

INDIA AND CHINA

Setting to rest all speculations on Arunachal Pradesh, India and China have resolved to uphold the political direction from their respective leaderships to resolve the boundary dispute. The decision came at the end of the 25th Round of Talks between the Special Representatives (SR) of India and China on the Boundary Question in Beijing, NSA Ajit Doval held a meaningful meeting with Wang Yi, his counterpart and agreed to eight-point plan to expedite the resolution of protracted boundary dispute. The two are reported to have held candid and in-depth exchange of views on the most contentious issue between the two countries. This is significant in view of the recurring assertion by China over parts of Indian territory, especially Arunachal Pradesh. The SRs decided to continue negotiations on a framework for the settlement of the boundary question as per the agreement signed in 2005. Already under this agreement, an expert groups are working on delimitation and border management and these groups would also expedite their work. In order to expedite their work, Doval and Yi agreed that these two groups must quickly finalise their respective terms of reference. Leaving no room for mischief and misunderstanding the two sides have agreed on to address the local issues that crop up occasionally due to unmarked boundary promptly through diplomatic and military channels. This is significant in view of the The two sides discussed ways to improve understanding of LAC in appropriate areas, for better border management. The confusion is most glaring on the Line of Actual control in Ladakh where the Galwan clash proved to be a major setback in the India-China ties at a time when things were going fine. The SRs have signed on creating more LAC meeting points where the local Army commanders would connect in case of confusion. Doval-Yi talks have resolved to hold the next meeting of the Group on trans border Rivers and continue to exchange hydrological data. He next round of border talks will be held in India next year.

Handle AI detection with caution

LT GEN DS HOODA RETD

Pangram is notable because it analyses bodies of public writing and publishes conclusions on whether they are AI-generated. It investigated winners of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize and publicly reported that four of the ten recent regional winners showed strong signs of AI usage in their writing. Pangram also has a browser extension that scans text on feeds such as LinkedIn, Substack and Reddit and inserts labels such as “Human” or “AI” as users browse.

Pangram has its share of critics. The Wall Street Journal editor James Taranto called Pangram a “smear machine” after three editorial columns in his newspaper were labelled as AI-generated. American journalist Taylor Lorenz was accused on X of using AI to write an article for Vanity Fair. Lorenz denied the allegation, and Pangram CEO Max Spero investigated the result and concluded that the detector had made an error.

Today, much of the debate around AI detectors is about their accuracy and the reputational harm to writers. However, for countries that rely on externally developed digital systems, the implications go beyond individual reputation.

Consider this scenario: a respected figure publishes a serious strategic paper that challenges a widely accepted position. It is run through Pangram and tagged as 71% AI-generated. It triggers a social media storm and the writer is discredited. The arguments made in the paper are not even debated. A technical judgment about how a piece of writing may have been produced becomes a verdict about its intellectual credibility. This has deeper implications in an age where authenticity, credibility and belief are increasingly contested.

could be argued that AI detectors are neutral tools, devoid of any geopolitical significance or power. This would be an extremely simplistic way of thinking. We have been on this ground before. Search



engines arrived as simple tools to find what already existed on the Internet. It took many years to realise that Google does not merely retrieve information. It ranks, curates and contextualises it. A change in ranking logic can amplify one political framing and bury another, elevate one interpretation of a crisis, shape what billions encounter first, and therefore what they are most likely to believe.

Social media was initially seen as a neutral connection to interact with friends. We now understand that these platforms shape perceptions, inflame emotions and could even divide societies. Social media has become an indispensable tool in information warfare between nations. In both cases, the consequences went far beyond viewing the technology as an unbiased conduit. AI detection carries a similar potential. It could become another choke-point through which information is increasingly authenticated and trusted. Histor Modern societies have gradually outsourced important parts of the information and knowledge environment to

technological systems. Search engines, social media platforms, generative AI, and now AI-detection systems are part of an emerging epistemic infrastructure through which societies discover and authenticate knowledge. In this infrastructure, authentication may prove especially consequential because it acts directly on credibility.

A search result can be buried but still found with effort. Dominant narratives on social media can be countered, even if by a minority. However, an important piece of work classified as inauthentic can be discredited before its arguments are even engaged with, making authentication a far more potent gatekeeper of credibility. In a post-truth environment, where trust is already fragile, and competing actors routinely seek to undermine the credibility of institutions and experts, authentication becomes a potential instrument of information control.

For India, this should be viewed as more than an academic integrity issue. We already operate in a vulnerable information environment due to our technological de-

pendencies. India relies extensively on platforms, algorithms and AI systems that are foreign-owned and foreign-governed. These technologies already mediate what information is discovered, amplified and consumed. If externally developed authentication systems also begin determining what is considered genuine, another layer of dependence is added to the information environment.

There is another India-specific issue. Models trained largely on native English set the standard for what human writing should look like, and detectors treat departures from that standard as suspect. A 2023 Stanford study found that widely used detectors flagged genuine essays by non-native English writers as AI-generated more than 60% of the time. Peer-reviewed work this year has reported the same bias. Systematic misclassification of this kind could disproportionately discount Indian scholarship, deepening our reliance on foreign strategic thinking.

This is why the issue goes beyond academic integrity into national security. Nations are already raising security concerns about who holds their data and who controls the networks they depend on. Authentication raises a further question: who decides what is accepted as genuinely human-authored? In a contest increasingly fought over credibility and belief, the ability to certify the authenticity of competing ideas is a strategic capability. For India, which produces much of its intellectual and strategic work in English as a second language, the exposure is sharper. History

This does not mean India should reject foreign technologies or attempt to build indigenous substitutes for every detection system. The larger concern is not where Pangram was built, but the authority we choose to give systems like it. If judgments about whether Indian scholarship, journalism or strategic thought are genuinely human come to depend on opaque external systems, a seemingly narrow question of AI detection could become one of intellectual and strategic autonomy.

PLAYING VIOLIN FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

SUMIT PAUL

THERE is an adage in my mother tongue Dari (Afghan variant of Persian), “Mausiqi az kamtar an’ dard-e-beemaar-o-mamaat” (music lessens the pain and agony of death and illness). During my cancer treatment, I would visit the music therapy hall at a hospital in England and play the piano and the violin all alone. I felt calm, and my pain and agony subsided considerably. Later, I played these musical instruments for patients and senior citizens at old-age homes.

Music therapy is becoming popular in India. Many major hospitals have dedicated rooms where light music, preferably instrumental, is played for the patients. Some old-age homes also have music rooms. I contacted hospitals, nursing homes and elder care homes in Pune and told them that they could approach me any time for a music session. I made it clear that I would not charge anything. Patients’ smiles brimming with satisfaction were my remuneration. Now, many doctors and even patients recovering at home request me to play the violin for them. It gives me im-



mense joy.

Once, a woman asked me to play for her ailing father, who was in his eighties. His pancreatic cancer was in its last stage. When I arrived at their place with my violin, he asked me in a feeble voice, “Please play ‘Rahein na rahein hum mehka karenge’,” a classic song from the film Mamta (1966). His daughter

told me that her mother would sing it for him. With tears in my eyes, I played it twice. Yet, he said, “Encore”. He passed away a few hours later.

A couple at an old-age home asked me to play “Ye dil tum bin kahin lagta nahin hum kya karenin” from Izzat (1968). Luckily, that place had a music room and a piano. When I played the song for

them, they began to cry like kids. I also cried with them. This is the power of music. It connects you instantly with strangers. Music& Audio

There are certain film songs which appeal to patients and senior citizens — “Zindagi ka safar hai ye kaisa safar” from Safar (1970), “Ye jeevan hai iss jeevan ka” (Piya Ka Ghar, 1972), “Zindagi kaisi hai paheli hai” (Anand, 1971) and “Zindagi ke safar mein guzar jaate hain jo makaam” (Aap Ki Kasam, 1974). Terminally ill people often become philosophical; some of them wallow in self-pity. No wonder they prefer sombre numbers.

Some doctors told me that what medicines couldn’t do, my music did. It is my life’s mission to make people happy with my music. I have performed for kids suffering from leukaemia and other blood disorders. Playing music for them made me realise the transience of life and relationships. We all have to go, but if we can bring a smile to a sad face, our existence makes a semblance of sense. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “To know even one life has breathed easier because you’ve lived — that’s to have succeeded.” The writer is a Pune-based freelance contributor

Language inseparable from context

SWATI TIWANA

SOMEWHERE between Shakespeare’s thou and GenZ’s bro, we seem to have misplaced something — not language, but context. From thou to you, from “Yours sincerely” to “Seen”, from carefully constructed sentences to “vasteguna huiya” — a playful exclamation with no literal meaning, popularised during the GenZ protest at Jantar Mantar — language has travelled a long distance. That is what makes language fascinating. It refuses to stay still.

Shakespeare’s Elizabethan English, with its elaborate flourish, was once perfectly natural to its audience. Centuries later came letters, emails, WhatsApp, memes, GIFs and emojis. Today, vocabulary can emerge on social media and become mainstream before dictionaries

catch up. This linguistic revolution is no longer confined to the young. Millennials use GenZ slang. Parents use it. Even generations that once complained about “kids these days” now use words first encountered on Instagram.

And why not? Every generation invents its own shorthand and inside jokes — sometimes meaningful, ironic or gloriously absurd. It may bewilder one generation while perfectly capturing a moment for another. That is the beauty of evolving language. But is it evolving faster than etiquette?

There is nothing wrong with slang, abbreviations or emojis. They have made communication quicker. But an emoji is also a caricature — it simplifies and exaggerates an emotion. That is why context matters.

I once received a condolence message accompanied by a crying emoji. The inten-



tion was compassionate, yet the emoji felt strangely out of place. Grief is solemn. Condolences are among those moments when communication needs quietness. A crying face, perfectly acceptable in casual conversation, suddenly felt informal and almost unserious. The message wasn’t offensive, but it reminded me that digital fluency does not automatically translate into social intelligence.

We talk about social media literacy in terms of misinformation, cyber safety, privacy and responsible posting. All are important. But perhaps there is another dimension: knowing how to behave. When is slang appropriate? When does humour become insensitive? When does an emoji add warmth, and when does it trivialise an emotion? When does informality turn into disrespect? These are questions not of grammar,

but of judgment.

Every generation has its language. What one considers rude, another may find refreshingly casual. Neither is entirely wrong. The answer is not to make one generation speak like another, but to learn code-switching — not merely between languages, but between contexts.

You can say “OMG” to a friend and “I am deeply sorry for your loss” to someone grieving. Communication is not merely about what we say. It is about what the moment deserves.

Beneath all the new words, abbreviations and emojis, let us hold on to the one thing that should never need an update: Grace. Because words will keep changing. Our sense of when, where and how to use them should not.

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