

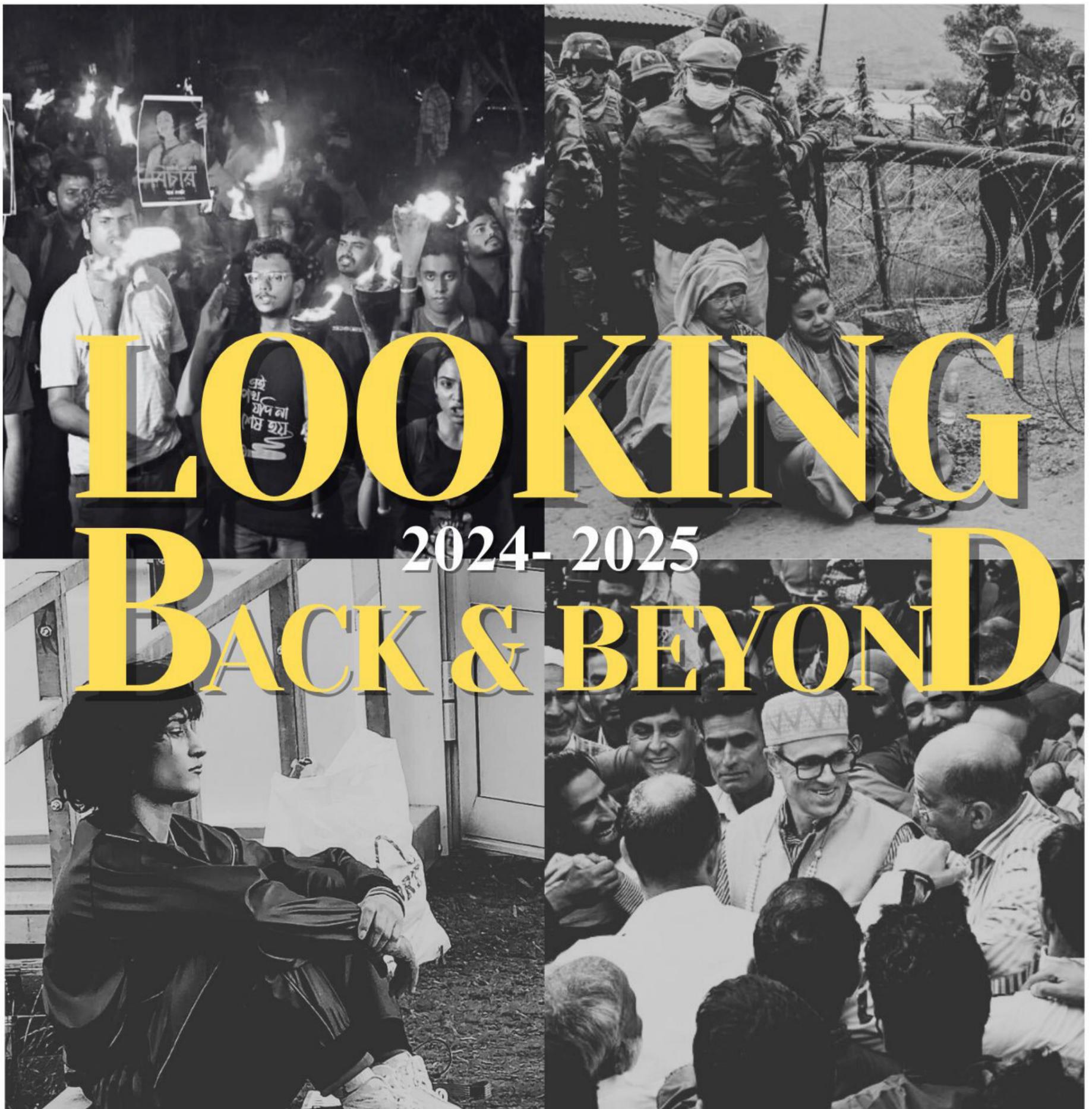
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LOOKING 2024-2025 BACK & BEYOND

An Era of Inflation: 2024 Marks the Year of Rising Costs, Deficits and Low Growth Rates



By Disha Gupta & Kashifa Wisal

India is struggling with a chronic case of inflation that has affected businesses, consumers, and officials alike as 2024 comes to an end. A difficult economic environment has been brought about by rising food and fuel costs, global supply chain disruptions, and the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) strong monetary policies. The government has also been forced to reconsider its budgetary approach. Here's a month-by-month revision of the major inflation-related events that defined the year.

January When Inflation Enters India

The Indian economy was dominated by inflationary fears at the beginning of the year. Food costs kept rising as a result of supply problems that were made worse by unpredictable weather, particularly for vegetables, pulses, and edible oils.

In an attempt to promote growth, the RBI maintained the repo rate at 6.5% in spite of these difficulties. As input costs began to climb, industrial output, especially in manufacturing and construction, began to show early signs of slowing down.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation said that in January 2024, retail inflation in India decreased to 5.10%, a three-month low. Consumer Price Index (CPI) suggested that inflation in rural areas was

5.34%, while in urban areas, it was 4.92%, according to government data.

"The main cause of this was the inflation of food, particularly vegetables. As a result of the combined effects of monetary policy initiatives and the notable decline in commodity prices, core inflation (CPI inflation minus food and fuel) continued to decline for both goods and services. However, the headline inflation trajectory is still impacted by the uncertainty surrounding food prices"

- RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said in his monetary policy statement.

While this is a relatively small shift in comparison to estimates for the easing cycles of other global central banks, the RBI is projected to keep its key policy rate constant until at least the end of June before considering a 25 basis point decrease in each of the third and fourth quarters.

February RBI Responds to 7.5% Increase in Inflation

Inflation reached a concerning 7.5%, significantly more than the RBI's target range of 2-6%. In order to control inflation, the RBI raised the repo rate to 6.75% due to an increase in fuel and food prices. This decision instantly increased borrowing costs for consumers and businesses, affecting industries including real estate and automobiles.

Governor Shaktikanta Das stated that the RBI expects the economy to grow by 7.2% by the end of the year, and he said that the first quarter's slower growth led to lower government spending during the national elections.

"While quite a few central banks have started navigating the path of rate cuts on account of recession worries, many still continue to maintain restrictive opinions and refrain from reducing policy rates so as to break the back of inflation persistence,"

he said in his speech, addressing the ongoing impact of high interest rates worldwide.

"It is the level of inflation going forward one year ahead that is what really guides us in our journey of attaining price stability", the Governor added.

March Growth in the Fiscal Deficit Pressure

The government's fiscal deficit increased as the year went on, reaching 4.2% of GDP by March due to growing subsidies and higher public spending on fuel and food. The agricultural sector remained unstable and low crop yields increased inflationary pressures. Meanwhile, food costs were rising more quickly in rural areas than in urban areas, making the effects of inflation more noticeable.

From 2024-2025, real GDP

growth in India is expected to range between 6.5% to 7%. With the GDP in FY24 that being 20% higher than its pre-COVID, FY20 levels, the Indian economy returned quickly from the pandemic.

Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, made this claim in the Economic Survey 2023-24 that she delivered to Parliament today.

Despite uncertain global economic performance, the Survey notes that domestic development factors have contributed to economic growth in FY24. It also states that India's growth rate over the ten years ending in FY20 was an average of 6.6% annually, which roughly corresponds to the economy's long-term growth potential.

However, India has shown to be a strong substitute. The Modi administration has implemented programs such as the Production-linked Incentive (PLI) to encourage multinational corporations to produce in India in a variety of industries.

April Fuel Costs Witness a Sudden Surge

The global increase in crude oil prices caused record-high costs for fuel in April, with diesel and petrol prices rising by up to 7%. This affected industries ranging from retail to manufacturing, increasing the cost of transportation and logistics in addition to contributing to inflation. The burden on regular consumers got worse by inflation, which kept rising.

Diesel is the most widely used fuel in India, making for over 40% of all petroleum products used. The demand for diesel decreased by 2.3% to 7 million tons. Although India entered an intensive electioneering phase for the general elections, diesel sales continued to decline in April, despite a 12.3% increase in the use of petrol.

May There are No Signs of Food Inflation Declining

The RBI's monetary policy committee was concerned about the continued risk to inflationary control as food inflation remained unbearably high, especially in rice, wheat, and edible oils. The automobile and construction i with increased borrowing costs and

rising input prices, which caused industrial output to further slow down.

June

Yet Again, RBI Raises the Rates to 7%.

The RBI increased the repo rate again to 7% in June, as many observers were expecting with current inflationary pressures. The decision was intended to slow price increases, but it also put more strain on an already at-risk industrial sector, since increased lending rates inhibited demands in industries like automobiles and real estate. The fiscal deficit was 4.3% of GDP at the time, which made the government think about adjusting its policies.

July

India's Retail Inflation Drops to 3.54%, Easing Food Price Pressures

India's retail inflation was comparatively steady as it was 3.54% in July 2024, its lowest level in nearly five years. As food prices moderated from previous highs based on government data that was shown on 12 August 2024. This marks a significant decline from June's inflation of 5.08%, and is the lowest since August 2019.

Despite this drop in inflation, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor, Shaktikanta Das cautioned that food inflation remains "stubbornly" high. He emphasized the importance of keeping the current monetary policy intact to guide inflation back to the central bank's medium-term target of 4%. "It's crucial to stay the course,"

Das said, underlining that price pressures, especially on food items, continue to pose challenges.

The sharp drop was largely driven by a favorable base effect, as inflation last year had surged to 7.44%. Economists had forecast a more modest decline, with expectations around 3.65%, but the actual rate was lower, suggesting the slowdown could be temporary.

"The moderation in retail inflation was in line with expectations,"

said Swati Arora, an economist at HDFC Bank. "A favorable base from last year largely pulled down the headline inflation below 4%."

In particular, food prices, which account for nearly half of the Consumer Price Index, rose by 5.42% in July, compared to 9.36% in June. Vegetable prices showed the sharpest slowdown, increasing just 6.83% in

July after a dramatic 29.32% rise the previous month. However, inflation for cereals and pulses remained elevated, at 8.14% and 14.77%, respectively.

August

India's Retail Inflation Edges Up to 3.65%, Driven by Food Prices

India's retail inflation rose to 3.65% in August 2024, slightly higher than the 3.60% reported in July, according to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). Despite this uptick, inflation remained within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) medium-term target of 2-6%.

Food inflation, which has been a persistent challenge, increased to 5.66% in August, up from 5.42% in July, marking the lowest level since June 2023 when it stood at 4.55%. Food prices had surged to 9.36% in June, driven by weather disruptions. However, the prices of cereals, meat, fish, milk products, pulses, and sugar fell sequentially in August, while fruits, vegetables, and eggs saw price increases.

Inflation remained below 6% for the 13th consecutive month, but some economists cautioned that the recent decline in food prices could be temporary.

"The slight uptick in August inflation was largely driven by food prices, while core inflation remained steady,"

said Upasna Bhardwaj, Chief Economist at Kotak Mahindra Bank. The RBI has maintained its key interest rate at 6.5% since February 2023, with expectations of 4.5% CPI inflation for FY25. Analysts predict the central bank will continue focusing on inflation control in the coming months.

September

Agricultural Struggles Continue as India's Retail Inflation Jumps to 5.49%

India's retail inflation surged to 5.49% in September 2024, a sharp increase from the previous two months, driven primarily by a rise in food prices. The surge was influenced by a high base effect and unfavorable weather conditions, including unseasonal rains and heatwaves, which affected food production. Rural inflation stood at 5.87%, while urban areas saw a slightly lower increase at 5.05%, highlighting regional disparities in cost pressures.

The Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) saw a significant spike, with food inflation reaching 9.24%.

Rural areas experienced food inflation of 9.08%, while urban areas saw an even sharper rise at 9.56%. Other sectors, like housing, also saw inflationary pressures, with housing costs up 2.78% year-on-year.

Factors such as adverse weather patterns, ongoing global supply chain disruptions, and increased domestic demand for food items have played a role in driving up prices. Despite the overall rise in inflation, certain categories like meat, fish, and sugar provided some relief, showing a decline in price pressures.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has attributed the recent uptick in inflation to the surge in food prices and highlighted supply-side constraints as key drivers.

October

India's Retail Inflation Surges to 6.21%, RBI Holds Repo Rate

India's retail inflation surged to 6.21% in October 2024, up from 5.49% in September, primarily driven by a sharp rise in food prices during the festive season. This marks the first time since August 2023 that inflation has exceeded the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) upper tolerance threshold of 6%. Food inflation rose to 9.69%, with significant price hikes in vegetables, fruits, and edible oils.

Rural areas experienced a higher inflation rate of 6.68%, while urban inflation increased to 5.62%. Urban food inflation was notably higher at 11.09%, compared to 10.69% in rural regions.

The surge in onion prices, which jumped from Rs 40-60 per kilogram to Rs 70-80, was particularly concerning. Despite the inflationary pressures, the RBI kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.5% in its November review, signaling that it will continue to monitor inflation closely. Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA, noted,

"The CPI inflation worryingly soared further to a 14-month high of 6.2% in October, driven largely by food and beverages, especially vegetables. Vegetables inflation hardened to a 57-month high of 42.2%, which weighed on the overall inflation print."

Agriculture-related factors, such as supply disruptions and adverse weather conditions impacting the Kharif harvest, have wors-

ened the state of Inflation in India

November

Consumer Spending Slows, GDP Growth Downgraded as India's Retail Inflation

Falls to 5.48%

India's retail inflation dropped to 5.48% in November 2024, down from October's 6.21%, marking the lowest level in three months, as vegetable prices cooled due to rising supplies. This decline was in line with economist expectations, with a Mint poll forecasting inflation to fall to 5.5%. Core inflation, which excludes food and fuel, stood at 3.9%, slightly lower than what it was in October. Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA, expressed optimism, stating,

"If headline CPI eases to 5.0% or lower by December 2024, the likelihood of a rate cut by the MPC in February 2025 would be very high."

Devendra Pant, Chief Economist at India Ratings, also noted that if inflation remains around 4% by FY26, a long-awaited rate cut could occur in February 2025. The decline in inflation coincided with stronger industrial output, which rose 3.5% in October, driven by consumer durables and garment production during the festival season.

December

RBI Adjusts Inflation Forecast to 4.8% Amidst Persistent Inflation in Food

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised its inflation forecast for the fiscal year to 4.8%, citing persistent high food prices and weakened consumption demand. Despite maintaining the repo rate at 6.5% for the eleventh consecutive time, the central bank acknowledged ongoing inflationary pressures.

Heavy monsoon rains had aided recovery from last year's drought, but excessive rainfall damaged key summer crops, exacerbating food inflation. In its latest policy review, the RBI noted that elevated food prices continue to burden households, while broader consumption demand remains subdued. The central bank is looking forward to closely monitoring the situation, with the inflation forecast reflecting challenges in the agricultural sector and difficulties in stabilising the wholesale prices.

2024 Parliamentary Sessions: A Year of Reforms, Resilience and Rivalry

Major policy shifts and political showdowns with heated debates that instigated bold moves



Source : Business Today

By Naysa Shrivastava,
Rounak Khare &
Ishita Malakar

Year 2024 for parliament was marked by striking debates, heated arguments, intense speeches and important policy changes that have structured the political scenario. Moments of unity, division, tension, and vindication highlighted the changing narratives of Indian democracy.

A Season of Economic Reforms and Fiscal clashes

The year began with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presenting the Union Budget on February 1, 2024. She emphasized on agricultural, infrastructural development and significance of green energy as the main element in the government's agenda.

She promised over 10 lakh crore rupees for capital expenditure. Atma-Nirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India) was the important element focusing on self-sufficient India. FM added,

“We should become a nation which does not consume but creates.”

The budget was countered by the opposition parties like Congress, Trinamool Congress (TMC), and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). They argued that this budget is unequal and required many alterations and support should be given to struggling masses.

Rahul Gandhi criticised the budget as it was only beneficial for the wealthy and big corporations,

“This is not a Budget for common people, it is for the rich class. Youth class, farmers and common people are completely ignored in this,” he said.

According to him the budget didn't resolve the inflation and unemployment crisis in India.

President of Congress Party, Mallikarjun Kharge expressed resentment towards the budget by saying that, “This Budget is an insult to the farmers, the middle class and the working class. The government has once again avoided the problems affecting the lives of the common class.”

P.Chidambaram, former finance minister questioned the government's claim and said, “The Finance Minister has laid out an elaborate plan for developing India in a \$5 trillion economy but there is no roadmap of the process of achievement.” He showed distress over how this budget will provide job opportunities and social welfare.

Party members of TMC showed concern and made a point that it is a corporate-friendly budget

and has disregarded the problems of poor and marginalized groups.

Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister of Delhi, showed disappointment and highlighted the loopholes in the budget and how it will negatively affect the common man. He said, “The budget is a missed opportunity for the poor and middle class. The government has failed to fulfill the promise of providing relief to the people of India.”

Representatives of The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) expressed dis-



Union Budget Session on February 1, 2024 | Source : Indian Express



Rahul Gandhi's bold counter attack to the government | Source : ETV Bharat

satisfaction towards the budget as it was long-term focused and didn't resolve existing problems in the economy and could increase the income gap between the poor and rich class. The union budget was the central point of political debate in the parliament as the opposition was against it as it lacked the essentials for the poor, marginalized and middle class.

Key Parliamentary Debates: Leaders' on Future of India and Democracy

Amidst the political battles and legislative quarrels, many speeches were impactful and rhetoric in nature. Rahul Gandhi's monsoon session speech in parliament was a call to action for Indians.

In his speech he particularly talked about economic inequality and Unemployment, "Unemployment is at an all-time high, and the government's response is to ignore the crisis. The future of India's youth is at risk. We are facing an unemployment crisis that this government refuses to acknowledge."

He also mentioned the agrarian crisis, the farmers are suffering and facing challenges every day because of the low Minimum Support Price (MSP) and rising input costs.

"Farmers' cries for help are going unnoticed. The government continues to make empty promises while our farmers sink deeper into debt and despair. Government should do something for the farming community," he said. Using the metaphor of the 'chakravayuh', he referred to how the union budget is only benefitting industrialists and the political monopoly in the country, instead of farmers, youth, labourers and small businesses.

The winter session of the Parliament witnessed the use of the electronic voting system in the Lok Sabha for the first time. Members of the parliament voted for or against the intro-

duction of two new bills which seek to implement simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, with 269 members being in favour of the bill, and 198 in opposition. The 'One Nation, One Election' bill was hugely debated during the session, with the opposition pointing out how it goes against the federal system of our democracy. The INDIA bloc argued that the government has failed to acquire the two-thirds majority which is required for such measures.

A controversial statement was made by Home Minister Amit Shah during the winter session. Addressing the Rajya Sabha during the debate to mark 75 years of the Indian



Amit Shah talking about Indian Constitution | Source : India Today

constitution, Amit Shah claimed that using BR Ambedkar's name has now become a "fashion". In an attempt to slam the opposition, he said that had they taken the name of God the same number of times as they say Ambedkar, they would have certainly got a place in heaven. This remark was met with a huge uproar of objection from

the opposition, who found the remark derogatory towards the architect of the constitution. Opposition MPs demanded an apology from Amit Shah for his statement, while holding up photographs of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and chanting slogans of "Jai Bhim".

The Lok Sabha passed three bills during the winter session of the parliament, which include the The Railways Amendment Bill, The Banking Laws Amendment Bill and The Disaster Management Amendment Bill. The Rajya Sabha also passed three bills, such as The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak 2024 which replaced the Aircraft Act of 1934, The Boilers Bill and The Oilfields (regulation and development) Amendment Bill 2024.

Conclusion from this year's Parliamentary Sessions

India has an ever evolving democracy and the parliamentary sessions of 2024 have been no hidden fact with the vibrant microcosm of challenges as well as the wins it has seen. India showed its dynamism through clashes between varying ideologies and significant policy shifts.

The idea of democracy has been both tested and fortified in the year 2024. The debates with varying opinions, sometimes although polarizing, has shown how discourse can shapeshift and bring impact on the lives of millions of people.

However, in some of these debates, there were moments of disruption as well as political drama which overshadowed significant thinking and consideration of matters of importance. Such examples, although somewhat unexpected, remind us of a more democratic and constructive framework that we need to have, especially in cases of serious matters of state importance.

The multifaceted nature of challenges that India has seen this year, widely among the policy changes are the major highlights of 2024. A vision for inclusive and sustainable growth was embodied in landmark laws addressing social justice, digital governance, and climate resilience. Despite being revolutionary, these programs frequently encountered opposition and initiated efforts to reach a compromise, illustrating the complex balancing act of democracy. The legislature's capacity to handle these difficulties is evidence of how resilient India's parliamentary systems are.

Moments of solidarity that cut over party lines and provided a glimpse of a shared commitment to the welfare of the country were equally notable. Such incidents acted as a reminder of the shared responsibility that unites India's leaders, whether it was through their unanimity in supporting disaster relief efforts following natural disasters or their collaborative efforts on international diplomacy. These instances served as a counterbalance to the differences that often dominated the political scene, reaffirming that cooperation is not only feasible but also necessary to confront the most important issues facing the country.

But the year also brought to light how brittle democratic discourse is when polarization increases. With walkouts, protests, and deadlocks interspersing multiple sessions, the widening ideological gaps frequently resulted in a standoff. These incidents made clear how vital it is to promote a dialogue-based culture that puts the interests of the populace ahead of political rhetoric.

In summary, the events of 2024 serve as a reminder that, in spite of its flaws, Indian democracy is still developing into a strong and inclusive system. The parliamentary sessions this year serve offer a reflection that democracy is fundamentally based on its capacity to respect difference, promote communication, and work towards the common good.

One thing is certain as the 2024 foundations start to influence the course of the upcoming years: Indian democracy is at its best when it listens to, adjusts to, and acts in the best interests of its citizens.

Breaking Ballot: Review of 2024 Elections

A relook at 18th general elections and state elections, analysing key outcomes, voter behaviour and regional dynamics observed in the year 2024



Source: The Leaflet

By Aditi S Bade & Savikalpa Thapa

The general elections of 2024 took place from April 19 to June 1, 2024. Voters in 28 states and eight Union Territories participated in the seven-phase elections to choose representatives for the 18th Lok Sabha. Voter behavior was influenced by a wide array of regional and national issues throughout the election and a combination of political continuity and change.

The Outcomes

The BJP continued to be the biggest party in the recently elected Lok Sabha although they won 240 seats unlike in the last elections, where they won over 300 seats. BJP's long-standing hegemony was challenged by an expanding opposition, which led to a change in voter attitude as a result of drop in seats. The BJP-led coalition of parties called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) secured 293 seats. Even though they didn't have a clear majority at 272, it ensured the formation of the gov-

ernment by the NDA. This marked the new era of regional alliances with significant coalitions from Bihar's Janata Dal (United) (JD(U)) and the Telugu Desam Party from Andhra Pradesh. Simultaneously, there was a resurgence of the Indian National Congress (INC). The INC saw a major bounce-back in terms of voter support as it rose from 52 to 99 seats under the leadership of Mallikarjun Kharge. With a number of regional parties also doing well in their individual states, this comeback was seen as a component of a larger trend in Indian politics toward multi-party dynamics.

Voter Turnout and Participation

The voter turnout of the general elections of 2024 showed a slight increase at around 66% as the turnout in 2019 elections was around 64.80%. Various states had varying turnouts. The smallest Union Territory, Lakshadweep registered 84% of eligible voters marking the highest turnout. Assam was another state with

high voter turnout. However, due to regional differences, Bihar, one of the largest states of the country, had the lowest turnout at 56%. Increase in women voters. According to data released by the Election Commission, women voters overshadowed men in 19 out of 36 states and Union Territories. Gender-targeted welfare schemes and campaigns by political parties mobilize women voters.

Maharashtra Polls 2024: Ladki Bahin Yojana

Ladki Bahin Yojana is the best-case study to see an increase in women's voting turnout. Introduced by the ruling mahayuti government, this scheme promised 2100 rupees direct cash transfer to women's accounts as an economic and social assistance. Amount was initially said to be 1500 but later hiked due to Congress led maha vikas aghadi's promise of giving 3000 rupees. This influenced women voters extensively especial-

ly in rural areas where women were struggling with economic issues. Emphasis on women centric welfare schemes resulted in a higher voting turnout leading Mahayuti gov to win by a good margin. This also highlighted women's position in shaping electoral results in Maharashtra.

Trends by Regions

The regional dynamics of the 2024 elections noticed changes in voter preferences. Uttar Pradesh, traditionally a BJP stronghold in recent elections, underwent a major downturn in the party's seat count. The victory of Opposition parties, led by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP), indicated the state's changing political landscape. Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, where BJP traditionally had a stronghold saw strong support for INC.

Alliance-Led Governments

2024 elections also saw a trend in increasing alliance led governments

not at centre and states. This does not only complicate India's political scenario but also strengthens democracy on the brighter side by getting varied perspectives to the table before decision making. In general elections, INDIA alliance comes ahead as a firm opposition against a single dominant ruling party. This does reduce the hold of a single party as well as involve smaller and regional parties in decision making. In Jharkhand, Hemant Soren's Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) formed the government with INC and RJD, irrespective of problems faced due to Soren's arrest. Similarly, in Jammu & Kashmir, National Conference-Congress alliance gained power for the first time after abrogation of article 370. Alliances and coalitions have been instrumental not only in general elections but also in states like Maharashtra. Alliances are increasing due to fragmented voters, so similar ideologies or parties willing to function together team up as collations to form governments. Parties prefer to come together to fight a dominant single force and make governance more inclusive and democratic. The challenges remain of inner conflicts, instability and voters' trust but this year has been ruled by coalition governments.

“When you lose, EVMs are tampered with; when you win, EVMs are fine”

-Justices Vikram Nath and P.B. Varale

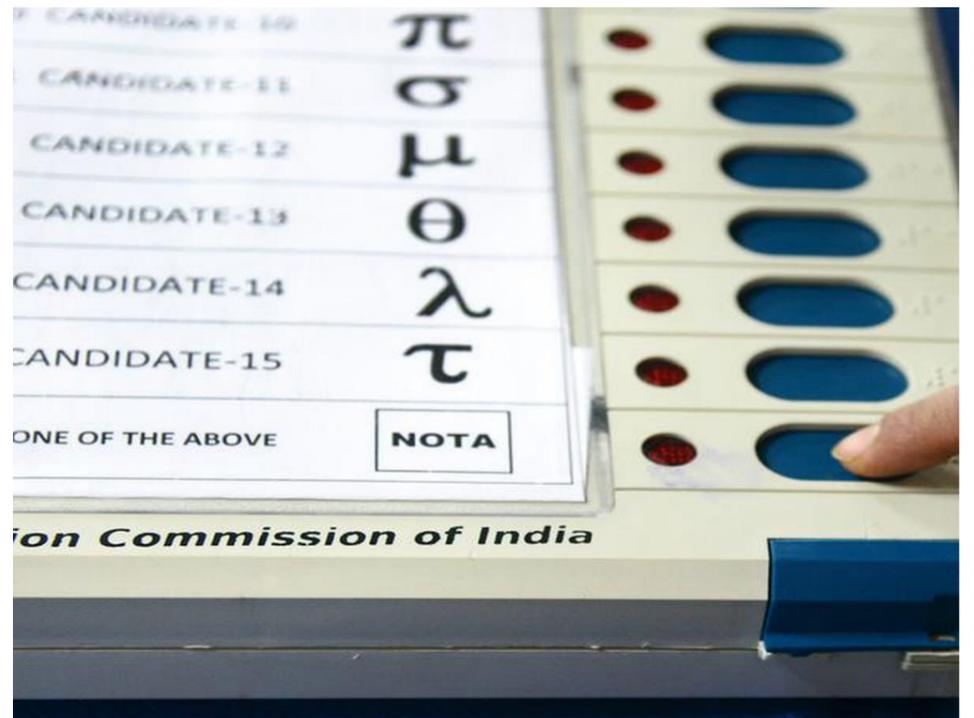
EVMs and the allegations

Every election cycle ends with allegations about the Electronic Voting Machines to be faulty. These machines used to enhance transparency in the voting results are often found to be a heated topic in political and public debates; accused of being faulty especially during surprising election outcomes. EVMs were first used in Kerala's general election, 1982 but the election results were rolled out due to lack of law directing its operation.

The 2004 General Elections were carried through EVMs entirely. Since then, EVMs have been a topic of political debates with concerns about its reliability. When a party wins there are no questions asked but the losing party often questions its reliability.

In Bharatiya Janata Party's Opposition years they stressed on examining EVMs reliability. In 2009, LK Advani, a co-founder of BJP, called for the return of ballot papers emphasizing the need for the Election Commission to guarantee the reliability of EVMs. However, after the BJP came to power, the Congress began raising similar concerns. In 2013 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail was introduced for further accountability and reliability of the poll process. It generates a paper slip displaying the symbol and name of the candidate voted by the voter.

In March 2024, after the Assembly Elections results in



Source: The Hindu

five states came out, the reliability concerns over EVMs resurfaced. Rashid Alvi, member of INC said that the opposition in Maharashtra should stress on voting through paper ballot instead of EVMs. He added that otherwise, anything can be done by the BJP Government and the Election Commission. In November 2024, the Supreme Court rejected a Public Interest Litigation seeking reintroduction of paper ballots. The bench, comprising Justices Vikram Nath and P.B. Varale, remarked, “When you lose, EVMs are tampered with; when you win, EVMs are fine,” referencing statements by Andhra Pradesh leaders Chandrababu Naidu and Jagan Mohan Reddy, who questioned EVMs only after electoral losses.

Conclusion

2024 was a packed year for elections. We saw the 18th General Elections in April-June 2024, followed by Vidhan Sabha elections being conducted in 8 states. These elections brought several electoral issues and discourses to the forefront. Rise in women voters helped social status and realigning the demographics along with alliances keeping democratic integrity alive even though it's subjected to complexities. On the other hand, challenges like EVMs' reliability were also discussed extensively. These factors help us understand the underlying mindset in every region of the country as well as focus our attention towards betterment in shaping India's political landscape and evolving democracy.



Source: TOI

Echoes of Violence: India's 12 Most Shocking Felonies from 2024 that Still Seek Resolution



By Janhvi Ahuja & Ishita Malakar

India is a country renowned for its diversity in tradition, culture, heritage, and hospitality. This reputation is a culmination of decades of efforts made not only by its notable leaders but also by its dignified citizens. There are instances that showcase the hospitable nature of the people highlighting the peace prevailing in the country.

However, in 2024, India, unfortunately, witnessed a drastic increase in many major crimes that include cases of rapes, sexual offences, homicides, suicides, and even cybercrimes.

To further understand their ramifications, let's look at the 12 major felonies of 2024. **Engineer falls prey to Digital Arrest**

This incident recalls a Bengaluru Software Engineer, aged 39, becoming a victim to a sophisticated digital arrest scam. This case took place between November 25 to 12 December, 2024 and it involves the techie being coerced into believing that his Aadhar Card was being misused for money laundering. To further establish their credentials, the scammers identified themselves as officers from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and made a convincing argument that the victim's SIM Card, which was registered under his name, was being used for illegal activities

such as sending harassing messages.

These repetitive and concerning phone calls led the victim to transfer a huge amount of money, around 11.8 Crore Rupees to the scammers. This case showcases the growing and overburdening influence of cybercrimes that prey on the vulnerability of citizens in India.

Doctor's Death Sparks Outcry: RG Kar Rape and Murder Case

The RG Kar doctor's rape and murder case was one of the most horrific and heinous crimes that India witnessed in its entire history. This incident highlights the fear and uncertainty that took over the lives of women medical health professionals working across India. This case is based on the rape and murder of a 31-year-old trainee doctor who was working at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital.

On the morning of 10 August 2024, the victim's body was found half-naked by some of the medical students at the hospital. The grave condition in which the body was found and the severity of the crime have agitated the whole country, especially the doctors and the medical students.

This gruesome incident sparked outrage amongst medical professionals as well as the general public all over the country. It also led to increased tensions and concerns regarding the security and

safety of women working in the fields of hospitality and education.

Tragedy in Transportation: The Road Accident and Murders Caused by Pune Porsche Case

This case talks about how Vedant Agarwal, a 17-year-old boy, collided with a motorcycle carrying two passengers eventually taking the lives of both the IT professionals. This incident took place in Kalyani Nagar, an area in Pune. Many reports point to the fact that the minor was under the influence of alcohol during the time of the incident.

However, the main reasons for the significant public outrage in this case highlight more than just the minor's alcohol intake. For instance, the public disapproved of a minor driving an automobile without any parental supervision or guidance. Not only this, but citizens also argued over how the juvenile got preferential treatment from the police as well as some political leaders based on his family's prior connections.

On the basis of these events, the minor was arrested and charged under certain sections of the Motor Vehicles Act. However, despite these many allegations, he was granted bail by the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) under the agreement that the minor would have to attend a 15-day safe driving

programme and write a 300-word essay on road safety. This resolution further sparked outrage amongst citizens and led to various public debates.

The Assassination of NCP Leader Baba Siddique in Mumbai

This particular case refers to the assassination of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader, Baba Siddique on October 12 in Mumbai. In this incident, Baba Siddique was shot by three gunmen right outside his residence located in Bandra, Mumbai. Siddique was soon rushed to the Lilavati Hospital where he was then pronounced dead. This created a sty in the financial capital of India and spread waves of shock and distress amongst the citizens.

Soon after the assassination, the Mumbai Police conducted a detailed investigation and arrested two of the three shooters, namely, Dharamraj Kashyap from Uttar Pradesh and Gurmail Singh from Haryana. Shiv Kumar Gautam, the alleged mastermind behind the assassination was also caught even though he fled the scene.

The main incentives for this murder remain unclear. Despite this, the incident sent shockwaves in Maharashtra and the whole country as the citizens started to contemplate the safety and security of the social and political figures of India.

When a Scenic Spot Witnesses a Tragedy: Attack on Army Officers near Jam Gate, Indore

This is another gruesome incident that shook India to its core as it involves an attack on two young army officers and their female companions. This incident took place on 11 September 2024 near Jam Gate located close to Mhow, a military cantonment located in Indore. This case soon gained prominence amongst the public as it included the attack by six armed men that robbed, assaulted, and allegedly raped one of the women companions who were there along with the army officers. One of the officers and women were detained by the men while the other two were forced to bring 10 Lakh Rupees. While they were sent to collect the sum of money, the army personnel took the opportunity to call his supervisors and the police to report this incident.

However, the assassins had

already fled the scene by the time the police arrived at the scene. This incident raised concerns, tensions, and fear amongst the citizens as the question about the safety and security of military personnel.

Should Students Focus on Education or Protection? - Badlapur School Sexual Assault Case

A 23-year-old male cleaner who was hired on a contract basis by the school was accused of assaulting two pre-primary pupils in the school restroom on August 12 and 13, 2024. It was discovered that the second girl had also been abused after one of the victims complained of pain to her parents, bringing the crimes to light.

The accused was taken into custody on August 17 after the parents filed a First Information Report on August 16. Protests in the district and considerable public outrage were triggered by the tragedy.

While trying to flee detention on August 20, the accused took a police officer's gun and open-fired, killing him in "retaliatory firing" that injured many cops.

Sex Scandal of Ex-MP Prajwal Revanna

Ministers involved in crimes are not uncommon. A case in 2024 that gained prominence involved the Ex-Member of Parliament Prajwal Revanna from Hassan, Karnataka who got entangled in a sex scandal. He was the grandson of the famous and prominent ex-Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda. In April 2024, pen drives containing videos of Revanna sexually abusing and exploiting multiple women started getting distributed among the people living in the district. Immediately after, some women came forward putting up allegations against him for sexual exploitation.

A Special Investigation Team was asked to probe into the case. Meanwhile, Prajwal fled to Germany with his diplomatic passport without taking permission from the Government and ministries involved. Consequently, the Janata Dal party suspended him from the party while the investigations awaited further results.

During the early hours of May 31, Prajwal was finally arrested at the Kempe Gowda International Airport in Bangalore. His father, H.D. Revanna, yet another prominent politician as well as his brother Suraj Revanna were also arrested after they were found to be sexually exploiting a male worker from their party. This case is a significant example of how people misuse power and how the legal framework lacks certain strict laws



for those involved in sexual crimes.

The Brutal killing of Renukaswamy that sent Shockwaves throughout India

Crime cases involving actors and actresses are another significant event in 2024 that India has seen. One such brutal case was the murder of Renukaswamy, a 38-year-old businessman from Karnataka. He was abducted on June 7, 2024, where he was severely beaten and administered electric shocks. Due to this attack, he sustained blunt injuries including ruptured testicles and lost one ear. On June 9, Renukaswamy's body was found near a drain in Sumanahalli, around Magadi Road in Bangalore.

Prominent Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa along with his girlfriend Pavithra Gowda were arrested for their involvement in the gruesome killing. Deepak Kumar, an associate of Darshan was also arrested with links to the crime. Their custody has been extended multiple times as reported by the Karnataka Police. Renukaswamy was a habitual offender who had sent several lewd, obscene and illicit messages to many women including Pavithra Gowda. This incident has garnered wide media attention due to the involvement of a huge actor in such a brutal killing.

Malice and Hatred Sparks Due to the Delhi Triple Homicide

The Delhi Triple Homicide case is yet another example of what parental neglect and humiliation can do to a child. Arjun Tanwar, a 20-year-old boy from Delhi University was arrested for the murders of his father Rajesh Tanwar, his mother Komal Tanwar, and his sister Kavita.

The date of the murder also coincided with the date of his parents' anniversary. Investigators report that he had developed a deep resentment

towards his family since early childhood where his sister was preferred more than himself. Before the murder, there was an incident where he was publicly humiliated by his parents after they found out he had a girlfriend.

This led to a lot of pent-up anger in Arjun which eventually led him to murder them. He used a knife to murder his sister first, his father, and then his mother. He was charged with homicide after police found inconsistencies in his statements as well as a blood-covered hoodie and a knife which was discovered in a forest close to the murder scene.

Men's Mental Health and Discriminatory Laws- The Atul Subhash Case

The death by suicide of 34-year-old Atul Subhash, an automobile company executive on December 9, 2024, in Bengaluru has sparked debate among the common people about the dowry laws this state entails upon men as well as brings up the issue of men's mental health which is quite predominantly neglected in this country.

Atul wrote a 24-page death note informing about the legal battle he has been fighting for years for the custody of his son after his divorce. The in-law's family demanded 3 crores to withdraw the numerous fake cases that they have issued against him in court and 30 lakhs for custody to see his son. On the day before his death, he wrote to an NGO fighting for men's rights regarding the battles he was facing for years and now has no option but to die.

His wife Nikita Singhania, her mother Nisha, her brother Anurag, and her uncle Sushil Singhania have been booked based on the suicide note written by Atul where the family rejected any involvement in the case and is awaiting a fair trial. The suicide notes along with the video recorded by Atul before committing suicide have led the internet

to criticize the failed judicial system, especially when it comes to legal proceedings involved in a divorce which has now almost turned into a business.

Bengaluru CEO Suchana Seth's Son's Murder and Homicide Case

On 7th January 2024, Suchana Seth, a data scientist and CEO of The Mindful AI Lab from Bengaluru was arrested for the murder of her 4-year-old son. She murdered her son by smothering him at a resort in Goa and tried to transport his body back to Bengaluru while she was arrested after the hotel staff found bloodstains in their hotel room. In a recent development, a note found with the child's body was written by Seth herself. This incident has gained popularity, especially online, and poses questions about child rights and welfare. The case is currently ongoing and is awaiting a fair judgment.

Falling prey to Cyber Crimes: Spike in Cyber Felonies in India

Cyber crimes in India are rampant, especially in 2024 where numerous cases of cyber-crimes involving huge amounts of money loss have been reported.

According to Cyberabad, the total number of crime cases registered has increased from 22,859 in 2023 to 37,689 in 2024, marking an increase of 64.88%.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has issued cautions for the citizens regarding the numerous fraudulent pre-recorded calls that are being made asking them for personal information and some of them even lead to money losses. There were about 1.89 lakh cases in August which was reduced to 1.63 lakhs in September and to about 1.51 lakhs in October 2024. Yet another incident that gained prevalence is the fake wedding scam on WhatsApp.

It first came under the notice of the Himachal Pradesh police where the fraudsters sent malicious APK files disguised as wedding invitations, upon opening, the hackers accessed all the data from their phones. This spike in crimes certainly has many negative impacts on the general society as they establish fear amongst the citizens. Not only that, but high crime rates also pose a challenge to the economy of the country, by hindering its trade and investments.

Rise of Cybercrime Cases in 2024

By Sidhima Choudhary & Somya Panwar

India is a vast and complex landscape of digital and tech-savvy population, but over 700 million people embracing the digital age are under constant threat of cyber-attacks that they never anticipated. This sudden rise in cybercrimes has gone beyond the statistics.

It has become a critical issue impacting individuals, business entities and Governmental organisations. From transferring money through apps to shopping from online stores, everything is just one click away from being a target to cyber criminals. The line between convenience and threat has never been thinner.

The widened scope of cybercrime has become a significant threat in 2024, from financial frauds to hacking social media accounts; the complexity of this new tech-friendly era has accelerated into frequent cyber-attacks. 2,92,800 cases have been reported in 2024, outpacing the number of incidents and amount of loss compared to previous years.

With 2,054.6 crore of lost money, making it an exceptional year for cybercrime, India witnessed a 20% increase in cases in 2024.

“An average of 7,000 cases are registered per day”

- Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre

Statistically, in the initial nine months of 2024, victims have lost over Rs120 crores, collectively.

Cybercrimes: Cases reported and losses incurred in 2024

Investment Scams- Luring the victims into investing a certain amount on a platform and once the transaction of money is completed the scammer and the platform both are untraceable.

**Cases reported: 1,00,000
Loss incurred: Rs. 3,216 crores**

Trading Scams - Converting funds of the victims into cryptocurrency through clones of trading apps and providing fake opportunities to victims of forex trading is the new trading scam in India.

**Cases Reported: 20,004 approx
Loss incurred: Rs. 1,420 crores**

Digital Arrest Scams - According to data from the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The organisation in collaboration with the telecom ministry has blocked 1,700 WhatsApp accounts.

Cases reported: 63,481 approximately

Every facet of society has been impacted by cybercrimes, even the governmental sector is not safe from cyber frauds and hacking. Computer Emergency Response Team

The Reserve Bank of India incurred a financial loss of more than Rs.10,000 crore in the first half of 2024 due to banking fraud which was disclosed by RBI itself.

(CERT) reported a 40% surge in ransomware attacks. The aforementioned data shows how the digital era is taking over the country and making users more perceptive to threats emerging through the cyber world.

Internet-driven society has created a space for cybercriminals to target government organisations now. Cases of data breaching in organisations dealing with sensitive and crucial data are being reported.

High-profile data breaches through fake Aadhaar data are very common these days. Defence systems and tax records have been compromised for data fraud and identity theft leading to the nation's security breach, and eroding the public interest.

The trend has been set by cyber attackers and now they have also targeted the democratic process. Manipulating content that goes viral and hacking attempts to spread misinformation to tamper the voting database during national and state elections have raised concern as it compromises the Indian electoral system's integrity.

The most significant and confidential sector of India, the defence has been a new target of cyber criminals; they along with foreign organisations are targeting government departments to steal confidential information, in future it can be a cause of a crime beyond the control of the Indian cyber cell. To find a solution for the crime, it's important to understand the factors influencing the rise of cybercrime.

The lack of adequate cyber security and simultaneous rapid growth in digital technology creates a space between crime and solution. Weak online portal for cyber security exacerbates the problem because of the lack of frameworks and limit-

The stock trading scams witnessed the largest blow with a loss of Rs 4,636 crore and around 2,28,094 complaints.

Investment scams followed with a loss of Rs. 3.216 crore with 1,00,360 complaints.

Meanwhile, digital arrest cases emerged as a significant concern accounting for a Rs 1,616 crore loss across 63,481

ed knowledge and awareness about the threats. Advanced technology like AI, Gemini and other machine learning platforms have opened opportunities for cybercriminals to execute attacks within interconnected devices.

It has given criminals creative liberty while planning to commit fraud. The digital age has given rise to cyberbullying, stalking and trolling which have a ubiquitous influence on victims, especially women. Around 6023 cyber harassment cases were reported in 2024 in the first four months.

Significant boom in cyber fraud incidents where according to the reports of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), a division of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the numbers rose from 75,800 cases in the FY 2023 to an alarming 2,92,800 cases in the FY 2024.

The financial toll has been equally severe causing losses of around Rs. 11,333 crores in the first nine months of 2024

This year, India witnessed a surge in diverse cybercrime trends with cyber crimes such as shopping scams, trading scams, deepfake AI scams & digital arrests being on top of it all.

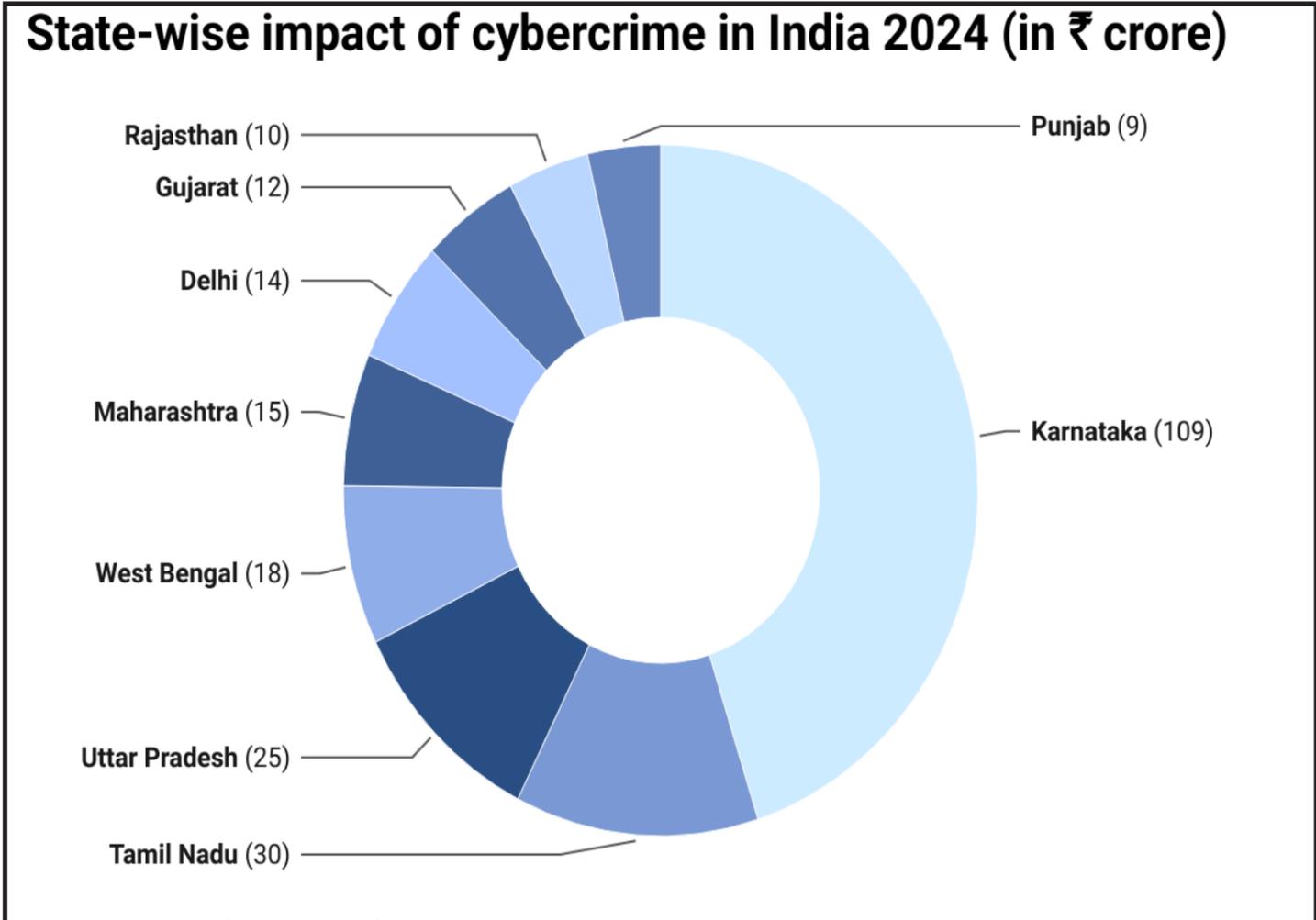
India's internet landscape had 250 million users in the year 2023 and is expected to surge to 900 million by the year 2025 and a staggering 425 million by the year 2027, broadening the pool for more potential victims of cyber fraud.

Among the growing threats are deepfake shopping scams, where the cybercriminals exploit trusted and popular shopping domains like Amazon and Flipkart by creating counterfeit websites with better Search



Source: Jagran Josh; Created by Yashaswini Chauhan

State-wise impact of cybercrime in India 2024 (in ₹ crore)



Engine Optimisation, luring customers with hefty discount/sale rates by either running very well-crafted Google Advertising campaigns. The website mimics authentic websites ranking themselves high on search engines and making it hard for people to distinguish the difference.

According to McAfee’s Global Festive Survey, McAfee labs analysed the rise of phishing cases with around 800 unsolicited festive-related emails including the deepfake shopping scam where they noticed the hike of such scams on Fridays and Saturdays with an increased trend every week. The malicious websites impersonate legitimate shopping websites promoting discounts until 99% off, enticing consumers to high levels.

India faced 135,173 phishing attacks in the first six years of 2024 in the financial sectors this year which ranged from e-commerce to payment methods.

The report by Kaspersky, a global cybersecurity and digital privacy company claims

“With the surge of AI, the threat has increased vastly, rising to 175 per cent compared to last year.”

Subsequently, the scam that attracted the most traction and losses is digital theft. With over 63,481 complaints, the cyber fraudsters impersonate an official authority be it a law enforcement officer who falsely alleges and accuses victims of serious crimes with serious threats of complying with their demands or else they will be enforced with ‘digital arrest,’ instantly.

Throughout the process, the accusers attempt to extort money and personal information about the individual.

PM Modi also addressed the 115th episode of ‘Mann Ki Baat’, radio programme claiming that “There is no such thing as digital arrest in the law,” asking people to be on alert.

Wisaluddin Malik, a resident

of Pilibhit fell victim to digital theft after being provided an unsolicited credit card by the Bank of Baroda.

He claimed, “I did not request any credit card, but I received it which was later insisted by the bank employee, Naaz, to activate it. Trusting her guidance, I followed her instructions, including sharing the OTP,” Malik said. A few days later, ₹99,600 was debited from his account and even after filing an FIR and informing the police and bank, no action has been taken.

He replied “I’ve deactivated the card, but I’m still waiting for justice,” Malik added. He believed that even the bank members are involved in such incidents and thus the action is delayed much further.

There have been various cyber regulations being implemented in India which primarily include the IT Act 2000, the primary autonomy handling data protection, electronic transactions and cybercrime.

Every section has its specific regulations governing banking, finance, healthcare, telecommunications, and critical infrastructure to combat and address cybersecurity challenges.

There are other such acts such as the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 which regulates and secures personal data whereas the National Cyber Security Reference Framework (NCRF), 2023 is a revised structure providing regulations and guidelines for a stronger cybersecurity system in India.

For the regulations in telecommunications the Telecom Cy-

bersecurity Rules (2024), centralise on safeguarding the infrastructure of the network by enforcing the compliance of data security. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) has collaborated with platforms like Google and Facebook to identify and block illegal digital lending apps to restrict hosting firebase, Google.

I4C will combat the cybercrime trend by enforcing stricter law enforcement with specialized training of judges and prosecutors in the fields of cybersecurity and digital forensics.

Cybercrime is rising tremendously in the social media apps where the latest report from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) highlighted in the first three months of 2024

WhatsApp received a total of 43,797 complaints of cyber fraud, 22,680 against Telegram and 19,800 regarding Instagram. With the rising trend in Cybercrime cases, people need to be aware of the scams and the preventive measures for them. The Ministry of Home Affairs has launched a portal called National Cybercrime Reporting Portal. The cybercrime victims need to report the incident including financial fraud for further action. There is also a dedicated national cybercrime helpline number (1930) for reporting cybercrime incidents. In case of bank fraud, the customers can report the financial loss directly to their bank through

their website or physical branches.

With the increasing number of internet users in India, it is highly efficient for everyone to be cyber-secure by taking corrective measures by implementing various risk mitigation measures, as simple as having a strong password with unique characters and not just consecutive numbers.

With that established, make sure you have extra layers of verification in your bank account which is called Two-factor authentication that enables extra security apart from just a password.

One needs to be aware of public WiFi as it is a major hotspot for data breaches.

Apart from that it is essential to constantly update your software to be away from antivirus and backup your data to eliminate the cases of ransomware attacks where the fraudsters hide your data and demand money.

India is surely leading towards a brighter and more advanced future with the advent of AI and Digitalisation and as much as one needs to embrace the changes and implement them in our lives, it is important to assess the risks too.

Thus, it is essential for you to trust your digital services and adopt a healthy cyber-secure practice by staying vigilant and safe.



By Somya Panwar

India has gone through a major transition to evolve from primarily focused aspects like customs and religion to the current constitutional values and developed legal caricature we have today. Traversing through colonial laws to the secular legal system has led us towards corroboration of modern laws and our Indian culture.

Since Independence from colonial rule, India has been struggling with its traditional beliefs and value system along with new amended laws in the modern legal system that was originated by the British. It has been a prominent discussions among Indian democrats to bring the necessary changes in criminal laws because of which we have witnessed the amendments in the criminal laws time and again.

However in 2024, Amit Shah, the Union Home Minister demonstrated the changes in the legal framework by Indians for Indians. Many legal experts have given their own detailed analysis of these changes; some have also stated how these new laws with important changes will not overhaul the pre-existing laws.

On December 25, 2023 the President of India assented to the three criminal law bills named the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 replacing the Indian Penal Code, 1860; the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 replacing the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973; and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 which has replaced the Indian Evidence Act of 1872.

July 1, 2024, is an important date for the Indian justice system as the aforementioned three new laws came into effect, replacing the procedural and substantive provisions of the criminal law and squashing the colonial laws enacted over 100 years ago.

It has been six months since the three new laws have been implemented in our criminal justice system.

Following are the highlights from the 2024 judgements which display a focus on the overhaul of new laws over pre-existing ones:

New Criminal Laws: Hit or Miss

Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023

Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023

Bhartiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023

1. Lalita Kumar VS Government of Uttar Pradesh

Date of Judgement: 17th August, 2024

The petition was filed in Supreme Court, challenging the refusal of police to register a First Information Report (FIR) against an alleged cognizable offence. It raised certain questions:

a) Whether a preliminary inquiry is necessary to be conducted before the complaint has been lodged against a cognizable offence?

b) Are the police obligated to register an FIR under section 154 of CrPC 1973?

c) Does it violate the right to life of the accused under article 21 of the constitution, if the FIR is lodged without preliminary inquiry?

The matter was heard by Bench: Justice P Sathasivam (C.J), Justice B.S.Chauhan, Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, Justice S.A Babde. The bench ruled in favour of Lalita Kumari, stating that “the police are required to register an FIR as soon as they receive information about a cognizable offense. Failure to do so is considered a violation of legal and constitutional obligations and shall invite contempt.”

The court ruled that any investigation conducted after the registration of an FIR is “procedure establishment of law” and hence is in accordance with the Article 21 of the constitution and any inquiry carried after the FIR is filed doesn’t violate the right of the accused.

The court stated that under BNSS there are certain situations under which the preliminary inquiries before an FIR can take place which was applied in the Lalita Kumari judgement. Its law provides more flexibility in the process of preliminary inquiry allowing the police to assess the validity of a crime before registering an FIR. It alters the landscape for cognizable offences.

2. Dr. SN Kundra VS Union of India

A public interest litigation (PIL) challenging the validity of section 149 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which criminalizes gathering people, arms and ammunition with the inten-

tion of war against the Government of India) was filed by DR. SN Kundra.

The petition questioned the article that protects national security by punishing those who prepare for war against the Government. It also questioned the President’s executive powers, the administration of oaths, disqualification for defection and amendment powers of parliament.

The bench comprising of Justice Hrishikesh Roy and Justice SVN bhatti, dismissed the petition on the grounds of finding no merit and imposed a fine of RS. 10,000 on DR. Kundra and directed him to deposit the amount with the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee within a week of the order. They made a statement in public against the frivolous suits in the judiciary.

3. Rohit Mehta VS Punjab and Haryana High Court

Bench: Hon’ble Mr Justice Sheel Nagu, Chief Justice Hon’ble Justice Anil Kshetarpal

The petition challenged the vires of section 366 (3) of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, that it is unlawful to publish or print any matter in relation to on-going proceeding unless prior permission is granted by the court even if the personal details of the victim are disclosed.

Now, the petition raised the question of the integrity and concomitant right to information to freedom of speech and expression and its interplay with the right to privacy under Article 21 of the constitution as both of them are fundamental rights of the citizen.

The bench ruled that although Article 19(1) (a) of the constitution states that every citizen has right to freedom of speech and expression, it has some reasonable restrictions imposed by law to protect the integrity of the country, decency and Contempt of court.

Thus, the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution has more power pronounced over right to information and the victim’s right to stay anonymous cannot be sacrificed at the altar of right to information of the petitioner. The petition stands dismissed without costs from overview of the above discussion.

4. Plea in Supreme Court challenges validity of BNS provisions, section 111, 113 and 152, unconstitutional.

A petition is submitted in the Supreme Court by Dr. Menaka Guruswamy, Senior Advocate, challenging the constitutional validity of specific provisions within Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023(BNSS) and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS).

Section 111 and 113 of the BNS, stating offences of organised crime and Terrorist acts are introduced into BNS, 2023. Dr. Guruswamy, in her petition has argued that the aforementioned sections lack procedural safeguards unlike special statutes like UAPA and MCOCA. The petition also states that they violate Article 14 right to equality and Article 21 right to life and liberty.

5. S G Vombatke VS Union of India

The petition filed challenges the validity of Section 124A IPC on the ground that it is ultra vires Article 19(1) (a) and Article 14 and 21 of the constitution of India.

The bench decided that there is no ground that the section 124 violates Article 14 nor did the bench of the constitution have any reason to consider the validity of the petition against a constitutional challenge on the basis of Article 14, Article 19 and Article 21.



6. Arunkumar VS State of Karnataka (Criminal Petition NO.200913 of 2024)

The Karnataka High Court ruled

that any FIR lodged under the repealed Criminal Procedure Code after the commencement of Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) that came into effect on July 1, 2024, were invalid.

A single judge bench of Justice K.Natarajan decided to quash the FIR lodged against the petitioner Arunkumar, under Section 376,323,506 and 420 of Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The court held that FIRs lodged after commencement of BNSS must be registered under the new law and under the repealed CrPC. The complaint was retained and remitted to police for investigation under BNSS. It also stated that the transition from CrPC to BNSS will be applied to FIRs filed post July 1, 2024 and clarified the applicability of BNSS in ongoing cases.

7. Deepu and 4 others VS State of U.P. and 3 others

The writ petition pleaded that the FIR filed under sections 376 (2)(n), 345,147,452,504,506 IPC and Section 4 POCSO should be quashed as it was registered under Indian Penal Code and not Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) which came into force on 1st July,2024

The court held that the amended or repealed procedural law will be applicable retrospectively unless otherwise mentioned in the new law and any liability or right accrued under the repealed law will not be affected and shall continue as the repealed act never came into force. It also stated that the litigants have no vested right in procedural law just in the substantive law; the new law will change the rights and liability and shall be construed to be prospective in nature.

8. Sablu Khan Alias Ayan vs State of U.P

The learned counsel argued that the applicant is innocent and the FIR lodged has been falsely implicated. The FIR was registered under section 137(2) BNS, 2023 but during the investigation Section 140(2) of BNS was added.

The court held that no case of bail is made out as the given facts and circumstances of the case and the submission made by learned counsel on behalf of the parties without expressing any opinion on merits of the case, nature of evidence and gravity of offence doesn't make any difference. The court dismissed the application and rejected the bail.

Public prosecutor, U.T. Chandigarh raised a preliminary objection on the petition filed under Section 482 of CrPC and stated it non-maintainable



under Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023(BNSS). Learned council submitted that the petition needs to be dismissed for being non-maintainable.

The petitioner's council controverted the above-said submission and stated that the FIR was registered on 4.11.2023, much before the BNSS came into force and hence, it is maintainable as it was supposed to be filed Under CrPC.

The court held that the petition preferred under Section 482 was not maintainable and is dismissed. However, it clarified that the court does not advert its merit as the same is non-maintainable. The petitioner has liberty to file the petition with appropriate provisions of BNSS and if permissible in law.

10. In Re-Inhuman Condition in 1382 Prisons Writ petition

(Civil) NO. 406/2013

The recent order was passed on 13th August, 2024, where Mr. Gaurav Agarwal, learned Amicus Curiae submitted that Bharat Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 which has replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure,1973 w.e.f 1st July, 2024 and now the new law shall prevail over the existing one and stated that Section 479 of BNSS which urges that the first time offender shall be released on bond by court, if he has gone under detention of one-third of the maximum period of imprisonment specified for such an offence under a particular law.

The learned Additional Solicitor General submitted that the instruction from the department to effect the

new provisions of BNSS shall apply to all the pending cases/ undertrials irrespective of whether the case was registered before 1st July, 2024, date when new legislation came into effect and section 479 of BNSS should be applied to the cases. Compliance of the aforesaid provision shall be made by the concerned District & Session Judges in all States/UTs.

The new laws and changed provisions have sparked a series of debates among the experts regarding the evolution of law and its impact on the legal system as it is evident in judgments discussed above. After having a

conversation with an expert and asking him about his opinion, he gave a brief overview on these new bills.

The judiciary's job is to be transparent and embrace evidence based practice, by addressing the flaws beforehand helps in making better and synchronized amendments that would go along with the public and the experts of the course.

These imperative reforms in the criminal system are as necessary as repealing the pre-existing ones that are not significant to the modern legal system of the country anymore.

EXPERT OPINION

“Criminal laws are an essential component. They assist in upholding the peace, shielding others from danger, and prosecuting lawbreakers. As society develops over time, criminal laws also need to reflect those changes. While it may be necessary to alter previous criminal laws to remain current, these new laws are frequently enacted to address the contemporary challenges. According to me, the enactment of these new legislations marks a turning point in Indian legal history. The goal of the new criminal justice system is to rid the criminal jurisprudence of colonial mentality. By eliminating certain colonial terms like British India, Queen, British calendar, and so on, the legislature has cleared the path for legislative text reform. Although we know there are some ambiguities that will be interpreted and clarified by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in near future.”

- Tarun Walia

(Legal Aid Defense Counsel, DLSA South)

India's Healthcare Challenges in FY 2024

By Nethra Sailesh & Sidhima Choudhary

In 2024, India's healthcare system has seen a surge in outbreaks of Nipah, Chandipura, Mpox and H1N1, including infrastructural deficiencies, staff shortages and implementation issues under major health schemes.

Deadly virus outbreaks

Between early June and mid-August, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recorded **245 cases of acute encephalitis syndrome (AES)**, a sudden inflammation of the brain with 82 fatalities. Out of this number, **64 cases were confirmed to be of Chandipura virus (CHPV)** infection which causes sporadic outbreaks of AES especially during the monsoons.

The virus is endemic in India, with outbreaks occurring regularly. The World Health Organization (WHO) identified this outbreak as the largest in the past 20 years. There is currently no antiviral treatment or vaccination for the same.

In July and September, Kerala reported **two cases of Nipah virus in Malappuram's Pandikkad and Thiruvalli**, both of which resulted in fatalities. This marks the sixth outbreak of the virus that the country has seen since its first emergence in 2001. Following this, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) announced that it was a local occurrence and not a major outbreak in the country. Currently, there is no approved vaccine against the virus which

has a 40% to 75% mortality rate. In September, India reported its first case of the new **monkey pox strain Clade 1b in Kerala's Malappuram district**. Over the past 2 years, **30 mpox cases caused by the Clade 2 strain** have been recorded, which is less transmissible.

WHO declared Mpox as a public health emergency of international concern after a surge in cases in Africa in August.

Additionally, there was a surge in H1N1 or swine flu cases across the country. As per official data until October, there were a total of **19,872 swine flu cases with 324 deaths**. The highest number of cases were recorded in Karnataka (3431), Kerala (3276) and Maharashtra (2006). This shows a significant increase from the 8125 total cases recorded in 2023.

Fight against COVID-19 continues

As of December 30, India reported 10 active COVID-19 cases. Moreover, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's data revealed that over 220,68,94,861 people have been vaccinated since the pandemic in 2020.

India exits HBHI group with minor decline in Vector-Borne Diseases

According to reports until October by the National Center for Vector Borne Diseases Control, India recorded a total of 1,86,567 cases of dengue. Kar-

nataka (30973) Tamil Nadu (19138), and Kerala (18534) were the states with the highest number of cases.

Moreover, India recorded a total of 1,92,343 cases of Chikungunya with 12,587 fatalities in 2024. This shows a slight decline from the 2,00,064 cases recorded in 2023.

Furthermore, according to the latest World Malaria report released in December by WHO, India has exited the High Burden to High Impact group (HBHI). This indicates India's reduction in malaria cases and malaria-related deaths between 2017-2023.

Rising Air Pollution:

Air pollution has proved to be a silent threat that has made numerous headlines this year. A recent study regarding this was published by The Lancet Planetary Health Journal that analysed 36 lakh daily deaths in 10 cities between the years 2008 to 2019.

It looked at the short-term exposure to PM 2.5 or particulate matter 2.5 which are small particles usually found in smoke and daily mortality in India.

The report identified that the levels of PM 2.5 were above the WHO's safe limit of 15 micrograms per cubic meters on 99.8% of the days.

The study concluded that more than 7% of the daily deaths recorded within that timestamp in those cities was linked to air pollution. For Delhi, 11.5% of deaths occurred due to air pollution. Another study conducted by the

State of Global Air found that India recorded 2.1 million deaths due to air pollution in 2021.

Moreover, it identified 1,69,400 pollution related deaths among children. Precise studies for 2024 still have to be conducted.

Hospital Fires and Infrastructural gaps

Beyond outbreaks, India's healthcare system has also been challenged by significant infrastructure shortages and mishaps. In May, a major fire broke out in Baby Care New Born Hospital in Delhi which took the lives of 7 newborns.

Police investigations reported that the fire intensified due to unauthorized, additional oxygen cylinders in the hospital as well as lack of basic fire extinguishers or emergency exits at the facility.

In November, another fire occurred in the neonatal intensive care unit at Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College Hospital in Jhansi that claimed the lives of 17 newborns.

Initial investigations revealed that the fire occurred due to excessive electrical load. Fires in hospitals are not uncommon.

A detailed report by the Indian Express showed that between January 2020 and October 2024, there were 105 hospital and clinical fires reported.

It also revealed that major accidents that took the lives of more than five people was mainly due to short circuits, absence of firefighting systems or allied safety measures, lack of staff training as well as hospitals operating without valid fire certifications. Other than a lack of fire safety measures, there were also shortages of infrastructure and nurses.

The National Health Policy 2017 recommends the availability of 2 beds per 1000 population. However, for public healthcare facilities (IPHS) norms 6 beds for Primary health centers to cover 20,000 to 30,000 population. According to the National Health Mission 2023, the total number of hospital beds in government hospitals is 8,40,455 for a population of 1.428 billion. The report for 2024 is yet to be published.



Source: Reuters

Source: Jagran Josh; Created by Yashaswini Chauhan

India is also seeing a huge shortage of nurses, with numbers dwindling due to better opportunities abroad in terms of salaries, working hours, and less work pressure.

Dr Girdhar Gyani, director general of the Association of Healthcare Providers told PTI that India has over 33 lakh registered nurses.

However, as per WHO's recommendations, there must be three nurses per 1000 population. The numbers show only 1.96 nurses per thousand population.

In an interview with INK reporters, Dr Arshita Chowdhury from Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital, addressed the challenges of surging disease rates and inadequate infrastructure. "The main issue is the lack of awareness among people. When it comes to communicable diseases, people do not know what to do," she explained.

However, she stated that lack of infrastructure has been an issue but it's worse at the village level. "There is a lack of doctors and treatment there which puts more pressure on the city," she added.

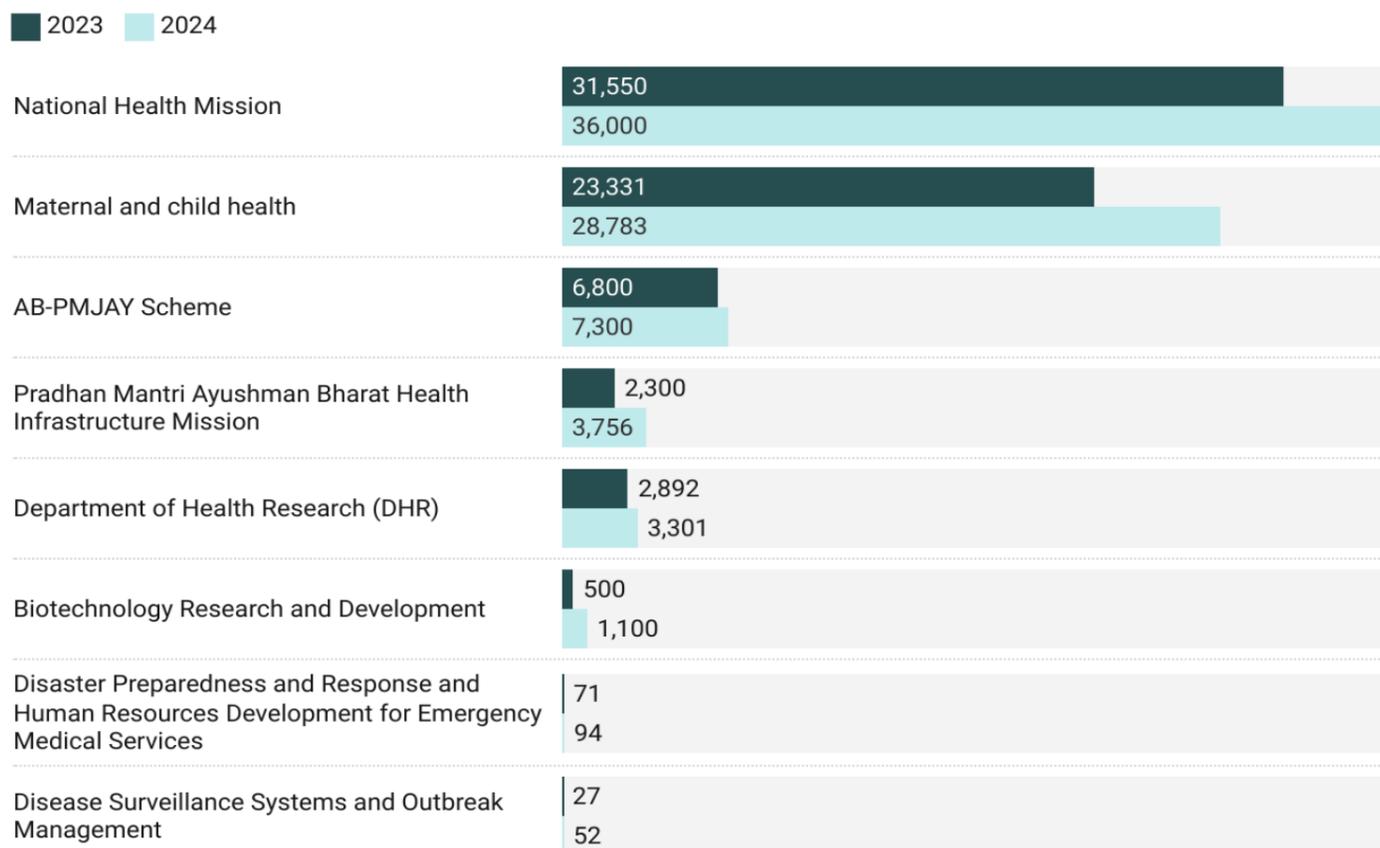
India's Healthcare Budget in 2024

The 2024-2025 healthcare budget of India saw a significant rise of 2% to Rs. 90,958 crores prioritizing the infrastructure, existing programs, and various health initiatives combining maternal and child health policies under the National Health Mission. It also includes a surge of 7% increase in the health insurance program Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY (Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana) which incorporates other schemes like ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) and Anganwadi workers.

Discrepancies in assessments of Healthcare Facilities

According to the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) under the National Health Mission, there are 2,00,988 public health facilities in India. However, the discrepancies arise as the IPHS dashboard claims to have assessed 190,519 facilities which defies the number mentioned in other newspaper websites claiming to have just evaluated 40,451 facilities with a substantial 42%, totaling 17,190 facilities, scored below 50%, revealing critical deficiencies in crucial healthcare areas. An additional

Budget comparison between the years FY22-23 & FY24-25 (in ₹ crore)



Source: KPMG on the Union Budget (2024-25) Healthcare report • Created with Datawrapper

15,172 facilities scored between 50% to 80%, illustrating varying levels of inadequacy prevalent throughout the public healthcare system.

Shortcomings in the System

While the initiatives focus on improving India's healthcare system, they also include various shortcomings. The 2023 CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) Performance Report of Ayushman Bharat—Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) reveals multiple pieces of information reflecting the scheme's shortcomings.

The PM-JAY scheme is essentially meant to provide health coverage of Rs 5 lakh per family for the primary and tertiary care of the hospital for the poor and vulnerable section of society, which includes over 10.74 crore families.

However, the beneficiaries reported facing severe problems with Identification and Registration. The online system for the registration of beneficiaries generates a match confidence score by comparing the beneficiary's documents with the Socio-Economic and Caste Census list of eligible beneficiaries.

The mechanized faced severe technical difficulties as the applications were often projected as approved or rejected without con-

sidering the match confidence score, invalid name and incorrect date of birth, and duplicate PM-JAYs IDs. In six states there were ineligible registration of households where the expenditure lacked massively too. Additionally, nine states reported various delays in the registration process as well.

Whereas, the Hospital Empanelment and Management encountered poor infrastructure, equipment, and medical staff, lacking the required standards. The basic hospital amenities like fire safety, biomedical waste management, and pollution control were also not fully adhered to.

ASHA, a scheme including trained female community activists aims to improve the health care and service providers and to generate awareness among people lacks its effectiveness too.

ASHA serves a population of around 1000 people in rural areas whereas 2000 in urban settings with a fixed amount. However, there have been various complaints and protests regarding the effectiveness of the scheme staging protests and long pending demands regarding the regulation and timely salary with monthly incentives in the work.

With an increase of 2% in the Health Budget in the year FY 2024-2025, the budget allocation is diverse, ranging from the Department of Health Research with a 13 percent

division (Rs 3,301 Cr) for reinforcing the Indian Council of Medical Research and various central initiatives. It also covers the AB-PMJAY allocation which was raised from Rs. 6,800 in the year 2023-24 to 7,300 in the year 2024-2025, covering the ASHA workers and Anganwadi helpers.

The Disease Surveillance Systems and Outbreak Management received a 93 percent increase in budget allocation in FY 2024-25 with Rs 52 Cr. as compared to Rs 27 Cr. in the last FY to the National Centre for Disease Control and overall, Health Sector

Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission which focuses on the key medical colleges of India such as AIIMS, KHS, NIMHANS, etc., experienced a different image in this area with a 28 percent dip in its budget allocated for creating new healthcare institutes in research, nursing etc.

Dr Arshita Chowdhury emphasized the critical need for hospitals to prioritize hygienic, high-quality equipment and medicines. Highlighting the reliance on substandard syringes and cheaper medicines in many facilities, she expressed hope that the 2% budget increase would address these gaps. Dr Chowdhury stressed that beyond introducing new schemes and policies, the government must focus on their effective implementation to ensure a healthier future.

India's Struggle with Unprecedented Natural Catastrophes in the Year 2024

Major natural calamities that impacted different states of India, thousands affected



Source : PTI

By R. Rakendu & Thamanna Sadique

People around the country welcomed the year 2024 with full of hope. Little did India know about the tragedies that were soon to follow. From the Wayanad landslide to Cyclone Fengal, India saw some of the deadliest natural disasters that took the lives of many.

On the dawn of 30 July 2024, India woke up to witness the tragic fate of Wayanad. The villages of Punjirimattom, Mundakkai were partially wiped away by the first landslide that happened at 02:17AM. Chooralmala village was entirely wiped off by the second landslide at 4:10AM.

The Wayanad landslide

was one of the worst natural disasters that Kerala has ever faced. More than 1500 buildings were destroyed. Over 120 people are still missing. 397 people were injured and 420 people are reported dead. Off the records, the number of casualties may be higher. Amid the crises, people were searching for their loved ones. Husbands were searching for their wives, children were searching for their parents, parents eagerly hoping to find their lost child and even dogs were searching for their owners.

Thankachan, a local resident, said "I couldn't even spot my house after the landslide. Currently a river

is flowing through the place where my house was situated. My brother's house was next to mine. It was also completely destroyed and my brother and his family have gone missing. They might have been stuck under the mud. Six of us in my house barely managed to save our lives. But I lost all of my good friends to the landslide. I knew many of them from my childhood, they are no more now."

After receiving funds from the Central Government, the State Government of Kerala is planning to build two townships for the people who lost their homes in Wayanad. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, in a recent press conference, stated that "A total of 58.5 hectares of land will be acquired in Elstone Estate, and 48.96 hectares in Nedumpara Estate. A drone was used to identify the land. Field survey is underway right now. In Kalpetta, houses will be built in 5 cent plots, while in Nedumala, they will be constructed on 10 cent plots."

The southern state of Kerala experienced heavy rainfall in late July 2024. The rain was also the major factor for causing the Wayanad landslide. Over 200 relief camps were open throughout the state. Periyar River, the longest river in Kerala overflowed causing displacement of many people as water surged into their homes. For the past 7 years, Kerala has been experiencing severe rainfall and floods during monsoon. Several districts like Wayanad, Alappuzha,

Kottayam, Ernakulam and Thrissur are affected by the rain every year. Heavy rain in Uttar Pradesh during the monsoon caused flooding on 26th July 2024. Overall, 76 tehsils, 26 districts and more than 500 villages were affected by the flood. Lives and livelihoods of people were affected. Many had to move out from their homes in order to find a safe place. About 10 people lost their lives. Cattles were tied on roads as the palaces around the house were filled with water.



Source: Tribuneindia

Landslides in Himachal Pradesh

was a tragic incident that happened on 19th and 21st August, 2024. Severe rainfall from 31st July 2024 caused landslides and cloudbursts in the state. Multiple landslides occurred across the regions of Kullu, Shimla and Mandi. Over 46 people lost their lives. 51 incidents of cloudbursts and flash floods took place in the state, with 31 people reported dead, 33 missing. Damages caused are estimated up to 1,140 crore rupees. The

state government, as an immediate relief, provided the affected families with 1,50,000 rupees and decided to give them free ration for 3 months.



Source: Sandrp

Madhya Pradesh Flood

On 12 August 2024, a breach in Tonga dam in Mena district in Madhya Pradesh led to a flood. The catastrophe caused by the leakage in the earthen dam majorly affected over 12 villages, tearing-down crops worth over 30 lakh rupees. More than 20 villages were alerted, and some of those villages were partially affected by the flood. The gradual increase in the leakage led hundreds of villagers to flee from their homes. The 135-year-old dam consisted of 80 percent of its water holding capacity at the time of breakage. The officials stated that they could only start doing the repair work, once the dam is almost or completely empty.

Tonga dam was built by royal Scindia family. It was built in the year 1889 and is not listed in the National Register of Large Dams (NRLD). According to NRLD, the first dam in Madhya Pradesh was

built in 1895. If the cracks in the Tonga dam was taken care, this situation could have been prevented.



Source : PTI

Cyclone Fengal

was one of the disasters that southern India faced towards the end of 2024. Originating from a depression at Bay of Bengal on 30th November 2024, Cyclone Fengal has moved to the southern part of India, posing threat to the lives of many. Around 16 people are reported dead and a number of people lost their lands to the sea. Though Tamil Nadu is the most affected state, Kerala and Southern Karnataka are also experiencing strong winds followed by heavy rainfall. Strong winds ranging up to 60 km/hr have caused destruction to many buildings and vehicles. Fisherfolks of Kerala were among the communities who were affected by the cyclone.

A fisherman from Kochi, Joseph said, "I have lived here for 78 years, never have I seen such heavy rainfall during the month of December. We are unable to meet the ends without going to the sea. But no one cares about us. A few people lost their lands to the sea during the tragedy."

Another fisherman, John from Cherthala stated "I had my share of land near the sea, but due to the lack of sea wall, in times of natural disasters like this cyclone, I lost my land as the sea took over it. It would be great if the authorities could build a sea wall to protect our land." Throughout these tragedies, hundreds of people lost their lives and many lost their loved ones. The unpredictable natural disasters created uncertainty in the lives of many.

Cyclone Remal



Source: NDTV

Unleashing on the Sunderban Deltas of West Bengal and Bangladesh on May 21st, killing 33 people at the least and dozens missing, Cyclone Remal

was the first of the natural disasters of 2024. It affected different parts of Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and West Bengal, causing destruction of over 15,000 houses, landslides, floods and death by electrocution, with Mizoram being the most affected. With a whopping 153 kmph speed, the wind caused huge landfalls and power cuts in Bengal. Heavy rains caused more than two lakh people to be relocated to relief camps. Mizoram chief minister launched a search operation to rescue the people who were trapped. Destruction of roads caused service difficulties. Similarly, internet connections also hindered communication problems.

Uttarakhand Landslides



Source: TimesofIndia

Landslide is a frequent visitor in Uttarakhand. In 2024, the state experienced record breaking 1813 landslides which was double the number of last year's Heavy rainfall in different parts of the states, which were the main triggers of the landslides.

Continuous heavy rainfall caused the stoppage of 115 roads across the state, including the prominent Badrinath-Gangotri highway, that remained closed for more than 8 hours. Reports showed the possibility of forest fires as another reason for landslides, which slowly and greatly affected the strength of the soil causing it to loosen. Extreme weather conditions caused a ban in any tourism related engagements. Collapse of bridges, cracks in buildings and mountains, cancellation or delay of flights and structures falling into the water were other major issues that occurred as a result. Another major incident occurred at Roopkund lake. It shrunk in size due to the debris that got collected as a result of the landslide. In light of this surging increase in landslides, Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister of Uttarakhand initiated the development of a landslide warning system, which helps in understanding the intensity of rainfall and gives warning on the possibility of landslides. As a matter of fact, certain landslides are still going on in Uttarakhand.

Professor M.P.S. Bisht, former director of the Uttarakhand

Space Application Centre (USAC), he emphasized the delicate geological structure of the place, stating that "Joshimath is situated on the remains (debris) of ancient landslides, making the area fundamentally unstable." In his observation he also noted poor drainage systems, unplanned construction and man-made pressure worsened the region's vulnerability. "The region is a geologically sensitive zone and not suitable for heavy infrastructure. The lack of proper drainage system has led to the leakage of water into the soil, weakening its structure and causing land subsidence."- he said. The government is taking initiative on the ongoing process of sustainable development model that ranges with the region's environmental awareness to prevent disasters in future.

Vijayawada floods in Andhra Pradesh

Started from August 31st to September 9th due to low pressure in Bay of Bengal, Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh that witnessed their heaviest rainfall in the last 50 years which recorded 37 cm and overflowing of Budameru river and Krishna River. It affected more than 20,000 people, with 45 casualties and over 44,000 residents displaced. This showcased double the severity as compared to the 2005 disaster.



Source: Socialnews.xyz

Heavy flooding caused 40% of the area to be under water. Shortage of drinking water, food and other necessities was one of the major concerns making survival difficult. N. Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh explained to the media about how the flood was the biggest hit they have taken so far in terms of natural calamities. He further addressed how the condition was pathetic and miserable.

In order to reduce the damages, the flood waters were made to shift their direction into Eluru Canal. An estimate of around 10 lakh cusecs of water was discharged from Prakasam Barrage. This has led to Krishna River being full of spat. According to the reports, the government released large scale relief and rescue operations for rescuing citizens and evacuating them from low lying flood-prone areas and shifting them to safe areas. As a safety precaution, electricity

supply was cut from affected areas.

Assam Floods

Killing 119 people, nearly 1325 villages of 19 districts were swamped. According to reports, around 45 people lost their lives and an estimated figure of 640,000 people suffered damages, with rivers crossing the danger marks. Hundreds of people were relocated to relief camps throughout the state. Flood caused damage to several areas with Kaziranga park known for their one horned rhinoceros which fled to nearby villages. Suman Das, from Guwahati, a resident of the affected area talked about how their home was hit by the flood. They were shifted to the nearest rescue area and the government took the responsibility of their food and shelter. The government also provided them with medicines, clothes and other basic necessities. After some days the government with the help of a pump cleaned the areas and almost after a week they moved back to their homes. Floods had an impact on the agricultural sector of the state as it destroyed the crops. Rakesh Mazumder, another citizen, also explained how during the floods they lived in a tent, the government provided the necessary things for the tent and also provided them with food and medicine. They lived in that tent for almost 12 to 15 days and after that they moved back to their places.

Natural disaster for the peninsular country has always been an unwelcome guest but, the year 2024 has been a wake-up call for India in terms of natural calamities. The year was marked by a series of devastating and daunting disasters. Destructive forces of nature and negligence of humans left countless lives of people in turmoil. Covering north in Uttarakhand to south in Kerala, disasters have taken a huge toll on the country. Hundreds of lives lost, thousands misplaced and millions affected by these catastrophes. The unpredictability of these situations makes it all the more fatal and deadly. These calamities are not limited to the lives of the people, but the economic conditions of the country as well. India, as a nation, together can seek to attain prevention of such risks. Water, air, soil and fire needs to be protected as well as controlled to avoid such miseries.



Source: PTI

India Continues to Leap in Space World

Exploring Key Missions, Milestones, and Upcoming Ventures in India's Space Journey



Source: TossHub

By Prachi Mishra & Rounak Khare

In the union budget 2024, a 1000 crore venture capital fund has been established for the space sector to expand the Indian space economy fivefold in the next decade. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) completed several projects in 2024, while also announcing new ones, which would expand and increase the country's standing among the space sectors across the world.

The year 2024 began with ISRO's launch of the **X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat)** aboard PSLV-C58 from Sriharikota. This launch made India the second nation globally to study polarisation of X-Ray emissions in space, after NASA. This satellite is aimed towards expanding research surrounding astronomy, by observing celestial phenomena such as black holes and neutron stars.

On January 6, India's maiden solar mission **Aditya L-1**, reached its halo orbit at the Lagrange point (L1). This satellite will have unre-

stricted access to the sun, thus helping in providing scientific results related to the sun's atmospheric conditions, including its chromosphere and photosphere. The satellite will also be able to provide data regarding space weather and solar activity.

Another milestone was achieved by ISRO with the successful launch of the **INSAT-3DS** weather satellite aboard GSLV-MkII on February 17. The aim of this satellite is to improve weather forecasting capabilities of the country as well as monitor environment and disaster management.

A second installment in the reusable vehicle launch series was released by ISRO through the **RLV LEX-02** landing experiment, on March 22.

This was followed by a third success, with the final test in the series of LEX, in the RLV landing experiment on June 23. The 'Pushpak', is a winged RLV which was lifted by an Indian Air Force helicopter, which was released from a 4.5 km altitude. During the final test, Pushpak simu-

lated high-speed landing conditions for a vehicle returning from space.

ISRO successfully carried out its second test of the **Air-Breathing Propulsion Technology** on July 22, 2024, at 7:00 AM from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. The propulsion system, mounted on an RH-560 sounding rocket, was launched to demonstrate the use of atmospheric oxygen for combustion instead of carrying oxidizers onboard. All the key objectives of the test were met with successful ignition and stable performance of the system. In addition, the technology was aimed at making space missions cost-effective with the use of reusable launch vehicles. The mission was a milestone in itself for its performance at hypersonic (i.e. extreme temperature and air-breathing propulsion) flights. It also boosted India's aerospace technology capabilities.

On 16th August 2024, ISRO successfully launched the **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle SSLV-D3**. The mission was a landmark achievement for India's space program,

demonstrating the SSLV as a reliable, dedicated vehicle for launching small satellites. It carried multiple payloads into low Earth orbit, making it suitable to meet the increasing demand of global launches of satellites that are cost-effective and flexible.

SSLV is a small launch vehicle developed by ISRO that can launch small satellites into orbit within a very short span of time and at a relatively cheap cost. It comes from the family of India's big rockets, but was specifically designed to carry low-weight satellites to orbit in low Earth orbit. It is compact, quick to assemble, and efficient; therefore, suitable for launching lightweight satellites for communication, weather monitoring, and other research purposes. This successful mission is indicative of ISRO's efforts to create affordable and accessible space launch solutions for both national and international customers.

Another significant experiment conducted by ISRO during November is India's first analog space mission (**Hab-1**), which is a simula-

tion of long-duration space missions on November 1st. In this mission, a group of volunteers will be living in a controlled habitat on Earth that is simulating the conditions in space, like isolation, cramped space, and reliance on stored resources. This will help them understand how human beings cope with the physical and psychological challenges during extended space travel, which is very crucial for future missions such as Gaganyaan.

By studying factors like stress, teamwork, and health under these conditions, Hab-1 will provide valuable data for designing better space missions. The mission is an essential step toward ensuring the well-being of astronauts during long space journeys to the Moon, Mars, or beyond.

On December 5th, ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) proved once again that it is a reliable vehicle as it put the European Space Agency's (ESA) **Proba-3 satellites** into orbit. The PSLV, with its excellent track record, successfully placed the two Proba-3 satellites into orbit.

The Proba-3 satellites are part of ESA's mission to demonstrate formation flying technology, where the two spacecraft will work in tandem to observe the Sun's corona. This launch highlights ISRO's growing capability in delivering complex payloads and strengthens its partnership with international space agencies like ESA.

Moreover, the upcoming missions planned by ISRO hope to bring remarkable results. The **NVS-02** satellite, set to launch in January 2025, will enhance India's NavIC system, which offers precise location and time services for India and the surrounding regions.

Launched on a GSLV rocket, the satellite will carry special atomic clocks that will help it provide precise navigation data.

This will support various applications, from transportation and navigation to disaster management and defense. The launch is an important step in strengthening India's ability to offer reliable, homegrown navigation services.

NISAR, launching in March 2025, is a NASA-ISRO joint mission for studying Earth using advanced radar technology. The satellite uses a special type of radar that can view the changes happening in the Earth's surface. This also helps in monitoring natural disasters like floods, tsunamis and landslides.

The Gaganyaan Human Spaceflight Mission will be India's first manned mission to be launched into space from India during this year, and is scheduled for the year 2026. ISRO plans to send Indian astronauts, known

as Gagannauts, aboard an Indian spacecraft designed for human space travel. Astronauts are being trained in India and abroad for space missions.

ISRO's **Venus Orbiter Mission**, similar to MOM (Mars Orbiter Mission), is expected to be launched in the year 2028.

It will probe Venus to understand the heavy atmosphere, extremely hot surface, and extreme weather conditions of this otherworldly ball.

The spacecraft, which will have special tools like radar and cameras. It will study clouds, volcanic activity, and surface features of the planet.

It will also gather facts about harsh planetary conditions. The mission will help scientists better understand Venus and compare it to Earth, giving new insights on how planets like ours might change over time.



Source: TOI

ISRO's ADVANCEMENTS IN SPACE EXPLORATION 2024

Mission Name	Date	Launch Vehicle	Description
XPoSat (PSLV-C58)	January 1, 2024	PSLV-DL	X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat): Launched to study X-ray emissions from celestial sources, focusing on black holes and neutron stars.
INSAT-3DS (GSLV-F14)	February 17, 2024	GSLV	INSAT-3DS: A geostationary satellite aimed at enhancing meteorological observation and data collection for improved weather forecasting.
RLV LEX-02	March 22, 2024	—	Reusable Launch Vehicle Autonomous Landing Mission (RLV LEX-02): A test mission to demonstrate autonomous landing capabilities of a reusable launch vehicle.
RLV LEX-03	June 23, 2024	—	Reusable Launch Vehicle Autonomous Landing Mission (RLV LEX-03): A subsequent test mission building upon RLV LEX-02 to further validate reusable launch vehicle technologies.
ATV D03	July 22, 2024	—	Air Breathing Propulsion System (ATV D03): A mission to test air-breathing propulsion technologies for future space vehicles.
SSLV-D3/EOS-08	August 16, 2024	SSLV	Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV-D3) carrying EOS-08: A mission to deploy Earth Observation Satellite-08 for environmental monitoring.
GSAT-N2	November 19, 2024	—	GSAT-N2: A communication satellite intended to augment India's communication infrastructure.
Proba-3 Mission (PSLV-C59)	December 5, 2024	PSLV-XL	Proba-3 Mission: A collaborative mission with the European Space Agency (ESA) to demonstrate precise formation flying for solar coronagraphy.
Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) (PSLV-C60)	December 30, 2024	PSLV-CA	Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX): India's first mission to demonstrate in-space docking technology, deploying two small spacecraft to test docking procedures, crucial for future satellite servicing and space station operations.

Highs and lows of Indian Cricket in 2024

Source: Star Sports



By Anushka Rajvedi & Chanakya Ch

2024 has been one of the most memorable years for the country, when it comes to the domain of sports. From winning 29 medals in the Paralympics to Gukesh Dommaraju becoming the youngest World chess champion, India has accounted for some of the most record-breaking sports performances. However, the sport that consistently grabs attention and makes headlines is cricket, which in the year 2024 gave us unforgettable matches and incredible performances, while displaying moments that were special as well as high on emotion.

The Indian National men's and women's cricket teams have proven their mettle the entire year, despite facing their share of ups and downs

On 24 June 2024 the Indian men's cricket team achieved a big win by defeating long-time rival team Australia by 24 runs during the T20 World Cup, after losing the ICC World Cup finale to them in the previous year. The women's cricket team also proved their worth when they gave a smashing reply to South Africa in the South Africa tour of India which was held from 13 June 2024 to 9 July 2024. Team India won three consecutive ODI's by 143 runs, 4 runs and 6 wickets respectively against South Africa. They also defeated South Af-

rica in their only Test match by 10 wickets. South Africa defeated India by 12 runs in the second T20I match of the tour but India bounced back and gave a befitting reply by winning the third T20I match against them by 10 wickets, thus bringing the three-match series to a tie, as the first T20I match had been abandoned.

The Indian men's cricket team began the year with a bang when they defeated England in a 5-match test series that was held from 25 January 2024 to 11 March 2024. Despite the absence of prominent senior cricketer Virat Kohli, who had opted out of the series due to family commitments, the team performed exceptionally and the match turned out to be one of the best test series that India has played in a long time. While India began the series with a loss, they were able to make a comeback in the game.

Jaiswal's 209 (290) took India to a total of 396 runs. The Yorker king Jasprit Bumrah's 6-wicket haul restricted England to a total of 253 runs. In the second innings, with a lead of 116, Shubman Gill rose up and scored 104 (147) thus contributing to a total of 255 runs for the team. Bumrah's and Ashwin's 3-wicket haul respectively contributed to India's victory in the second test. India gave a top-notch fight in the 3rd test match. Where skipper Rohit's 131 (196) and Jadeja's 112 (225) took India to a total of 445 runs, Mohammed Siraj's 4-wicket haul restricted England to a total of 319 runs. With a massive lead of 126, Jaiswal and Shubman Gill scored 214 (236) and 91 (151), respectively, which took India to a score of 430. Along

with the splendid performance of the batsman, the fielders too bowled down the England team. Ravindra Jadeja single-handedly took 5 wickets and restricted English men to a total of 122.

India won the match by a huge margin of 434 runs. Team England had a good start to the last two matches when Joe Root scored a century in the first innings and Olie Robinson scored a half century, and with little contributions by Bairstow and Ben Foakes, England could score 353 runs. Yashasvi Jaiswal scored 72 (117) and Dhruv Jurel scored 90 (149), which left India trailing by 46 runs. Ravichandran Ashwin's 5-wicket haul and Kuldeep Yadav's 4-wicket haul restricted England to a score of 145. With Rohit Sharma and Gill scoring half centuries, India was seen leading the series 3-1. India was spot on with their performance, when Ashwin and Kuldeep took 5-wickets and 4-wickets respectively and restricted England to 218. India displayed its best performance in the beginning of the year itself.

With Rohit and Gill scoring centuries set up the game, Devdutt Padikal and Sarfaraz Khan scored half centuries and with equal contribution from Jaiswal, India got a massive lead by 259. Ravichandran Ashwin took another 5-wicket haul and England were all-out for 195. India won the match by an innings and 64 runs. India overpowered England by winning the series 4-1 and Yashasvi Jaiswal being awarded as the Player-of-the-series, for his score of 854 runs in the series.

Soon after the victory of the first test series of the year against England, India had another win awaiting them in the test series between India

and Bangladesh that was held from 19 September 2024 to 1 October 2024. India, after the 2-0 test win against Bangladesh, moved up to the top of the table in world test rankings. Bangladesh fell short of runs and wickets in both the test matches held at Chennai and Kanpur respectively. Yashasvi Jaiswal and Ravichandran Ashwin were the stars of this test series.

In the first test match that was held at Chennai's renowned MA Chidambaram stadium, India dominated the match from the very beginning. Ashwin's 112 (133), Ravindra Jadeja's 86 (124) and Jaiswal's 56 (118) really helped India reach a massive total of 376/10. While the game-changing bowler Jasprit Bumrah took 4 wickets, Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep and Ravindra Jadeja also took two wickets each which helped India to restrict Bangladesh to 149/10. India however, did not just stop at the first innings. It had showcased its dominance in the second innings as well. With a 227 runs lead, India outraced Bangladesh in the second innings that led to their terrible defeat. Shubman Gill 119 (176) & Rishabh Pant's 109 (128) India had reached a total of 287/4 and had a humongous lead of 514 where India chose to declare the innings. With Ashwin's 6 wicket haul and Jadeja's 3 wicket haul, Bangladesh fell short of 280 runs, and lost the game.

India shattered Bangladesh in a dominant win against Bangladesh in the second test held at Kanpur's Green Park stadium. The beginning of the match however was unpredictable, with rain pouring down for 2 and ½ days, which left everyone

doubtful. After the match resumed, Bangladesh lost two early wickets, and Mominul's contribution of 107 (194) runs led Bangladesh to a total of 233/10. However, Bumrah's 3 wicket haul and Siraj, Ashwin and Akash Deep's respective two wicket haul severely impacted Bangladesh.

While the Indian men's cricket team was displaying its excellent game skills, the Indian women's cricket team secured their biggest win against Sri Lanka in the Women's T20 World Cup, which was held in October. The match had a strong start with Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma as the openers for the team. With their fierce game, the duo achieved a partnership of 50 runs in 8 overs. Shafali Verma single-handedly faced the delivery of one of the best bowlers of Sri Lanka, Inoka Ranaweera. Breaking the records of Gaby Lewis, the Ireland batswoman, Shafali became the youngest batswoman in the world to have scored 2000 runs in T20 cricket matches for women. The duo continued to showcase their splendid partnership, as Smriti completed her half century by the 12th over. The match took a drastic turn during the 13th over when Smriti Mandhana got out at 50 runs. Soon

During the second innings, in the second ball of the first over, Renuka Thakur took the first wicket of Vishmi Gunaratne for the team and gave a tough start to Sri Lanka. Immediately, in the second over, Sri Lanka lost another wicket, Chamari Athapaththu. While Sri Lanka did try to gain a little momentum in the match by the 7th over, India did not give them any chance to win. By the last over, India defeated Sri Lanka by 82 runs.

The Indian women's cricket team displayed their best performance in the bilateral matches. The team defeated West Indies at 3-0, and New Zealand at 2-0. After defeating Sri Lanka, the team reached the finals where they had to face Australia. However, the finals did not turn out to be in the favour of the Indian team, and they lost the match. While the Indian women's team did well in the test matches, they had an unfortunate stage exit from the Women's T20 World Cup 2024 in UAE. Moreover, the team also lost the Asia Cup tournament to Sri Lanka. Although the team did not play too well on the international ground, cricketer

Smriti Mandhana had a record breaking year.

She scored four centuries in ODIs in 2024. She also took over the record of Laura Wolvaardt by scoring the highest number of runs in the T20 calendar year in every game format. She scored a total of 763 runs across 23 matches in a single year. She also led her team Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) to win the title of Women Premier League (WPL) 2024. Both Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana also set a new record in the off-test against South Africa. While Australia held the title of scoring the highest number of runs with 575/9 in the women's innings, India broke the record. With Shafali hitting a double century, Smriti hitting a century, the two led the team to a score of 603/6, which was the highest score ever recorded in the history of women's cricket. The team also set a new record by the end of 2024 by winning the inaugural edition of the Under-19 Women's Asia Cup Title 2024, after defeating Bangladesh by 41 runs. The Indian men's cricket team experienced transitions at various phases during the year. Rahul Dravid was replaced by Gautam Gambhir as head coach of the team, following the win of the Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL 2024, who were coached and mentored by him. While the Indian women's cricket team managed to maintain their game at both national and international grounds, the Indian men's



Source: Star Sports

cricket team faced many gray areas.

Although the team had a great start to the year, they also faced backlash when they lost the three-match test series against New Zealand. The series came out to be a shock for the whole nation, as it was the biggest loss of the team in the last 12 years on their home soil. However, the team did not lose hope and won the T20-I series against South Africa by a score of 3-1 under Surya Kumar Yadav's captaincy. The ICC Men's T20 World Cup was held from 1st June 2024 to 29th June 2024 and was hosted by West Indies and USA. In a thrilling finale, India defeated the South African team in Barbados. The 'run machine' of the Indian team, Virat Kohli's 76 (59) and the versatile all-rounder Axar Patel's 47 (31) led India to a total of 176/7. During the course of the second innings, South Africa put up a strong fight but their hopes were shattered. During the course of the 17th over, South Africa had to make 22 runs from 18 balls, which made their chances of winning much higher. However, Bumrah during his last over knocked the stumps up to dis-

miss Marco Jansen which slightly turned the game to India's side. Later in the match, South Africa needed 16 runs in 6 balls. While the star player of South Africa, Henrich Klussen was on strike, the hopes of South Africa winning the match was still high. However, Surya Kumar Yadav's stunning catch turned the tables for South Africa. India won the match by 7 runs and won an ICC trophy after 11 years.

Virat Kohli was awarded the 'Player of the match' and Jasprit Bumrah was awarded the 'Player of the tournament' - as he took 15 wickets in 8 matches. However, the joy of victory was short-lived for the cricket fans, as not too long after the match, the three major players- Virat Kohli, captain Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja announced their retirement from T20 Internationals. The year 2025 will witness new cricketing adventures as the national men's team and national women's team continue to achieve new milestones and inspire millions of Indians with their discipline, professionalism and performance.



Source: Star Sports



Created by Anushka Rajvedi

after, Sri Lanka took another wicket of Shafali Verma at 43 runs. After the openers were out, the skipper Harmanpreet Kaur was on strike with Jemimah Rodrigues, who was eventually dismissed by Ama Kanchana. With injuries on her body and a fierce game, Harmanpreet Kaur scored 52 runs thus contributing to a total of 172 runs by the end of the first innings.

India makes several record-breaking performances in sports



By Swastika Chowdhury & Krishika Rathod

SPORTS, a factor that binds people together to support the players and teams with zeal and passion. Be it FIFA, Olympics, Paralympics or Chess one never fails to brag and cheer about their favourite player or team. Such was the scenario this time for India, where not only did it do wonders but also brought home a number of accolades and medals.

AT A GLANCE- OLYMPICS 2024

The 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris will be remembered as an extraordinary exhibition of athleticism, unity, and strength. The Games combined the essence of sports achievement with the grandeur of Parisian culture. There were over 10,000 athletes from all parts of the globe, including 240 Indian athletes—India's largest ever cohort to the Olympics to represent a country across 32 sports. The nation's athletes demonstrated resilience, skill, and determination, securing four remarkable medals that will inspire future generations.

A noteworthy achievement at these Games was full gender equity, with equal numbers of male and female competitors competing. This dedication to inclusion was further underscored by the admission of breaking (breakdancing) as an Olympic event, reflecting the changing environment of global athletic competition. Neeraj Chopra, India's star javelin thrower, added to his legacy by capturing a silver medal at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Neeraj performed admirably in the men's javelin throw event, throwing an impressive 89.45 meters. This victory makes him the first Indian track & field athlete to win two Olympic medals, following his historic gold medal at the Tokyo 2020 Games.

Neeraj's consistency and success on the international arena continue to inspire millions, demonstrating India's emerging athletic superiority. Swapnil Kusale won bronze in the

Men's 50m Rifle "This medal means a lot," Kusale said. "It is not a gold, but I am pleased I got a medal. To get an Olympic medal is a dream." His majestic victory in the Paris Olympics paid off for his debut entry at the competition.

Manu Bhaker, the first Indian woman to reach an Olympic shooting final in an individual event was also the first to qualify for the 10m air pistol women's final at the Olympics. She not only made the cut to the final but also bagged a beautiful bronze with her calibre.

In the air rifle competition, the infamous Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh were a part of the mixed team of India's 10m air rifle competition. This was the sixth and the final medal in the name of our country where they performed exceptionally to secure a bronze for the country. Manu Bhaker became the first Indian sportsperson to win 2 medals at the same edition of olympics

The youngest ever medalist in Olympics this time stood out to be an Indian, i.e. Aman Sehrawat who won an impeccable bronze in the 57kg freestyle wrestling championship. His skills empowered with playing what's colloquially called kushti (mud wrestling) in India led to him being the most accomplished player surpassing PV Sindhu's record of the youngest player when she bagged the silver during the 2016 Rio Olympics.

CHESS: In a series of matches in the World Chess Championship that took place between 25th November to 12th December between Ding Liren and the challenger Gukesh Dommaraju, India emerged to be victorious in the series. After Ding resigned following a blunder, Gukesh moved the position to a king and pawn versus king endgame. Gukesh's victory is a reflection of his swift rise in the chess community, as he attained grandmaster status at just 12 years old. His triumph not only exceeds Garry Kasparov's achievement as the youngest world champion but also marks a significant milestone for Indian chess, echoing the legacy

of his mentor, Viswanathan Anand. The championship match attracted considerable worldwide interest, with a prize fund of \$2.5 million highlighting the event's distinction. Gukesh's win secured him \$1.3 million, whereas Ding was awarded \$1.1 million. The match was praised for the exceptional quality of play and the nearly flawless precision exhibited by both competitors, making it one of the most unforgettable World Chess Championships in recent memory.

CRICKET: India emerged victorious in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, defeating South Africa in a nail-biting final at the Kensington Oval, Barbados. With a seven-run win, this victory not only ended India's long wait for an ICC trophy but also etched another historic chapter in their cricketing journey.

South Africa began their chase with confidence, led by a blistering 52-run effort from Heinrich Klaasen. At one stage, it seemed as though they were cruising to victory, needing just 30 runs off the final five overs with six wickets in hand. But cricket is a game of unpredictability, and India's bowlers proved why they are among the best in the world.

The victory was made even more emotional as three Indian stalwarts—Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Ravindra Jadeja—announced their retirements from T20 internationals on the same day. For Rohit and Kohli, this triumph served as the perfect farewell to their T20 careers, which have been instrumental in shaping India's success in the format. Jadeja, a key all rounder, also bid adieu to T20Is, leaving behind a legacy of consistency and match-winning performances. Kohli's brilliant innings earned him the Player of the Match award, while Jasprit Bumrah's consistency throughout the tournament won him the Player of the Tournament accolade. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) recognized the team's achievement by announc-

ing a cash reward of ₹125 crore. The 2024 T20 World Cup final was more than just a cricket match—it was a testament to India's resilience, teamwork, and ability to thrive under pressure. This historic win not only brought the trophy home but also reignited the nation's passion for cricket. It also marked the end of an era for Indian cricket as it sets its sights on a new generation of stars

A BROADER IMPACT

Beyond the medal count, India's performance in Paris revealed significant progress in boxing, badminton, and athletics. The provision of high-quality facilities and training for athletes was largely enabled by the government's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) and increasing private investment. Additionally, 2024 will be recognized for using sports to promote Indian patriotism and unity. Indian sportsmen pushed the envelope on the track and in the arenas, setting records and motivating millions. The nation's love for sports was reignited by the Paris Games, and involvement in grassroots initiatives rose, particularly among young people and women.

The outcomes in Paris highlight a turning point for India, both as a competitor and as a new international force in sports. The groundwork established in 2024 ensures that India will continue to be a major player on the international scene as the country prepares for the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

To conclude with how the sports championships have overall been in the year 2024 it was an exciting set of events that were lined-up throughout the year. India's representation in competitions has remained exemplary in its entirety. From winning medals in the Paris Olympics to hosting the world's best chess champion it has been truly exhilarating. For the people who are into sports and championships, it was truly their year to be a great audience.

Fashion Recap of India 2024

By Naysa Shrivastava & Shubhangi Chauhan

Fashion Industry in the Year 2024; Source : Sunday Guardian

2024 has been a year that exemplified as a testament of resilience, innovation and unyielding essence of creativity. India is known for its diverse culture, traditions and forever evolving aesthetics, it has witnessed transformations in the fashion realm in 2024. From the streets of Delhi to the runways of Mumbai, the fashion industry thrived with revolutionary themes. The world of style collaborated with sustainability. India's impact on global fashion continues to expand.

Consumers in India have also shown a growing interest towards sustainable fashion. In a 2024 survey by Fashion Revolution India and Boston Consulting Group (BCG), 68% of the Indian millennial population considered sustainability before buying a cloth or any kind of clothing. This new trend of usage has made leading retail stores and designers change into more environmentally friendly solutions.

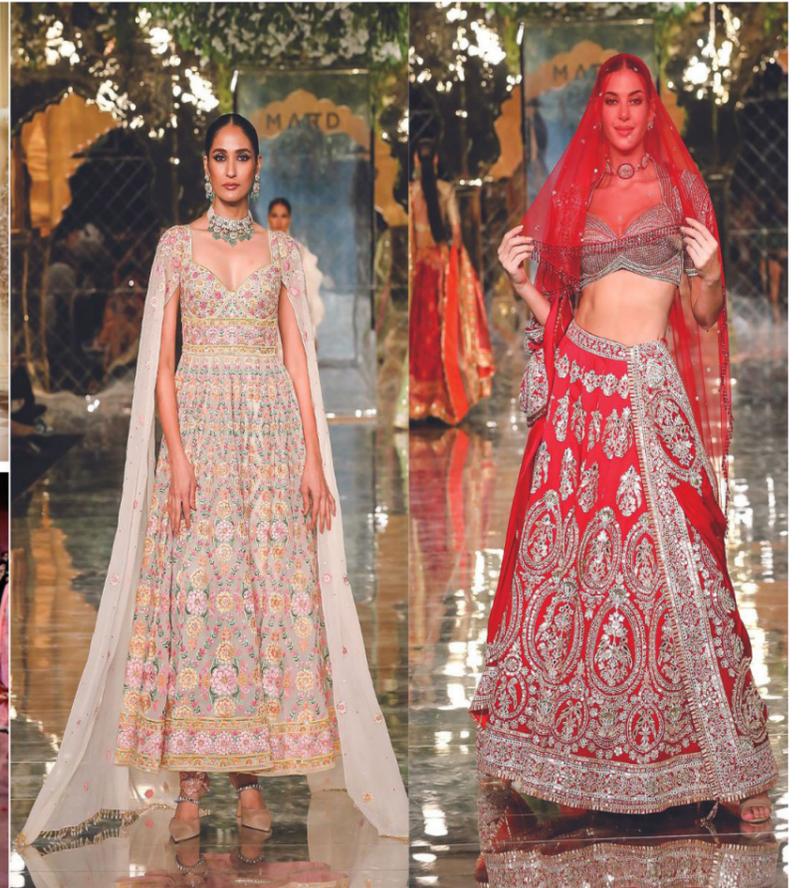
The Uprise of Sustainable Fashion

India adapted eco-conscious methods in fashion. As the world battles with climate change and other ecological issues, designers combined modern sustainable techniques with sustainable methods to create costumes. Many well-known designers conversed regarding the significance of sustainability in fashion.

Anita Dogre, a fashion designer who established sustainable fashion in India, has been setting the bar high



LAKME Fashion week 2024; Source: IAD



by encouraging eco-friendly collections.

“Sustainability in fashion is no longer an option ; it has become a necessity. We need to save earth and what is better than adapting craftsmanship and organic materials?” she mentioned.

The Lakme fashion week had a Sustainable Fashion Day event that turned out to be the most anticipated. Leading designers like Shantanu & Nikhil, Raghuvendra Rathore and Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla showcased their collection made up of sustainable fabrics.

“We’ve all been trained that beauty lies in the material world, but it’s high time that we focus on beauty that is inherently responsible.” -Shantanu Mehra mentioned

Legendary fashion designer Ritu Kumar, one of India’s leading fashion designers, said,

“Sustainability has been inherent in Indian fashion from handloom fabrics to natural dyes. We seemed to have lost touch but 2024 saw us going back to the basics and brought in the modern version.”

Rahul Mishra, who had combined the sophistication of India with the trends of the world showcased new organic cotton and silk materials woven with a support from the rural weavers, said-

“Sustainability is about designing a world where every stakeholder, from the weaver to the consumer is getting something for their efforts”.

Emerging, new generation designers and their ideas such as Kriti Tula’s Doodlage and Ashay Bhave’s Thaeley gained limelight. Minimalist and sustainability-based patchworked collections appealed to a general public, and the waste bins idea made Tula stand out; sneakers made from recycled plastic bottles were something that the youth enjoyed. They said-

“Fashion is actually one of the largest polluters in the world, and we need to address this and that right now. Every design decision matters and we truly believe that.”

The name ‘Abraham & Thakore’ has successfully implemented sustainability into its practicality with a range developed from recycled PET bottles.

As one of the designs, patchwork, applique and the Kantha embroidery, were used and integrated in the design with traditional recycling form. Apart from giving the foundation of

the collection, these techniques also dictate the prints and patterns, generating a distinct design story.

Abraham & Thakore’s Spring Summer 25, ‘Finding Beauty’ is a collection of occasion wear from materials such as cassettes tapes, chip wrappers, X-Ray films etc with a touch of creativity and minimalism.

“Fashion can play a powerful role in communicating our views. Rather than describing our approach purely as sustainable, we prefer the terms ‘responsible or ‘mindful’ fashion”- they said to Grazia.co.in

Mahima Gujral’s fashion brand, Sui, focuses on sustainable clothing by using eco-friendly materials like hemp and organic cotton, certified by the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS).

“Our theory is simple: we produce in house and make clothes that are ethical, wearable and chic, using earth-friendly fabrics and dyes.”

Collaborating with the NGO Women Weave, Sui empowers women to create handspun fabrics without electricity, promoting energy-efficient practices. Sui’s in-house team,

called “threadspellers,” crafts ethical, stylish, and wearable clothing.

“We have a minimal plastic policy and upcycle fabric scraps and deadstock fabrics into accessories”.

Famous fashion designer Manish Malhotra spoke about the importance of sustainable fashion in a conversation about his 2024 collection and said-

“I have always thought that luxury lies in craftsmanship and sustainability. There is a good shift towards mindful consumption, and we must adapt to it.”

The Revival of Traditional Craftsmanship: An ode to Heritage

One of the most overpowering trends in 2024 was the re-development of Indian craftsmanship, an honour to the country’s rich heritage. From Kanjivaram silks and Chikan embroidery to Bandhani and Banarasi weaves, all were given a modern stance by some prominent designers.

Sabyasachi Mukherjee, openly acknowledged the necessity of Indian craftsmanship, he said, “2024 was a rediscovery for Indian Textiles. I have always been passionate about preserving the crafts of India. This year I witnessed that people are turning to what is truly ours, the world is looking at India for artistry, intricacy and the soul embedded in it. It is a testament that Indian heritage will always remain relevant.”

Sabyasachi’s haute couture collections exhibited splendid Zardosi work, intricate hand woven silks and traditional motifs representing India’s heritage.

Major Fashion Events of 2024

FDCI India Couture Week

The Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) conducted the 17th edition of India couture week in 2024. It was held from July 24-31 at Taj Palace and The Ashok, New Delhi. The event celebrates the textile heritage of the Indian fashion industry. 14 esteemed fashion designers were



featured in the event, a combination of contemporary aesthetics and traditional craftsmanship was the key element.

Suni Sethi, Chairman of FDCI gave a statement that, “Indian Couture Week is more than a fashion event; it is a celebration of our culture and homage to the artisans who bring their vision to life.”

Many famous celebrities like Vicky Kaushal, Shobita Dhulipala, Sonakshi Sinha, Malaika Arora, etc participated as show-stoppers in the event. Siddharth Tyler’s Caligula’s Feast was the eye-grabbing collection, it was inspired by Caligula, the Roman Emperor, famous for his luxurious and sybaritic living styles.

Tarun Tehlani’s collection brought the element of Grecian influences to reality. It included corseted bodices and fluid drapes. He re-staged the entire show because of the seating mishap and said, “It was respecting the people who came to see the work.”

Rimzim Dadu’s collection was an ethereal use of unconventional materials such as metallic weaves and organized pleats to craft the design.

It was the perfect collaboration of art and fashion, “I want to push boundaries, to prove that couture is about tradition as well as innovation.” Rimzin said.

Even small scale fashion brands made an impact this year. Independent fashion houses focused on unique designs and artisanal craftsmanship along with lower prices and good quality products. Many of them have started opting for eco-friendly methods and made a small scale label in the market.

Some of the small scale events all over India were:

Rajasthan Heritage Week

Location- Jaipur

The collection was a blend of contemporary fashion and traditional crafts like handloom from the rich culture of Rajasthan.

Blender Pride Fashion Annual Tour

Location- Multiple cities
 The event had high fashion brands featuring renowned Indian fashion designers with celebrities, music and entertainment.

India Bridal Fashion Week

Location- New Delhi and Mumbai

The event focused on bridal couture and featured Indian designers like Tarun Tahiliani and Anita Dongre.

Textile India

Location- Gandhinagar, Gujarat

The event was organised by the Government of India in order to support Indian Textile Industry, promote Indian artisans and promote weavers and textile based Designers.

While taking an interview with Aditi Parashar at Artisan Market at Lokaya art by Spotlight Events. The event is a hub for affordable fashion clothing and reflects creativity through their unique designs. The eco-friendly market has not only made an impact in the fashion industry but has also contributed



Sabyasachi’s Sustainable Bridal Collection 2024 | Source : Manifest Magazine

to saving the environment by reducing wastage.

What was the inspiration behind the collection? Does any specific theme, culture or personal experience influence your designs?

“The inspiration for all my collections comes from the simplicity of life. Just like life never stops for anyone, my collection is always evolving. Every piece in this collection reflects my personality—colourful and quirky. I’ve worked on multiple different pieces to showcase my different sides and interests. My goal is to make the art stand out in the design.”

What is your approach while selecting the material for your collection? How do you incorporate sustainability into your design process?

“ADT is a zero-waste brand that uses surplus fabrics, which is essentially factory waste from other companies. To ensure our process is zero waste, we start with bigger products like shirts. After making the shirts, we sort the leftover fabric into two piles: one for larger pieces and one for tiny pieces. The larger pieces are used to create hoop art, bags, and other items, while the smaller pieces are transformed into our Katran Diaries by quilting them into a new fabric. Since, we use surplus fabric; our each and every product is unique and one-of-a-kind. This not only makes our brand eco-friendly but also ensures that our customers get something truly special.”

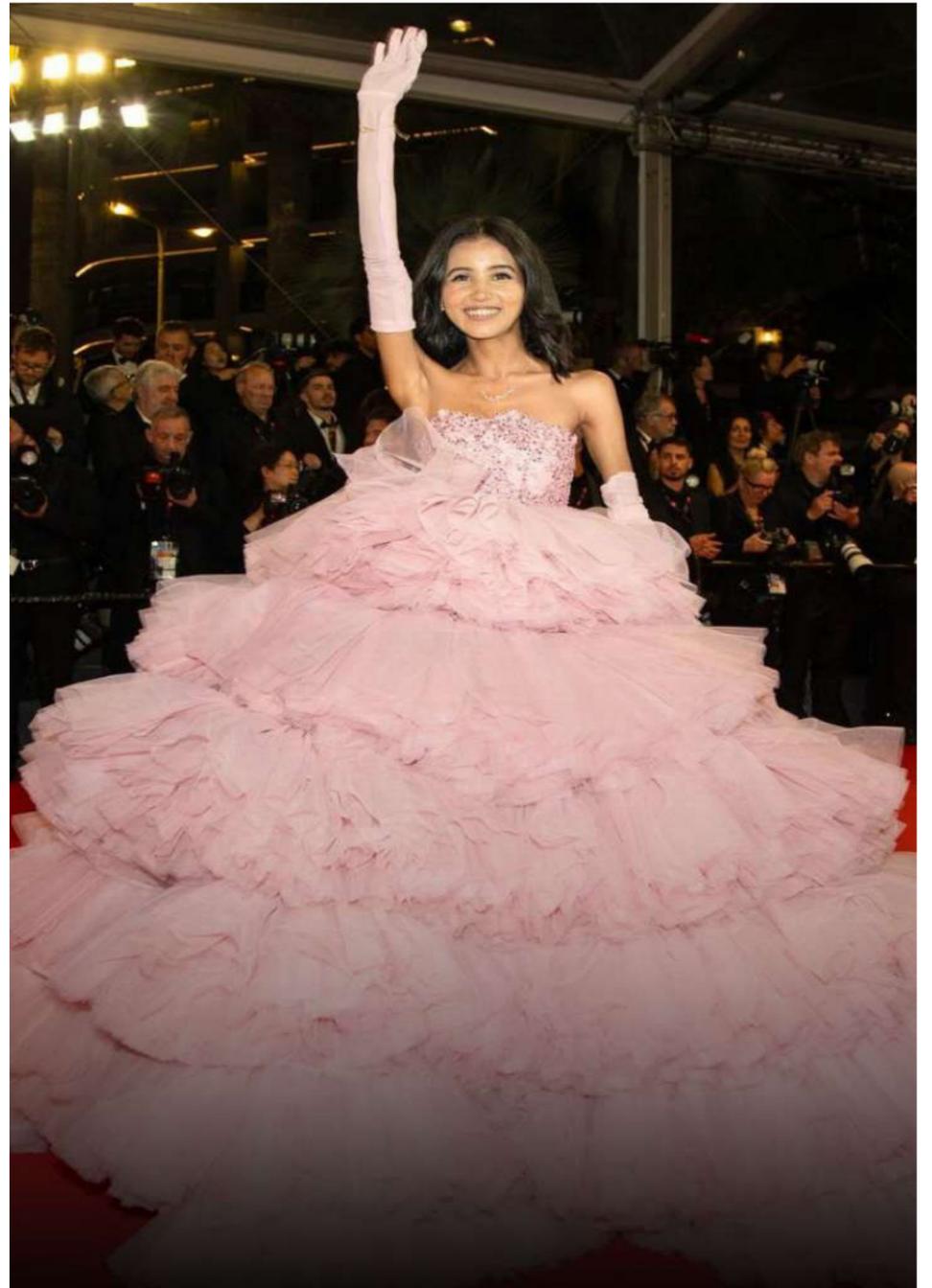
How does this year’s collection reflect your vision for the future of fashion, and what can we expect next from you?

“Putting up my collection at the artisans market was an amazing experience. It gave me a great platform to interact with people who were genuinely interested in my products. Seeing the surprise on their faces when they learned about the Katran Diaries was truly rewarding. My vision is to continue working towards sustainability and take it to a bigger level. I want to create a company with a pure intention of sustainability, with complete trans-

parency for all my customers.”

In 2024, the Indian fashion industry converged on making sustainability the pillar of fashion business by preserving culture and building technology. There are no longer only decisions about how fashion is made, but what it is doing for the environment and society. The famous designer, Manish Malhotra pointed out, Sustainability as a crucial factor. “Being a senior designer and a brand, it is crucial to adopt the values that are necessary for creating such a product, that are backed by technology, sustainability, and empowerment. These principles are essential when seeking growth, whether as an individual or as a business and as we seek to integrate them into our operations it is vital to remember this.”

As we step into 2025, Indian fashion is set to step on the world stage with its emphasis on ethnic influence and innovative changes, affirmative action, and looking forward to sustainable fashion.



Nancy Tyagi in her self-stitched dress for Cannes Film Festival 2024; Source: herzindagi



Lakme Fashion Week X FDCI 2024; Source: mid-day

A Year of Glamour and Grace: Highlights From Entertainment and Lifestyle World

India's Entertainment and Lifestyle Boom: From Blockbusters to Fashion and Wellness

By Shweta Jena &
 Vidhi Thacker

The year 2024 was filled with some major events around the globe, from world elections to milestones in sports and space. India witnessed its share of massive changes in all the major fields from politics to sports, and the arena of entertainment and lifestyle was no different. From hosting the biggest concerts of the year, producing award-winning movies and blockbuster sequels to establishing itself as a culinary genius, India raised the bar on the global platform. Listed down are some major events that impacted and moulded 2024 for India.

The Indian Film Industry kick-started its year with a box-office success named *'Kalki 2898 AD'* in June, directed by Nag Ashwin and starring superstars like Prabhas, Deepika Padukone and Amitabh Bachchan. Set in the year 2898 AD in a post-apocalyptic world, it follows a chosen group on a mission to protect lab subject SUM-80's unborn child, Kalki. As per IMDb, the budget of the movie was Rs 550 crore while globally it earned a gross of 1052 crore, making it a blockbuster hit, setting multiple records by being the second-highest grossing Indian film of 2024 and fourth-highest grossing Telugu film. The second half of the year witnessed another blockbuster and a megahit at the box office with the theatrical release of *'Pushpa 2: The Rule'*, a sequel to 'Pushpa: The Rise' (2021). The movie directed by Sukumar and starring superstar Allu Arjun tops the list of blockbusters in 2024 with a gross of 1800 crore globally till now, the first-highest-grossing Indian film. Apart from these super-hits, the film industry expanded its genre stepping into the world of horror comedies. It explored and experimented, making two box office hits with 'Stree 2' and 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3'.

Stree 2 released on August 15, directed by Amar Kaushik, starring superstars such as Rajkummar Rao and Shraddha Kapoor is a sequel to 'Stree' and continues the story of the haunted town of Chanderi, which now is under another spirit that abducts women mysteriously. A Rs 100 crore budget film achieved a worldwide gross of Rs 858 crore and a domestic collection of Rs 605.8 crore as per the IMDb, declaring an all-time blockbuster and emerging



Source: Telegraphindia

as the third-highest grossing Indian film along with the highest-grossing Hindi film of 2024. Following behind was another hit from this genre i.e. *'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3'* released on 1st November as an addition to the Bhool Bhulaiyaa series of movies. The movie was directed by Aneez Bazmee and starred Kartik Aaryan, Vidya Balan, Madhuri Dixit, and Tripti Dimri with a budget of Rs 150 crore. It became a box office success with a collection of Rs 423.85 crore, taking the tag of the second-highest-grossing Hindi Film and the sixth-highest-grossing Indian Film of 2024. The third sequel strayed away from the first two movies and changed the storyline providing a twist to the audience which gained it a huge success in the industry.

Another major turn that the industry witnessed was in movies like *All We Imagine As Light*, *Girls Will Be Girls*, and *Laapataa Ladies*

which threw light on the deep-rooted atrocities of Indian society and the day-to-day lives of middle-class people. These movies with their strong storytelling powers and women at the center of the discussion left imprints in the minds of the audience allowing them some food for thought.

'All We Imagine As Light' released on 21st September 2024, written and directed by Payal Kapadia, starring Kani Kusruti, Divya Prabha, Chhaya Kadam, and Hridhu Haroon and was the first Indian film to compete in the Cannes Film Festival since 'Swaham' 1994 and won the Grand Prix. It explored and celebrated the lives and texture of contemporary working-class of Mumbai, securing a position in the top five international films of 2024 by the National Board of Review and receiving two nominations for Best Foreign Language Film and Best Director at the Golden Globe Awards 2024.

Second in line comes another film moving against the tide named *'Girls Will Be Girls'* directed by Shuchi Talati. This coming-of-age story revolving around a rocky relationship between a daughter and a mother won the Sundance Film Festival 2024 as the Audience Award in the World Cinema Dramatic category and the Special Jury Award for Acting. Lastly, the 2024 theatrical release *'Laapataa Ladies'* of Kiran Rao, which made its way to Oscar Academy Awards selections for 2025. It won Best Film (Critics Choice) at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne and was India's entry for Best International Feature Film at the 2025 Oscars.

One of the biggest live entertainment events that attracted the masses from all over the country in 2024 India were the concerts. Last year encountered some of the biggest concert events around the globe in India from *Ed Sheeran* to *Maroon 5*, the country's music scene took a different turn altogether. Some remarkable performances included *Ed Sheeran*, *Jonas Brothers*, *Dua Lipa*, and *Maroon 5* who attracted major young audiences conducting over 30,000 live events over the year, as per BookMyShow's year-end report. Zomato Live, the food delivery company noted India becoming a hotspot for International Music tours due to its promising fanbase and growing economy. Both domestic and international artists did tours in Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities with *Diljit Dosanjh*, and *Shreya Ghoshal* leading the way. The growth and popularity of live concerts last year promised a huge market and stage for future concerts both by international and domestic artists, as can be seen with 2025 kick-starting with *Alan Walker's* concert.

With the milestones that India achieved in the entertainment industry last year, the country also lost some of its outstanding artists such as musicians *Ustad Zakir Hussain* and *Ustad Rashid Khan*, singer *Pankaj Udhas* and filmmaker *Shyam Benegal*. These artists made major hits, contributing valuable works to the industry.

In 2024, the Indian lifestyle was shaped by important events that combined fashion, luxury, travel, and wellness. Here are the main trends and events that defined this year's story.

Starting with fashion, where Indian designers made bold strides this

year, which left an undeniable mark on global fashion. Indian fashion designers like *Gaurav Gupta*, *Manish Malhotra*, and *Sabyasachi Mukherjee* made a significant mark by dressing up some of the biggest names in not only Bollywood but also Hollywood. *The Kardashians*, known for their reality shows worldwide, were seen wearing saree and Indian ensembles created by Manish Malhotra and Tarun Tahiliani for the grand Ambani Wedding in July.

In major global events like *Mekala*, *the Oscars* or *the Grammy*, Indian designers are easily noticeable on celebrities. Malhotra told PTI that he believes it to be a natural progression that global celebrities are turning to Indian designers because of “a growing appreciation for the rich tapestry of Indian fashion and craftsmanship”.

Lakmé Fashion Week x FDCI was held twice this year with the Summer-Resort show in Mumbai and the Winter-Festive in Delhi. It introduced collections blending tradition with innovation. This year, the spotlight was firmly on sustainable fashion, with designers focusing on eco-friendly fabrics and artisanal techniques. It featured a blend of established designers and emerging talents, presenting collections that highlighted India’s evolving fashion landscape.

In 2024, India hosted a multitude of literary festivals that attract like-minded people in a hub that creates a space for crowds to interact and

exchange ideas. A few of these major literary festivals were the “*Valley of Words*” in Dehradun, *The Bangalore Literature Festival*, *The Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival*, *The Kerala Literature Festival* and many more.

India’s literary contribution gained recognition by being included in the 2024 memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific regional register. Three significant Indian literary pieces, the *Ramcharitmanas*, *Panchatantra*, and *Sahridayāloka-Lo-cana* were made part of this. It was announced during the general meeting of the committee which was held in May.

The Indian food scene in 2024 made a significant impact in the global culinary world, acquiring international recognition. India’s journey in 2024 captured tastebuds worldwide, which established India as a culinary powerhouse. One of the most anticipated annual lists, ‘The world’s 50 best restaurants,’ featured *Gaggan* in Bangkok by Gaggan Anand at number 9 and *Tresind Studio* in Dubai, by Himanshu Saini, at 13, modern Indian cuisine to the world. Further, the extended 51 to hundred list showcases two more Indian restaurants, *Masque* in Mumbai at 78, and *Indian Accent* at 89.

The newly launched *Annapurna Certificate*, established by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), is designed for International Indian restaurants that promote authentic Indian cuisine and

culinary practices. This certificate recognises their important role in introducing Indian cuisine to international communities and promoting cultural exchange. This award will be focused towards smaller and local joints that haven’t received much attention from Michelin. That being said, a lot of Indian Restaurants have been receiving Michelin stars, like the *Jamavar Doha* and the *Musaafer*.

Vikas Khanna’s bungalow is one of the most talked about restaurant openings of the year by an Indian celebrity chef. The restaurant gained quick popularity because of its concept and design, which is based on the regional flavours of India. The restaurant was awarded the coveted Michelin Bib Gourmand award.

Indian whiskey has also been gaining popularity in the global scene and Indri, which is a renowned single malt whiskey, secured the title of best “*New World*” Whiskey by VinePair. It got over 14 international awards and established India’s rising popularity in the global whiskey market.

India’s tourism sector celebrated significant achievements in 2024, establishing a strong presence in the global tourism scene. Inauguration of government campaigns, such as, “*Chalo India*” and the launch of the first Sunken Museum at Humayun’s tomb complex in Delhi, were the highlights of this sector in 2024. “*Chalo India*” is a global campaign



Source: Uplash

that aims to make diaspora members ambassadors of Incredible India and encourage them to invite five of their friends to travel to India. The government also gave a major push to spiritual tourism through the 2024 union budget by allocating funds to several temples and temple corridors.

Prominent trends in the health sector in 2024 were mostly focused on the narrative of self-care. Some of the major trends in 2024 were around elderly care, skin care, a rise in weight loss medicine, and a rise in non-alcoholic fatty liver diseases in the younger generation. The major health issues faced by the elderly are bone health, heart diseases and brain diseases. Age is one of the biggest factors in these. Fitness enthusiasts embraced hybrid workouts that blend traditional practices with modern technologies like virtual classes and wearables. Mental health awareness grew, with retreats providing stress management and mindfulness programmes. Organic food markets and plant-based diets surged in popularity among health-conscious individuals.

Last year was a transformative year for India’s entertainment and lifestyle industry, solidifying the country’s position on the global stage. From record-breaking blockbusters and groundbreaking films challenging social structures to the growing prominence of Indian designers at International Fashion events, India showcased its culture and creative brilliance. The rising live concerts and culinary achievements highlighted the country’s dynamic lifestyle landscape.

The *Annapurna Certificate* and campaigns like ‘*Chalo India*’ reflect the growing global interest in Indian cuisine, culture, and tourism. At the same time wellness and sustainability took the middle stage, shaping India’s approach to health-care, fashion, and self-care. As we step into a new year, India’s entertainment and lifestyle industries will thrive more combining tradition and innovation, setting a benchmark of excellence for others to look up to.



Source: Mediaindia

Concert Craze in India: From Global Tours to Economic Growth in 2024



Source: Istock

By Shubhangi Chauhan

In recent years, live music has become one of the most popular industries in the whole world which is redesigning the economy of India. For the year 2024 alone, many international and domestic artists started their tours and put India on the world map of live music. From Coldplay with the Music of the Spheres World Tour 2025, to Diljit Dosanjh with Dil-Luminati Tour 2024, concerts are a form of entertainment but also promote and support big businesses.

As reported by the Economic Times, Nitin Menon, Managing Partner of NV Capital, Media and Entertainment Debt Fund, stated, “Music concerts post-Covid have been a rage, and this trend started especially after the Eras tour by Taylor Swift, which is believed to have grossed \$2 billion in revenues.”

The trend is slowly gaining momentum in India and can be seen in Diljit Dosanjh’s tour as, all his shows were full. Coldplay’s concert which is to be conducted in January is another example of popularity and virality; some tickets in the grey market were selling for lakhs.

A report by the Bank of Baroda (BoB), titled “Concert-ed Push for the Economy,” drew relations to, how concerts have led to creation of what

has come to be known as ‘experience economy’ in India, it has boosted private consumption, employment generation and tax collection. Based on the three months, the concert earned 71,600-2,000 crore which in annual year expected ₹6,000-8,000 crore.

India’s Live Music-Boom

After the outbreak of the covid 19 pandemic, India has seen a steep incline in the live music concerts which is mainly attributed to the rise in disposable income and a younger audience that wants to be experience seekers. Indian fans can see international artists such as Dua Lipa (Feeding India Concert 2024), Green Day (Lollapalooza India 2024), Bryan Adams (So Happy It Hurts Tour 2024) & AP Dhillon (The Brown Print India Tour 2024). At the same time, domestic artists like Prateek Kuhad (Silhouettes Tour 2024) & Karan Aulja have filled this niche market.

India has grown in the live event business across the world. The country now sits at seventh place in generating revenue from live events, displacing South Korea, France and Australia.

First of all, consumer demand for such live music concerts is consistent with the overall trend identified as ‘premiumization,’ when consumers are willing

to pay more for high-quality services.

Economic Impact of Concerts

Ticket Sales

Tickets have the biggest revenue share, said to be ranging between 750 crore to 950 crores. Ticketing to the concerts are done at various prices to suit a number of market segments. But the rising demand has brought challenges such as ‘ticket scalping’ when retailers raise prices leading to fans’ frustration and anger.

Business tycoon Harsh Goenka focused on the situation, pointing out the societal shifts these trends reveal. He told Times of India, “Urban Indians are clearly shifting from Roti, Kapda, Makaan to a Zindagi Na Milegi Dohara lifestyle. Coldplay’s January 2025 shows sold out swiftly, with resale prices hitting 5x the original.

Diljit’s concert tickets, priced at Rs 7,000, also saw massive sales, along with Dua Lipa and Bryan Adams’ concerts.” Goenka’s observation depicted that the priorities have been shifted, suggesting that today’s growing urban Indian is more concerned about global entertainment and luxury.

Hospitality and Transportation

Music concerts are helpful in developing the hospitality and travel indus-

tries, and have added 400-500 crore. This gives an opportunity to hotels, airline companies and car fare services since fans are required to spend a lot of money on transport to cross states and arrive at the event venue. This has been especially apparent in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities because concerts attract people who travel from nearby regions.

“Music tourism is a key pivot in our tourism strategy. What is equally encouraging is the emerging demand from our powerful corporate MICE segments – with incentive trips being planned around music performances – be it a Diljit Dosanjh or an Arijit Singh or a Karan Aujla concert”, said Rajeev Kale, president and country head for holidays, Meetings, Incentives, Conference, and Exhibitions (MICE) and visa at Thomas Cook (India). He told Economic Times that as India’s music programme in the subsequent months continues, a constant rise in the tempo of music-led travel experiences can be seen.

Food and Beverages

Concerts are a major factor of revenue for the Food & Beverage industry in India. People engage in food and beverages and spend from ₹140-180 crores in revenue.

There is high traffic in restaurants, food stalls and on-site food vendors for the crowd.

The concert rule of not bringing any food and water inside makes more people buy from the stalls inside. With the restaurants being overpacked, food stalls and on-site food vendors are in high demand in the crowd. The demand for catering services to provide food and beverages for backstage crew members, artists, and VIP guests also adds up to the industry growth. Local businesses get benefits from high traffic before and after concerts.



Source: Netsurf

Sponsorships and Merchandise

Sponsors are the next big source of fund inflows estimated at ₹250-300 crore, Local and global brands also want to establish their connection with the popular events. Besides, merchandise sales and products like artist's merchandise or branded t-shirts, caps and souvenirs gross ₹45-60 crore.

Job Creation and Gig Economy

Concert industry has given rise to many job opportunities especially in the freelance market segment. Immediately, it can be seen that event managers, security, caterers, and those helping at the event can all benefit from the system. Other activities that are implemented in concert include stage setting and delivery services which also surge by these seasons.

Multiplier Effects Across Industries

The concert's economy points out that this is not the only area where money is spent. Businesses like restaurants, bars, hotels, and cafes near such facilities indicate big sales on event days. Airlines along with Ola, Uber and other mobility solutions report a rise in bookings and revenue. Besides, there is a boost in local tourism since fans visit other attractions within the course of the journey.

Dipanwita Mazumdar and Jahnvi Prabhakar, Economists at Bank of Baroda pointed out that the economic impact of live concerts is larger than we think. This influences consumption across sectors like food, beverages, textile, transportation etc., which are all engines for the growth of India's economy.

Challenges Faced by the Concert Industry in 2024

India's concert industry has faced challenges, despite its triumphs that could hinder its growth.

Ticket Scalping

The issue has become rampant, where ticketing companies sell large number of tickets and sell the same tickets for high prices. The BoB report assumes scalping accounts for 1,000 - 1,200 crores in addition to the concert economy but causes inconvenience to the fans who are forced to pay in such higher prices.

The confusion of ticketing for Coldplay concerts in India has overshadowed the record breaking alarm for any concert ever held in India. Karan Beda, CEO of 'Escape' (agency in Nagpur) stated, "Some 15 million consumers visited bookmyshow and 2 lakh of them were able to log in for Coldplay concert tickets." He further added, that India is just not ready for, say, a Taylor Swift concert which would be presumably bigger than Coldplay."

Infrastructure Limitations



Source: Business today

Like many venues across India, most locations provide insufficient sponsorship support for major international concerts. Some of the things that people dislike are poor crowd control, lack of adequate parking space and long lines. The expansion of these facilities is important for the continuation of the live concert revolution.

On December 14, Diljit Dosanjh during his Chandigarh concert announced how he, "will no longer perform in the city until infrastructure improves". Dosanjh also said the next time he plans for a concert, he will probably build a stage where the public is all around him and can have an engaging experience.

World Wide Focus

India has always been known to be a live music center, which is adding up additional cultural value. The ability to host international artists such as Akon (Shillong cherry blossom festival 2024)

and Cigarette After Sex (X's India tour 2024) makes it more galvanizing.

This trend also has a positive impact on local artists. The sold out stadium of Diljit Dosanjh and Peter Cat Recording Co. 's (Good Luck BETA 2024) tour explains how many Indian performers are performing along with the global performers.



Source: PTI

Ever since people are not afraid to spend additional amounts to get things that are exclusive such as VIP passes to simply meet their favorite stars. There is shift in consumers preferences with 82% increase in demand for such premium events. This trend towards premiumization is redefining the entertainment sector and boosting more economic activities.

Analysis of India's Future Concert Economy

The rage for live concerts is now evident in the Indian music scene, it isn't just an interesting shift in culture preferences but also a burgeoning business. This stretched to ₹1600-2000 crore in the three months that the industry had shown its potential of generating ₹6000-8000 crore per annum.



Source: Walkofftheplanet

However, it is very important to have solutions for problems such as ticket scalping and poor infrastructure to support this growth and improve to meet these standards, then India could place itself to become a world hub in live entertainment. Rohini Padiyar, an avid concert lover, pointed out the challenges faced by attendees during live music events. She stated, "The front area of the venue often becomes extremely overcrowded,

leading to situations where people feel sick, unable to move, and overly congested." She emphasized that, "The main issue lies with the stage setup. It should be designed in a way that allows everyone to feel engaged, regardless of where they are standing."

The increased number of access to international artist performances as well as the growth of local artists have made concerts a necessity in the experience economy. As more artists begin to consider India as a target market, the live concert business continues to expand, thus generating employment opportunities, increase in tourism, and inspiring higher private sector expenditure. It is important for India to manage its challenges to keep its concert economy a driving force into the foreseeable future.



Source: Economic times

The concert culture in India is set to expand further. Entrepreneurs are focusing on enhancing fan experiences, streamlining events, improving sanitation and infrastructure. By overcoming challenges the future of India's live music industry looks brighter and more inclusive and transformative than before. Recently when singer Diljit Dosanjh met Prime Minister Modi, discussed the possibility of hosting music festivals in India that would revolutionise the global music festivals surpassing international events like Coachella. India's rich musical heritage and growing popularity among global artists are driving this growth. Concerts are not just an industry, but a celebration of culture and connecting people.



Source: Masala

Remembering Legends We Lost in 2024

By Shreyanka Nandan & Sucheta Roy

Ratan Tata

(28 December 1937-9 October 2024): Ratan Tata was one of the veteran industrialists of India, who served as the chairman of the TATA Group. His contribution in different sectors, from technology to engineering is highly appreciated. Under his leadership, the TATA Group has witnessed its immense expansion all over the world. Apart from his successful ventures with the TATA Group, he was a man with great humanity. He was honoured with the Padma Bhushan (2000) and the Padma Vibhushan (2008) awards for his magnificent contribution.

Ratan Tata was born in the Province of Bombay in British India. He was the son of Naval Tata, who was adopted by Ratanji Tata, son of Jamsheedji Tata, the founder of the TATA Group. He completed his bachelor's degree in architecture from Cornell University College of Architecture. He did his advanced management program from Harvard Business School (HBS) in 1975 and joined the TATA Group in 1962. Throughout his life, Tata invested in over 40 startups primarily with personal capacity, in additional investments through his firm, RNT Capital Advisors. In an interview conducted by NDTV, Ratan Tata said, "I don't believe in work-life balance. I believe in work-life integration. Make your work and life meaningful and fulfilling, and they will complement each other."



Manmohan Singh

(26 September 1932-26 Dec 2024) Manmohan Singh was an Indian politician, economist, academic and a bureaucrat who served as the 13th Prime Minister of India (2004-2014). He was a member of the Indian National Congress, and was the first Sikh prime minister of India. He was also chosen to serve as the finance minister. He was the architect of economic reforms in 1991 that changed the course of India's economic trajectory. Singh was born in Gah, in present day Pakistan. His family migrated to India during partition in 1947. After securing doctorate in economics from the University of Oxford, he subsequently began his bureaucratic career. Lalit Narayan Mishra hired him as an advisor in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. During the 1970s and 1980s, he held several key roles in the Government of India, such as Chief Economic Advisor, Governor of Reserve Bank, and as of the Planning Commission. Singh officially resigned from his premiership on 17 May 2014 after the Bharatiya Janata Party won the election.

In 2024, India bid farewell to all of these personalities, who had acted as a pillar of strength in their own domain. Apart from mentioned ones, there are a lot of prominent people who have left behind their footprints through their works like Ameen Sayani, Narayanan Vaghul, Anshuman Gaekwad, A. G. Noorani, and many more. Their legacies will remind us of transformative power of human creativity and resilience and their absence will be deeply felt.



Ustad Zakir Hussain

(9 March 1951- 15 December 2024) Zakir Hussain Allarakha Qureshi was a tabla player, composer, percussionist, music producer and film actor. He was widely regarded as one of the greatest tabla players of all time. He is well known for bringing Indian classical music towards a global audience. He procured four Grammy Awards, the United States National Endowment for the Arts and National Heritage Fellowship award, which is the highest award given to traditional artists and musicians. Zakir Hussain was born on 9th March at Maharashtra, to tabla master Alla Rakha Qureshi. He completed his schooling from St. Michael's High School in Mahim and pursued graduation in St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. Zakir started performing in concerts from 7 years of age and began touring by the age of 12. He played on George Harrison's album "Living in the Material World" and John Handy's album "Hard Work" in 1973. He performed in Van Morrison's album "Into the Music and Earth, Wind & Fire's" in 1983. Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead invited him to create the special album Planet Drum, featuring drummers from different parts of the world. The first "Planet Drum" album was released in 1991 on the Rykodisc level, which went on to earn the Grammy Award for the Best World Music Album in 1992. He was recognized as 'The Guardian' of the tabla and The New York Times mentioned him as "blur of his fingers rivals the beast of a hummingbird's wings."



Ramoji Rao

(16 November 1936 – 8 June 2024) Ramoji Rao was the founder of Ramoji Group and the media mogul behind Eenadu and Ramoji Film City. His immense contributions to the media and entertainment industries in India has a huge impact. As the owner of one of India's largest media groups, Rao changed the way information and entertainment were consumed in the country. He was a pioneer in establishing regional media outlets, mostly through his Telugu-language newspaper Eenadu, which became one of the largest circulated newspapers in the country. Ramoji Film City, an enormous film studio complex in Hyderabad, became a hub, attracting filmmakers across India. The film city was not just a studio but a symbol of Rao's vision to make Hyderabad a global center for film production. Under his leadership, Ramoji Group expanded its reach into television, newspapers, film production, and hospitality, making it one of the most diversified media conglomerates in the country. Ramoji Rao's passing in 2024 was the end of an era in Indian media. His creative and innovative approach to journalism, entertainment, and business has transformed the media landscape, and his contributions will always be remembered.



**Buddhadeb
Bhattacharya**

(1 March 1944 – 8 August 2024)



Buddhadeb Bhattacharya was the former Chief Minister of West Bengal and an eminent leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). His political leadership played a very important role in the state for over three decades. Bhattacharya, was a man of intellect and conviction. He guided CPI(M) through a period of both significant achievements and controversies.

Bhattacharya's political career began with the student movement, where he was an active member of the All India Students Federation. His rise within the CPI(M) culminated in him becoming the Chief Minister of West Bengal in 2000, a position he held until 2011. During his tenure, Bhattacharya emphasized the importance of industrialization, land reforms, and rural development. His tenure was also marked by some significant political turbulence, particularly the violent protests in Singur and Nandigram, where attempts to acquire land for industrial development led to widespread public opposition.

Despite the controversies, Bhattacharya remained a steadfast advocate for the working class and the poor. Bhattacharya's contributions to the state's development and his unwavering commitment to his political ideals remain a key part of his legacy.

**Rashid
Khan**

(1 July 1968 – 9 January 2024)



In the month of January, we lost Hindustani Classical singer and Music Maestro Ustad Rashid Khan. After fighting with prostate cancer for over four years he passed away at the age of 55. He was a proponent of the Rampur-Sahaswan gayaki, a style of singing related to the Gwalior gharana. He was bestowed with the Padma Shri, Sangeet Natak Akademi and Padma Bhushan in 2022 by the Indian Government.

He was born on 1st July 1968 at Badaun, Uttar Pradesh. As a child he had interest in music and started his initial training from his maternal grand uncle, Ustad Nissar Hussain Khan. Uncle Ghulam Mustafa Khan was the first person to notice his talents and for some time he trained him in Mumbai. Later, when he turned 18 years of age, he started to enjoy his musical training.

Rashid Khan had his first concert when he was 11 years-old. In 1978, he got an opportunity to perform at an ITC concert in Delhi. In 1980, he joined the ITC Sangeet Research Academy (SRA) Calcutta and by 1994 he was formally acknowledged as a musician. Later, he was one of the scholar musicians' and was a part of the teaching faculty at SRA from 1994 to 1998 along with mainstream performance. In an interview conducted by Sansad TV 9 years ago, he was asked about his audience's most requested song, to which he replied "Yaad Piya Ki Ayi".

**Sitaram
Yechury**

(12 August 1952 - 12 September 2024)



Sitaram Yechury, the general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), passed away in 2024, leaving behind a legacy of intellectual rigor and leadership within the Indian Left. Known for his articulate speeches, sharp intellect, and unyielding political principles, Yechury was one of the most influential figures in Indian politics. His ideological stance on issues ranging from secularism and socialism to economic justice. Born in 1952 in West Bengal, Yechury joined the CPI(M) at an early age and quickly rose through the ranks. He became the party's general secretary in 2015, after the death of his predecessor Prakash Karat. As a leader, Yechury sought to modernize the party's approach to political and social issues, advocating for greater engagement with India's growing middle class and intellectuals. Under his leadership, the CPI(M) faced both electoral challenges and opportunities, with Yechury navigating the party through periods of political turbulence and a declining presence in Indian politics.

Yechury was instrumental in shaping the party's stance on several national issues, including its opposition to the rise of religious extremism, the push for greater democratic rights, and critique of neoliberal economic policies. He was a prolific writer and orator, often engaging in debates and discussions with other intellectuals and policymakers. His passing in 2024 marked the loss of a towering figure in Indian leftist politics.

**Natwar
Singh**

(16 May 1931 – 10 August 2024)



Natwar Singh was a former Indian diplomat and Minister of External Affairs. Known for his knowledge, diplomacy, and wit, Singh played a very important role in shaping India's foreign policy during the critical post-Cold War years. Born into an aristocratic family, he joined the Indian Foreign Service and went on to have a distinguished career in diplomacy, serving in countries such as the United States, the Soviet Union, and several Middle Eastern nations.

As India's External Affairs Minister from 2004 to 2005, Singh was instrumental in shaping the country's foreign policy at a time when India was redefining its global positioning. He was a strong advocate for strengthening ties with the United States, particularly in the aftermath of the nuclear deal between the two countries. His memoirs and writings have provided valuable insights into the complexities of international relations and India's role on the global stage.

Amongst other prominent faces that India lost last year include: **Manohar Joshi (2 December 1937–23 February 2024)**, who was the former CM of Maharashtra (1995 to 1999) and the Speaker of Lok Sabha (2002 to 2004). Ghazal maestro **Pankaj Udhas (17 May 1951–26 February 2024)**, known for his soothing voice, notable songs in films like Mohra, Saajan, Yeh Dillagi, Naam and Phir Teri Kahaani Yaad Aayee, and his music albums such as Stolen Moments, Tarrannum, Nasha, Ghoongat, Khayaal and so on.

PM Modi 3.0: Formidable Challenges in 2025



Ramesh Menon

The third term is not going to be an easy one for Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi. His path is strewn with numerous challenges and hurdles. He must overcome them to do well in the upcoming state elections and the national hustings in 2029.

One of the formidable ones would be to rein in the economy. For that, he must carry along his allies and the opposition as bold reforms would be required to ensure faster and more equitable growth. Reforms hurt and any political dispensation needs to have courage to take it in national interest.

GDP growth has slowed, and rating agencies have not painted a rosy picture. Due to its size, India will continue to grow and remain one of the fastest-growing economies, but that is hardly enough. The disparities between the rich and the poor are increasing, and the middle class is limping with the burden of taxes, taxes, and more taxes.

The coming budget must be bold regarding reforms; it must cut taxes to help the middle class save and then spend to boost the economy. Much rationalisation has to be done regarding GST in the tax structure.



The centre and the states are now bleeding financially due to the freebies political parties, including the BJP, offer to ride to power. Just the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, which has 800 million beneficiaries at a cost of over rupees two lakh crore, is drilling a hole in the union budget. There is no end to it, as there will be more freebies in the next election.

Taxes on health insurance and other entities that help commoners must be removed. Many taxpayers would not grudge about paying taxes if they saw that it was used to improve infrastructure and the quality of their lives. But increasingly, they are seeing it being frittered away. There are examples galore. One just has to look around to see the festering corruption in infra projects and other senseless

ideas with narrow political motives.

Then, there is a sluggish employment market with millions of educated youngsters not finding jobs. Employers are struggling to find enough skilled workers. They also complain about the poor output of India's colleges, as the education system is deeply flawed. Graduates do not have the knowledge bandwidth they are expected

to and many of them are actually unemployable. Modi cannot ignore education and skill development.

The centre and the states are now bleeding financially due to the freebies political parties, including the BJP, offer to ride to power. Just the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, which has 800 million beneficiaries at a cost of over rupees two lakh crore, is drilling a hole in the union budget. There is no end to it, as there will be more freebies in the next election. Modi needs to be brave enough to gauge the high costs incurred for such populist schemes just to win elections.

Modi will have to whip in agricultural reforms to effectively wean away farmers from grains, especially water-guzzling rice, to horticulture crops that can increase their incomes by adopting sustainable scientific methods.

India will have to forge new relationships and emerge as a soft power on the foreign relations front. It has to get world powers to stop China and Pakistan from creating new hurdles as it tries to march to the top of the world.

More than anything else, Modi needs to send a stern message that communalism will not be tolerated as it is fracturing the country. If there is no peace, there will be no foreign investor wanting to bet his money on India.

Ramesh Menon is an award-winning journalist, educator, documentary film-maker and corporate trainer. He is the author of 'Modi Demystified: The Making Of A Prime Minister'. He is based in Delhi.

Searching...

I am a woman born in India, to parents who are lost in the throes of poverty. I am a woman who has been denied education because my parents cannot afford to provide me with even two square meals a day. I am a woman who is bewildered by the world outside, the piercing eyes of the public, the groping hands that scare me to death. I am a woman who is scared to walk on empty roads, or late at night, because I see lustful eyes around me, vulgar descriptions of my body, and hate-filled spaces that scare me. I am plagued by nightmares that define my future, as a Dalit woman, as a woman from the lowest class in this society, as a woman who dares not to speak out, as a woman who will never be heard, as a woman who sees a bleak future that I dare

not even think about. I am a woman who sees the bright fireworks around me as the dawn of a new year is celebrated and I am too terrified to think of the days ahead. What is it that awaits me but more pain, more uncertainties, more panic and fear, more possibilities of violence against me? Who do I reach out for help? How do I live my life with dignity? How do I ask for compassion?

I am a Muslim man from India, born to parents, who live ordinary lives, as clerical assistants in a small private firm. My parents live in a small town and they used to be happy with their simple pleasures. Then



Dr. Swapna Gopinath

lives changed slowly, of course, they didn't know what was coming. Over the past decades, as I began to grow up, I realised that it was not easy being a Muslim in India. I saw that I was not welcome

in some conversations. I sensed an uneasy silence when some of my classmates were discussing religion. I heard my friends talk animatedly about Muslims as the other, the invader, the immigrant, the unwelcome guest who overstayed. I heard the fear and mistrust and realised that I am that other, I represent the unwelcome guest, I represent the population that deserves to leave the country. I real-

ise with a shudder that I can be a target for an angry mob, and I might be dehumanised and then classified as an illegal presence at any time. Who knows what awaits me in this secular socialist republic? Will this new year be the year of reclaiming the lost trust and compassion? Will it give me back my life of dignity and self-respect?

Dr. Swapna Gopinath is Professor of Film and Cultural Studies at Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication, Pune. A Fulbright fellow, she has an experience of 25 years in the Education Industry. Her areas of specialization are Culture Studies, Film Studies and Gender theories.

The AI revolution in marketing is here— Are You Ready to Lead?



Dr. Abhishek Roy

In today's data-driven world, artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming the engine that powers media management and marketing strategies. From Silicon Valley to Mumbai, it's crucial to understand how AI is transforming the landscape of media and marketing, both internationally and within India's diverse market.

AI-Powered Personalization and Content Creation

AI is revolutionizing content creation and enabling hyper-personalized experiences based on user behaviour and preferences. Tools like Jasper.ai accelerate content generation while ensuring brand consistency, even offering features like Jasper AI Image Suite for visual content. In India, where diverse languages and cultural nuances play a crucial role, AI-driven personalization helps brands connect more effectively with various

demographic segments, which allows marketers to create more engaging and relevant content faster, potentially leading to higher conversion rates and customer loyalty. Yet amidst this algorithmic renaissance, we must grapple with profound questions about privacy and transparency in AI usage policies.

AI in Social Media Marketing and Management

AI is transforming social media marketing by automating video production, generating ad creatives, and enhancing content scheduling. Tools like AdDog create high-quality videos featuring digital human avatars, optimized for platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, which is important for Indian businesses targeting these popular social media platforms. AdCreative.ai generates high-conversion ad creatives, texts, and headlines, potentially improving conversion rates significantly. For Indian marketers managing multiple social channels, AI-assisted tools like SocialPilot offer features such as bulk scheduling, task assignment, and automated reports. These advancements increase efficiency, improve ad performance, and help maintain a consistent presence

across multiple platforms. However, marketers must balance AI-generated content with authentic human creativity to maintain brand voice and emotional connections with audiences.

AI-Driven Analytics and Optimization

AI is revolutionizing analytics and optimization through predictive analytics and programmatic advertising. AI tools analyse historical data to predict future trends and consumer behaviour, allowing marketers to make data-driven decisions. This includes forecasting customer churn and implementing retention strategies, crucial in the competitive Indian market.

Programmatic advertising, exemplified by platforms like The Trade Desk, automates the buying and selling of ad space in real-time. In India, where digital advertising is rapidly growing, AI-driven programmatic advertising helps marketers reach target audiences more effectively and efficiently. These advancements enable marketers to allocate budgets more effectively, improve ROI, and make faster, more informed decisions.

AI is not just a futuristic concept but a present reality reshaping



ing media management and marketing landscapes worldwide. For Indian businesses, embracing these AI-driven trends offers immense potential to compete globally while addressing unique local market needs.

As we move forward, marketers must continuously educate themselves about AI advancements and thoughtfully integrate these technologies into their strategies. By doing so, they can harness AI's power to create more meaningful, impactful, and culturally relevant marketing experiences. Hence, the true masters of this new landscape will be those who can interpret AI's insights through the prism of human experience and strategic thinking.

Dr. Abhishek Roy, who teaches at SIMC Pune, has an expertise in digital marketing, filmmaking, and mass communication, combining research, teaching, and creative skills.

Looking Ahead: Branding trends in 2025

The key branding trends for 2025 which have evolved to keep pace with the changing consumer attitudes and expectations, unfold an accent towards being authentic and straightforward while capitalising on technology and the opportunities that digital spaces offer.

The aesthetics of colour

Brands will indulge in tones of tempting, velvety chocolate and enticing coffee to keep the mood warm and comforting for its consumers. The American-based Pantone Color Institute, recognised globally for its colour expertise, has selected Mocha Mousse, pronounced moh-kaa moos, as its shade for 2025. (PANTONE 17-1230 MOCHA MOUSSE).

The warm, rich hue of coffee and delicious melting chocolate will be the colour most brands across the globe will cherry-pick for their communication, product design, and new offerings, from fashion, clothing and accessories, make-up, mobile phones, ear pods, paints to furniture. The shades from this colour palette are believed to translate to better mood enhancement and

sophistication for luxury brands and an earthy, raw feel for popular brands.

Interior designers and fashion experts welcome this tint and claim that the versatility and texture of these warm tones give them plenty

of creative options to select from the chocolate brown palette for their line of work. The hue of Mocha mousse also visualises the minimalist, soft, clean feel in terms of aesthetics to give an understated, elegant finish. Emotions and feelings associated with the colour include indulgence, comfort, pleasure, and warmth.

Going minimal

Minimalist branding will dominate amidst the clutter and digital noise in the branding landscape. The trending brand theme will be a clean, monochromatic, simple design and straightforward communication. It will break through the commercial clutter and focus on navigating the consumer away from the chaos, giving them a calm brand experience and leading them to



Dr. Sudha Venkataswamy

intentional, mindful purchases that offer value. Authenticity and direct storytelling with simple vocabulary instead of polished narratives will be at the forefront of brand communication since consumers increasingly want genuine connections and authentic experiences.

Sustainability route

Integrating sustainability as a core brand value continues into 2025 to gain consumer trust and build strong relationships with eco-friendly and socially-conscious brands, leading the way for others. Staying natural continues through 2025, with more brands jumping onto the 'going green eco-friendly' brand wagon, not just in external aspects like packaging and colour but also including these concepts in the brand's core, essence, and identity. The spotlight for retail brands will be on sustainability and ethical branding, which will be reflected in minimalist showroom design using natural materi-

als, visual merchandising and display.

Consumers as influencer

Inclusive branding, with a community-focused approach and consumer engagement, will be a significant shift in 2025, with consumers included in the brand story. This was practised to some extent by small brands in 2024. Still, this trend is expected to rise with leading brands listening to the consumer, making them part of the brand journey, and sharing their brand experiences across categories in the brand spectrum. Nevertheless, technological advancements steering AI-enhanced brand interfaces, immersive brand experiences with VR and AR, voice search optimization, and voice branding will be the essential and indispensable trends that shape the brands and influence consumer behaviour in 2025, besides brand shifts towards being global yet hyper-local.

Dr Sudha Venkataswamy has an experience of 30 years in academia, research and consulting. She is currently a Professor at Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication, Pune.

Cinema 2025: Can Horror Comedies, Sequels, Akshay Kumar save Bollywood from Crisis?



Shambhu Sahu

To look ahead, sometimes you have to look back. For, in the past lies the clue for the future. The year 2024 saw the worsening of the 'content crisis' in the Hindi film industry (HiFi, for short) which has been plaguing it for the past couple of years. Not only were their hits fewer in number, but there were fewer films that made it to the theatre. Filmmakers like Karan Johar and Vikramaditya Motwane acknowledged this content crisis in HiFi. Unlike 2023, there was no superstar (read Shah Rukh Khan) to save the industry last year. The biggest films of 2024 came towards the end of the year: 'Stree 2', netting about INR 875 cr globally, followed by 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3' and 'Singham Again'. There were attempts to "re-release" a few old films to cash in on nostalgia, but that too failed to rake in the moolah. In this context, the industry will hope to overcome the 'crisis of (good) content' and achieve better business this year. Here's a sneak peak at the trends for 2025:

Sequels Series:

Though it looks like a risk aversion tactic, sequels and universes are where Hindi filmmakers have put their best bets. The sequels that will hit the



big screen will include 'Dhadak 2' (but with a new star cast), 'Awara Pagal Dewana 2', 'Hera Pheri 3', 'Jolly LLB 3', 'Housefull 5', 'War 2', 'Baaghi 4', 'Son of Sardaar 2', 'Don 3: The Final Chapter', 'Kantara-A Legend: Chapter 1', and 'Metro... In Dino' (a sequel to 'Life in a... Metro'). Plus, there will be a new 'file' in Vivek Agnihotri's 'files-verse', 'The Delhi Files'.

Horror Comedies:

Given that HiFi likes formula films, the horror comedy genre will rule the box-office. Maddock Films has already announced its Horror Comedy Universe till 2028, including its two 2025 releases: 'Thama' and 'Shakti Shalini'.

Who is the Busiest Star of 2025?

Clearly, it's Akshay Kumar, who has as many as nine releases lined up this year, including (besides his sequels mentioned above) 'Sky Force', 'Welcome to the Jungle', 'The Untold Story of C Sankaran Nair', 'Gorkha', and 'Bhooth Bangla'. Next stars with

most films lined up are Sanjay Dutt (7); Ajay Devgn, Kiara Advani and Trisha Krishnan (5 each); Rashmika Mandanna and Suriya (4 each); Prabhas, Ram Charan and Ananya Pandey (3 each).

North-South Collaborations:

Not that these collaborations are new (Dilip Kumar era saw many such films), but the trend primed recently by SS Rajamouli's 'RRR' and Shah Rukh's 'Jawan' and will see a continuation with 'War 2', which stars Hrithik Roshan with N.T. Rama Rao Jr.; 'Sikandar', in which Tamil film director A.R. Murugadoss directs Salman Khan; and Malayalam film director Rosshan Andrews directs Shahid Kapoor in 'Deva'. Other 'collabs' include 'Thalapathy69' starring Joseph Vijay and Bobby Deol; Kiara Advani starring with 'K.G.F.' fame Yash in 'Toxic' and with Ram Charan in 'Game Changer'; Sanjay Dutt in Prabhas Star-rer 'The Raja Saab', etc. There are reports of the 'Jawan' director Atlee doing a film with Salman Khan in 2025.

Other Interesting Projects:

Vishal Bhardwaj will be back along with his 'Kaminey' star Shahid Kapoor in 'Arjun Ustara'; Vicky Kaushal with 'Chhaava' (based on Sambhaji Maharaj); and Kangana Ranaut with 'Emergency'. Sandhya Suri's cop drama 'Santosh', shortlisted for the Oscars as a UK entry, is also likely to hit the theatres.

Biggest Film Debuts:

A number of star kids will make their film debut this year, including Raveena Tandon's daughter Rasha Thadani in 'Azaad'; Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh's son Ibrahim in Dharmma Production's 'Sarzameen'; Sanjay Kapoor's daughter Shanaya Kapoor will make her debut with 'Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan' (instead of now-shelved 'Bedhadak'). The biggest of them all could be Amitabh Bachchan's grandson Agastya Nanda, who will be seen on the big screen for the first time in Sriram Raghavan's 'Ikkis'. He earlier made his 'screen debut', along with SRK's daughter Suhana Khan, in Zoya Akhtar's 'The Archies' which is long forgotten after its premiere on Netflix in December 2023. Could 'Ikkis' be the 'real' debut the Bachchans have been hoping for?

Shambhu Sahu teaches journalism at Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication, Pune. He has over 18 years of experience in print media, book publishing and higher education institutions.

Nurturing relationships – hopes for 2025



Josraj Arakkal

Life can be cluttered. And stressful. We are all chasing different things at different points in life. It can be chaotic. We ultimately seek peace of mind. Happiness is also a much desired state. At the same time, we can get easily hijacked with our worldly desires.

How do we keep ourselves

rooted and balanced? Many things come into play. Man is a social animal, an important pillar that can help us in this journey of building our relationships. How we manage our friends, family and social connections can play a crucial role. We need to invest in our relationships and it has become even more difficult with the omnipresence of social media.

So, how do we manage this better? Stay in touch with your old friends. Be the one taking the initiative, make that call, do not bring in your ego and expect the other person to take the effort. Remember, good friends are a boon. Keep them close.

Disconnect to connect! The

mobile phone can often be a villain. When you are in a gathering of family or friends, be in the moment fully. How often have we seen this at restaurants! Each of them at the table are on their phones, supposedly on a family night-out where they might have stayed home.

The Birthday Wish; the easiest way these days is to Whatsapp your wish on someone's birthday. In the case of families, we may just post the message in a group. Avoid doing this! Make the call or wish the person in person. I can count on one hand the friends who still take the time to make a call on my birthday. It's a simple yet a powerful gesture.

Make new friends, go out of your comfort zone. Every relationship is a window to new experiences. It's a gamble, a risk. Worth it though. Be the one making the move.

Misunderstanding can create havoc sometimes. Look beyond. Don't let one incident or your interpretation of it hamper a relationship that's run long. Here's wishing you all a strong, solid, and healthy relationship for 2025!

Josraj Arakkal has over 30 years of experience in strategic media planning and is currently a Professor of Practice at Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication, Pune.