

Telangana government to install solar power plants on temple lands

Hyderabad: To protect vast swathes of temple lands, the State government has come out with an initiative to set up solar power plants on these lands to generate green power. Sources say the State government was planning to set up solar plants in 252.39 acres of temple lands. In the first phase, solar plants would be set up in 231.05 acres in 5 districts — Siddipet, Medak, Nirmal, Nizamabad and Nalgonda. In the second phase solar plants will be constructed in 21.34 acres of temple lands spread over Hanamkonda and Mahabubabad districts. Solar plants would be set up in 9.06 acres of land of Sri Venugopalaswamy temple in Cheryala mandal of Siddipet district, 100 acres of Sri Lakshminarayana Swamy Temple in Medak district, 96.36 acres of Bimsa Shri Gosala in Nirmal district, and 9.10 acres of Jankampet village in Edapally Mandal of Nizamabad district. Similarly, solar plants would be set up in 15.33 acres of Lakshmi

Narasimha Swamy Devasthanam situated at Bijjalapuram village in Mothkur mandal of Nalgonda district. Self-help group women would be given the responsibility to implement the project and also to maintain it. The State government would also provide funds to SHGs to set up solar plants. The initiative would help the SHG women earn revenues through maintenance of the solar plants, officials said. Officials claimed that solar plants in temple lands would not only bring down power bills of the temples, but also help in saving them from encroachment. The move would also help temples in generating revenues through sale of excess power to Discoms through power grids, they added. Already, the government has initiated steps to ensure that temple lands are not registered in the name of individuals and even geo-tagging exercises has also been taken up by the Endowments Department. So far about 34,000 acres of temple lands have been



geo-tagged. District Collectors have been directed to initiate measures to reclaim the

encroached and alienated endowment lands.

Government-private partnership to boost tourism at Nagarjuna Sagar, Buddhavanam



Nalgonda: Excise and Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao on Friday announced that steps were being taken to develop star hotels and water sports facilities in and around Nagarjuna Sagar and Buddhavanam through a government-private partnership. Along with Kamlesh D. Patel (Daaji), the founder president of Ramachandra Mission, he inspected the surroundings of Buddhavanam at Nagarjuna Sagar. The inspection began with a review of the layouts of Buddhavanam and Vijay Vihar. The

Telangana Tourism Development Corporation MD, Prakash Reddy, and Buddhavanam consultant, Sivanagireddy, explained the unique features of Buddhavanam, which spans across 270 acres, to the minister and Daaji. Minister Jupally Krishna Rao emphasized that Buddhavanam attracts many Buddhists from various Asian countries, especially from Sri Lanka and other parts of Asia. He highlighted the necessity to provide adequate facilities and amenities for these visitors, which could further attract Buddhists from other countries as well.

TSRTC to arrange special buses for devotees to Shaivite shrines during Kartika masam

Hyderabad: Special buses were being arranged for the convenience of devotees to famous Shaivite shrines during the holy month of Kartika, announced Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) Managing Director, VC Sajjanar here on Saturday. These special buses will be run from Hyderabad to Srisailem, Vemulawada, Dharmapuri, Keesaragutta and other temples. At a high level review meeting on performance of RTC, operations and various schemes, Sajjanar directed the officials that the operations of Kartika month and Sabarimala are very important for RTC and they should take appropriate action to avoid inconvenience to the devotees.

On Sundays and Mondays, there will be more rush of devotees to Shaivakshetras, and accordingly, special buses should be made available. He said a special package is being offered to Arunachalam in Tamil Nadu on the occasion of Kartika Pournami on November 15 and buses will be run every Monday to Pancharamala in Andhra Pradesh. Advance reservation for these special buses should be done on the website tgsrtcbus.in. For more details, devotees can contact RTC call center numbers 040-69440000, 040-23450033. Sajjanar said that RTC bus fares have been reduced on rental basis. The cost of Village Light has been reduced by Rs.11 per kilometre, Express by Rs.7, Deluxe by Rs.8, Super Luxury by Rs.6 and Rajdhani by Rs.7, he



said advising to book RTC buses on rent for Sabarimala and auspicious occasions and reach the destinations safely.

Deadline for one time scheme to pay HMWSSB bills extended till November 30

Hyderabad: The deadline for OTS-2024 has been extended by the government till November 30. The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) citing huge demand from consumers for extension of the scheme has written to the government following which the decision to extend the scheme till November 30 was taken, a press release said. The HMWSSB has earned revenues of around Rs.49 crore till October 31 through OTS-2024 scheme and around 70,335 users have availed this scheme during this time.

Medicinal foods: A missing category on the regulator's plate

Nature's bounty has provided humans with a wide diversity of plants that we consume daily as food. In some Indigenous knowledge systems such as Ayurveda the same plants are also recognised as medicines. Throughout the 21st century, researchers discovered novel compounds and drugs from plants used in traditional medicine; today, the world is mining the same plants and knowledge base for wider health benefits. Sustainable, natural products are increasingly in demand as nutraceuticals: food ingredients with both nutritional and pharmaceutical benefits and which promote wellness. The authors of this article — from the University of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences and Technology (TDU), Bengaluru and the 'Plants for Health' team at the Royal Botanic Gardens in the U.K. — recently conducted a study funded by the British High Commission. We found that of the 7,564 medicinal species listed in 11 referenced sources, approximately a quarter (1,788) were documented as food as well as medicine. Safety of foods as medicine

Although centuries of traditional use provides empirical support for the use of plants for medicinal purposes, many and their derivatives can be found in the market today in new combinations, recipes, and applications that are far removed from their prior classical use. For instance, several herbs are available in the form of pills today, but in antiquity a physician may have recommended consuming them in the form of a decoction in warm water. While traditional use is generally safe as food, are these new avatars safe as medicines as well? How will plants be identified for potential nutraceutical benefits? And who will regulate the uses of a plant that is a food as well as a medicine? Consider turmeric, the staple spice of the Indian pantry. There is a rich store of information from traditional sources as to its therapeutic value and culinary use, and a large volume of scientific studies of both the whole rhizome as well as of one of its better known bioactives, curcumin. From cancer to inflammation, researchers have explored turmeric's potential in laboratory tests and clinical trials, with many positive results. What may not be apparent to a layperson, however, is that the dose in which we consume turmeric as a spice is much lower than the dose in which it is used in therapeutic trials. It is uncommon to find warnings attesting to the fact that high daily doses of turmeric can have toxic effects.

Of the 1,788 Indian food plants identified by this work as being used as both food and medicine, just over 5% (or 139 species) are documented in the 2017 Indian Food Composition Table (IFCT), the official reference for the nutrient value of commonly used food ingredients. The Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia cites herbal substances derived from 334 plants. The overlap of plant species between the IFCT and the Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia is more than 90%, underscoring why consumers believe ethnomedicines can be consumed as food.

Discord and conflict An analysis of the



contents of the 11 published references threw up two other problems with the listing of plants: (i) an extraordinary level of discordance and ambiguity in how scientific names are used to refer to plants, and (ii) the lack of information and conflicting evidence about the plant parts to be used. In total, we found 21,033 different scientific plant names were cited in the 11 reviewed publications. But because of synonymy, these names refer to just 7,564 different plants — an issue that extends to the scientific literature as well. These scientific synonyms add to the complexity for regulators; for consumers when they are trying to find the relevant information; and for researchers when they are comparing their findings related to a plant across different scientific studies. The scientific name of many life-forms is binomial: the name of the genus and the name of the species in that genus. For example, in *Homo sapiens*, 'Homo' is the genus and 'sapiens' is the species name. For plants the binomial name also includes the name of the person who first published that Latin name. This name however is not fixed.

As researchers collect more DNA and chemical evidence, plant taxonomists are developing better insights into how plants are related to one another and make changes to the taxonomic hierarchy accordingly. In this way, researchers publish more than 10,000 changes to plant scientific names every year. Regulations of the way plants are named also control how their subspecies, varieties, and hybrids are specified in scientific terms. Thus, what is a 'lemon' to a non-expert person would perhaps fully be described as *Citrus limon* (L.) Osbeck to the botanist. Unfortunately, this precision of labelling and the nuances are rarely captured in food composition tables. For example, the IFCT 2017 catalogues 'lemon' simply as *Citrus limon*, with-

out indicating its hybrid origin or mentioning which variety of the listed species researchers studied. In fact, imprecise or ambiguous plant names were observed to the tune of 100% in IFCT 2017 and 80% in the Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia of India. Need for standard names for plant parts This has serious implications for the regulatory process — not just for human health but also biodiversity conservation. Climate change will likely have an unequal impact on different plant varieties and their nutritional value and bioactivity. To be able to consistently and reliably regulate plants and their derived products, therefore, we need appropriate use of scientific nomenclature. Since plants show little respect for national boundaries and many of the plants consumed in India may have first taken root in other countries, it is important for regulatory and legal purposes to acknowledge international efforts to standardise plant nomenclature. Thanks to COVID-19, many would have heard about giloy or ashwagandha. These names refer to two plants widely used in Ayurveda. Fewer people, however, will be aware that it is the stem of *Tinospora cordifolia* (Willd.) Hook. f. & Thomson that is used in giloy, and the root of *Withania somnifera* (L.) Dunal that is used in ashwagandha — both for medicinal purposes. In the case of giloy, medicinal uses of the leaves, fruits, and roots are also mentioned in Ayurveda and folk medicine. Such information regarding the relevant parts of each plant are rarely included in the labels of consumer goods, however. Where the scientific name is mentioned, it is often incomplete or misspelt. Dried ashwagandha roots.

This is important from a nutritional perspective as well. The leaves of bhringaraj (*Eclipta prostrata* (L.) L) are celebrated in Ayurveda for their ability to promote good hair health and are marketed

as such in several products. The same plant is also consumed as a green leafy vegetable in certain parts of India and yet no nutrient information is found in the IFCT 2017. Regulators are undoubtedly best placed to address questions regarding the toxicity of plant materials. But then by which regulator: those responsible for food or those with a responsibility for medicines? Further, do we need separate regulations for plant-based medicinal foods? This is an important question because in a majority of countries, food and medicine are regulated by separate government agencies, and they don't acknowledge that the same plant can have different uses. In six economies that we examined — Brazil, China, the European Union, India, the U.S., and the U.K. — it was observed that there was a distinct regulator for food and nutrition and another one for drug testing and licensing. There were some exceptions: for example, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the health regulator in the U.K., recognises "border products" that straddle the divide between food and medicines. In India, however, food is regulated by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and drug licensing by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). Drug regulators, unsurprisingly, establish far higher requirements for evidence for efficacy and safety than do food regulators. There is no one simple approach to integrate evidence across domains, yet current attempts to share knowledge across regulators is currently also hampered by their use of inconsistent and/or imprecise plant names. The health and wellness industry is set to grow in the coming years as richer economies age and people's incomes become more able to support investments in natural plant products, which are derived primarily from traditional knowledge.

I want to be a complete batter and a complete spinner: Tanush Kotian's mission statement

The wallpaper on his mobile phone has the text embossed next to his off-break-bowling action. "I keep changing the wallpaper but for the last few weeks, I have stuck to this," he says. They used to pen their frame of mind into a diary once upon a time. For Gen Z, the wallpaper is a sneak peek into their thought-process. And the best place to let a cricketer spell out his mindset is... obviously a cricket ground. Days after he played a pivotal role in ending Mumbai's 27-year wait for the Irani Cup, one sits down with Tanush Kotian — the lanky all-rounder from Vikhroli, a Mumbai suburb — at the Sharad Pawar Cricket Academy ground. The facility — a breeding ground for age-group and senior cricketers alike — has been his comfort zone. But it has taken him a struggle of well over a decade to earn his comfort zone. By the time you read this, he will be a member of India-A — the almost-there group — on its shadow tour of Australia ahead of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. But making it to the national selectors' targeted pool has been a topsy-turvy ride.

Flashback one Two years ago, Kotian — who turned 26 last month — was in unsure territory — the kind of position that he loves to have a batter in, ball in hand. He had emerged as the Player of the Match in the 2022 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final, picking up three for 15 and sealing Mumbai's win with a six in the last over. Several franchises called him for trials ahead of the Indian Premier League auction. He was billed as one of the possible entrants into the crorepati club. But a few hours before the IPL auction, disaster struck. The franchises were informed that Kotian's bowling action was seen as "suspect" although he had never been reported in any domestic game. He later discovered that a match referee, in consultation with the on-field umpires, had found just one ball suspicious during the SMA Trophy. Kotian was never barred from bowling, but that was it! The franchises' interest dropped. "Now when I look back, I realise that the whole episode kind of triggered my will to succeed at any cost. Someone else may have dropped his shoulders after such an episode but I got more determined to prove all my detractors wrong and show my real mettle," says Kotian. Earlier in 2022, Kotian — along with fellow all-rounder Shams Mulani — had bailed Mumbai out of a precarious situation against Goa in the Ranji Trophy. That innings of 98 set Mumbai on course for the final and dispelled all the doubts over whether he had it in him at a higher level. Flashback two A majority of cricketers in India — especially in Mumbai — are made because of their fathers wanting their kids — not just sons now, thankfully — to achieve what they couldn't. Tanush was no different. Karunakar — a legend in tennis-ball cricket, 'tennis cricket' in Bambaia parlance — was a formative influence. Like his father, a young Tanush used to hit the ball hard and run in and bowl as fast as he could. But the youngster gradually developed a fondness for turning the ball. And unlike most pushy fathers, Karunakar let him be. Turning to spin: Kotian started off as a pacer as a child before developing into an off-spinner with a First Class bowl-



ing average of 25. "He has always been supportive, never pushy," stresses Tanush. "And him being a cricketer has always been a help. He has helped me analyse my game better. And he knows what's going through my head after a good or a bad day at the ground." Switching to a "cricket school" — the VN Sule Gurujji School in Dadar — in the seventh grade made him realise the hard yards he needed to put in. "Till then, I was among the better ones in and around Vikhroli. Once I started playing in the top-tier of inter-school, I realised that I was one among dozens of cricketers who were competing to break into Mumbai's age-group teams. I had to work harder than ever before if I had to survive first, and then succeed, at that level." Working hard was never going to be a problem, especially for a teenager willing to spend 13 to 14 hours away from home every day in his quest to convert his passion into a profession. Flashback three Given these struggles, it was no surprise that Karunakar shed tears of happiness at the Wankhede Stadium this March. Tanush had not only helped Mumbai regain the Ranji Trophy but was also adjudged the Player of the Tournament. "That has been his proudest moment so far. I just hope he will have a few more moments to savour in the next few years," says Tanush. A return of 502 runs — including a hundred while batting at No. 10 — and 29 wickets catapulted him into national reckoning. It also led Rajasthan Royals to sign him, as a replacement for Adam Zampa, a welcome turn of events after the snub of 2022. Kotian got just one opportunity to showcase his talent, that too as an opening batter, and wasn't required to bowl. But right through those two months, he chased the three senior spinners — "Ash bhai, Yuzi bhai and Keshav" — for what he terms "learnings for a lifetime". "Those two months were an education. When you have Ashwin, Chahal and Maharaj to learn from — not just by

watching them prepare and bowl but even available to chat and help you out in the nets — what more can you ask for?"

The present: batting or bowling all-rounder? While he was thrilled with his IPL experience, the manner in which he was utilised against Punjab Kings in April also led to murmurs in Indian cricket circles about whether he was a batting or bowling all-rounder. The man himself wasn't surprised. After all, he had been dealing with such queries ever since he broke into Mumbai's under-14 squad in 2013. Early in his career, when he started visiting coach Rajesh Sanil's nets for batting drills, Sanil gave him advice that he has etched onto his mind just like the words from the wallpaper on his phone. Learning tree: At Rajasthan Royals, Kotian made the most of the opportunity to pick R. Ashwin's brain. | Photo credit: Emmanuel Yogini Learning

tree: At Rajasthan Royals, Kotian made the most of the opportunity to pick R. Ashwin's brain. | Photo credit: Emmanuel Yogini "Rajesh Sanil sir told me it doesn't matter what number you are batting at, treat yourself as a batsman and build your innings accordingly. Even while bowling, he and Pappa [father] keep telling me to think like a batter so that I can set the batter up," he says. "In short, all along I have been told and have thought that I don't want to be a batting all-rounder or a bowling all-rounder. No one should take me lightly in any department. Call me a 50-50 or whatever, I want to be a complete batter and a complete spinner." As he leaves to pick up his kit-bag, one can't help but think that, given the challenges he has overcome and his simple, clear approach to cricket, Kotian will do everything in his power to achieve that ambition.

NSS volunteers repair pothole on NH in Bhadrachalam

Kothagudem: A small gesture by the volunteers of National Service Scheme (NSS) has made a big difference in the lives of commuters who travel on a national highway that passes through Bhadrachalam in the district.

As part of their social service activities the NSS volunteers of Government Degree College, Bhadrachalam repaired a big pothole formed on the national highway in front of the college by filling it with gravel and cement. The pothole has become a problem for the motorists passing on the road as they often met with accidents. Under the supervision of the college principal Dr. John Milton and NSS wing in-charge Dr. Kiran Kumar the filled up the



pothole by doing 'shramadanam' on Saturday. The college mathematics department extended financial assistance to procure material. The locals appreciated the college NSS volunteers for repairing up the pothole and thus ensured safety of the commuters.

The essential skill of 'media and information literacy'

Media and information literacy (MIL) has become an essential skill in the 21st century as we navigate digital landscapes where the production, dissemination, and consumption of public-interest information is rapidly changing. Not long ago, COVID-19, the first pandemic in the age of social media, highlighted the dangers of unverified or outrightly incorrect information. This 'infodemic' became a threat almost as large as the virus itself, resulting in real consequences such as racial discrimination, social boycotts, and attacks on health-care workers. More recently, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has raised many concerns, which include deepfakes, algorithmic biases, targeted misinformation campaigns, and data privacy violations — all of which pose risks to public trust, security, and social cohesion. These challenges underscore the urgency of creating an Internet of Trust to ensure digital spaces are safe, reliable and inclusive. The transformative impact of digital platforms and new content creators on how we create and consume information highlights both opportunities and risks. This year's Global Media and Information Literacy Week (October 24-31, 2024) highlighted the need for MIL skills to help individuals identify, assess, and engage with public-interest information online.

The two sides to digital reach Digital platforms have become vital hubs for public discourse and cultural expression. With an estimated 4.75 billion people — 60% of the global population — engaged on social networks in 2023, these spaces have transformed how we communicate and connect like never before, allowing us to have connections on a speed and scale never seen before in the history of humanity. The rapid growth of digital technologies and AI has further opened up endless opportunities for connectivity and information sharing. While they democratise access to information and promote a diversity of thought, they are also the breeding grounds for spreading misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, and conspiracy theories.

This complex environment poses significant governance challenges that impact both democracy and social cohesion. The unchecked spread of false narratives undermines trust in information systems, widens social divisions, and ultimately impedes collective efforts to tackle global crises. This is why MIL is no longer a privilege but an essential skill, equipping individuals to critically assess information and navigate digital spaces responsibly. For example, MIL encourages an awareness of algorithmic biases and helps develop skills such as resisting misinformation and fact-checking as a reflex. UNESCO has a long-standing commitment to MIL, whether in education or within the communication and information space. In line with this mandate, in February 2024, UNESCO launched Global Citizenship Education in a Digital Age: Teacher Guidelines, which aim to equip educators with the tools to navigate digital spaces ethically and contribute to peaceful societies, both online

and offline.

The implications of AI risks The risks posed by AI are not merely technical; they have broad societal implications, urging immediate governance measures. In 2023, UNESCO launched Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms outlining five key principles to create safer and more ethical digital spaces. These guidelines rest on five core principles to create a digital ecosystem rooted in trust and inclusivity. First, 'Human Rights Due Diligence' calls for regular risk assessments by platforms to mitigate potential human rights impacts, especially during critical times such as elections. Second, 'Adherence to International Standards' ensures that content design and moderation align with global human rights norms to safeguard equality and non-discrimination. Third, 'Transparency' emphasises clear communication on policies and practices, so that users can make informed choices. Fourth, 'User Empowerment' encourages platforms to offer accessible tools and information in local languages, enabling everyone, especially vulnerable groups, to engage meaningfully. Finally, 'Accountability to Stakeholders' lays stress on the need for platforms to be answerable to a broad array of stakeholders, including independent regulators, and to stay true to their promises of safety and openness. Together, these principles foster a collaborative approach across governments, civil society, and tech entities, paving the way for freedom of expression and access to reliable information, all while preserving the integrity of our shared digital world.



UNESCO also promotes the ethical use of AI, highlighting the importance of MIL to ensure that individuals can critically understand and engage with AI technologies. Its Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM) is part of the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence — the first global regulatory instrument on AI, adopted in 2021. This methodology guides UNESCO member-states in implementing ethical AI standards, equipping citizens with the skills to discern and responsibly use AI-driven information. UNESCO is working with over 50 countries, including India, where it partners with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to assess AI capacities. In India, RAM helps policymakers identify needed regulatory and institutional

changes to leverage AI's benefits while mitigating its risks.

Awareness as the first line of defence The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, in his 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast on October 27, 2024, highlighted the alarming rise in 'digital' scams, urging citizens to adopt a 'stop, think, and take action' approach. This call underscores the vital role of MIL in empowering individuals to recognise digital threats and respond responsibly. As technological advancements leap-frog, strengthening MIL skills in every community becomes essential. Raising awareness is the first line of defence against digital deception, misinformation, disinformation and creating an 'internet of trust'.

Vijay cannot be ignored

The response that Tamil film actor Vijay received for his speech at the inaugural State-level conference of his party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), in Vikravandi on October 27 was mostly on expected lines. Mr. Vijay's indirect attack on the ruling DMK government in Tamil Nadu and the BJP-led Central government and his statement on power sharing have become talking points among the political parties of the State. While the DMK, a couple of its allies, and the BJP did not take his speech kindly, the AIADMK, the principal Opposition party, viewed it favourably in view of the perception that Mr. Vijay did not target it. If reactions on social media are any indication, the TVK leader's words created an impact on the people. Some admired the speech, while others criticised him for being vague on many serious issues.

As he laid down the broad contours of his party's policies and action plans in the already cluttered political landscape of Tamil Nadu, it became clear that Mr. Vijay was adopting the general line of thinking seen in his films. By and large, his films belong to the 'masala movie' genre. They offer nothing different either in terms of plot or narration from other movies in the same

genre. In many of his films, the protagonist, played by Mr. Vijay, represents subaltern communities or identifies with them.

The manner in which he spoke at Vikravandi, the contents of his speech, and the way the conference was organised indicated that the actor may want to follow a similar formula in politics too: nothing radically new; and in support of social justice.

He did differ from other politicians in some aspects, however. He spoke simple and direct Tamil and liberally used English words and punchlines. He did not wear a crisp, white dhoti, the uniform of politicians in the State, but instead chose trousers and a shirt. The conference began with some of the State's traditional dance forms — Paraiyattam, Mayilattam, Devarattam, and Vallikummi. He also announced that he would be open not only to forming an alliance with other parties, but also giving a share in power in the event of victory in the 2026 Assembly polls.

Even though the film star-turned-politician did not name the DMK and the BJP in his attack, the leaders of the two parties were quick to find fault with him. Alluding to Mr. Vijay's observation that the TVK was neither the "A team" nor the "B team" of any other party, the State Law Minister, S.

Regupathy, labelled the latest entrant the "C team" of the BJP, while Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and former State president of the BJP, L. Murugan, contended that Mr. Vijay's speech lacked clarity. To substantiate his point, he referred to the TVK leader calling Dravidam and Tamil nationalism as "two eyes" and said the two concepts were contradictory to each other.

The DMK's allies were not attracted by Mr. Vijay's offer of power sharing. The principal secretary of the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Durai Vaiko, said it would create confusion. The leader of the Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi, Thol Thirumavalavan, who defended the demand for a share in power not too long ago, said Mr. Vijay's "offer" was an attempt to pre-empt the AIADMK. The Congress's State unit chief, K. Selvaperunthagan, said his party would "wait and watch" even as he welcomed Mr. Vijay's position.

The AIADMK was the only major party which seemed to support Mr. Vijay. Referring to the actor's observation that certain parties took an "anti-fascism" position but had "underground dealings" with the same forces, the general secretary of the AIADMK,

Why this Census is crucial for delimitation, women's quota, what's the legal roadmap

The Centre has indicated that the much delayed Census could now start as early as next year — and be completed by 2026. There are two very important upshots of the exercise — the delimitation of constituencies, and the implementation of the reservation for women in elected bodies. **THE PROCESS:** Since senior government sources have said that the Census process is expected to be completed by 2026, it would imply that the government is hoping to wrap up the process in time for the 2029 Lok Sabha election. The timeline is significant since it also involves the delimitation exercise. Delimitation is the process of fixing or redrawing the boundaries of territorial constituencies. A Delimitation Commission is appointed for carrying out the exercise. Though the decadal Census has been conducted seven times since Independence (1951 to 2011), the delimitation exercise has been carried out only four times (in 1952, 1953, 1973, and 2002).

The last delimitation, however, only readjusted the boundaries of constituencies based on population, and did not lead to an increase in the number of seats, which have remained constant since 1976. This was because the Constitution was amended in 1976 and 2001 to readjust the allocation of seats till the findings of the first Census taken after 2001 and 2026 respectively are published. The number of seats in Lok Sabha is currently 543, and in all state Assemblies taken together, 4,123. These numbers were decided on the basis of the 1971 Census for Lok Sabha and 2001 Census for state constituencies, when the country's population was 54.81 crore and 102.87 crore respectively. The numbers of seats are likely to increase substantially, going by the expected population of around 1.5 billion when the 2021 Census is eventually conducted. "Upon the completion of each census, the allocation of seats in the House of the People to the States and the division of each State into territorial constituencies shall be readjusted by such authority and in such manner as Parliament may by law determine," the provision states.

The 42nd Constitution Amendment brought in 1976 amended Article 170, and froze the delimitation exercise until the results of the first Census after 2000 were published. In 2001, this was further extended for 25 years. And now, delimitation will happen only after the results of the first Census after 2026 are published. Article 170 deals with the composition of legislative Assemblies, and contains an explanation to the provision defining the word "population" which is the basis for dividing territorial constituencies. The provision states: "In this clause, the expression "population" means the population as ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published: Provided the reference in this Explanation to the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published shall, until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2026 have been published, be construed as a reference to the 2001 census." Questions have been raised on whether the 2021 Census, taken in 2025 and published in

2026, can be the basis for the readjustment mandated under Article 82. This provision will have to be amended to facilitate delimitation before the next Lok Sabha election. Apart from this, other provisions dealing with the composition of the Lok Sabha (Article 81); state Assemblies (Article 170), and President's election (Article 55) will also have to be altered. **POLITICAL CHALLENGES:** There are other challenges too, such as building consensus on the procedure to be followed for delimitation. So far, delimitation Acts passed by Parliament have said that readjustment is done on the basis of the Census, physical features, existing boundaries or administrative units, facilities of communication and public convenience. The same challenges that led to the readjustment being postponed in 1976 and 2001 remain today. Southern states that have fared better in controlling their population would lose out if the number of seats are to be increased on the basis of only population, which has increased more in the North. The BJP's numbers in the House will also be crucial to carry out these amendments. While it had majorities of its own in 2014 and 2019, this time the party has 240 seats in Lok Sabha, and needs its allies, the Telugu Desam Party and the Janata Dal (United) to push through legislation. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu recently flagged the issue of declining young population, saying he was thinking of giving an incentive to families that have more than two children.

Women's reservation In September 2023, Parliament amended The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in Lok Sabha and state legislative Assemblies. A crucial provision in the law makes the implementation of



women's reservation contingent upon the delimitation process. It states that the quota "shall come into effect after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the relevant figures for the first census taken after the commencement of The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) Bill 2023 have been published, and shall cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of 15 years from the date of such commencement." This in effect will be the 2021 Census that, according to the latest indications, is likely to be published in 2026. One of the reasons women's reservation did not become a reality in the last 35 years was the fear among male politicians of having to let go of their

seats. A 33 per cent reservation in the current 545-member Lok Sabha would mean 182 seats being kept for women. Only 363 seats would be available for men. The current Lok Sabha has 467 men. But delimitation could preserve the political fortunes of the current group of male politicians. If, as a result of the delimitation exercise, the strength of Lok Sabha increases to 770, as some calculations suggest, 257 seats would be reserved for women, and the remaining 513 could be available for men to contest. This would mean that political parties would have to deal with fewer complications in accommodating the political interests of their male leaders.

Is thirst a good predictor of dehydration?

Water is essential for daily functioning and health, and we can only survive a few days without it. Yet we constantly lose water through sweat, urination and even evaporation when we breathe. This is why we have evolved a way to regulate and maintain water in our bodies. Like other animals, our survival relies on a strong biological drive that tells us to find and drink water to balance fluid loss. This is thirst — a sensation of dryness in the mouth signalling we need to have a drink. This basic physiological mechanism is controlled mainly by part of the brain's "control centre", called the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus receives signals from various regions of the body and in return, releases hormones that act as a messenger to signal the thirst sensation.

What is dehydration?

Staying hydrated (having enough water in our bodies) is important for several reasons, including: -regulating body temperature through sweat and respiration -lubricating joints and eyes Dehydration occurs when our body doesn't have enough water. Even slight drops in fluid

levels have noticeable consequences, such as headaches, feeling dizzy, lethargy and struggling to concentrate. Chronic dehydration can pose more serious health risks, including urinary tract infections, constipation and kidney stones.

What does the evidence say?

Despite thirst being one of the most basic biological drivers for good hydration, science suggests our feelings of thirst and subsequent fluid intake don't always correlate with hydration levels. For example, a recent study explored the impact of thirst on fluid intake and hydration status. Participants attended a lab in the morning and then later in the afternoon to provide markers of hydration status (such as urine, blood samples and body weight). The relationship between levels of thirst in the morning and afternoon hydration status was negligible. Further, thirst may be driven by environmental factors, such as access to water. For example, one study looked at whether ample access to water in a lab influenced how much people drank and how hydrated they were. The link between how thirsty they felt and how hydrated they

were was weak, suggesting the availability of water influenced their fluid intake more than thirst. Exercise can also change our thirst mechanism, though studies are limited at this stage. Interestingly, research shows women experience thirst more strongly than men, regardless of hydration status. To understand gender differences in thirst, researchers infused men and women with fluids and then measured their thirst and how hydrated they were. They found women generally reported thirst at a lower level of fluid loss. Women have also been found to respond more to feeling thirsty by drinking more water. While acknowledging some people will need to drink more or less, for many people, eight cups (or two litres) a day is a good amount of water to aim for. But beyond thirst, there are many other ways to tell whether you might need to drink more water. 1. urine colour: pale yellow urine typically indicates good hydration, while darker, concentrated urine suggests dehydration 2. frequency of going to the toilet: urinating regularly (around four to six times a day) indicates good hydration. Infrequent urination can signal dehydration

How simulation using AR, VR can facilitate learning

Simulations in education are teaching strategies that mimic real-life scenarios of events or processes. They aid in a clear understanding of concepts and have been an integral part of science classrooms for decades. The earth-sun-moon system is a classic example that can be simulated using a role-play method, where students assume the roles of the earth, the sun and the moon to learn concepts like earth's rotation, phases of the moon, eclipses, and so on. How does one learn abstract concepts such as evolution, cell structure, or chemical reactions in a classroom? Online simulations to the rescue!

Simulations provide opportunities for students to observe, evaluate, and explore. Thanks to technological advancements, online tools such as agent-based models (ABM), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR)-based simulations have made it possible to simulate processes and concepts ranging from microbiology to astronomy in the sciences. Most online simulations are based on the inquiry-based 5E-instructional model- engage, explore, explain, elaborate, evaluate. Agent-based models simulate the actions of 'agents,' which are the components of a simulation. Agents could be molecules, cells, or animals in a system. For example, suppose a teacher wants to teach the spread of a virus within a population. In that case, an ABM such as NetLogo* provides a digital space where the students can set up a model to change the number of viral particles, population density, or chances of recovery of infected persons and observe how the infection is transmitted over a given period. Such models engage students in collecting data, analysing graphs and understanding how individual actions lead to outcomes at the system level. Teaching topics in physics such as electricity or optics can also be simplified due to simulations such as PhET. ABMs give a real-life experience to students, where they can manipulate variables to gain an interactive learning experience. Augmented reality (AR) is a technology that blends digital information with a learner's real-world experience. For example, astronomy teachers could use mobile applications that simply require a mobile phone to be held against the sky. The application shows all the information about celestial objects in the direction to which the in-app camera is pointed. AR is also widely used to teach chemistry, anatomy, or concepts where real-life resources are unavailable or could pose a hazard to students. Most AR-based tools require minimal resources, such as a mobile, laptop or a tablet and internet connection. Virtual reality or VR creates an entirely virtual representation of an environment. While it provides a fully immersive and highly engaging learning experience, it requires sophisticated VR laboratories equipped with VR headsets.

Global warming visualised In India, many schools equipped with computers and internet facilities use simulations to teach abstract concepts in science and mathematics. "Evolution through natural



selection is a topic that can be best explained using simulations. Evolution of species takes hundreds of thousands of years. I use simulations to teach these concepts in the science classroom", mentioned 41-year-old Maram Pavithra, a science teacher in ZPHS Penpahad school, Suryapet, Telangana state.

Pavithra, with her 15-year teaching experience, uses several freely available agent-based simulations in her science classroom. She adds that their classrooms are equipped with interactive flat panels, making it easier to run simulations. Moreover, most of these simulations can also be explored outside the school through mobile applications. Pavithra learned about the simulations through a teacher professional development programme – Connected Learning Initiative (CLIX) led by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Mumbai and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, U.S.A. Pavithra is now herself a teacher-trainer who helps other teachers learn simulations. "Many teachers learn about these tools, and some use them in classrooms. Others don't use these either because they feel simulations require a lot of technical knowledge, or they are not interested in using them at all", comments Pavithra. She adds that while the simulations might appear to require technical expertise, they are, in reality, intuitive and can be used with little practice. Many educators are exploring the potential of simulations to engage school students on burning issues such as global warming or antimicrobial resistance (AMR). For one such activity on AMR for school students, 29-year-old Avanish Utsav, Associate Researcher at Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai designed an agent-based module using NetLogo that simulated the development of antimicrobial re-

sistance in bacteria. The module contained disease-causing bacterial cells as 'agents,' and students could control the reproduction of the cells and dosage of antibiotics given to patients, among other parameters. Through this, students learn how natural or artificial selection can lead to antimicrobial resistance over time. "This module simulates what you cannot demonstrate in the laboratory. Students play around with different controls and variables, and they construct their knowledge on antimicrobial resistance", remarked Utsav. These simulation tools follow the inquiry-based learning strategy. Teachers can further design their lessons to apply different pedagogical techniques, such as project-based, problem-based or activity-based learning, depending on the content. Some simulations also allow users to extend the existing models and tweak them to run the model in a different context. Despite the multiple advantages, most simulations, whether traditional, agent-based, or augmented reality-based, have their own challenges and limitations. Educators com-

monly believe that over-reliance on simulations should be avoided. Practices like using more than one model and discussing the limitations of simulations are important in preventing misconceptions. The big technological divide in the society is a bigger challenge to address. Many students are missing out on the learning experience through simulations "There are some initiatives to reach those on the other side of the technological divide, but with our population size, state intervention is needed to ensure these resources reach the maximum number of students," Utsav added. *Wilensky, U. (1999). NetLogo. <http://ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/>. Center for Connected Learning and Computer-Based Modeling, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. The author would like to thank Dr. Rafikh Shaikh, senior research coordinator and teaching faculty at the Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, and Prasad Adekar, scientific staff at IUCAA Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune for inputs.

Telegram pledges zero-tolerance policy against deepfake pornography

Seoul: South Korea's media regulator said on Monday that Telegram has pledged to adopt a zero-tolerance policy and immediately remove deepfake pornography and other illegal content from its platform, in cooperation with local authorities. The Korea Communications Standards Commission (KCSC) said it had a face-to-face working-level meeting with Telegram on Friday, raising concerns over deepfake content involving doctored images of Korean women, which has surfaced

on Telegram in recent months. In response, Telegram acknowledged the severity of the issue in Korea and vowed to take strict action against such illegal material, reports Yonhap news agency.

"Telegram said they understood the situation in Korea where deepfake porn content has become a significant social issue," KCSC Chairman Ryu Hee-lim stated in a press conference, adding that the platform will take stern measures to combat the problem.

How exactly is the Census carried out, its links to delimitation, women's Parliament quota

The Centre, it seems, is finally preparing to conduct the Census which it could not carry out in 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Though an official announcement is yet to be made, sources have indicated that the exercise might begin next year. This Census is linked to two other important outcomes — the delimitation of Parliamentary constituencies, which has been on hold for the last five decades, and the implementation of women's reservation in Parliament. The year 2021 marked the first time India's Census missed its decadal schedule since it was first carried out in 1881. But the pandemic was very much over by 2022, and that could have enabled the start of the Census process in 2023 or 2024. The government seems to have deliberately delayed starting the Census to ensure that the delimitation or reorganisation of Parliamentary constituencies is carried out immediately after it. However, a Census completed by 2026, or earlier, might not allow for an immediate delimitation.

The delimitation angle Delimitation, a Constitutional mandate, is supposed to happen after every Census. The process adjusts the number of constituencies of Parliament and state Assemblies in accordance with the latest population figures, to ensure that the number of people represented by any Member of Parliament or Member of Legislative Assembly is roughly the same. However, this exercise has been suspended since 1976 due to a lack of political consensus. If the standard logic of delimitation were to be followed, the wide divergence in population growth trends in various states would mean that some would see the number of Parliamentary constituencies reduce, while others would see an increase. Southern states have argued that this would amount to punishing them for successfully meeting population control objectives. A delimitation exercise in 2002, following the 2001 Census, involved only the redrawing of existing boundaries of constituencies, and not a change in the number of constituencies. As of now, delimitation is suspended till at least 2026. The 84th Constitutional Amendment of 2001 said that the next delimitation can be held only based on the Census conducted after 2026. Therefore, even if the 2021 Census had been held on time, or in 2023 or 2024, delimitation could have been done only after the 2031 Census. If the Census, which takes two years to complete, begins next year, delimitation can theoretically happen immediately thereafter. Once in a decade

The Census has happened in the first year of every decade since it was first held. There is a Constitutional mandate to carry out a Census — it is mentioned as item 69 on the Union List of subjects, meaning only the Central government is empowered to undertake the exercise. There are repeated references to the Census in the Constitution of India in the context of the reorganisation of constituencies for Parliament and State Assemblies. But it does not say when the Census has to be carried out, or what the frequency of this exercise should be. The Census of India Act of 1948, which provides the legal framework for it, also does not mention its timing or

periodicity. Therefore, there is no Constitutional or legal requirement for a Census every 10 years. However, the British administration carried it out in the first year of every decade, and this convention was maintained after Independence. Most other countries also follow a similar cycle for their Census. Some, like Australia, carry out a Census after every five years. Schedule for delimitation

India's Census is a two-step process involving a house-listing and numbering exercise, followed by population enumeration. House-listing and numbering are done in the year before the Census year, usually between April and September. Population enumeration happens between the second and fourth weeks of February in the Census year. The numbers revealed represent the population of India as of midnight on March 1 in the Census year. To account for the births and deaths during the enumeration period in February, the enumerators return to the households in the first week of March to make revisions. The preliminary results of the Census, particularly population totals, are released within a few months, usually in the same year the Census is carried out. The full results take one to two years to come out. Interestingly, a Census that begins in 2025 and is completed in 2026 might not enable an immediate delimitation. The language of the 84th Constitutional amendment says delimitation can happen only on data from the first Census "taken after the year 2026". This would suggest that the population enumeration part of the Census has to be carried out after 2026. Therefore, if the Census exercise has to begin next year and the government wants to begin the delimitation process afterwards, in time for the 2029 Lok Sabha elections, an amendment to the existing provision may be required. However, Constitutional requirements are likely to be the least of the problems encountered in conducting delimitation. The suspension of delimitation was caused by sharp disagreements among the political parties, which continue to date. Southern states, which would see their seats in Parliament reduced if current populations are accounted for, might want to put off delimitation again — unless they are compensated in some other way.

The recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission might be a crucial element here. The Finance Commission, a body constituted every five years, recommends the devolution of financial resources between the Centre and states. The 16th Finance Commission is supposed to submit its report by the end of next year. Further, the Parliament approved the 128th Constitution Amendment last year, reserving 33 per cent of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women. However, it is supposed to come into effect only after the seats in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies are modified, following the delimitation exercise. Caste Census demand There is also an expectation that the next Census may collect caste data as well to eliminate the need for a separate caste census, which has been demanded by some political parties in recent years. The collection of caste data in the



Census would not be unprecedented. Some information related to caste was obtained until the 1941 Census and the practice was discontinued only in independent India. In some earlier years, information on caste or sect of people belonging to all re-

ligions was obtained in the Census. In other years, only the caste data of Hindus was collected. The practice was discontinued from the 1951 Census onwards, and only data on Scheduled Castes or Tribes has been collected since then.

Modus operandi of fraudsters: How scamsters execute digital arrests revealed

New Delhi: As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, cybercrimes are on the rise, and digital arrest and other online scams are emerging as a new threat. These scams have a certain modus operandi where the fraudsters impersonate as officials of the law enforcement agencies and use video calls to convince victims that they are involved in criminal activities and hence accountable to the law. Fearing action, they give in to the hollow threats of these scammers.

Typically, these scams begin with an automated message, projecting it as a call from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). The phone calls are usually made via WhatsApp voice or video call. The scammers, posing as officials give the victim two options: either report to a police station or court within a few hours or provide a statement via phone. Unsuspecting victims usually opt for the latter, which sets the stage for the scam. In recent incidents, these scammers also show fabricated government documents letters to justify their identity, thereby leading the former to believe they are under threat. Fearing false charges, many victims transfer large sums of money to the scammers.

One recent case involved an elderly man from Ahmedabad who was duped of Rs 1.2 crore. The fraudsters posed as high-ranking judiciary officials and falsely accused the senior citizen of being involved in a money laundering case. Fearing arrest, the man liquidated his fixed deposits and transferred the amount to the scammers, who promised it would be refunded within 48 hours after "verification" by the Supreme Court. However, the fraudsters cut off all contact after receiving the money. Fortunately, the Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Cell has since arrested four individuals involved in the scam. In another case, an 85-year-old retired army officer, Major General Prabodh Chander Puri (Retd), from Panchkula, was defrauded of Rs 83 lakh. The scam began with a call informing him that his mobile phone number was allegedly being used to threaten people and would be deactivated within hours. The scammers coerced him into withdrawing his savings and transferring the money to an account they provided, assuring him that the amount would be refunded within six hours. They even falsely promised that he would be recognised with an award for cooperating with the authorities.

Coldplay and Diljit Dosanjh concerts: Amid ticket scalping, challenges and the path forward in India

Remember those classic Bollywood films from the 1980s and 90s, where a character whispers, “Das ka bees, das ka bees,” while flashing a pocketful of tickets? That playful portrayal of ticket scalping as a quick money-making scheme has become a familiar trope. But the reality of scalping today is far from charming — it’s a predatory practice that goes unnoticed unless someone falls prey to it. What began as a survival instinct — hoarding — has evolved into a tool for profit. Now, instead of essentials, people hoard access. The frenzy is evident when tickets for events like Diljit Dosanjh’s or Coldplay’s concerts, sell out within minutes — only to reappear online at exorbitant prices. From IPL matches to music festivals, online ticket scalping has become a widespread phenomenon. While ticketing platforms and limited regulations attempt to curb the practice, the absence of stringent government intervention has allowed it to flourish unchecked. Historically, ticket scalping in India was synonymous with black marketing. Outside cinema halls, vendors ran the “Dus-Ka-Bees” scheme, exploiting demand for blockbuster films. Over time, the practice has evolved into a more sophisticated operation, migrating online. Scalpers now use bots and automated tools to hoard tickets in bulk, leaving ordinary consumers struggling to secure access to popular events. In some cases, event organisers themselves manipulate supply by withholding a portion of tickets from initial sales. Using bots and auto-refreshers, these tickets are quickly resold through secondary platforms at inflated prices, creating artificial scarcity.

A notable example is the case of *Mandeep Singh v. State of Chandigarh* (2015), where a seller was arrested for reselling World Cup match tickets on eBay and charged under Section 66A of the Information Technology Act and Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for fraud. The petitioner sought the quashing of the FIR, arguing that Section 66A had been struck down by the Supreme Court in *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India* (2015), and that no case under Section 420 was made out since there was no intent to cheat. The Court acknowledged that Section 66A had indeed been struck down and noted that no offence under Section 420 IPC was established, as there was no inducement or deceit involved — the petitioner had openly disclosed the higher price of the tickets, and there was no legal prohibition against reselling them. The Court held that continuing the proceedings would amount to an abuse of the process of law and affirmed that, “In India, there is no legal restriction against reselling match tickets.” Loopholes in regulation and consumer protection

Although Rule 4(11) of the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020, prohibits e-commerce platforms from manipulating prices to gain unreasonable profits, its enforcement remains weak. In the case of Diljit Dosanjh’s Dil-Luminati Tour concert, a legal notice was filed alleging malpractice in the sale of tickets. It was claimed that the organisers opened ticket sales earlier than advertised, resulting in

immediate sellouts. This sudden availability and ticket unavailability were interpreted as manipulative tactics to inflate demand and prices, potentially constituting an unfair trade practice under the Consumer Protection Act. “Since tax liability can only be imposed on sellers, and most ticket-selling websites are not registered in India, they evade taxes. Events utilising government resources necessitate a legal framework to secure tax benefits and protect consumer rights,” says Ayush Kaushik, an Advocate at the Supreme Court of India. In a complaint filed by lawyer Amit Vyas regarding ticketing practices for the upcoming Coldplay concert in Mumbai, it was alleged that BookMyShow engaged in unethical practices that obstructed genuine fans from purchasing tickets. The complaint accused the platform of allowing bots to purchase tickets, which then appeared on resale platforms at exorbitant prices, suggesting possible collusion between BookMyShow and third-party resellers. The complaint cited several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, that could be applicable to the alleged scalping activities. These include:

India’s ticket scalping issue is addressed through laws like the Consumer Protection Act, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and state-specific legislation. For instance, Rajasthan Entertainments and Advertisements Act (1957) and Maharashtra Entertainments Duty Act (1923) prohibit ticket resale for profit and above face value, respectively. Section 3 of the Competition Act, 2002, prohibits anti-competitive agreements and practices. While ticket scalping could theoretically involve collusive behaviour aimed at manipulating market supply and pricing, proving such informal arrangements is inherently difficult. Ticket scalping typically involves individual transactions that are not easily categorised as collusive behaviour, hindering effective legal action. Furthermore, the Act does not specifically target the issue of scalping, limiting its applicability in consumer protection contexts. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 includes provisions against unfair trade practices. According to Section 2(47) of the Act, an “unfair trade practice” refers to any method adopted to promote the sale, use, or supply of goods or services that involves deceitful, false, or misleading representations or actions. These practices can include: Misleading the public about the price of goods or services, implying they are sold at a regular rate when they are not. Hoarding or destruction of goods, or refusal to sell goods or provide services in a manner that raises the cost of goods or services (as outlined in Section 2(47)(v)). In the context of ticket scalping, if a ticketing platform or organiser engages in hoarding by deliberately restricting the availability of tickets to create artificial scarcity, this could be classified as an unfair trade practice. For example, if a platform sells tickets but simultaneously uses bots to buy up a significant portion for resale at inflated prices, it could be seen as hoarding.

While the Consumer Protection Act provides some protections, its enforcement mechanisms are primarily designed for direct sales rather than the complexities of



resale. Moreover, the absence of explicit anti-scalping provisions makes it challenging for consumers to seek redress. “Consumer Protection Rules, 2020 require sellers to verify ticket authenticity. However, since tickets are sold through third-party websites, there’s no grievance redressal mechanism for buyers,” says Ayush Kaushik. The BNS, the IT Act, the Consumer Protection Act, and the Competition Act, collectively illustrate the fragmented and ineffective approach to addressing ticket scalping. The lack of cohesive legislation creates significant gaps in consumer protection, allowing scalping to persist.

Scalping regulations in other countries Internationally, countries combat ticket scalping through legislation. France prohibits resale above face value without organiser consent, while in the US, states like New York and California restrict resales to face value. The UK has amended its Consumer Act and Criminal Code to address the issue. In Australia, *Eventim UK Ltd v. Vivendi Universal SA* case in 2009 reinforced contract enforcement against unauthorised resales. The Fair Trading Act in New South Wales limits resale prices to 10% above face value, while the Ticket Scalping Act 2018 penalises both usage. The United Kingdom’s Consumer Rights Act 2015 mandates transparency in reselling, with the CMA successfully challenging Viagogo in *Watson v. Viagogo*. The Digital Economy Act 2017 enhances consumer protections, while *R v. Andrew Lee and Peter Hunter* resulted in scalper convictions under the Fraud Act 2006. In Canada, the Ontario Ticket Sales Act 2017 bans bots and caps resale prices at 50% above face value, reflecting a global trend towards stricter ticket scalping regulations. Countries are leveraging technology to combat ticket scalping, adopting solutions such as blockchain technology for secure ticketing systems and AI-powered platforms to detect unusual sales patterns. However, modern technology com-

plicates enforcement, enabling companies to exploit regulatory gaps and hinder local law enforcement. Projects like Fanz and GUTS utilise blockchain for authenticity and trackability, enhancing security and transparency in ticketing systems. Advocate Mishi Choudhary, founder of SFLC.in, an advocacy platform that works for digital rights, however, says that blockchain can help with authenticity, not scalping. “For scalping, regulating prices is more effective.” Proposed solutions To combat ticket scalping effectively, there is a need for central legislation, considering international best practices and stakeholder impact, to ensure entertainment remains accessible to all. “This is a matter which requires consideration at the Central level... someone in the Ministry of Finance and everyone should take a look,” says Vyas.

Proposed solutions include establishing specific anti-scalping legislation that clearly defines scalping practices and outlines penalties, alongside capping resale prices at a reasonable level, such as 10% above the original price, to deter scalping while allowing flexibility for genuine resellers. Choudhary highlights the BOTS Act as a good example of legislation addressing automated ticket purchases leading to scalping. The Act requires disclosure requirements, monitoring, and reporting. Encouraging primary ticketing platforms to create controlled secondary markets can enhance transparency while implementing stricter penalties for scalpers and buyers would emphasise the seriousness of this issue. Kaushik suggests compulsory ticket sales through Indian entities to combat black marketing and tax evasion, with criminal prosecution for violations. Robust data privacy regulations should be introduced to protect consumer data and enhance the integrity of ticket sales. Additionally, Vyas suggests implementing Blockchain technology and forming a committee with a retired judge and cyber expert to provide guidelines to combat ticket scalping.