion in Moscow. Confined to a desk, he balefully glared at the gawking visitors who filed past.

Fedor had earlier served on the International Space Station, where his job was to conduct spacewalks and carry out maintenance, but was fired after unsatisfactory performance. When Fedor was unable to grasp things in zero gravity, his cosmonaut shouted at mission control, "Maybe I should bash it with a hammer?"

With his whirring servo motors and chunky metallic appearance, he was already far removed from the gracile offerings from Boston Dynamics or China. He already belonged to a different past's future, something left behind.

I retreat to my bookshelves piled with second-hand paperbacks; going through their strata is like an archaeological excavation of the future. A well-thumbed favourite, a story by Robert Silverberg, has the character aboard a "shining starship gliding silkily through the interstellar depths, en route at nine times the velocity of light from Betelgeuse IX to Rigel XXI".

This was the 1970s imagining our now. This was what science fiction promised. Instead we have robot-baristas. How did the future turn out to be such a disappointment?

THE TODAY
Another future has infiltrated our reality. As Sami Ahmad Khan, assistant professor at the Centre for English Studies, JNU, and author of *Star Warriors of the Modern Raj*, says, "Our world itself is science fiction now—and not always in a good way."

Writer Samuel Delaney once said, "You can put together more interesting combinations of words in science fiction than you can in any other kind of writing—and they actually mean something."

What if I could send a message to my earlier self of 20 years ago, a line from a news report, "Chandrababu Naidu tweets

"I Have Also Entered the Ghibli Trend" and posts a picture of him and PM Modi"? My past self would know all the entities mentioned but would have run out of processing power figuring out that Delaney-esque connection.

Says Khan: "The science fictional worlds around us are broken, ravaged as they are by dystopian imaginaries, senseless wars, ecological catastrophes, man-made disasters, extreme ideologies and global climate change." Then comes the kicker: "However, I recognise this world—our

world—not just from SF but from the news."

Fragments of that future past, of super intelligent robots, of Martian colonies, are visible, but in unwholesome combinations.

I email Gigi Ganguly, author of *Biopeculiar*, a collection of speculative fiction. As a pro, does she sign off on the disappointing merger between reality and SF?

She isn't a fan of flying cars, but she "decided to whisper a search command to my TV and got the shock of my life when it whispered back to me. At the back of my mind, I knew it was just one of the functions of the AI assistant, but still, it creeped me out. So yes, AI assistants feel like characters out of science fiction".

This was not what we signed up for.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS
It is said that science fiction sales have been hit in the US, because there is a sense that the present has already become too futuristic. People are now turning to mystery or romance to get away from the now.

It is a genre long accused of promoting escapism, but now even the escapists are escaping. Conversely, its tropes are intruding into literary fiction; last year's Booker Prize went to *Orbital* by Samantha Harvey.

Chronicling life on a space station, it had the author confidently say that it was written "not as sci-fi", while even a few years ago the very mention of astronauts would have had the judges howling at the infusion of genre.

As a child, I was haunted by *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991). In its famous opening scene, as the camera pans over a skull-strewn landscape, swarming with gleaming metal skeletons with demon-red eyes, the date is stamped across the screen: 2029 AD.

Once it was impossibly far away, now terrifyingly near.

What will the coming years hold?

What went into it? Basu explains that

"Everything in that book is going to come true," Samit Basu says with a laugh.

The book he is referring to is *Chosen Spirits* (2020), which Basu spent half a decade researching. Set in 2030, in a Delhi under the grip of surveillance capitalism, it delineates our next half-decade.

We learn that JNU has been turned into Asia's biggest mall, while a Singapore real-estate tycoon is looking to set up an organ-farming business, claiming, "it could give backward Indians a chance to contribute value to the world".



My favourite cafe in my hometown of Vizag is going to replace its staff with Russian robots

Fragments of a future past, of super intelligent robots, are visible, but in unwholesome combinations.

Samit Basu's Chosen Spirits is set in 2030, in a Delhi under the grip of surveillance capitalism

Silverberg's character is aboard a starship gliding through interstellar depths

Mumbai falls into the sea in 2032 in Rimi Chatterjee's Antisense Universe

al redesign".

Chatterjee, former professor of English at Jadavpur University, is known for her novels such as *Signal Red*. I ask what led her to this world. "There were two inciting incidents—or, maybe three. One, of course, was the turn towards fascism consequent to the new dispensation of 1991. That was what laid the foundation for *Signal Red*. The other two were the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and my 2005 cancer diagnosis.

These two led me to invent the Antisense Universe," she says.

What about Kolkata, I ask, dreading the answer: "Calcutta slowly sinks and becomes uninhabitable, and in the 2030s the capital of West Bengal is moved to Durgapur." Yet this symphony of destruction is not the "focus of Antisense". "The story is really about the solutions, which are to be found in Climate Town, an experimental refugee camp designed and run by climate scientists," she says.

Khan agrees: "There is still some hope left, for science fiction is not only full of projections of brokenness but also a template through which it can be healed or, at least, reimagined as 'heal-able'."

REFRACTIONS
I again turn to the shelves, to the pages marked by the acetic years they spent on the pavement bookstores of Abids in Hyderabad. There is *Colonies in Space* by TA Heppenheimer, published in 1977.

Its following pages are a strange contrast to its confident assertions: "1982—the target date for the beginning of major construction of the first earth colony in space."

The benefits include "great laboratories and observatories" and "traffic-free transport by monorail" but also "out of this world sex without the hangup of gravity". This was a timeline that died unborn.

Prediction is a dangerous game. But as Basu says, "It is not science fiction's job to predict the future. It is a projection of the personal and social anxieties and aspirations of the time they are written in."

Says Chatterjee: "When I predicted the rise of the Right in 2005, it was the height of the liberalisation boom, and everyone wanted stories about call centre employees drinking in pubs. No one wanted gloom and doom about shady bioweapons and Hindutva mind control, yet here we are, in a world so much worse than I imagined."

Concurs Khan: "I don't think that science fiction has to predict the future. I do, however, insist that it refracts our today. I am aware of how science fiction—despite its aliens, intergalactic and temporal travel, AI, etc—always ends up speaking to us about our times, and forces us to think about our future not just as individuals but also as a species."

Later, as I take a cab through 'Cyberabad', I see the gleaming chrome and glass of the silicon towers shimmering in the summer thunderstorm.

When I used to come to Hyderabad as a child, it was all crumbling manzils and Irani cafes, denoting a genteel, static past that would keep extending in a straight line.

I had read all those science fiction novels which used to be set elsewhere, in another place, in another time, while all along another future crept up.

Unudurti is a writer and chess enthusiast

"the technology in it is already in existence" and his work "looks at the personal and social impact of the broader use of new technology, specially taking into consideration different levels of power and privilege".

NEAR FUTURE
"Mumbai falls into the sea in 2032 when the Bombay High rock formation, depleted of its oil over nearly a century, collapses, taking all of central Mumbai, and making Chinchpokli the new coast." This Chatterjee on the setting of *Antisense Universe*, a "storyworld focused on climate action and civilisation-

'The More Time Kids Spend on Phones, The Worse Their Mental Health... But Bans in Schools Alone Won't Help'

Victoria Goodyear is an associate professor in physical activity, sport and health at the University of Birmingham, UK, working with both the School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences and the Institute for Mental Health. She is a contributing author of two recent publications that examine school policies on smartphones and adolescent well-being. The first, written by a broad team of authors and published in *The Lancet*, investigates the impact of mobile phone policies in schools on students' mental health, academic performance, physical activity and sleep, drawing on data from over 1,200 adolescents

aged 12-15 years across the UK. The second article, written by six authors in *The British Medical Journal*, focuses on strategies to support the development of healthy technology use among young people.

Apoorva Mittal spoke to Goodyear on Zoom on the findings and their implications in a world where digital devices are deeply woven into the lives of young people and at a time when Australia has introduced a law banning social media for minors and shows like Netflix's *Adolescence* are highlighting the negative impacts of these platforms on young adults. Edited excerpts:

And that was in areas across all of the outcomes around mental health, physical activity and sleep attainment and behaviour. One explanation for this is that school phone policies did not lower the overall time adolescents spent on their phones. We found that adolescents who attended a school with a phone ban only lowered the amount of time they spent on their phones—by 40 minutes on phones and 30 minutes on social media.

When we put that in perspective of the whole day—when adolescents were spending four to six hours on phones, and two to four hours on social media—school phone policies were only making a small amount of difference to the time spent. The second finding from the study was that an increased amount of time spent on phones and social media was associated with worse outcomes in all of those areas.

The more time you spend on your phone and social media, the worse your mental health and well-being. With that in mind, the implication from this study is that time is an important focus for improving mental health and well-being and education and physical health outcomes. But school phone policies alone are not enough to tackle those negative impacts and we need to focus on use in and outside of school.

pace. It's very different from many childhood experiences of many adults. And we need to be able to provide that education so they are equipped with the skills. The second area is age-appropriate design, and

that means designing technology with children's well-being in mind. It means ensuring that devices and social media accounts align with children's evolving capacities where they feel safe and secure in those environments.

in the UK underway, particularly the UK Digital Futures for Children, and it has guidance for 11 key principles to ensure children's rights are at the centre of technology design. Some of those aspects include a focus on acting in the

"The challenge is with tech companies. There is a need for governments to require companies to show how they are delivering on children's rights, and ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place in all the services that are accessible to children"



"We found that adolescents who attended a school with a phone ban only lowered the amount of time they spent on phones—by 40 minutes on phones and 30 minutes on social media"

Australia has approved a landmark law setting stringent limit on social media use by minors.

We are all navigating an increasingly digital society. Issues and concerns in terms of social media and smartphone use are new challenges for us all. We currently lack an evidence-based, best practice approach to support the idea that phones should be banned until adulthood. But bans in schools alone are not enough.

Issues like bullying existed before social media too. Is there a way to help kids process those emotions?

We can create a framework in terms of age-appropriate design. There is some work

best interests of children—like agency to reduce compulsive use, modifying the algorithms and content personalisation. The content that reaches children can often be biased for commercial or political reasons, and that in itself is an infringement of their freedom of choice and this can affect their decision-making and ultimately their rights and well-being.

So it's really about bringing together big tech and policy.

Absolutely. The challenge is obviously with technology companies—there are for-profit incentives. There is a need for legislation and for governments to

require technology companies to show how they are delivering on children's rights to support development, and ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place in all the services that are accessible to children.

The Netflix show Adolescence has gone viral, putting the spotlight on the toll of social media. What do you think of it?

I have watched it. I think what the show does well is it talks about the different areas of an adolescent's life. It talks about the connections between home and school and some of the access to content in technology. That's exactly what we are saying: we need to support young people across all those spaces, not in isolation.

Were there any challenges in conducting the study? What are your next steps?

Being a cross-sectional observational study, we can't draw causal conclusions. But we observed adolescents in real-life settings, which gives the findings real-world relevance. In terms of the next steps, this study signposts that we need to think more about in-school and out-of-school use, and we need to move beyond a sole focus on bans and think about a broader approach. Any new approaches that are tackling adolescents' phone use and social media use need to be accompanied by robust evaluation, and we also need to be thinking about the wider aspects of their lives and not as isolated spaces or activities: so across home, school and community settings.

Do these findings apply globally—in countries like India or the US?

Yes, broadly. While cultural differences exist, the trends around phone use and school policies are quite similar. The principles of our findings are relevant across different regions.

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What inspired you to undertake the study on phone use in schools and its impact on adolescents?

When we started the study, we were seeing growing concerns about adolescent mental health—especially around increased anxiety and lower well-being. At the same time, there was a noticeable rise in smartphone ownership and social media use among teenagers. Many discussions were linking the two, but the evidence was inconsistent. Meanwhile, several countries were starting to consider or implement school phone bans or delaying smartphone access for adolescents. We wanted to look at whether these bans were making a difference.

What have you observed on the use of technology by adolescents?

Adolescents use phones for all sorts of things—accessing information, playing games, staying connected with friends. But they are also spending a lot of time on these platforms throughout the day.

How do kids navigate something so pervasive, especially when it is linked to harm?

In our article, we argue that we need to support adolescents through a rights-respecting approach. A key part of that is education—helping adolescents develop digital skills so they feel confident and in control of their phone and social media use. This means they can in some ways mitigate some of the risks and harms themselves, but they can also explore the benefits and realise the benefits and have it as a tool that can support their well-being at the same time.

In the study, schools with and without phone bans showed no major differences in outcomes.

We found no difference in outcomes for adolescents who attended a school with a phone ban compared with those who attended a school without a phone ban.

If You Can't Beat 'em, Make Premium Space for 'em to Beat It Out of Their System

What makes a comedy show, enjoyed by an audience, suddenly turn into a 'crime site' of offending sensibilities? Better to just embrace the chaos and monetise it

FUNNY BUSINESS



ANUVAB PAL

After all the police cases against comedians, and about 20 years of Indian stand-up, it's safe to conclude a few things about comedy in India.

1. Audiences do have a sense of humour. They show up and make comedy clips go viral.
2. Many powerful individuals can't take a joke at their expense because there is a key difference between Western and Indian thinking. In the West, if someone powerful is made fun of, they accept it – and even add to it – suggesting they are secure

in their status. In India, if someone is made fun of and they don't respond with force, or a legal case, it's seen as weakness.

In seconds, comedy shows can go from laughter to being accused of 'putting down culture'. No one knows when and how the switch happens, what triggers it, who gets offended, and what the fine line is. If you ask comedians what subjects have led to threats, it is never the obvious: not the PM, religion, or politics.

It's as varied as DJs (one comedian was threatened because he said DJs don't do much) to someone wanting to punch me after a show because I said Mogambo was the funniest of all villains. Yes, Indian public sentiment is near impossible to understand, let alone appease.

A month ago, it was Samay Raina and Ranveer Allahbadia (for a random incest-related question). The latest is an old favourite – Kunal Kamra (for the deputy Maharashtra CM song).

I'm not here to discuss the rights and wrongs of free speech. I am here to talk



THEY JUST HATED THE FURNITURE

about the difficulty of running any arts space in the age of sentiment maintenance.

The gent (who shall remain nameless because who knows what venue-related sentiments will be hurt by naming him) who runs Habitat Comedy Club in Mumbai, where the Kamra incident took place, is used to having his venue ransacked.

Over the years, whenever a mob disagrees with a comedian, they go to the venue and break things. Sometimes the mob is upset when the room is empty, because they need something to break. So instead, they resort to banging their heads against a wall. Which doesn't make

To run any artistic space in India, you have to keep everyone's sentiments in mind—creator and hater

a good enough threatening video. All the gent wanted to do was provide a space for comedy, a small sanctuary to spread joy. Surely that's not a crime, he thinks. Until an incident like this, when the mob decides that it is, and the police, so far, haven't said it isn't.

At this rate, if there's a film one doesn't like, or a piece of art that offends a sentiment, one can ransack a cinema or a gallery or museum, saying the venue is equally responsible, with no protection under the law. Should, therefore, the owner of a club have his pro-comedy mob to protect it from an anti-comedy mob?

I have a suggestion, which I hope the gent takes on if he's ever allowed to reopen. Because living in fear, from show to show, wondering who might beat him up, is not a long-term solution in any hospitality business.

So here goes: Clearly, people want to be

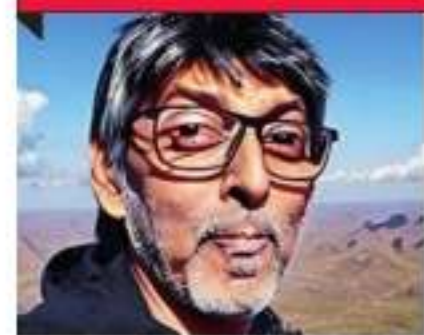
violent towards ideas they don't want to debate. Why not have an area in the comedy club, after the show, earmarked especially for vandalism? Every night, any audience member angry at any comedian can engage in hooliganism – perhaps for an extra charge – with some real estate breakage, some viral videos. Everyone goes home happy.

Given the state of the economy, maybe the comedian would also be willing to receive a thrashing – a very different kind of fan meet-and-greet – for some premium customers.

Habitat started with the kind, cute idea of giving artists and audiences a space. What it forgot was to incorporate those who hate that idea. To run any artistic space in India, you have to keep everyone's sentiments in mind – creator and hater. After all, we're a democracy.

The writer is a standup comedian

RED HERRING



INDRAJIT HAZRA

What MAGAwati's Mandal List Tells Us About America

One sure sign of being left behind is clamouring for what's 'rightfully' yours

It's like the Mandal Commission list. For countries. Except it's not reservations for jobs and college admissions deemed historically 'backward', but reservation *against* anyone not of the much-abused, much-maligned MAGA caste.

The language gives it away. 'For decades, our country has been looted, pillaged, raped and plundered by nations near and far, both friend and foe alike,' railed MAGAwati from Bhu-Rajnitik Parivartan Sthal, a.k.a. White House Rose Garden, trading the trademark handbag for a signature red tie. With arguably good reason, but with arguable logic in terms of how to go about correcting bad geopolitical history.

MAGAwati's logic is pretty straightforward. America makes things. If other countries take a hefty toll in allowing America to sell things in their country, dammit, America will toll back like Quasimodo on steroids, so help Americans, god. So, other countries who also make things – many of them actually make 'American' things – will respond by doing one of three things:

1. Lower their *hafa* on American things being sold in their country so that they become more affordable in these countries. That way, so goes the plan, more of these American things will get made – in America – and sold all over. This approach by other countries is what historians without a clue about trade economics call the 'Neville Chamberlain' approach – that a reconciliatory gesture will, by the laws of psychology and psucking up, lead to bonhomie all around.

2. Hike their toll for entry of American things in retaliation to retaliatory tariffs. This could spawn further retaliation from America, followed by another salvo of retaliations from the other country... till, at least logically, America and the other country stop buying and selling each other's things completely.

3. Work out, as they say in Hindi, separate-separate deals with America and other countries, by which one can trade things not being bought or sold inside the supermarket/home delivery app in shops, kiranas, stalls, mandis... It just means more work, more keeping tabs on who's trying to skiff off



DEO BHAIIYYA...

the top – a return to the good old days when you exchanged fur and tobacco for rifles and GPU chips.

MAGAwati's trade economics is pure accountancy – money made from selling American things to zero-to-low duty countries must top money lost from high tariffs slapped on American things sold in other countries. Essentially, the model would be MAMA – Make America Marwari Again. (Disclaimer: I flunked my first term accountancy exam in Class 9 by getting a record-breaking 4 out of 100.)

But will it work? For America, that is. People in the know-hoo say that this could actually be the push-turned-to-shove that countries like India need to go forth and prosper. Like a top school suddenly saying that the cut-off marks for admission is no longer 75% in board exams but 99% and the ability to turn out Studio Ghibli-style images without using AI. It'll force students to develop skills that they were happy (read: lazy) not to develop.

This tough love actually sounds good for low-application, high-potential countries like India. Imagine George Fernandes and his pals not having to drive Coca-Cola out of India, but Coca-Cola upping and leaving, so as to bring the genius of Thums Up into the world. And here's the best thing: once 'forced' to 'sell better, sell more' in other countries, India-like countries have the option of applying in *other* 'schools', without getting obsessed about Ivy League America.

As for MAGAwati's gambit – America's Regular Janes and Joes will find prices of things rising, stock markets getting squeezed... essentially America punching its diminished, and diminishing, weight. Such a Mandalisation will probably confirm what many of us are still in denial about: that America needs all the money it can get these days, its hankering to be 'great again' itself an admission that it's fallen on not-so-great days.

For whose clamours for historical correction and empowerment than those finding themselves, yes, still in the top, but no longer as top as before? And that is the real eye-opener of MAGAwati's tariff gameshow: the Brahmin Ain't So Great Anymore.

We just got snapped out of the 'American dream'.

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A Bhasha to Learn Won't Twist Tongues

One official language, however imperfect, can provide wider opportunity, without endangering local languages

SUNDAY SAPIEN



ATEESH TANKHA

When Soviet Russia conducted a census in 1926, there were 191 ethnicities with almost as many languages and dialects. Ukrainians and Belarusians outnumbered Russian speakers. Eventually, to ensure standardisation, Russian was imposed on all citizens – in legislature, bureaucracy, and education. Much as Mandarin was imposed decades later by Mao across China.

This would take time, as Fitzroy Maclean learnt in 1938. Maclean – British diplomat, spy, soldier and, arguably, role model for James Bond – was surreptitiously traversing Soviet Azerbaijan when he was detained by an NKVD patrol. When he tried to explain that he held diplomatic immunity, NKVD arrested him and sent him to Baku.

It was only under interrogation that Maclean learnt that he had been arrested because soldiers had neither understood a word of the good Russian he spoke, nor could they read his papers. Taking advantage, he used his superior knowledge of Russian to secure his release and return to the British embassy in Moscow. When he heard of this later, Stalin was incensed.

Yet, it took WW2 and another decade before the spirit of militant communism permitted Russian to take root amongst people living between the Gulf of Finland and Vladivostok, a position it tenuously holds even today.

Critics of this forced imposition should weigh things in the balance. An official language, however imperfect, can provide considerable opportunity, without jeopardising local languages and customs. There is no country in the world which has created an official national language, and then permitted it to languish while local languages freely operated as languages of instruction.

When India's founding fathers wrote the Constitution, they bequeathed a legacy that could only be unlocked if you were educated enough to appreciate its outlook in English. They felt that only English could do justice to both the hopes of an emerging nation, and the

sheer plurality of spoken and written tongues that existed, for whom English was the only link language.

Other countries, some of which were equally diverse, realised the necessity of a common tongue. For instance, while English, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil are all officially recognised in Singapore, the first is the common official language. In India, there are 23 languages that operate in every Indian state as official mediums of instruction. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 now encourages this, because it ostensibly enables greater choice and protects local culture.

But it may inadvertently create a hegemony that damns those with future potential to a state of non-achievement and slow career progression. The downside of a non-standardised medium of primary instruction cannot be overestimated. Higher education doesn't always remedy or reverse this inequity as a rule,

though exceptions no doubt abound.

Naturally, this demands the political will to recognise that equality of opportunity begins with equal access to a uniform system of education through a common language of instruction. There are also infrastructure challenges: qualified teaching staff and sufficient teaching material across a wide swathe of subjects. Enabling this in 23 languages will be even more daunting.

Transitions like this require the surrender of misplaced nationalism, not to mention the hypocrisy that allows politicians to champion one language while sending their children to an English-medium school. For the sake of India's future generations, it may be time to mandate one language at the primary level that's universally accepted and valued. Even the mighty Persian Empire made Aramaic the official imperial language for expediency.

Many government schools have already chosen to become English-medium institutions, by supporting and supplementing their lack of trained personnel with smart technology. India's demographic capital – its future generations – should not be shortchanged for the lack of such a policy.

Ultimately, as politicians dispute the hidden agenda of NEP in the South, and as budget disparities stymie education goals, the necessity for a common official language to standardise literacy, learning, and competence goals becomes glaringly self-evident. It should not take a plague of homegrown, or foreign, Macleans to prove this.

The writer is founder-CEO, ALSOWISE Content Solutions



MUJHE PAATA HAIN HOW TO PRONOUNCE 'MULTILINGUALISM!'

Quiz Question: What Pub Or Crab Doesn't Crawl?

Colombo is one questionable city, with its many rituals including the pub quiz

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN



MICHEL BAAS

Colombo: Once a year, I return to the clammy embrace of Sri Lanka. I plan it in such a way that I can attend 'pub quiz on Wednesday,' a Colombo institution that's been going strong for decades. As much as my annual participation may befuddle, it also holds the key to why the island keeps luring me back.

I attended my first quiz when it was still held at Barefoot Cafe, a complex of interlocked buildings that culminate into a sprawling courtyard. My friend Suchetha, Barefoot Prince of Colombo, famous for going shoeless most of his life, had taken me on a road trip to Polonnaruwa and Sigiriya the previous day.

Driving down dusty roads at breakneck speed, avoiding cattle and pointing out the occasional elephant emerging from the jungle, he knew exactly which resthouses to stay at and laze about on the porch after a long day at the ruins.

Yet, as the week turned into Wednesday, he suddenly seemed to be hitting the gas a bit more forcefully, rushing me through Anuradhapura as if being chased, seemingly in a hurry to get back to Colombo in time for *something*. I remember the final miles as happening in a blurry blaze – us parking the car on Galle Road, and running down the lane that leads to the back entrance of Barefoot Cafe.

We arrived panting and were greeted by his friends, already properly sauced, pens and papers ready. The quizmaster said something to the sort of 'There

you are!' And then the first round of questions appeared on a big screen.

I'm not sure if we won that evening. Or on any other day, for that matter. Colombo consists of rituals that are sort of the opposite of winning. Following a quiz at Barefoot, I usually head for lunch at Dutch Burgher Union (DBU) the next day. Its VOC Café is the best place to have lamprais, a quintessential Sri Lankan dish that, fortunately, has little to do with Dutch food.

Wrapped in banana leaves, lamprais consists of two curries, meats, and holds two obligatory frikadeller meatballs. It probably started as a convenient way for Dutch burgher housewives to pack leftover food from the previous evening for their husbands for lunch the

next day. It does sound like a decidedly 'Dutch' thing to do – not waste food (or money).

Sri Lanka's Dutch period lasted from 1658, when they took over from the Portuguese, till 1796, when the island became British. Dutch burghers of Ceylon had long intermarried with other Sri Lankans, and the mestizo (Portuguese for 'mixed person') community, Dutch linkages are often thin, or non-existent.

Although DBU once offered Dutch classes, they were soon disbanded, as there was limited interest. It is a vibe Michael Ondaatje captures particularly well in his 1982 book, *Running in the Family*, a semi-fictionalised account of his Dutch burgher heritage that depicts his family as slightly mad, decidedly alcoholic, but capable of the most magnificent feasts.

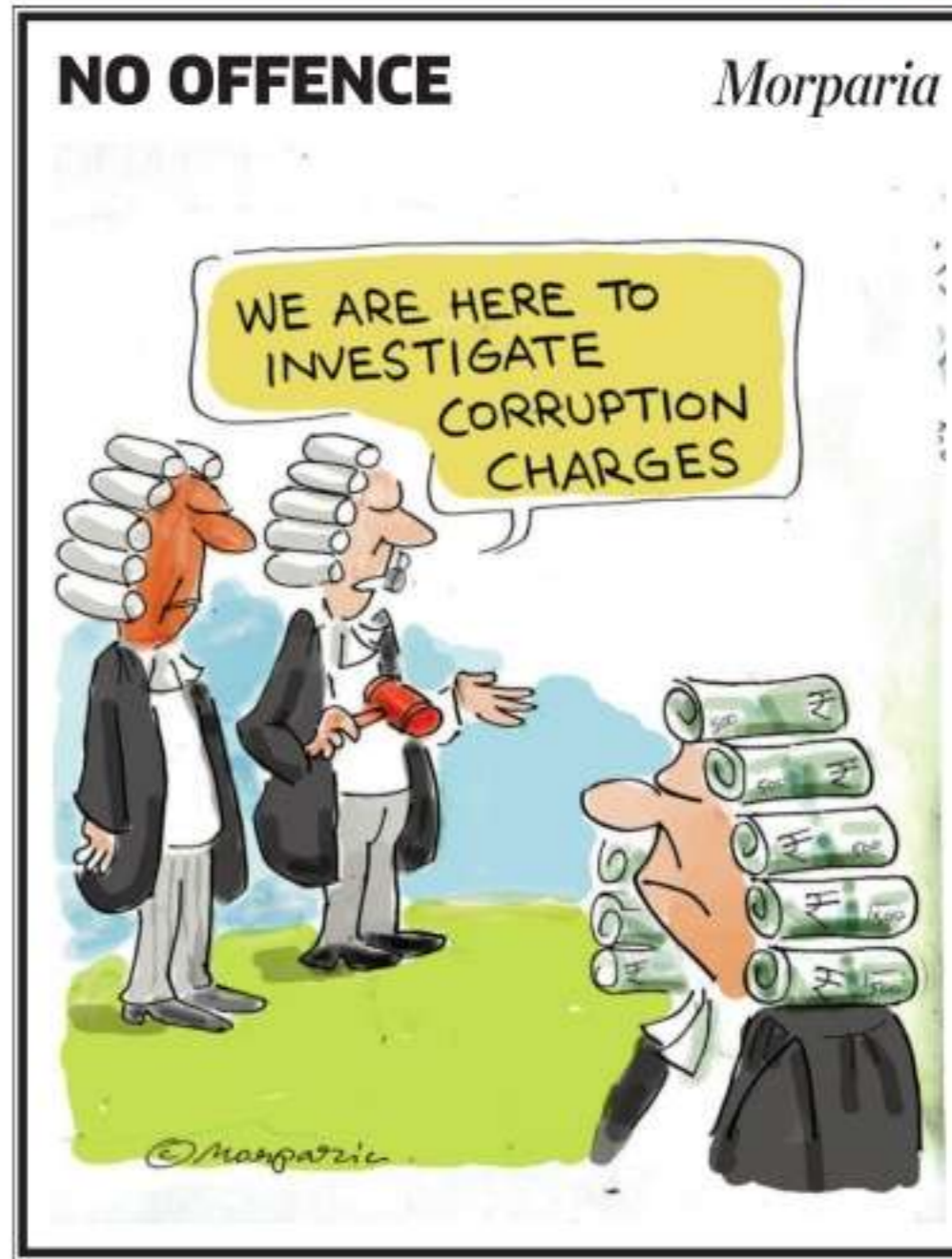
'Quiz' encapsulates that too, possibly reflecting life in Colombo more generally. These days quizzes are no longer held at Barefoot, but in the courtyard of a pub called The Joint. Located behind the Dutch Hospital, this old colonial building has long stopped functioning as a hospital, and is now a shopping precinct where one of Asia's top restaurants, Ministry of Crab, is located.

It's not where my friend would take me to have Jaffna crab. He will assert that if you can't go to Jaffna yourself, the region's best crab is best to be had in small Tamil eateries tucked away in Colombo back alleys. You will have to remove the meat from its bones with your bare hands, the piping hot masala making the whole experience a messy, sweaty, but delicious one.

The Barefoot Prince is now a quizmaster himself, his questions the right blend of pop culture trivia and the sort of stuff you've been coming to Sri Lanka for. Last Wednesday, as I found myself wondering if we will 'win' this time, I knew I would be back once more.



WHEN WEDNESDAYS SPELL DOOM



NO OFFENCE

Morparia

biometric risks – essentially, your AI-crafted avatar could be holding onto data that's a little too close for comfort. In simpler terms, it might be a digital fingerprint in disguise.

How bad could it really get?

The real issue lies in how AI models process and potentially store facial data. Unlike traditional AI art filters that merely apply effects, advanced AI tools can interpret, analyse, and, in some cases, retain unique facial markers. This raises questions about consent, security, and – let's not forget – the deepfake technology.

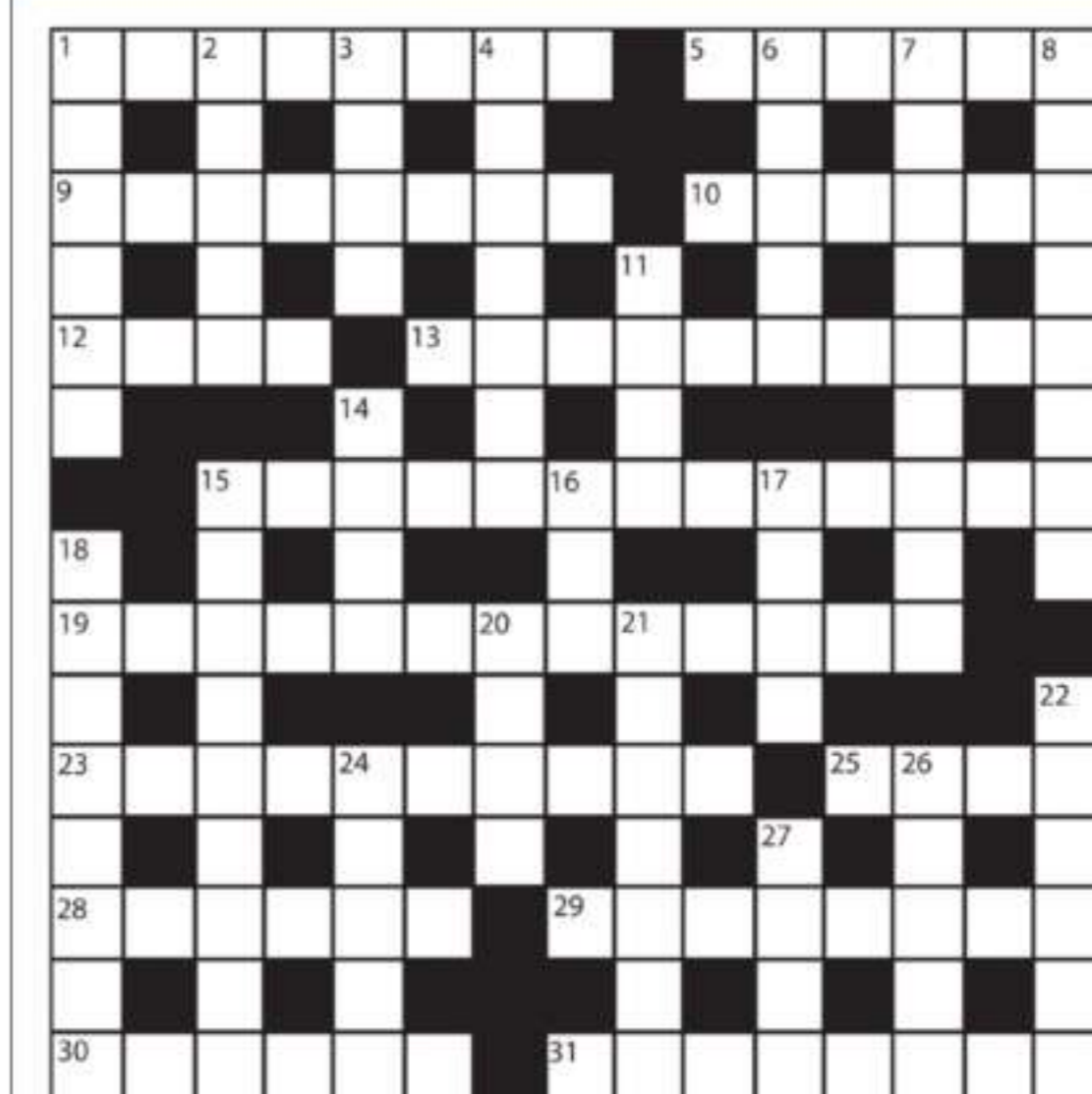
Should we panic or just enjoy?

Bask in the AI-Ghibli glow, but keep your wits about you. While AI art has its charm, understanding its implications is crucial. Know where your data is going, question how it's being used, and maybe don't hand over your biometric details for a digital Totoro selfie just yet. And maybe, just maybe, take Sam Altman's advice and chill – at least until OpenAI figures out what to do next.

Text: Team Sunday ET

ET Sunday Crossword

0110



ACROSS

- 1 Sudden drop in foreign videos in northeast (4,4)
- 2 Politicos mostly absorb everything around them (6)
- 3 Be like rebels fighting to surround large space (8)
- 4 He insults a top lady in charge of coach (6)
- 5 Look closely – feel-good factor's back (4)
- 6 Criminals' nasty red wound covers both hands (10)
- 7 It excluded tab that's suspect, like

DOWN

- 1 slender new missile (6)
- 2 This is all mostly used to make mats (5)
- 3 Suppress moisture (4)
- 4 Disputed naval base straddles Cuba's border (7)
- 5 Steer front of boat in isolated stretch of river (5)
- 6 Wretched but, with less clothing, musical (9)
- 7 Office machine's quiet and more revolutionary? (8)
- 8 I love boy and would be author's wings clipped (4)
- 9 Leave 11 in Egypt (4)
- 10 We tried somehow to keep extremely alert in ebb and flow (9)
- 11 Not very bright and getting less intense briefly (3)
- 12 Split up in carriage (4)
- 13 Deny a monkey before Islamic revolution (8)
- 14 What's left after cutting edges of forestry (4)
- 15 I climb each peak in central Kenya leading with this? (3-4)
- 16 Mated married up in cattle fold (6)
- 17 Fancy coats and hats at this race meeting (5)
- 18 Detest nabbing son in hurry (5)
- 19 Yarns are special to one in Paris (4)
- 20 Spun.
- 21 Dewlap.
- 22 Resc.
- 23 Ice-dick.
- 24 Resc.
- 25 Resc.
- 26 Resc.
- 27 Resc.
- 28 Resc.
- 29 Resc.
- 30 Resc.
- 31 Resc.

Spending Cut, Tax Break Plan Gets Senate GOP Approval

US senators on Saturday approved a budget blueprint unlocking trillions of dollars for sweeping tax cuts promised by President Donald Trump, despite bitter infighting among the majority Republicans over the savings that will be needed to fund them.

Working deep into the night, lawmakers voted 51-48, mostly along party lines, to approve the resolution, with two prominent Republicans opposing the measure.

It now moves to the House of Representatives, where Republicans hold a slim majority, and where hard-liners and fiscal hawks have criticized the Senate version.

The Senate vote came at a time when Trump's sweeping tariffs imposed on dozens of trading partners sent global stocks plummeting, with Democrats arguing that now is not the time to be entertaining significantly reduced government spending.

"President Trump's tariff tax is one of the dumbest things he has ever done as president, and that's saying something," *CNN* quoted Democratic minority leader Chuck Schumer as saying.

Schumer submitted an amendment targeting Trump's tariffs, but it did not receive enough support for adoption.

Republican senators Susan Collins of Maine and Rand Paul of Kentucky joined the Democrats in opposing the budget resolution. However, nearly every Republican in the upper house of the Congress stood by the president, with Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana saying in a brief statement: "President Trump wants to balance the budget and decrease our debt. I agree." *AFP*

AFTER TARIFF-FUELLED SLIDE, BEIJING SAYS 'MARKET HAS SPOKEN' US President doubles down China Goads US over Selloff, Trump says 'We Will Win'

China said on Saturday "the market has spoken" in rejecting US President Donald Trump's tariffs, and called on Washington for "equal-footed consultation" after global markets plunged in reaction to the trade levies that drew Chinese retaliation.

Trump, however, doubled down on his extraordinary calls as he warned Americans of pain ahead but promised historic investment and prosperity.

The US President introduced additional 34% tariffs on Chinese goods as part of steep levies imposed on most US trade partners, bringing the total duties on China this year to 54%. He also closed a trade loophole that had allowed low-value packages from China to enter the US duty-free.

This prompted retaliation from China on Friday, including extra levies of 34% on all US goods and export curbs on some rare earths, escalating the trade war between the two largest economies.

USING DUTIES AS WEAPON

State-run *Xinhua* news agency on Saturday published the Chinese government's stance, saying the US should "stop using tariffs as a weapon to suppress China's economy and trade". Hong Kong financial secretary Paul Chan told public broadcaster *RTHK*, however, that the territory would not impose separate countermeasures, citing the need for the city to remain "free and open".

"The market has spoken," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said in a post on Facebook. He also posted a picture capturing Friday's falls on US markets.

Global stock markets plummeted following China's retaliation and Trump's comments on Friday that he would not change course, extending sharp losses that followed Trump's initial tariff announcement earlier in the week and marking the biggest losses since the pandemic. For the week, the S&P 500 was down 9%.

"Now is the time for the US to stop doing the wrong things and resolve the differences with trading partners through equal-footed consultation," Guo wrote in English on Facebook.



The US should resolve differences through equal-footed consultation, said Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun

NOT BACKING OFF
Defending his call on sweeping tariffs, the US President said 'China has been hit much harder' than the US

Later in the day, Trump defended his decision on this Truth Social platform, saying, "China has been hit much harder than the USA, not even close. They, and many other nations, have treated us unsustainably badly."

'AN ECONOMIC REVOLUTION'
"We have been the dumb and helpless 'whipping post,' but not any longer. We are bringing back jobs and businesses like never before... THIS IS AN ECONOMIC REVOLUTION, AND WE WILL WIN. HANG TIGHT, it won't be easy, but the end result will be historic," he added in his post.

In a separate statement published by *Xinhua*, the Chinese government urged the US: "Stop using tariffs as a weapon to suppress China's economy and trade, and stop undermining the legiti-

mate development rights of the Chinese people."

"China has taken and will continue to take resolute measures to safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests," said the government.

Washington "seriously undermines the rules-based multilateral trading system, and seriously undermines the stability of the global economic order," it added.

INDUSTRY BODIES HIT OUT

Earlier on Saturday, several industry chambers of commerce in China ranging from those representing traders in metals and textiles to electronics, issued statements condemning the tariffs.

The country's chamber of commerce—representing traders in food products—called on "China's food and agricultural products import and export industry to unite and strengthen cooperation to jointly explore domestic and foreign markets".

Meanwhile, Hong Kong's Chan said it strongly opposes Trump's actions and would continue to be "free and open".

"Allowing a free flow of capital and acting as a free port are our advantages, and this will not change," Chan told public broadcaster *RTHK*.

"The rules-based multilateral trading system is our core," he said. *Reuters*

Zelensky Slams US Embassy Reply on Russian Strike

Toll in missile attack on Ukraine President's hometown rises to 18

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday slammed the US embassy for what he called a "weak" statement that did not blame Russia for a missile strike on his hometown which killed 18 people, including nine children.

In one of the deadliest strikes in recent weeks, a Russian missile on Friday evening struck a residential area near a children's playground in the central Ukrainian town of Kryvyi Rih, followed by attack drones. Seventy-two people were wounded, 12 of them children, Dnipropetrovsk governor Sergiy Lysak said after the end of emergency operations overnight, with city officials declaring three days of mourning.

Zelensky—in an emotional statement on social media—named each of the children killed in the attack, accusing the US embassy of avoiding referring to Russia as the aggressor. "Unfortunately, the reaction of the American Embassy is unpleasantly surprising: such a strong country, such a strong people—and such a weak reaction," he wrote.

"They are even afraid to say the word 'Russian' when talking about the missile that killed the children," the President added.

Zelensky singled out the United States for criticism as President Donald Trump has pushed for a partial ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine while seeking a thaw in ties with Moscow.

US ENVOY'S POST
The Ukrainian president was taking aim at a message posted on X by US Ambassador Bridget Brink on Friday evening, which said: "Horrible that tonight a ballistic missile struck near a playground



A car burning after a Russian missile attack on Friday evening in Ukraine's Kryvyi Rih AP

Progress in Talks with UK, France

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday hailed "tangible progress" after meeting British and French military chiefs in Kyiv to discuss strengthening the Ukrainian army as well as ways to support the war-torn country after any end of hostilities with Russia. *AFP*

Brink, who was appointed by Trump's predecessor Joe Biden and has been ambassador since May 2022, added that "this is why the war must end". Zelensky wrote Saturday: "Yes, the war must end. But in order to end it, we must not be afraid to call a spade a spade."

NOT NAMING RUSSIA
In recent posts, Brink did not refer directly to Russia, but on Saturday, after Zelensky's criticism, she referred to "Russian attacks" while visiting the war-torn city of Kharkiv. *AFP*

Jaguar Land Rover Pauses Exports to US

UK automaker Jaguar Land Rover is pausing shipments of its cars to the US following the introduction of tariffs by Donald Trump's government. The Coventry, England-headquartered company is putting these exports on hold this month as it looks at ways to address the new trading terms, a spokesperson said on Saturday. Washington introduced a 25% tariff on imported cars, which went into effect on Thursday. The Jaguar Land Rover move is the latest example of the global fallout from the policy. *Bloomberg*

TikTok Deal Halted amid China Objections

Washington/Beijing: A deal to spin off the US assets of TikTok was put on hold after China indicated it would not approve the deal following President Donald Trump's tariffs announcement this week, according to two sources familiar with the matter. Trump on Friday extended by 75 days a deadline for ByteDance to sell US assets of the popular short video app to a non-Chinese buyer, or face a ban that was supposed to have taken effect in January under a 2024 law. *Reuters*

Move Towards Long-term Profitability

From Page 1
Sahil Barua, cofounder and CEO of Delhivery, said, "The Indian economy requires continuous improvements in cost efficiency, speed and reach of logistics. We believe this acquisition will enable us to service customers of both companies better, through continued bold investments in infrastructure, technology, network and people."

As of September 30, 2024, Delhivery had ₹5,488 crore in cash and cash equivalents. The transaction will require clearance from the Competition Commission of India. Delhivery said it expects to close the acquisition in the next six months. Thereafter, Ecom Express will become a subsidiary of Delhivery.

"The deal definitely helps everyone as one not-so-efficient player is out and, hence, Delhivery will be able to price reasonably and move towards long-term

profitability and improve their network. How they gobble this asset and leverage it is to be seen. It will bring sanity to the pricing market for sure," an investor in the logistics sector said on condition of anonymity.

IPO SHELVED

Ecom Express was looking to raise ₹1,284.5 crore in fresh capital via its IPO, while investors, including promoters, had planned to offload stakes worth ₹1,315.5 crore. Having filed its IPO papers in August last year, the company subsequently put the plan on hold.

After it filed its draft prospectus with the Securities and Exchange Board of India last year, Delhivery accused Ecom Express of misrepresenting certain metrics.

Delhivery said that Ecom Express double-counted the number of return-to-origin shipments and, hence, ended up

inflating its volume on a like-to-like basis. "Return to origin" is a term used by logistics firms when a product is returned or the delivery is cancelled, and the goods go back to the seller.

Delhivery shares closed 2% down at ₹258.25 on the BSE on Friday. The company's market capitalisation was around ₹19,200 crore.

In the months leading to the Delhivery acquisition, Ecom Express had started consolidating its operations, shutting down multiple delivery hubs and laying off hundreds of employees, people in the know said. It reported ₹2,607.3 crore in operating revenue for 2023-24, a 2.3% increase from the previous year. Its net loss narrowed to ₹255.8 crore from ₹428.1 crore in 2022-23.

ECOMMERCE DEPENDENCE

Ecom Express and Delhivery were among the first third-party logistics

(3PL) firms that aimed to leverage the country's e-commerce growth in 2011-12 as the likes of Flipkart, Snapdeal and Amazon started gaining consumer traction.

After a few years, though, large horizontal e-commerce firms began building their internal logistics systems by setting up separate entities such as Ekart Logistics (by Flipkart) and Amazon Transportation Services. This is when businesses of these 3PL firms started getting impacted.

E-commerce volumes for 3PL players saw a resurgence after Covid-19, in 2021 and 2022, as Meesho started growing. However, with Meesho launching Valmo, its in-house logistics software arm, in February 2024, the volumes of 3PL companies took a hit yet again.

Between Delhivery and Ecom Express, the listed firm gained an upper hand from previously having diversified into other segments including part-truckload and supply chain services, which account for almost 35-40% of its

revenue. E-commerce shipments continue to contribute the biggest chunk to its business.

Ecom Express, which remained focused on shipping e-commerce parcels, became overdependent on not only the sector but also one player—Meesho. Without naming the firm, Ecom Express flagged in its IPO prospectus that its top customer contributed more than 52% of its revenue in 2023-24, up from 29% in the previous financial year.

In Delhivery's December-quarter earnings call, Barua had said that the firm was open to any deals at the right price. "The fact of the matter is that the volumes are highly concentrated for most of our competitors and so it's not clear what value we should ascribe to those volumes," he said. "I think the reality is it's better to let discipline enforce itself. So, we'll wait and watch. If the right consolidation opportunity becomes available at the right price, then obviously, Delhivery is a natural consolidator in the market."

Greater Flexibility

From Page 1
Enquiries are mainly from startups, e-commerce, food-tech and marketplace companies, said Saxena. "The adoption of pet insurance is expected to grow further."

In 2023, RPG Group conducted a multi-city in-depth research study to understand the motivational factors and aspirations of Gen Z. At the time, the conglomerate realised that Gen Z prioritised flexibility at the workplace. As a result, last September, RPG Group launched Grow@RPG, an AI-powered career mobility programme that allows employees to explore internal gigs and cross-functional roles.

"We are one of the few brick and mortar businesses which enables almost every employee to work remotely and flexibly for a large part of their work week or month," said Supratik Bhattacharyya, chief talent officer, RPG Group.

According to Aon research, many companies are seeing Gen Z employees make up the bulk of their employee base due to which they are bringing in more flexibility at work. "Our research shows Gen Z value flexible work policies, time off, ability to work from home, diverse career paths and varied roles early in their careers and a huge appetite to upskill, while trying to promote inclusion, equity and wellbeing," said Roopank Chaudhary, partner & head of data solutions for Human Capital, India at Aon.

Many firms are introducing flexibility in work schedules. "This will allow Gen Z employees to manage their work-life balance and pursue their passions along with their job," said Chaudhary. Some firms also have policies like unlimited sick leave and 'well-being days' to prevent burnouts.

More Exports Expected

From Page 1
Trump has levied tariffs such as China's 54%, Vietnam's 46%, Thailand's 36% and Taiwan's 32%. These will come into effect from April 9.

Chinese brands like Haier, Hisense, Lenovo, Motorola, Oppo, Vivo and TCL have operations in the US, with most sourcing products from their factories or contract manufacturers in China and Vietnam. Hisense is finalising plans to import moulds for its global products from

China for production in India through contract manufacturers in the second half of the year, some of which could be exported to the US, an industry executive said.

Contract manufacturer Dixon Technologies is expecting a tariff windfall for India through increased exports. The company currently makes some smartphone models for Lenovo-owned Motorola for the US market. It had an exposure of ₹1,700-1,800 crore to the US in FY25.

The India chief executive of a leading Chinese electronics brand said if New Delhi relaxes FDI approvals for Chinese companies in the current scenario, it could be a gamechanger for Indian electronics manufacturing and exports.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month said India and China can slowly return to cooperative ties, after which Chinese president Xi Jinping said the relations-

hip should improve and take the form of a "Dragon-Elephant tango."

India's electronics exports are projected to reach \$37.5 billion in FY25, with \$13.5 billion coming from the US. This is largely led by Apple. In FY24, India exported \$10 billion worth of electronics to the US, with smartphones alone contributing \$5.6 billion, accounting for 36% of India's total smartphone exports.

India and the US are also negotiating a bilateral trade agreement which the industry believes should further reduce tariffs between the two nations.

Another Major Tata IPO

From Page 1
Under the merger terms, Tata Capital will issue shares to Tata Motors Finance shareholders, giving Tata Motors an effective 4.7% stake in the merged entity.

It will be Tata's second public listing in two decades, following Tata Technologies' blockbuster IPO in November 2023. The last major one before that was Tata Consultancy Services' ₹5,500-crore offering in 2004.

Tata Capital's unlisted shares—which surged to ₹1,100 in April 2024 from ₹450 in December 2023—are now trading at about ₹975, valuing the firm at around ₹3.6 lakh crore. For FY24, Tata Capital reported a revenue of ₹18,178 crore, a 34% jump on-year. Net profit rose 12% to ₹3,315 crore. The NBFC has a net worth of ₹23,417 crore as of March 31, 2025.

UN Urges Myanmar Support as Quake Toll Crosses 3,300

Bangkok: The United Nations called for the world to rally behind quake-hit Myanmar on Saturday as the death toll rose to 3,354, while a former USAID official said a US aid team had received notice they were losing their jobs after arriving in the disaster zone.

In addition to those killed by the March 28 earthquake, 4,850 people were injured and another 220 are missing, state media said. During a visit to Myanmar's second-biggest city, Mandalay, which was near the epicentre of the 7.7 magnitude quake, United Nations aid chief Tom Fletcher appealed for international support.

"The destruction is staggering. Lives lost. Homes destroyed. Livelihoods shattered. But the resilience is incredible," he said in a post on X. "The world must rally behind

Limited Impact on Pharma Exports

From Page 1
New Delhi anticipates a small impact on its pharmaceutical exports due to the new tariffs imposed by the Trump administration.

Washington could slap duties similar to what it has levied on steel imports.

India is currently negotiating a free trade agreement with the UK, with "very good" progress on the talks, and there are similar requests from other countries including Bahrain and Qatar.

Work is also on to support exporters who would be hit by the US tariffs. Goods exports growth in FY25 is expected to be slightly higher than in the previous fiscal and FY26 growth will be higher than in FY25, said an official.

India's goods exports in the April 2024-February 2025 period amounted to \$395.63 billion. Its competitor Vietnam is facing 46% US tariffs, Indonesia 32% and Thailand 36%. Officials also said the commerce department is reaching out to domestic exporters regarding the US tariffs.

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सरल ई-नीतामी के माध्यम से

आधारभूत सुविधाओं युक्त औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में करें उद्यम की स्थापना

कुल औद्योगिक भूखण्ड 533 कुल औद्योगिक क्षेत्र 79

उपरोक्त औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों पर प्रत्यक्ष आवंटन योजना-2025 लागू नहीं है

ईएमडी	प्रारम्भ तिथि: 07 अप्रैल, 2025 (प्रातः 10:00 बजे)	अंतिम तिथि: 21 अप्रैल, 2025 (सायं 06:00 बजे)	
54 आबू रोड	02 जयपुर (उत्तर)	03 बालोतरा	02 जालोर
30 अजमेर	08 जयपुर (दक्षिण)	37 झालावाड़	22 राजसमंद
07 अलवर	01 जयपुर (श्रीमोंग)	23 भरतपुर	05 झुंझर
08 भिवाड़ी-I	28 ईवीआईसी नीतापुर, अजमेर	24 भीलवाड़ा	31 कोटा
33 भिवाड़ी-II	01 जोधपुर	17 बीकानेर	01 सीकर
26 बीरानाडा	36 किशनगढ़	02 चूरू	02 श्रीगंगानगर
01 दौसा	01 मंडौर	44 नागौर	18 उदयपुर
08 धिलोठ	02 नीमराना	50 पाली	06 सवाई माधोपुर

*25% भुगतान के बाद, शेष 75% भुगतान 11 किन्तों में 8.5% ब्याज के साथ या 120 दिनों के भीतर ब्याज रहित भुगतान या

रीको की टर्म लोन स्कیم के तहत भूमि की लागत का 75% तक का ऋण 5 साल की पुनर्भुगतान अवधि एवं 8.5% ब्याज के साथ*

सामान्य प्रश्नों के लिए स्कैन करें

राजस्थान स्टेट इण्डस्ट्रियल डवलपमेंट एण्ड इन्वेस्टमेंट कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड
उद्योग भवन, मिलक मार्ग, सी-स्क्रीम, जयपुर-302005
ई-नीतामी हेल्पलाइन नं. 0141-4593250, 4593237, हार्डसफ्ट +91 90010360015, ई-मेल: riico@riico.co.in

आवंटन से सम्बंधित नियमों एवं शर्तों, ईंगुण्टी विवरण, रजिस्ट्रेशन एवं भूखण्ड से सम्बंधित जानकारी के लिए देखें <https://riico.rajasthan.gov.in> या <http://www.riico.co.in>

Talk Z to Me

It's always a good idea to go back to school when the generation gap starts to feel more like a language barrier. **Kanika Saxena** takes you through the ever-evolving world of Gen Z – one word at a time.

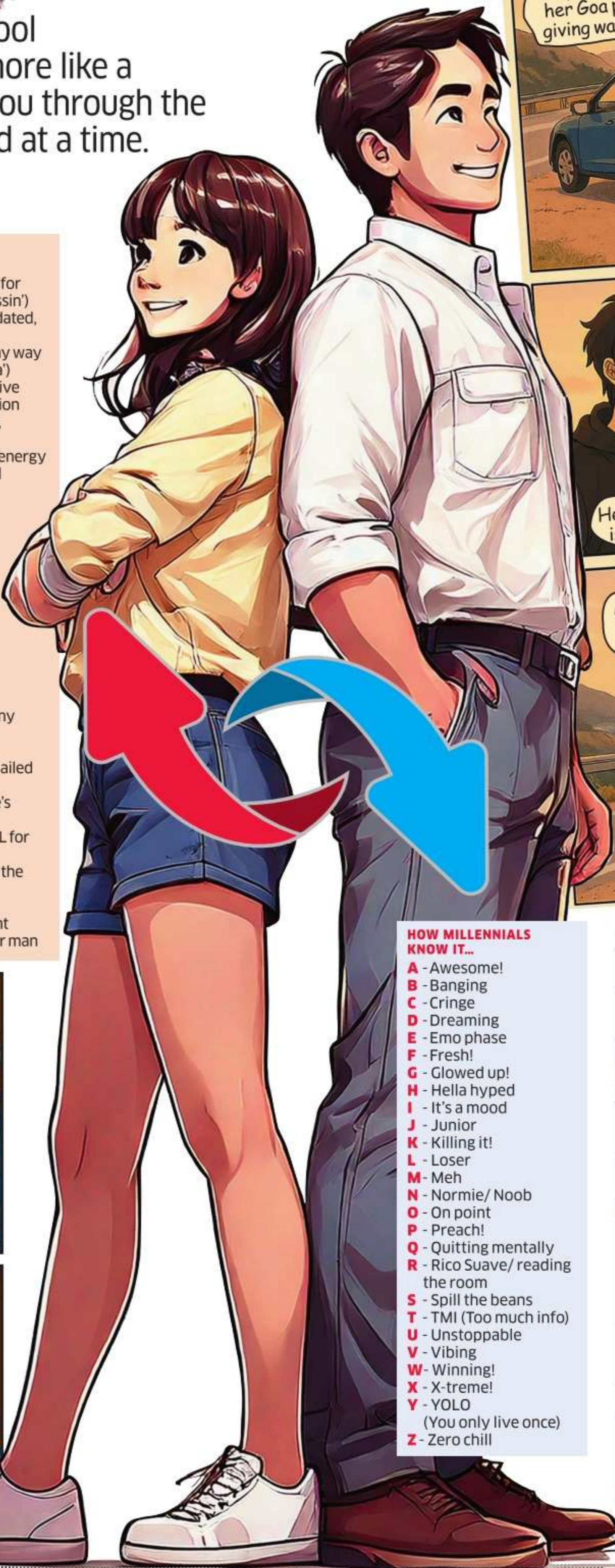
Slay Report

Scene Check



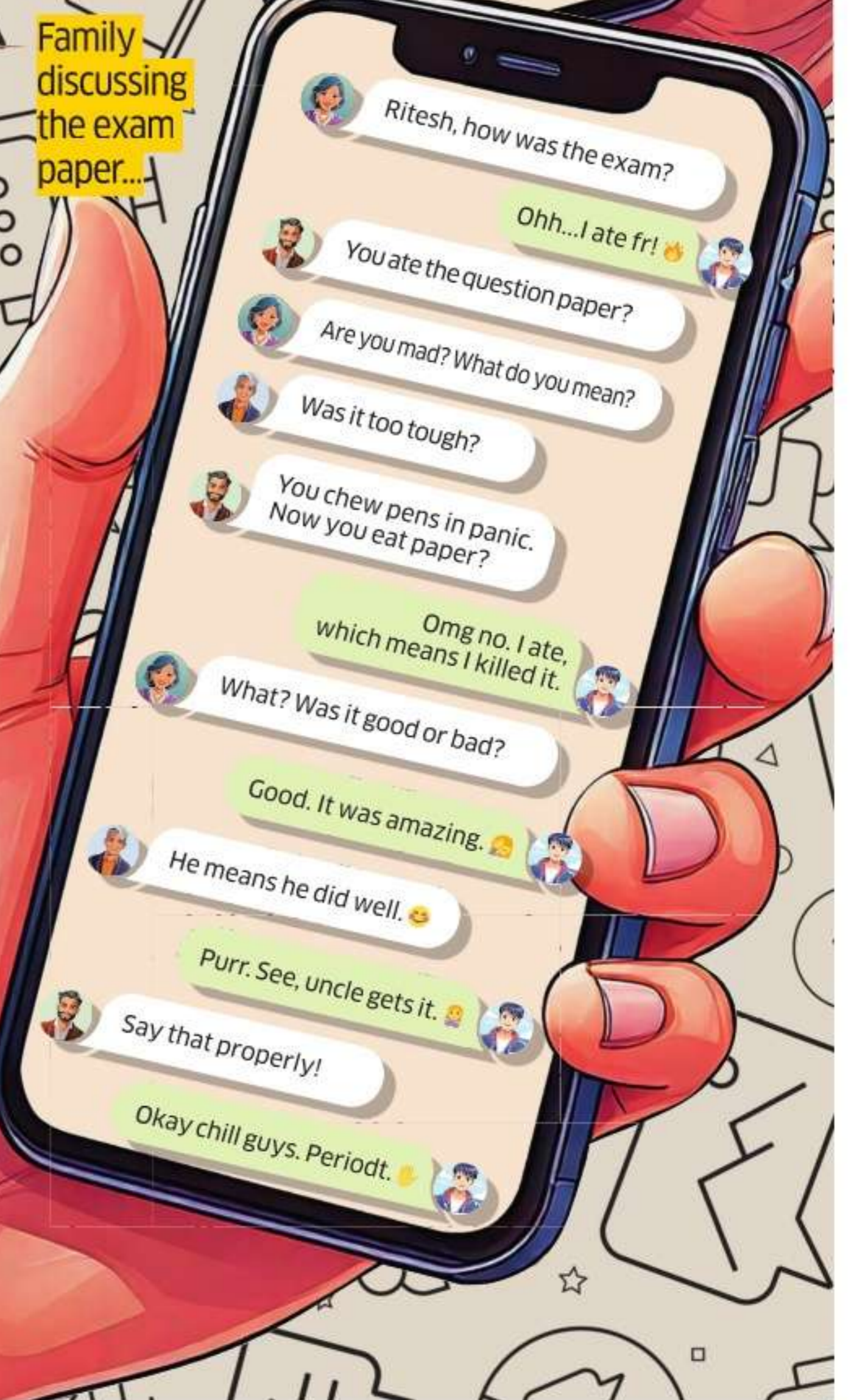
A to Z

- HOW GEN Z SAY IT...**
- A - Ate:** Nailed it! It was amazing!
 - B - Bussin':** Highest form of praise for something amazing (This is bussin')
 - C - Cheugy:** Something that is outdated, not trendy anymore
 - D - Delulu:** Delusional but in a funny way
 - E - Era:** Phase of life (eg, 'villain era')
 - F - Fire:** Amazing, cool, or impressive
 - G - Ghost:** Cutting off communication
 - H - High-key:** Opposite of low-key, owning the excitement
 - I - It's giving:** Describing vibes or energy
 - J - Jit:** Young kid or inexperienced person
 - K - Killin' it:** Doing something exceptionally well
 - L - L:** Loss or failure
 - M - Mid:** Average, not great, kinda meh
 - N - NPC:** Non-Player Character, acts robotic
 - O - On God:** I swear, for real
 - P - Pookie:** Someone cute
 - Q - Quiet quitting:** Doing the bare minimum at the job
 - R - Rizz:** Charisma, flirting skills
 - S - Skibidi:** Weird, absurd (in a funny way)
 - T - Tea:** Gossip or juicy news
 - U - Understood the assignment:** Nailed the task perfectly
 - V - Vibe check:** Checking someone's mood or energy
 - W - W:** Win or success (opposite of L for losing)
 - X - Xennials:** Those born between the 1970s and 1980s
 - Y - Yeet:** Throw away something excitedly or express excitement
 - Z - Zaddy:** Attractive, stylish, older man



- HOW MILLENNIALS KNOW IT...**
- A - Awesome!**
 - B - Banging**
 - C - Cringe**
 - D - Dreaming**
 - E - Emo phase**
 - F - Fresh!**
 - G - Glowed up!**
 - H - Hella hyped**
 - I - It's a mood**
 - J - Junior**
 - K - Killing it!**
 - L - Loser**
 - M - Meh**
 - N - Normie/ Noob**
 - O - On point**
 - P - Preach!**
 - Q - Quitting mentally**
 - R - Rico Suave/ reading the room**
 - S - Spill the beans**
 - T - TMI (Too much info)**
 - U - Unstoppable**
 - V - Vibing**
 - W - Winning!**
 - X - X-treme!**
 - Y - YOLO (You only live once)**
 - Z - Zero chill**

Whatcha Yapping About?



How Words Go Viral

Tony Thorne, a British linguist and director of the Slang and New Language Archive at King's College London, decodes the magic of slang

How do new slang words take root? Do they simmer, or do they explode through virality?
In the past, slang took time to break out from tight-knit local social groups, spreading through word of mouth before the media picked it up. Today, with the digital wildfire effect, new words can go viral overnight, leaping from TikTok, YouTube, Instagram right across the 'anglosphere' and go global.

Do we have more slang than ever, or it seems like that because everything is amplified online?
It's hard to say if the total 'volume' of slang has increased. What is true is that slang has become more accepted by mainstream media, where it would be censored or ignored. We also have a very new phenomenon whereby influencers deliberately create, promote and spread new terms, so slang is no longer just coming 'up from the streets'.

Why do some slang words last while others fade?
There aren't any rules that govern it. Some think that words which convey important social or technological innovations or that reflect current 'moods' are likely to have a longer appeal, but there's no real proof of this. Words relating to social behaviour or relationships: insults, terms of endearment, dating, complaining, identity labels, are reinvented for each successive generation.

Why do older generations resist slang – until they don't?
Parents, teachers and 'authority figures' generally start by decrying younger people's language and avoiding or ignoring it or trying to ban it. But if a term is adopted by the media ('woke' is an example) they may, in a few cases, start to use it themselves. Technological terms ('spam', 'troll' etc.) and lifestyle jargon may be invented or used by older speakers. I always warn parents, though, not to try and imitate their kids by borrowing their slang. In the kids' own language this is extremely 'cringe'.



The Time Machine

A quick look at how the same meaning is conveyed by different generations.

WHEN SOMETHING IS COOL

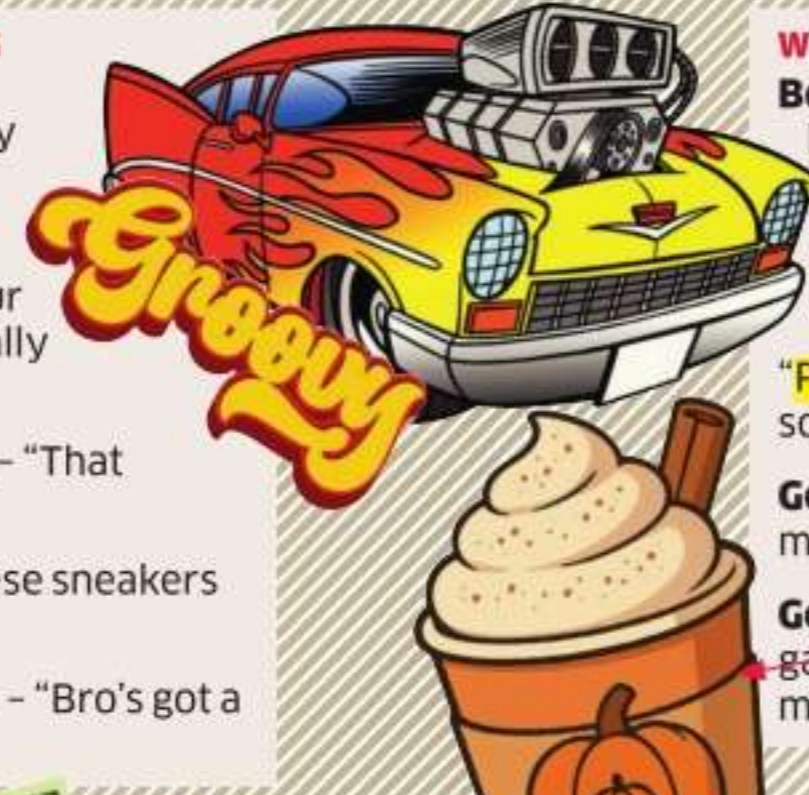
Boomers: Groovy – "That car is groovy!"

Gen X: Rad – "Your new jacket is totally rad."

Millennials: Sick – "That trick was sick!"

Gen Z: Fire – "These sneakers are fire."

Gen Alpha: Rizzy – "Bro's got a rizzy fit today!"



WHEN SOMETHING IS UNCOOL

Boomers: Square – "Don't be such a square."

Gen X: Bogus – "That rule is totally bogus."

Millennials: Basic – "Pumpkin spice lattes are so basic."

Gen Z: Mid – "That song is mid."

Gen Alpha: Ohio – "That game is so Ohio." (Used to mean lame/weird)

SLANGING MONEY

Boomers: Bread – "I need to make some bread."

Gen X: Benjamins – "All about the Benjamins, baby."

Millennials: Bucks – "I am trying to get those bucks."

Gen Z: Bag – "Secure the bag, always."

Gen Alpha: Racks – "She spent racks on her new iPhone!"

F.R.I.E.N.D.S

Boomers: Pal – "He's my pal from college."

Gen X: Buddy – "Hey buddy, what's up?"

Millennials: BFF – "She's my BFF!"

Gen Z: Bestie – "Bestie, what are you doing?"

Gen Alpha: Slime – "That's my slime fr."



ILLUSTRATIONS: AI GENERATED IMAGING: ATUL BANDEKAR

The Creations of a Celebrity Nail Artist



PICS: AP, AFP, GETTY IMAGES

The New York Times
For at least a few days most weeks, Mei Kawajiri makes hotel calls to Cardi B, Heidi Klum, Ariana Grande and Bad Bunny to whip up viral creations, often shared with her more than 3.43,000 Instagram followers. Her medium might be even more impressive: Extravagant nail art—minutely detailed 3D pastries, hand-drawn portraits of anime heroines and six-inch acrylics embedded with jewels and lace.



Mei Kawajiri hand-paints and sculpts custom designs for a clientele that includes Heidi Klum and Cardi B

When she's not collaborating with celebrities, Kawajiri works out of her combined home and office in Manhattan, US, her nail equipment tucked in a corner across from her toddler's playpen, toys strewn across foam and carpeted mats. After working for a few months at a SoHo nail salon, she decided to strike out on her own in order to do more creative work. She initially charged \$100 for two-hour sessions, working out of a suitcase and doing as many as six house calls per day. Now, 13 years later, she creates custom nail art for A-list clients for events like the Met Gala and the Academy Awards, and she has worked with some of the biggest brands in fashion, including Balenciaga, Louis Vuitton and Marc Jacobs.

FORM OF EXPRESSION

She finds inspiration in the every day: She created 3D croissant nails when she first moved to New York City because she struggled to pronounce the word, and it was easier to just point at her nails when ordering at a cafe. (She said she changes up her own nails about every 10 days.)

During an interview, she wore a full 10 fingers of 3D art—a hot dog on one nail, an apple on another because, she said, her daughter, Itsuki, is obsessed with apples and stops crying when she sees her mother's finger.

"My life is my inspiration for my nails," said Kawajiri, whose recent creations also include 3D dirty socks and baby bottles.

She also creates elaborate hand-drawn nails of characters from the anime world, using a brush with a tip as thin as a strand of hair. (Unlike most manicurists, she does not use stickers or stencils.) "Nails are such a powerful form of expression," she said.



ART ON NAILS

It has been a long journey for Kawajiri who, after a childhood in Kyoto, Japan, opened her own studio in Harajuku, a stylish neighbourhood in Tokyo, at 23. In 2012, she came to New York on the advice of a client's friend, who said that her work deserved to be on magazine covers.

After arriving in New York alone, speaking no English, she would walk the four-mile stretch from the Lower East Side to the Plaza Hotel with a portfolio. "I would ask people, 'Do you think I should move to New York?'" said Kawajiri.

She obtained an artist visa at a time when it was tough to convince people that doing nails could be considered art, she said. (Her application was approved; Kawajiri said that the woman who interviewed

Are Women Allowed Their Dreams, Asks This Author

Twelve years after her last novel, bestselling author and feminist icon Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is making a highly anticipated return, with the story of four women from Nigeria who emigrate to the US but find that their lives do not work out as planned.

Adichie has won a string of prestigious literary awards for her previous works—including the Orange Prize for *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and the National Book Critics Circle Award for *Americanah* (2013). But it was her 2012 TED talk, "We Should All Be Feminists", that propelled her into the mainstream. It received millions of views on YouTube and was even sampled by Beyoncé in a song.

But she does not like being pigeonholed. "I don't think of myself as a 'feminist' writer," she insisted. "I think of myself as a writer. And I'm also a feminist."

"The problem with labels is that it can be very limiting," she added. With her new book, however, she has returned to the theme of women, their rights and the agency they possess. "I'm interested in how much of a woman's dream is really hers, and how much is what society has told her to dream about," Adichie said. "I think that the world is deeply oppressive to women. Women are judged for being selfish, for having ambition and for being unapologetic."

AFRICA STORY

Another of her bugbears is the patronising Western stereotype of Africa, the "single story" of a continent plagued by poverty, conflicts and diseases. "There's the tendency to look at Africa as a place to be pitied," she said. Nigeria is a major oil producer, for



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

instance, and has a thriving business culture and global pop stars. "It's very troubling because you cannot understand a place like Nigeria if you look at it only as a place to be pitied," she added.

INSPIRATION IN A DARK PLACE

Three years after *Americanah*, she recalls being seized by crippling writer's block. It was the loss of her mother in 2021, only months after the death of her father, that broke the stalemate. Out of her sorrow, came another novel. "I think my mother helped me," she said. "I think she said: 'You know, I need to get my daughter writing again so that she doesn't go completely mad from grief.'" — AFP

The New York Times

When Wes Anderson was just starting out and wanted to reshoot some scenes for his 1996 debut *Bottle Rocket*, the rookie director got a shock. Columbia Pictures had sent the movie's props off to a store, which sold them all.

So, when he made his next movie, *Rushmore* (1998), Anderson decided to put everything into an SUV when the shoot was over; then drove the hoard away to look after it himself.

That decision ended up helping not just Anderson. Over the past two-and-a-half years, curators at the Cinémathèque Française in Paris and the Design Museum in London trawled through Anderson's storage facility in Kent, England to compile a museum retrospective of his work.

The show at the Cinémathèque Française runs through July 27. It will then transfer, expanded, to the Design Museum.

ATTENTION TO DETAILS

The Paris show includes more than 500 exhibits, many of them well known to Anderson fans, including the candy pink hotel model that opens *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, several sardine-blue explorer outfits from *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou*, and a luxurious fur coat worn by Gwyneth Paltrow in *The Royal Tenenbaums*.

Items like these are key to Anderson's signature style—heavy on retro fashion, symmetry and pastel colours.

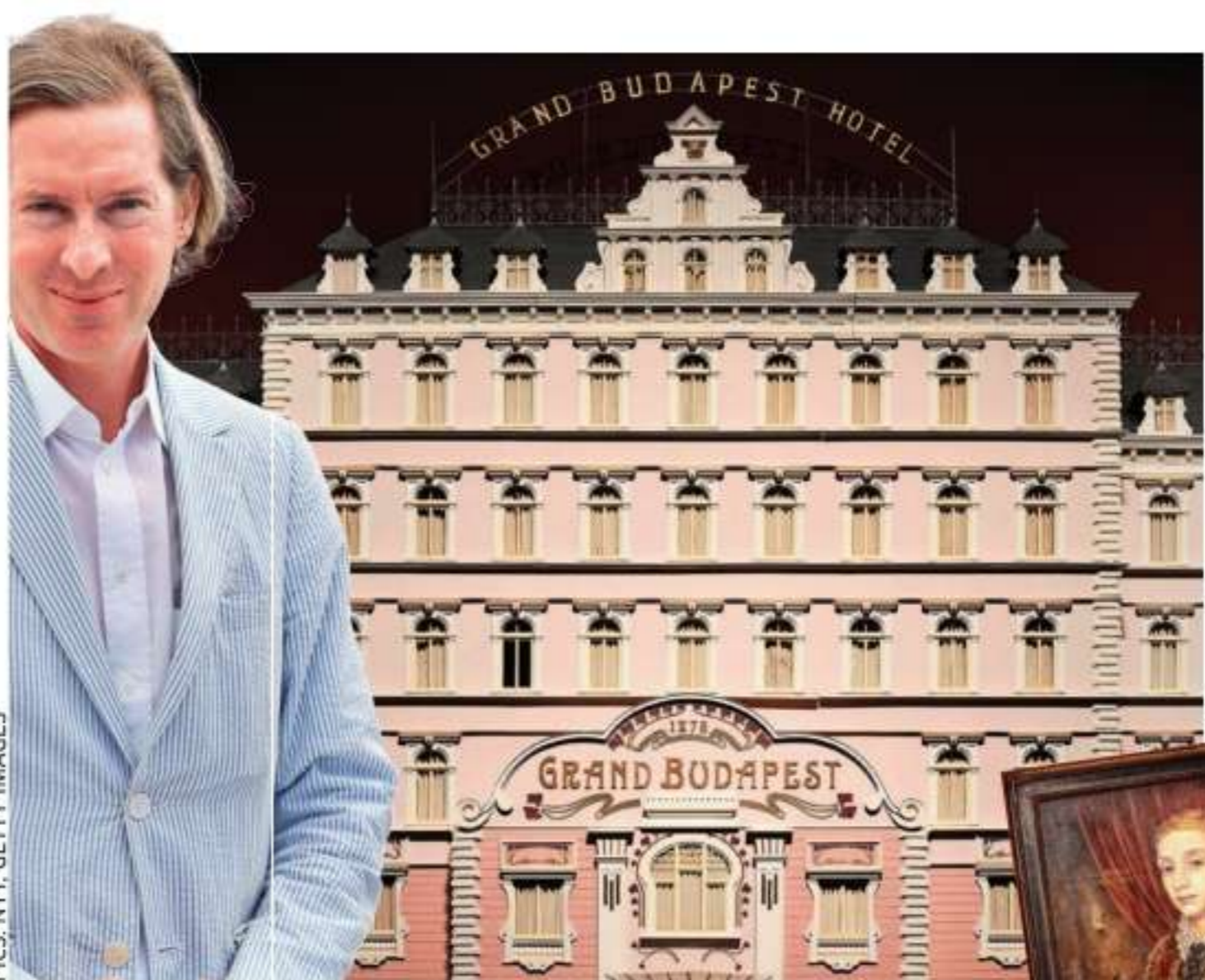
Wes Anderson's GRAND WORLD

But Johanna Agerman Ross, a curator at the Design Museum, said it was a "misunderstanding" to think of Anderson as a director defined by a few stylistic tropes. He had "an extreme interest in the creative process", she said, and he believed that because even the smallest items help create a world on screen, they needed to be "fully formed pieces of art and design".

Some of Anderson's best-known props took weeks or months to conceive and make, including a faux-Renaissance painting, 'Boy With Apple', for *The Grand Budapest Hotel*; a vending machine that dispenses martinis from *Asteroid City*; and the painted Louis Vuitton luggage in *The Darjeeling Limited*.

Agerman Ross said that while developing the exhibition, she had spoken with craftspeople who told her that they had lengthy email correspondences with Anderson to discuss every detail of the props they were making, right down to tweaking fonts and colours for magazine covers that appear for milliseconds in *The French Dispatch*.

Mathieu Orléan, a curator at the Cinémathèque Française, said that Anderson's attention to detail shaped his projects from their beginnings. The exhibition includes a vitrine filled with yellow spiral-bound notebooks in

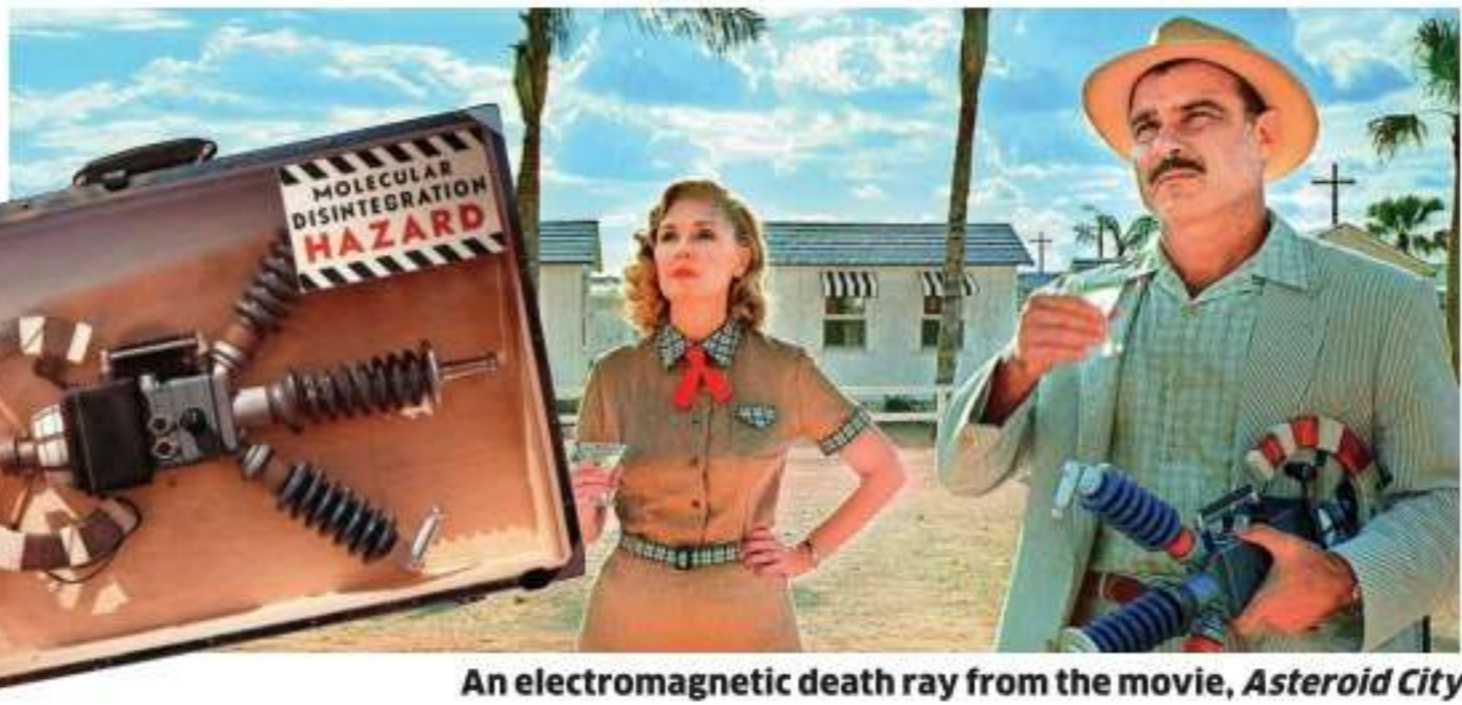


A museum exhibition shows how thousands of small decisions add up to make the director's signature style

Wes Anderson's GRAND WORLD



A luxurious fur coat worn by Gwyneth Paltrow in *The Royal Tenenbaums*



An electromagnetic death ray from the movie, *Asteroid City*

which the director jotted down his ideas. They contain careful notes for scripts and minute storyboards for scenes.

PERFECTIONIST TRAITS

The exhibition also includes a black-and-white animated storyboard that Anderson uses to show actors and crew how he wants scenes to appear. Orléan said that Anderson had produced these for all his movies since *Fantastic Mr Fox* in 2008, adding that he records himself reading the script over it, so actors know how to deliver the lines.

Andy Gent, a model maker who has worked on seven Anderson movies, said that the director had "totally changed the look" of stop-motion films by insisting the puppets in that movie have real animal fibres, even though they were hard to control, creating an effect known as 'boiling', where the puppet's fur appears to move.

Gent and his fellow puppet makers would "slave over the tiniest whisker" to ensure the

'Boy With Apple', attributed to the fictional painter Johannes Van Hoyt le Jeune



A puppet was created with real animal fibres for *Fantastic Mr Fox*

figures looked exactly as Anderson wanted, he said.

While making *Isle of Dogs*, for instance, Gent recalled that Anderson's opening instruction was simple: "Sculpt some dogs!" So, Gent and his team spent months making hundreds of mongrels, with Anderson choosing bits he liked from individual models and asking the puppet makers to bring them together.

SHOCK VALUE

At the opening of the Paris exhibition, one item drew more attention than others: The model of *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

Simon Weisse, who oversaw the making of the prop, said that six craftspeople spent three months building the model, which includes glass windows and sheer curtains. The colour choice, though, was all Anderson's, he said.

Weisse said that when the colour samples had first arrived at the studio, he couldn't believe it. "I said, 'Pink? Bright pink and dark pink? No!'" he recalled. "I asked the art department to check there wasn't a mistake, but they said, 'It's right. Wes has chosen these colours.'"

It was only when Weisse finished the job, he said, that he appreciated Anderson's decision. The colours were quirky, they echoed real European buildings, and fitted perfectly with the movie's eccentricities.

Anderson might sweat the smallest details, Weisse said, but "in the end, he's always right".

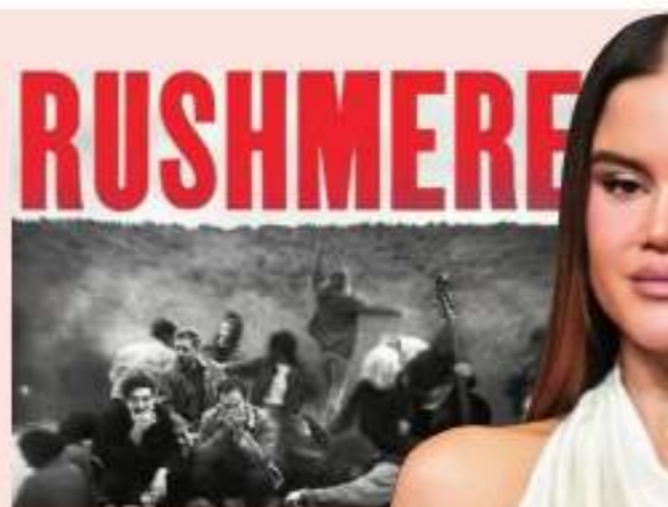


Five Hot Songs to Tune Into

From West African dance music to a plea for children in war-torn regions, these tunes cover a range of genres

The New York Times

MAREN MORRIS, 'CARRY ME THROUGH'
Equal parts self-help and secular gospel, 'Carry Me Through' puts robust piano chords and a choir behind Maren Morris as she works on finding the will to heal herself. "Yeah, I got friends around / Plenty of hands held out," she sings. "But I'm still the one who has to choose to carry me through." The music gives her ample reinforcement, and by the end, she's vowing, "I'll get there."



RUSHMERE

Mumford & Sons get a strong infusion of Southern rock in 'Truth', part of their new album *Rushmere*. Over a bluesy, sinewy riff, Marcus Mumford declares, "I was born to believe the truth is all there is" and insists, "I refuse to offer myself up to men who lie." The track intensifies—with percussion, guitars, handclaps and choral harmonies—as the singer's desperation grows: "Don't leave the liars in the honest places," he pleads.



TIMBALAND, 'AZONTO BOUNCE'

Timbaland, the producer whose sounds and techniques transformed hip-hop in the '90s, has released an album, *Timbo Progression*, that visits entirely unexpected territory: West African music, with a vintage sound. Azonto is a dance and music style from Ghana; Timbaland's version, with its mid-tempo beat and modal horn lines, also hints at Fela Kuti's 1970s Afrobeat.



ALLISON RUSSELL FEATURING ANNIE LENNOX, 'SUPERLOVER'

Here's an unexpected but sensible alliance: Canada-to-Nashville songwriter Allison Russell joined by Annie Lennox of Eurythmics. 'Superlover' is a plea and a

prayer for the world's children, especially in combat zones. It's accompanied mostly by Russell's banjo picking, but adds churchy overtones. "There's no God of fire and blood / If there's a God, God is love," Lennox sings. But is that enough to save lives?

THE SWELL SEASON, 'PEOPLE WE USED TO BE'

In a complicated conjunction of art and life, Glen Hansard—the Irish songwriter who led the Frames—and Markéta Irglová, who came to Ireland from the Czech Republic, formed the Swell Season and made an album together in 2006. They starred in the 2007 film *Once*, which was adapted into a Tony-winning Broadway musical; they dated and broke up, but have continued to record and perform together. They trade verses in 'People We Used to Be', a folksy ballad with swelling strings that reflects on how an artistic collaboration can survive a changing friendship.

How Tariffs and Hunger Have Shaped Human History

FOOD FABLES



VIKRAM DOCTOR

The Indian government is planting a 'Green Wall' along the Aravallis to prevent desertification. It is based on African initiatives, but there is a more local, forgotten example. In the 19th century, a massive hedge was planted across central India, not for environmental reasons, but to prevent smuggling of salt.

Roy Moxham explored this in his fascinating *The Great Hedge of India*

India. He noted that there was a long history of salt taxation in India, but the East India Company took it to punitive levels. In the 18th century, over 30 years, "the wholesale price of salt increased from 1.25 rupees to about 4 rupees a maund". This was severe for such a basic commodity—and a huge incentive for smuggling. To counter this, in the 1840s, a 4,000-km hedge was planted from Punjab to Orissa, manned by up to 14,000 guards.

The Inland Customs Line, as it was called, guarded against smuggling of salt from the west coast and locations like Rajasthan's Sambhar Salt Lake into the north and east Indian territories controlled by the Company. It was main-



tained for about 40 years, till overall British control of India made it less needed. The hedge disappeared, but the prickly plants it was formed from continued to spread. One of them is karonda, whose delicious berries will start ripening as summer reaches a peak. In the week of US



President Donald Trump's tariffs, the story of India's salt hedge reminds us that taxing movement of products has a long history—and unexpected consequences. Governments have long used tariffs, both to raise revenue and shield local producers, and food has commonly been the primary focus. Athens, for example, put a two per cent tariff on grain flowing in through its port of Piraeus. Because

Roman revenues was huge. But, as always with luxury, high prices simply spurred more conspicuous consumption—and illicit trade. Smuggling may have enriched border regions, and ultimately encouraged the rise of local rulers to challenge Rome.

Another example of tariffs intersecting with food and geopolitics came with the treaty of Balta Liman (1838), between Britain and Turkey. Mohammed Ali, Egypt's then Governor, was increasingly aggressive towards Ottoman rule. The sultan turned to the British to keep him in check, in return for which they gained almost tariff-free access to Turkish markets. The British empire produced textiles and wheat and flooded Turkey, with little revenue to the state. To compensate, the Ottomans raised taxes in their eastern Europe territories, triggering nationalist movements that ended Ottoman rule (and caused endless Balkan conflicts). Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's geopolitical

meddling is said to be driven by the desire to revenge this humiliation.

The British had their own experience with the transformative powers of tariffs with the Corn Laws (1815-46), levied on grain imports to protect agricultural interests. The beneficiaries were the aristocrats who owned estates and dominated the government in the House of Lords. The impact of high food prices fell on urban dwellers, whose numbers rose with the Industrial Revolution. The anti-Corn Law movement became a push for political reform, increasing urban constituencies in the House of Commons.

Actual repeal only happened with the Great Irish Famine. Irish grain was Britain's fallback supply, enabled by the potatoes that fed the peasants who grew the grain. When the potato crop failed, thousands starved to death or emigrated—and the British agreed to ease tariffs to import grain. The misery involved was immense, but that is irrelevant to those who play with tariffs.



Müller to Leave Bayern After 25 Years at Club

Munich: Thomas Müller will end his "incredible journey" with Bayern Munich this summer after 25 years at his boyhood club but says he wasn't ready to leave. The 35-year-old midfielder, whose contract is set to expire after the season, made the announcement Saturday in a joint statement with Bayern. On Instagram, Müller wrote that he respected Bayern's decision not to offer him a new contract for next season "even if this did not reflect my personal wishes." "It's clear that today is not like any other day for me," Müller said. "My 25 years as an FC Bayern Munich player will come to an end in the summer. It's been an incredible journey, shaped by unique experiences, great encounters and unforgettable triumphs." **AP**

MÜLLER'S CAREER & MILESTONES

- 25 years at Bayern Munich
- 743 appearances (club record)
- 247 goals for Bayern
- 33 trophies with Bayern (club total)
- 12 Bundesliga titles
- 2 Champions League titles
- Joined Bayern's academy in 2000 at age 10
- Made Bayern debut in 2008 under Jürgen Klinsmann
- Broke through under Louis van Gaal the following season
- Last game will be at the FIFA World Cup in the United States in June and July

Everton Hold Arsenal to Leave Liverpool Smiling

Liverpool: Everton did neighbours Liverpool a massive favour by holding tight to Arsenal to a 1-1 Premier League draw at Goodison Park on Saturday when Iliman Ndiaye's penalty cancelled out a Leandro Trossard opener for the visitors. Second-placed Arsenal have 62 points from 31 games, 11 behind leaders Liverpool, who have a game in hand when they go to Fulham on Sunday. Everton climb to 14th place with 35 points, 15 points clear of the relegation zone. Arsenal took the lead in the 34th minute as a poor header in midfield allowed Raheem Sterling to race clear and feed Trossard, who took a touch and drilled his shot low into the far right corner. Everton were awarded a penalty two minutes into the second period and Ndiaye netted his ninth goal of the season to leave Arsenal's flagging title hopes in tatters. **Reuters**

WORLD BOXING CUP Clinical Jamwal Storms Into 65kg Final

New Delhi: India's Abhinav Jamwal delivered a near perfect performance against Italy's Gianluigi Malanga to storm into the 65kg final of the World Boxing Cup (WBC) in Brazil's Foz de Iguaçu city. The 22-year-old used his tall frame to stay clear of Malanga's reach, but was quick enough to pounce when his rival's guard was down to earn a 5-0 unanimous verdict on Friday. Malanga had to even face a countdown in the first round itself, putting him on the back foot for the rest of the bout. On Thursday, Hitesh (70kg) became the first Indian to reach the WBC final. While Hitesh will take on England's Odel Kamara, Jamwal will face off local favourite Yuri Reis in the final. **PTI**

Chennai: KL Rahul struck 77 on his return as opening batsman to help Delhi Capitals beat Chennai Super Kings by 25 runs for their third successive victory on Saturday.

Electing to bat, Delhi reached 183-6 as they rode on Rahul's 51-ball knock that included key partnerships at Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium. Delhi bowlers combined to restrict five-time winners Chennai to 158-5 and stay unbeaten in this edition. Chennai slipped to their third successive loss and second at home this season. Delhi batters set up victory with Rahul playing an anchor role after taking over as opener from South Africa's Faf du Plessis who was not fit for the match.



Anand Datla

The Masters represents something beyond competition—it embodies the essence of golf, a place where legends are forged, and reverence is expected. It's a sanctuary where fractured loyalties can mend, and golf can thrive without an asterisk. As the dogwoods bloom and the sunlight bathes the pristine fairways each spring, golf finds its most sacred expression away from the noise and discord of the modern world. The players can share fairways, if not futures. It is where Fred Ridley's quiet diplomacy offers a temporary truce. Ridley, the chairperson of the Augusta National Golf Club, walks a careful line—safeguarding Augusta's traditions while navigating golf's deepest divide. The Florida man has emerged as an unexpected diplomat amid the sport's most contentious civil war. His committee upholds strict qualification standards, demonstrating subtle flexibility that acknowledges golf's evolving landscape without ex-

Max Gives Red Bull Wings

Verstappen conjures up stunning lap to claim a fourth consecutive pole at Suzuka, shocks McLaren's Norris and Piastri

Nick Mulvenney

World champion Max Verstappen took pole position for the Japanese Grand Prix on Saturday, stunning the McLaren's with a late flying lap to put his Red Bull at the front of the grid for the fourth year in a row at Suzuka. The McLaren's championship leader Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri have dominated qualifying so far this season and looked like doing so again until Verstappen conjured up a lap record of one minute 26.983 seconds at the end of the session.

Briton Norris was 0.012 seconds behind and will start on the front row beside the Dutchman, while Australian Piastri, who won in China two weeks ago, will be on the second row alongside Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

"A lot of happiness when I crossed the line," said four-times world champion Verstappen, who has won from pole at Suzuka for the last three years.

"The whole qualifying, we just kept on just trying to improve the situation a bit, and then the final lap was very good.

"I think if you look at how our season started, even during this weekend, I think it's very unexpected. I think that makes it a very special one."

It was Verstappen's 41st pole but a first since the Austrian Grand Prix in June last year, although he was fastest in qualifying later in the season in Qatar only to be handed a one-place penalty. "Congrats to Max. He did a good job. It's hats off. You have to credit someone when it's a lap that good," said Norris. "I feel I got everything out of the car. Just a tiny (margin) but Max did an amazing lap."

George Russell was disappointed with a spot on the third row in fifth place alongside his Mercedes teammate Andrea



This is a proper highlight for us to be back on pole here. The last lap was just flat out. I've had some really nice (poles) in other places. But I think if you look at how our season started ... it's very unexpected. And I think that makes it probably a very special one **MAX VERSTAPPEN**

Kimi Antonelli after showing good pace in practice. "We are definitely there or thereabouts to fight for the podium, maybe not the win," Russell said. "But with changeable conditions, who knows?"

Japan's Yuki Tsunoda qualified a disappointing 14th for his first race in the Red Bull car after replacing Liam Lawson last week. Lawson will start a spot ahead of him for Racing Bulls.

"I didn't expect to be like this -- how I ended up like that today," said Tsunoda. "It's a shame but at least the positive is I started to understand about the car."

Racing Bulls rookie Isack Hadjar overcame a seatbelt problem early in qualifying and will start the race from seventh on the grid alongside Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton in eighth.

"Not good enough from my side. P8 is not great," said seven-times world cham-

ion Hamilton.

"Charles did an amazing job. We went in different directions with set-up. I genuinely love the rain so I hope it comes tomorrow after a qualifying like that."

Spain's Carlos Sainz was 12th fastest for Williams but was later bumped down to 15th on the grid as a penalty for impeding Hamilton, his successor at Ferrari.

Another rookie to impress was Haas's Ollie Bearman, who got into the third qualifying session for the first time and will start in 10th place on the fifth row along with Alex Albon of Williams.

"This track is a joy," said teenager Bearman. "I loved every moment and the car was responding to everything I did which is always a good feeling. I had so much fun. I think we can stay in the top 10 tomorrow."

Despite preventative measures being

JAPANESE GP SUZUKA CIRCUIT

First Grand Prix	1987
Number of Laps	53
Circuit Length	5.807 km
Race Distance	307.471 km
Lap Record	1:30.983
	Lewis Hamilton (2019)
2024 Winner	Max Verstappen (Red Bull)

THE GRID (Top 10)

# DRIVER	CAR	TIME (minutes)
1 Max Verstappen	Red Bull	1:26.983
2 Lando Norris	McLaren	1:26.995
3 Oscar Piastri	McLaren	1:27.027
4 Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	1:27.299
5 George Russell	Mercedes	1:27.318
6 Andrea Antonelli	Mercedes	1:27.555
7 Isack Hadjar	Racing Bulls	1:27.569
8 Lewis Hamilton	Ferrari	1:27.610
9 Alexander Albon	Williams	1:27.615
10 Oliver Bearman	Haas	1:27.867

LEADERBOARD DRIVER STANDINGS (Top 10)

# Driver	Points
1 Lando Norris	44
2 Max Verstappen	36
3 George Russell	35
4 Oscar Piastri	34
5 Kimi Antonelli	22
6 Alex Albon	16
7 Esteban Ocon	10
8 Lance Stroll	10
9 Lewis Hamilton	9
10 Charles Leclerc	8

CONSTRUCTOR STANDINGS

# Team	Points
1 McLaren	78
2 Mercedes	57
3 Red Bull	36
4 Williams	17
5 Ferrari	17
6 Haas	14
7 Aston Martin	10
8 Sauber	6
9 Racing Bulls	3
10 Alpine	0

Lowest-Calibre Manchester Derby in Decades

The sad decline of United and City illustrates how easily the mighty can fall, as the pair meet to play for little more than pride

Richard Jolly

Welcome to Manchester, to borrow a hackneyed phrase. Although the invitation may seem less enticing than it has for quite some time.

"This, without a shadow of a doubt, will be the global capital of football in the rest of the 21st century," said the mayor, Andy Burnham, last year. He may yet be proved right and the Everton supporter was talking in the context of a new Old Trafford and an expanded Etihad Stadium. But not now.

If Madrid has had a stronger case to be the world's footballing capital over recent years, Manchester could have regarded itself as England's unofficial centre. Some 21 of the 32 Premier League ti-

les have gone to Manchester, an era of United dominance followed by one of City superiority. Its twin halves have converged on London for the 2023 and 2024 FA Cup finals. Since the Premier League was founded, United and City have a combined 64 trophies.

"They could make it 66 in 33 years, topping the annual average of two, considering City beat United to win the Community Shield in August. Now City are the favourites for the FA Cup and United the only unbeaten side in the Europa

League. And yet there are reasons to call Sunday's meeting the lowest-cal-

ibre derby in decades. It is 13th against fifth; unless other results demote United to 14th or 15th before kick-off. There is the possibility—either because of the hearing into City's 115 (or 130) charges or simply due to results on the pitch—that Manchester will have no representative in the Champions League next season. That has not happened since 1965-96.

This derby is not a summit clash, a title decider. It has a greater significance for City; normally by this stage of a season, they need not worry about finishing in the top four and five. United are in the unusual position of having little to play for; directly anyway, given that local pride, preparation for Europa League decider against Lyon, a bid to belatedly kick-start Ruben Amorim's reign and provide form, understanding and optimism ahead of next year all have a relevance.

But aggregate the league positions—and 13 plus five makes 18—and it is only the third biggest game on Sunday, after Fulham against Liverpool and Chelsea's trip to Brentford. Aston Villa

versus Nottingham Forest is arguably the plum tie of the weekend, which perhaps has not been the case since Ron Saunders and Brian Clough were in the dugouts. And so United and City convene at Old Trafford, the visitors without their two talismanic figures, the injured Erling Haaland and Rodri. Many of those who Guardiola last week called "legendary" players risk being found on the bench, whether due to age, form or the problem of determining who should be in this diminished City team.

United, meanwhile, have spent some £600m in three years, about £1.6bn since Sir Alex Ferguson retired, and have a bottom-half team, with a lone elite force in Bruno Fernandes. New co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe last year voiced an ambition to knock City off their perch; it transpires that Forest, who have beaten both Manchester clubs in the last month, may have done that. **The Independent**

WATCHOUT! Tonight

ISL Goa vs Bengaluru 7:30pm (Sports18)
PREMIER LEAGUE Brentford vs Chelsea 6:30pm; Fulham vs Liverpool 6:30pm; Tottenham vs Southampton 6:30pm; Man United vs Man City 5pm (Star Sports)
LALIGA Sevilla vs Atlético Madrid 7:45pm (GXR)

IPL 2025 TONIGHT'S SHOWDOWN

SRH vs GT
Hyderabad FORM

LLL vs WWL
HEAD-TO-HEAD

TEAM	M	W	P	NRR
DC	3	3	6	1.257
PBKS	2	2	4	1.485
RCB	3	2	4	1.149
GT	3	2	4	0.807
KKR	4	2	4	0.070
LSG	4	2	4	0.048
MI	4	1	2	0.108
CSK	4	1	2	-0.891
RR	3	1	2	-1.112
SRH	4	1	2	-1.612

Updated till CSK vs DC game

3 in 3: Capitals Continue Winning Run

Rahul's 77 helps DC outclass CSK at Chepauk for first time in 15 years

The 32-year-old Rahul, a wicket-keeper-batsman, started his international career as opener but later batted in different positions and recently took number six slot in the ODI Champions Trophy won by India. Rahul lost his opening partner Jake Fraser-McGurk for a duck off left-arm quick Khaleel Ahmed but stood firm to get going with Abhishek Porel, who hit 33 off 20 balls.

Ravindra Jadeja dismissed left-handed Porel with his left-arm spin, but Delhi batters kept chipping away with Rahul steady at one end. Rahul put on partnerships with

skipper Axar Patel, who hit 21. Sameer Rizvi, who made 20, and then Tristan Stubbs, who struck an unbeaten 24, to keep up the batting charge. Rahul fell to Sri Lanka pace bowler Matheesha Pathirana in the final over after he hit six fours and three sixes.

In reply, Chennai were never in the chase despite Vijay Shankar's valiant 69 not out.

Opener Rachin Ravindra fell caught and bowled, for three, off pace bowler Mukesh Kumar and Australia's left-arm quick Mitchell Starc took down skipper Ruturaj

Gaikwad for five.

Wickets kept tumbling with New Zealand's Devon Conway out for 13 in his first match for Chennai this season and impact substitute Shivam Dube dismissed for 18.

Former captain MS Dhoni walked out to loud cheers in the 11th over after Jadeja's departure. The 43-year-old Dhoni, whose family including his parents—a rarity—were in attendance at the ground, made 30 off 26 deliveries in an underwhelming show by him and his team.

BRIEF SCORES
DC 183/6 (Rahul 77 off 51, Porel 33 off 20, Stubbs 24 off 12; Khaleel 2/25) beat **CSK** 158/5 (Vijay 69 off 54, Dhoni 30 off 26; Nigam 2/27) by 25 runs



Anand Datla

The Masters: A Bridge Over Golf's Troubled Waters

The tournament's commitment to global golf transcends tour affiliations and creates a neutral territory in an increasingly polarised sport

explicitly taking sides in the PGA Tour-LIV Golf dispute.

Joaquin Niemann received a second consecutive special invite alongside Nicolai Hojgaard. "The Masters Tournament has a long-standing tradition of inviting leading international players who are not otherwise qualified," stated Augusta National in January. Their commitment to global golf transcends tour affiliations and creates a rare neutral territory in an increasingly polarised sport.

Twelve LIV Golf professionals will walk these hallowed grounds this year. Their presence, once contentious, now feels inevitable. Jon Rahm returns as a former champion, his 2023 victory still fresh in memory. Bryson DeChambeau will drive deep after a redemptive T6 that stoked his hopes in 2024. Sergio Garcia, the 2017 champion, is making his 26th appear-

ance. Phil Mickelson, Charl Schwartzel, Bubba Watson, Patrick Reed, and Dustin Johnson benefit from the protections reserved for past champions. Cameron Smith and Brooks Koepka will strengthen the field of 96 golfers. Tyrrell Hatton is also among the competitors, coming off a T-9 finish from last year.

Augusta's embrace welcomes 21 newcomers, including five amateurs who celebrate the most at Augusta. José Luis Ballester, Spain's US Amateur champion, follows in Seve Ballesteros's footsteps. Cayman Islands pride Justin Hastings triumphed at the Latin America Amateur—an nod to Augusta's global reach. Evan Beck, the Virginia insurance broker turned Mid-Am winner, embodies Bobby Jones's ideal.

Noah Kent, the 6'4" former hockey player, brings Rory McIlroy-inspired



Rory McIlroy walks to the 13th green at Augusta National Golf Club **AP**

dreams. And Hiroshi Tai, Singapore's NCAA champion, carries Asia's hopes. They might bunk in the Crow's Nest, their laughter echoing through golf's most sacred attic.

Television ratings reflect a latent hunger for drama and excellence. While LIV continues to compete for an

audience, the PGA Tour has benefited from a recent spike in ratings. Improvements in coverage, along with the consistency of Rory McIlroy and Scottie Scheffler, have contributed to this rebound. Both the Genesis and Players Championships surpassed 3 million viewers at their peak.

Mere desh ki dharti ka laal



Manoj 'BHARAT' Kumar
1937-2025

'If You're a Painter, Playing for India is Your Dream Canvas to Paint'

ET Q&A

B SAI SUDHARSAN
Gujarat Titans Opener

B Sai Sudharsan has been one of the most consistent batters in this IPL—74, 63 and 49 in his three outings for Gujarat Titans so far. The left-hander spoke with **Boria Majumdar** about the team, dressing room culture, presence of Jos Butler and his India ambitions. Excerpts

You've been incredibly consistent this season. What's the secret?
I'm glad I've been able to make a difference to my team. I'd say I have understood the T20 game better in the course of the last year and know what I need to do to be consistent and not push things too much. I have worked hard and prepared very well and if I do what I know how to do, runs will surely come.

How is it opening the innings with your captain Shubman Gill and how is he as a leader?

He's an excellent leader of men. He gives you the freedom to say whatever you feel and batting with him is an absolute pleasure. With him at the other end, you know he will soak in the pressure and play some incredible shots. Your job becomes easier that way and you can just focus on your own thing.

Did you enjoy batting with Jos Butler, one of the best white-ball batsmen?

Absolutely true. Jos is such a calming influence out there. You know there is someone who is in control. He will constantly encourage you and also make sure you don't feel the pressure. He is a leader and you will know it if you bat with him. I have enjoyed every minute we have batted together and learnt a lot in the process.

You've made remarkable strides over the past year—earning a spot in the India A squad and touring Australia. Do you think about representing India at the highest level?

If you are a painter, playing for India is your dream canvas to paint. There can be nothing better in the world for a cricketer. And it is the same for me. But I am not thinking too far ahead. You just have to put in the hard yards. At the moment, it is about the Gujarat Titans and helping my team make the playoffs. Having said that, playing for India is the ultimate dream and I will do anything to make sure I achieve it one day.

In three years, Gujarat Titans have established themselves as a brand in the IPL. What is it that GT is doing right?

You will hear the word family much too often in the IPL. We hear people saying teams are like families. In the case of Gujarat Titans, it is actually the truth. The team culture is such that each one of us has a say and has the freedom to express ourselves. We play as a collective and there is no "I" in this team. The management, coach Ashu bhai (Ashish Nehra), skipper Shubman each one is accessible and I have loved my team here.

Ashish Nehra has played a big role in making this team what it is. What makes him such a good coach?

Energy and passion—that's what Ashu bhai brings to the table and it is infectious. It is just special how he has been able to bind us all together and the energy he has. Having played for India at the highest level he knows it all and his experience helps a great deal. The other thing about him is his positivity. He is always looking at the bigger picture and how we can get better. We are fortunate to have him as our coach in GT.

How are you dealing with money and fame?

It has added more responsibility. I know people are watching me and they want to see me do well and be successful. I know I have certain duties towards my team, my family and my fans. If anything it has added more hours to my training. It has given me the added incentive to work that extra percent harder and make a mark. I want to do well at every level. For my club team, state, IPL franchise and for India. My dream is to win World Cups for India and that's the ultimate ambition. I will work hard to fulfil it.

stages are diminished without their brightest stars. Augusta's diplomacy has reminded the majors of their duty—to unite the game, even as its tours remain divided.

Donald Trump facilitated two meetings on golf's grandest stages. The majors provide what weekly tournaments cannot: a global spectacle that transcends tour politics. In an era of fragile ratings and fractured allegiances, the majors remain golf's most compelling product, reminding us why we watch—to witness greatness unfold where it matters most.

Augusta's neutral stance, honouring past champions and global merit, inspired others to follow. The United States Golf Association (USGA) led the way by creating a direct exemption for one of the top three players on LIV Golf who was not already qualified by May 19, ensuring that Oakmont will host LIV's best this June.

The R&A mirrored this inclusivity by offering a spot at Royal Portrush to the highest-ranked LIV player within the top five of their standings at the end of June.

The PGA of America, though less formal, extended invitations to Niemann and Sergio Garcia for Valhalla. These gestures reflect a growing realisation: fans demand full fields. Golf's greatest