

THE ECHO

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ear Reader,

I'm excited to welcome you to the inaugural issue of The Echo for 2024. School may take a break but we sure don't! Our dedicated team has been busy curating a collection of global affairs,

captivating tales from school events, and updates on national happenings.

In our International section, Vatsala covers the ongoing crisis in Bangladesh. Meenakshi examines the Taliban's hold on Afghanistan, and Aanya highlights the remarkable achievements of Sunita Williams.

Turning our gaze to national matters, Yadavi covers the Pune Porsche car accident, while Aditi Parashar delves into the contentious issue of illegal land allotment in Karnataka.

In school news, Yadvi and Avishi conducted interviews with the basketball team players and their coach, Lalith Sir, to gain insights into preparation for upcoming games. Meanwhile, with college application season in full swing, Aanya engaged in a thoughtful conversation with Saritha Ma'am, our school counsellor.

For those who enjoy thought-provoking commentary, Aanya explores the question of whether the West is at fault in the Ukraine conflict, and Mehul presents a timely piece on the complex situation in Ladakh.

Meanwhile, Vatsala brings a lighthearted touch to the frenzy surrounding Coldplay's ticket sales. To top it all off, don't miss out on our first crossword puzzle at the end, filled with spooky clues and fun trivia related to Halloween, perfect for testing your knowledge while getting into the festive spirit.

This issue would not have been possible without the hard work of the Masthead and the kind support of Alka Ma'am; for this, I am immensely grateful. From the Echo family to yours, we wish you a happy festive season!

Yours,

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Hainting THE NEW DAWN RED

Natsala Sudeep



E

ver since its formation in 1971, Bangladesh has seen major political fallout on many occasions—but none as severe or permanently impactful as the changes that took place on August 5th, after the departure of Bangladesh’s longest-serving leader, Shaik Hasina.

Hasina resigned after weeks of fatal student-led protests, which began after a major turning point in June 2024, when the High Court reinstated a quota

reserving 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans from Bangladesh’s 1971 War of Independence. Protests began against this quota due to students viewing it as favouring supporters of the Awami League (which Hasina was a part of).

The Supreme Court would eventually reverse this quota to 5%, but this was after irreparable damage had already been done—violence between the police and protestors was virulent, and Hasina’s actions- referring to protestors as “razakars” (a term referring to those that opposed Bangladeshi Independence in 1971), and refusing to release detained student leaders- only added fuel to the fire.

In an attempt to gain some semblance of control over the protests, Hasina repeatedly shut down the internet in the country, announced a curfew, and jailed approximately 11,000 protestors. However, after the army withdrew support, Hasina was forced to flee, with a 17-member interim government led by Mohammed Yunis being instated.

This political unrest was also deeply entwined with Bangladesh’s ongoing economic crisis- the GDP growth fell from 6.01% in 2022 to 3.78% in 2023. The World Bank’s April 2023 update called this into the spotlight, fearing a steady economic decline. Bangladesh’s financial struggles also include a negative balance of payments, tight liquidity conditions, reduced exports, and a rising inflation rate.

These issues on a whole have increased worry when it comes to Bangladesh’s role in foreign trade; the turmoil has called into question the continuation of Bangladesh’s bilateral trade agreements and the stability of foreign investments.

The protests have created a lasting impact on Bangladesh: they claimed the lives of over 600 people and injured many more, with extensive looting and incidents of arson having occurred in various government buildings, including the Prime Minister’s residence. Unfortunately, the troubles have not stopped there, with the humanitarian needs of refugees (specifically Rohingya refugees) being affected by shocks caused by extreme flooding in August 2024.

Additionally, protests have continued, with protestors taking to the streets to demand that the age limit for government jobs be raised from 31 to 35. Protestors gathered around the National Museum and marched to the official residence of Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunis. After failed attempts by police to get the crowd to disperse, they resorted to tear gas and rubber bullets.

Evidently, Bangladesh’s problems do not stop here. Despite an overhaul of the government, the country continues to face political and economic unrest, which can affect national and foreign relations. It remains to be seen whether Bangladesh will be able to stay on track to a peaceful future, or if lawlessness will continue to run rampant.

Behind Closed Doors : THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS UNDER TALIBAN RULE

MS Meenakshi



A

midst the several ongoing conflicts and crises in the world, one of the most continuous yet frequently overlooked issues seems to be that of Taliban controlled Afghanistan. Not only does this invasion of the Pashtun, an Islamic fundamentalist group, have a major impact on the country’s economy, but on the dignity and safety of its citizens as well.

Afghanistan is no stranger to crisis, be it natural disasters, conflict, or invasion. Ever since they took over once more in 2021 after less than a decade, the Taliban have been wreaking havoc in the country, imposing their interpretations of the Islamic texts, curtailing the rights of the people.

The economic crisis worsened in 2022, driven by multiple factors, including significant reductions in donor aid in 2021, leading to wage cuts for essential workers; a severe liquidity shortage; soaring prices for necessities like food; and external government restrictions affecting the banking sector. Millions of children continued to suffer from acute malnutrition, and over 90 percent of Afghans faced food insecurity throughout the year.

Women and girls were disproportionately impacted by the crisis, partly due to Taliban measures that forced many women out of paid employment and hindered female aid workers from performing their duties. This isn’t the first time women’s rights have been snatched away ruthlessly by the Taliban, either. Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani education activist, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has given the world a personal view on her experiences of having her rights to education and basic freedom suppressed by the Taliban, all in the name of Islam. Women are banned from higher education(secondary school), from teaching at or attending university, and from working.

Moreover, women are also banned from working for NGOs, political and social participation, access to public spaces such as parks and in some places, they’re banned from leaving the house without a mahram (close male relative).

Current Scenario

Despite the Taliban’s promise that the rights of women would be respected, and that their rule will be ‘positively different’ from the period of 1996 to 2001,things have only gotten muddier for the women of Afghanistan ever since another recent update on the bans upon women’s basic rights.

In August 2024, the leader of the Taliban, Hibatullah Akhundzada, approved new laws further dehumanising women, reducing their status to mere objects belonging to a nation, or a man. The new laws specify exactly how women should dress, their faces to be covered to avoid ‘temptation’, how they must act around men that aren’t their relatives. Moreover, by the laws, a woman’s voice is described to be ‘intimate’, thus banning women from singing, reciting poetry, or reading aloud in public.

Under these new restrictions, women are farther away than ever from education, employment, and public life. The laws enforced a complete erasure of women from cultural, academic, and social spaces, intensifying their isolation. Female journalists, teachers, and healthcare workers who had previously served vital roles in Afghan society were driven from their professions, further eroding the infrastructure that supported women and children.

With education for girls already severely limited, these new laws placed an even heavier burden on families and communities struggling to survive in the midst of widespread poverty and hunger.

Retaliation and the fight for rights

The Taliban are brutal in silencing any revolt against their actions. The space for freedom of expression and media continues to shrink drastically, and several journalists have been killed, bombed, or arbitrarily arrested and harassed for reports critical of the Taliban or violating Taliban rules.

However, even with the risk of losing their lives or facing worse punishment looming over them, the women of Afghanistan have not been silent. They’ve posted videos of themselves, singing, defiantly going against the laws. Despite the harsh restrictions imposed on them, these women have found ways to resist, using their voices as a powerful tool of protest.

The United States- infamous for meddling in each and every International affair that has risen till date- had been pushing NATO to expand eastwards and establish friendly relations with Ukraine, which laid the groundwork for Putin's hostile approach toward Ukraine. Moreover, in 2014, after Russia annexed Crimea, political scientists agreed that “the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for this crisis.”

Their acts of defiance—whether through song, public speeches, or organizing protests—demonstrate their unyielding determination to fight for their rights and freedom. This resistance has inspired global solidarity, drawing attention to their courage and the plight they face under oppressive conditions.

Concerns from the International Community

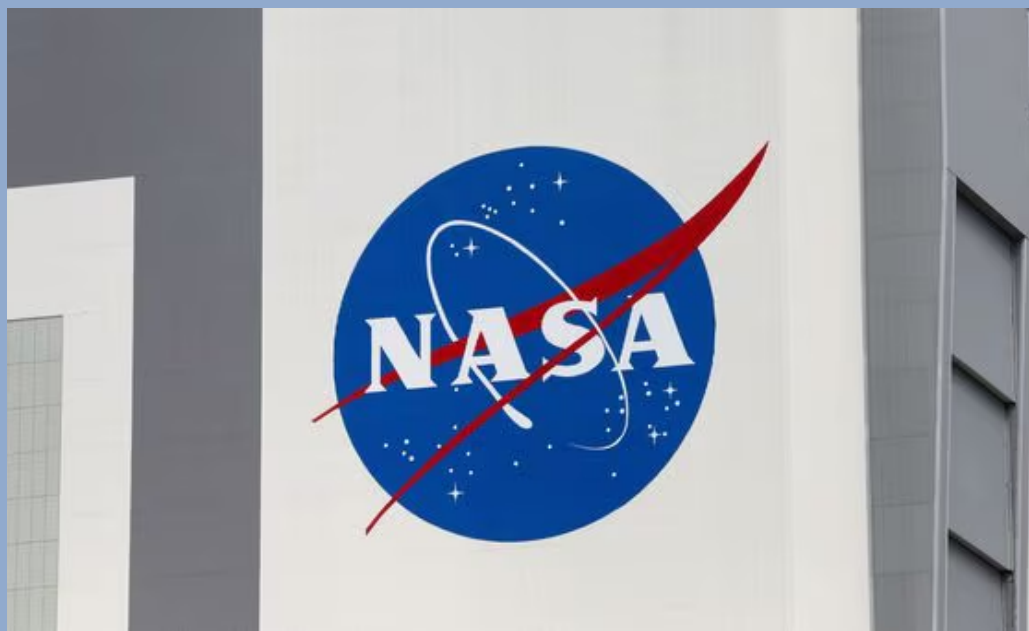
Human rights organizations express deep concern over the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

UN Women Special Representative Alison Davidian emphasized the resilience of Afghan women, urging the international community to invest in their efforts. Along with several UNSC (United Nations Security Council) resolutions to extend support systems to the people of Afghanistan, the International Criminal Court (ICC) requested to re-open investigation for a formal case, following the 2022 request from the former Afghan government to defer to their own investigations. This issue has been a key point of discussion at the 79th session of the UN General Assembly held in September, with actress Meryl Streep stating, “A cat may feel the sun on her face. She may chase a squirrel into the park... A bird may sing in Kabul, but a girl may not, and a woman may not in public. This is extraordinary. This is a suppression of natural law. This is odd.” To all this however, the Taliban’s only response was cold denial, blatantly refusing to admit to any human rights violations in the country. “Human rights are protected in Afghanistan and no one is discriminated.” Stated Hamdullah Fitrati, a spokesman for the Taliban. He further accused ‘some women’ of spreading hate propaganda against Afghanistan to make the situation ‘look wrong’. With discussions reaching new heights at the recent UN General Assembly session, as well as the steely response of the Taliban, it’s important to remember that although no one can truly change the minds of such oppressors at the moment, word can still be spread and awareness can be created, in a way to remind those women that they have the world’s support.



From Quick Flight to Cosmic Stay : Williams and Wilmore's Extended Mission

Aanya Jaidka '26



On June 5th, as the Boeing Starliner launched, carrying two American heroes, Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore, to the International Space Station, the NASA control room was filled with excitement and jubilation. The mission, aimed at validating Starliner's transportation system, including its launch pad, rocket, spacecraft, in-orbit operational capabilities, and return to Earth with astronauts aboard, was supposed to last for just 10 days or so.

But on 24th August, NASA Administrator Bill Nelson announced in a live conference that Boeing's Starliner will return to Earth without the astronauts. He went on to say that Williams and Wilmore would continue their work formally as part of the Expedition 71/72 crew until February 2025.

A 10-day mission, now stretched to 8 months—what exactly went wrong?

Firstly, as Starliner approached the Space Station, 5 of its 28 reaction control system thrusters malfunctioned. These thrusters are used to move the capsule around in orbit, particularly to adjust its position as it docks and undocks with the space station.

While 4 of those thrusters were eventually restored, it prompted NASA to launch an investigation into what went wrong

Secondly, the team also found slow helium leaks in the system's propulsion system. Surprisingly, mission managers knew about one of the helium leaks before Starliner's launch but said that it was manageable and unlikely to affect the mission or compromise the astronauts' safety. However, not long after the launch, 2 more helium leaks were detected on the top of the capsule.

Keeping the astronauts' safety in mind, NASA announced that Starliner would be brought back to Earth uncrewed- and it did, on 7th September. NASA also tied up with SpaceX, one of Boeing's rivals, to bring back the astronauts. The SpaceX Crew-9 mission, which was initially supposed to carry 4 astronauts, will now be taking only two so that Sunita and Butch can join them back on their journey home in February, 2025.

Meanwhile, Williams and Wilmore- still stuck in space, have been adapting well to their extended mission. Both have previously completed 2 long duration stays in space and have clarified that they have all the gear they need for their 8 month stay. NASA also added in a public statement that the astronauts are in good spirits and in regular contact with their families.

So what started as a (relatively) quick 10-day trip to the Space Station turned into an 8-month "cosmic sabbatical" for Williams and Wilmore. From validating a spacecraft to becoming SpaceX passengers, they're really getting the full space-tourist experience- just without the return tickets for now!

The Indian Justice system

The Pune Porsche case



In May 2024, a tragic incident occurred in Kalyani Nagar, Pune, involving a 17-year-old who lost control of his father's Porsche, resulting in the deaths of two engineers. The teenager had recently celebrated passing his board exams with a score of 60%, and after consuming alcohol with friends, he drove at an excessive speed of 200 km/h before crashing into a motorbike. One victim died at the scene, while the other later succumbed to injuries in the hospital.

Initially, the juvenile was given a lenient sentence by the Juvenile Court, including a 15-day safe driving program and a brief essay. However, public outcry led to further investigation by the Pune police, who charged the teenager under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Motor Vehicles Act, including culpable homicide not amounting to murder and driving under the influence.

A significant development in the case was the revelation that the teenager's blood sample had allegedly been swapped with that of his mother at a local hospital, an act intended to shield him from harsher penalties. Several individuals, including his parents and hospital staff, were subsequently arrested.

This incident has sparked a widespread discussion on several critical issues, including parental responsibility, underage drinking, and the adequacy of juvenile justice laws in India. The case raises important questions about the influence of wealth on legal outcomes and the accountability of families in such situations.

As the Juvenile Justice Board considers trying the teenager as an adult, the public is closely watching the developments. This case has underscored the urgent need for stricter enforcement of laws concerning underage drinking and reckless driving, as well as broader discussions about juvenile justice reform in India.

Global Be Well Day

Snooze to succeed

-MS Meenakshi & Praneetha G



Pc: Abhimanyu Mehta



Pc: Arghodeep Banerjee

C

hirec's third edition of Global Be Well day was celebrated on 27th September, 2024, with this year's topic being: 'Giving our mind and body the gift of sleep'.

The day started off bright and early with the morning assembly, lifting our sleepy spirits with a humorous, musical and informative play by the students of 9A on the importance of sleep, and how proper sleep enables us to perform better, portrayed beautifully in a manner relatable to us students.

The principal, Katyayini ma'am gave a special address for the occasion, expressing her concern for how the children of the generation do not have much control over their routine, and how we should take control of our own life. In her wise words- 'We have 24 hours in a day- how we manage them is up to us.' The assembly ended there, but it didn't mark an end to the fun.

Activities were planned out throughout the day for primary and middle school students, and for a few hours for high school students, focusing majorly on the topics of knowing more about healthy sleeping patterns and the circadian cycle, and knowing how to maintain proper sleep habits for better productivity.

Activities- Primary school

Grades 1 to 5, were the most active set of students to participate in GBWD's activities, thus far. For two weeks, they had been marching around the school holding placards and signs, showcasing the importance of sleep to their upperclassmen. Students of grade 5, took up the responsibility to make, and explain the meaning behind those placards to their younger peers. Grades 1 and 2, had handcrafted beautiful bookmarks and eye masks, using radiantly bright colours and mandala art designs. Later, they all gathered together to take a gallery walk, and have a glance at each other's art pieces. Grade 3 were stunning performers as they role played different characters, from emojis to animals, wearing self-crafted facemasks, and playfully displaying the benefits of sleep in their roleplay.

Grade 4 participated in a fun circle time activity, a more creative take on the party favourite 'passing the parcel', where they'd ask the one who held the mystery parcel a question about their sleeping patterns when the music stopped. They ended up sharing their experiences with different nighttime routines.

Additionally, they all spent the day enjoying activities such as zumba, yoga, mime acts and insightful monoskit by their teachers, revolving around the aftereffects of using different electronic gadgets before sleep. The day ended with memorable pictures at the photobooth.

Students had a positive outlook towards this game, and some of them made interesting observations.



One of them was from Alankriti, who observed that when her parents sleep late, she feels she should be able to do so too, which makes us wonder about the effect parent's sleep schedules can have on their children.

Activities- Middle School

Entering the middle school block felt like a fever dream. The entrance was surrounded with attention drawing charts and paperwork, talking about the importance of sleep, stopping students midway to read them.

The usual hustle and bustle of rubber shoes grazing the floors finally quieted down and only stillness could be heard. One could say the building was as calm as a sleeping baby.

The smell of fresh paint and art supplies, along with the splashes of paint brushes filled every room, as the students made wonderful posters about healthy sleep habits with eye-catching drawings and creative slogans. They spent their time efficiently by discussing about sleep journaling and going on nature walks, a tip proven to help with effective sleep. They also engaged in physical activities such as guided meditation, aerobics and stretches.

Tejal and Akshara from grade 7F expressed that these activities give them a fresh take on such simple, yet neglected topics, and that the tips on how to sleep better had really helped them sleep better in recent weeks.

The students mentioned that the activities were a refreshing break from their rigorous study routine, and as a plus, they also learnt something new. They did, however, express their desire for more interactive activities.

Activities- High School

The senior grades took this opportunity to catch a break from their rigorous schedules.

Grades 9 and 10 had lots of fun playing charades and tossing the ball, with every turn unlocking a new sleep related word and completing the day's puzzle. They also had sessions on yoga, meditation and aerobics, both parts of keeping one's mind and body relaxed, an essential requirement for healthy sleep.

The yoga teacher, Ms. Vineeta Ditta, spoke about the importance of how warming up with stretches, yoga and meditation, early in the morning, helps improve one's health and fitness, ultimately improving their daily performance. Throughout the session, she focused on poses like the tree pose for improving balance and concentration, diamond pose to help with digestive processes, child pose for relaxation and blood circulation, and lastly, the lotus pose for meditation, which was preceded by a breathing exercise which would improve focus and memory power and clear the mind, allowing one to sleep faster.

At the end of the session, she observed that she'd seen a vast change in most of the student's spirits and attitude, as most of them appeared to look calmer and quieter than before the session, proving that even 2 minutes of meditation and 5 minutes of yoga can completely change our mood and behaviour.

Grades 11 and 12 went through an informative PPT to understand the effects of the circadian cycle in our daily lives, the effects gadgets could have on our sleep patterns, and tips for sleeping more effectively, including those used by the Navy of several nations. They were then asked to write short stories, posters and poems on the effects of healthy sleep, based on what they had learnt from the earlier shown PPTs and videos, which everybody got pretty creative with.

The takeaways

Eventful day as it was, Global Be Well day 2024 has taught us all one very important thing. Even simple day to day topics, like healthy sleep, is something to be discussed, in any school or workplace, to ensure that such simple, yet profoundly impactful matters don't go neglected.

See you in the next edition!



Pc: Abhimanyu Mehta



Pc: Arghodeep Banerjee



Pc: Arghodeep Banerjee

Hoops & Heroes: CHIREC'S RISING BASKETBALL STARS



Pc: Namita Vegesna



Pc: Namita Vegesna



Pc: Abhimanyu Mehta

C

hirec's basketball team is making waves on the court under the expert guidance of Coach Lalith Sir. His unique coaching style blends discipline and motivation, helping the team secure top positions in recent matches and showcasing their talent.

Lalith Sir meticulously handpicks players based on a blend of skill, dedication, and fitness, ensuring each team member possesses 50-60% pure skill and 30-40% ability to execute his instructions. Physical fitness is non-negotiable, and he sets a high standard, expecting players to match his commitment and vision.

Despite limited exposure for the girls' team this year, Lalith Sir remains determined. While they secured third place, narrowly missing Nationals, he

believes in their potential and emphasizes that improvement comes from both school training and individual practice. He encourages players to build chemistry and adapt on the court, stating, "Play as a unit, adapt when things don't go as planned, and don't repeat mistakes." Acknowledging academic pressures on the 12th graders, Lalith Sir continues to nurture a zeal for success, pushing his players toward greatness. His optimism and tenacity make him a true mentor.

The boys' team, led by captain Swaksh Keshri and top player Vidhman Reddy, embodies passion and determination. Swaksh's leadership and Vidhman's drive, inspired by a family legacy (his cousin, who nearly secured a spot on the National Basketball Team), emphasize the importance of broader exposure through training at professional academies. They believe that true growth comes from facing diverse challenges.

Swaksh sets high standards and mediates conflicts among teammates, fostering a no-compromise attitude toward performance. The team inspires younger players to join, showcasing the importance of consistency, discipline, and an unwavering will to improve. Their success is a collective effort, credited to the exceptional guidance of coaches Lalith Sir, Jai Shankar Sir, and Akbar Sir, whose expertise has been pivotal in refining their skills. "We couldn't have reached where we are today without their support," the players agree.

The Chirec basketball team is a beacon of excellence and confidence. Challenges may arise, but the boys and girls do not back down, embodying the valuable lessons from their coaches. With determination and hours of practice, they balance academics and sports, motivating their juniors to aspire to be future players. Under Lalith Sir, they grow not only in skill but also in character, playing for the spirit of the sport and the pride of Chirec. With a bright future ahead, the sky's the limit for this talented team.

Empowering Futures: CHIREC's Roadmap to College Readiness

AN INTERVIEW WITH MS. SARITHA BALANAGAR

Aanya Jaidka

T

he college application season is like a wild roller coaster that every high schooler knows they have to ride, but no one feels

prepared enough for. It's a mix of panic, excitement and the constant ticking of the clock. As the season's approaching, students can be seen wrecking their brains, trying to write their personal statements along with the scramble for letters of recommendations, test scores and extracurriculars.



Pc: Namita Vegesna



Pc: Namita Vegesna

In an interview with Ms. Saritha, a career counsellor at CHIREC, we gained insights into the current college application process, including the challenges students face and valuable tips for navigating this crucial season successfully.

Ms. Saritha began by sharing that while the traditional definition of career counselling states that the process should begin from 9th grade or so, CHIREC has a unique approach. At CHIREC, children are encouraged to explore activities and opportunities in various fields in 9th and 10th grade so that they are better prepared and more confident while choosing their subjects for 11th and 12th. Moreover, 11th and 12th graders are urged to pursue internship opportunities and enrol in college courses related to their fields of interest.

CHIREC actively supports these efforts by periodically offering curated lists of college summer programs and other resources, giving students great opportunities to explore and pursue their passions.

Ms. Saritha also pointed out that it's a big myth that universities are looking for students who are all-rounders. "If you have a weak academic performance, you have no profile. Extracurricular activities can only boost your profile if you have a good academic record," highlighting that a solid academic performance is the crux of a strong college application.

While discussing the red flags admission officers look out for in applications, Ms. Saritha explained how activities that don't align with the applicant's field of interest can undermine their profile, especially if they're not accompanied with a justification. Moreover, listing out activities where applicants didn't show any commitment or consistency definitely weakens applications. It's important for applicants to demonstrate their willingness to take up responsibilities and commit to their chosen pursuits.

There has definitely been a change in the way colleges respond to the college application season as well, particularly through outreach programs in schools, aimed at engaging prospective students. Conducting such outreach programs and college fairs in schools is an excellent way to make students more comfortable with the college application process and moreover, help them gain a better understanding of their options and what they can expect.

Ms. Saritha concluded by saying, "At CHIREC, our goal isn't only to place you at universities, but also to prepare you to navigate the next 4 years." And indeed, the efforts CHIREC has been making to ensure that CHIREC-ians are prepared to navigate the college application process and subsequently, thrive in their future endeavours is truly commendable.

Moves to Medals THE CHESS GLORY



Nikita Rajesh



A

game where the mind creates endless possibilities and outcomes, with a crucial move bringing about a game changer -

turning the tide, setting off a chain of events where deceptive moves and intricate weaving make a trap see invisible until its too late.

chess is a game of wit that requires a plan involving strategies and sacr to pull an unpredictable move which seals the match

This remarkable sport had captivated the world after team India's triumphant and unforgettable victory in the Open and Womens' category, taking the world by a storm. Securing their first ever record of gold with 21/22 in the open category and 19/22 in women's category, India could not be more proud of these brilliant players, who with their grit and passion created a historic moment in the countries rich history of chess achievements.

The Hamilton-Russell Cup was championed by Gukesh D, Praggnanandhaa R, Arjun Erigaisi, Vidit Gujrathi, and Harikrishna Pentala, with Srinath Narayanan as the captain (open category) and The Vera Menchik Cup was won by Harika Dronavalli, R Vaishali, Divya Deshmukh, Vantika Agrawal and Tania Sachdev(Women's category). The Gaprindashvili Trophy was also awarded to India owing to their best overall performance in both categories.

These players' hardwork and love for the sport is one of the main factors of India's success which could not have been possible without remarkable team effort

However there were many notable players who played a key role to seal the deal. Gukesh D on Board 1 and Arjun Erigaisi on Board 3 in the Open section, along with Divya Deshmukh on Board 3 and Vantika Agrawal on Board 4 in the Women's section bagged gold individually. Additionally, Gukesh' performance in this Olympiad was extraordinary, with a score of 9/10 and rating of 3056. His resilience in the nail biting match against China's Wei Yi with a move simplifying the game into an endgame of two knights against a rook was fantastic, showing yet another example of this 18 year olds tenacious attitude.

Arjun Erigaisi is no less, making his opponent falter while playing in a Queen's Gambit declined game, ending with him striking by sacrificing his queen which led to a checkmate, sealing the game in just 36 moves. Divya Deshmukh, an aggressively inclined player scored 9.5 points out of 11 and Vantika Agrawal won 6/9 games and clinched victory spectacularly in their respective boards.

This win proves once again that India is a force to be reckoned with and it adds another page to the history of our ancient and beautiful country. It is truly a proud moment for Indians to bask in the glory of such a special moment.

India continues to aim for the highest of goals even when it seems impossible. Nevertheless, we have managed to touch the stars with our talent and firm belief in ourselves.



Farewell to Legends: THE END OF THE BIG THREE OF TENNIS

Anjali Narayan



There is a crazy stat: there are about 87 million tennis players in the world. 2347 of them are male professionals, and more than 80% of all major competitions for the past 20 years have been won by three individuals.

For over two decades, an elite trio—Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, and Novak Djokovic—has ruled the world of tennis. These three legends, often known as the "Big 3," have rewritten the sport's record books and defined an era of unparalleled excellence. Since Wimbledon 2003, the "Big Three" have won 66 out of 84 Grand Slam Tournaments, with Djokovic winning 24, Nadal 22 and Federer 20 major titles.

Their combined Grand Slam titles, years holding the No. 1 rank and unforgettable matches have captivated fans globally.

However, all good things must come to an end. We are now witnessing the end of this iconic era as they move away from the sport they helped shape. This decline did not happen suddenly, but was a gradual process influenced by age, injuries and the emergence of new talent.

Roger Federer, often hailed as the greatest player in the history of the sport, was the first of the Big 3 to step away from competitive tennis. Federer is renowned for his 20 Grand Slam titles and his effortless elegance on the court. However, as he aged into his late 30s, Federer began to experience the physical toll that comes with a career spanning over two decades. In 2020, Federer underwent knee surgery, which greatly impacted his ability to compete at the highest level.

Despite a brief return to the tennis court in 2021, it became clear that the Swiss maestro's body could no longer cope with the demands of the modern game. Federer officially retired in 2022, saying an emotional farewell to the sport at the Laver Cup.

The king of clay and one of the toughest competitors in tennis history, Rafael Nadal, has also been plagued by injuries in recent years. Nadal is known for his incredible work ethic, athleticism and 14 French Open championships. His career was marked by relentless dominance on clay and incredible resilience on any surface.

However, much like Federer, Nadal's body has started to betray him. Chronic knee issues, foot problems, and other physical ailments have plagued him in recent years.

While Nadal has managed to win Grand Slam titles even in his 30s, his participation in tournaments has become increasingly sporadic. In 2023, Nadal suffered a serious hip injury at the Australian Open, which sidelined him for the rest of the year.

The announcement of Rafael Nadal's retirement at the 2024 Davis Cup Final marks the end of the legendary "Big Three," as he joins Roger Federer in stepping away from the sport.

For fans, Nadal’s retirement is bittersweet. His presence on the court was magnetic, and his rivalries with Federer and Djokovic were tennis’s version of high-stakes theatre.

Each encounter felt epic, a battle not just for a trophy, but for a place in history. And now, with two-thirds of the Big 3 retired, the sport will never quite be the same.

Novak Djokovic remains the final vestige and a rapidly disappearing remnant. This wasn’t the case six months ago - he seemed fitter, stronger and more determined than ever. As of 2023, Djokovic, boasting 24 Grand Slam titles, continues to defy age and remains a formidable force in tennis.

With Roger Federer retired and Rafael Nadal hindered by injury, Djokovic has effectively held back the younger generation, showcasing his enduring dominance in the sport.

His unparalleled consistency, physical conditioning, and mental toughness have allowed him to outlast his rivals and maintain his status as the world’s No. 1 player.

However, even Djokovic is not immune to the passage of time. At 37 years old, he has hinted at the reality of his career winding down in the next few years. While Djokovic may still have a few more Grand Slam victories left in him, as aptly put by seven time major champion John Mcenroe “You never want to count him out”.

An epoch shifting Grand Slam season dominated by Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner has provided the clearest sign yet that the “Big Three” era of men’s tennis is finally over.

Many jokingly call the duo the next Federer and Nadal. Their game is unmatched, their rivalry beautiful to watch, and their sportsmanship inspires the next generation of players. It’s good for the sport to have some new champions. Alongside them, stars like Daniil Medvedev, Andrey Rublev, Alexander Zverev and Casper Ruud are also shaping the future, bringing their own unique styles and fierce competitiveness. Rising talents like Felix Auger-Aliassime, Holger Rune, Taylor Fritz, and Lorenzo Musetti further enrich the landscape, each contributing to a diverse and dynamic tennis scene. With such promising players emerging, the sport is poised for an exciting new chapter, ensuring that the legacy of tennis continues to evolve and inspire.

As the era of the Big 3 comes to a close, it is important to reflect on the legacy they leave behind. Federer, Nadal, and Djokovic have not only set new standards of excellence in tennis but have also pushed the boundaries of the sport, becoming global icons. Their battles on the court have captivated audiences for years, and their sportsmanship, rivalry, and mutual respect have set an example for future generations.



Ukraine Crisis WHO'S BAGGAGE IS IT?

Aanya Jaidka



I would never want Ukraine to be a piece on the map, on the chess board of big global players, so that someone

could toss us around, use us as cover, as part of some bargain...” - Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine The Ukraine conflict, often painted as a battle between East and West, has roots far deeper than Russia's military aggression alone. The West, particularly the U.S. and NATO, shares considerable

blame for stoking the flames that led to this war. Western leaders have been playing a dangerous game of geopolitical chess in Eastern Europe for decades, making Ukraine their sacrificial pawn. Western media has framed the conflict as being driven solely by Vladimir Putin's ambitions. The narrative frequently portrays him as an “irrational” or “crazy” man, obsessed with “creating a greater Russia”

and even going as far as comparing him to Hitler-reducing the conflict to a simple story of a dictator seeking domination. But there are always two sides to every story. While Russia’s actions are indeed aggressive, the West’s role in escalating the situation through NATO expansion and its interference in Eastern Europe cannot be overlooked. Let’s start with NATO’s expansion. After the fall of the Soviet Union, there was an implicit agreement that NATO wouldn’t expand eastwards.

Yet, what did we see? A steady march of NATO expansion right to Russia’s doorstep. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and several others were inducted, with the eventual eye on Ukraine—a country deeply intertwined with Russia in history, culture, and economy. To think Russia would sit idly by while NATO encircled them was naïve at best, provocative at worst. Moreover, at the Bucharest Summit on April 3, 2008, NATO declared that Georgia and Ukraine would eventually become members.

This was seen as a direct provocation to Russia. Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister responded by stating that Georgia’s and Ukraine’s membership in NATO would be a “huge strategic mistake which will have the most serious consequences for pan-European security.” Putin echoed this sentiment, calling NATO’s eastward expansion a “direct threat” to Russia, with Ukraine’s bid to join the alliance being the final straw.

The United States- infamous for meddling in each and every International affair that has risen till date- had been pushing NATO to expand eastwards and establish friendly relations with Ukraine, which laid the groundwork for Putin's hostile approach toward Ukraine. Moreover, in 2014, after Russia annexed Crimea, political scientists agreed that “the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for this crisis.”

In fact, the US Department of State even mentioned that they are “in support of Ukraine in response to Russia’s premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified war against Ukraine.”

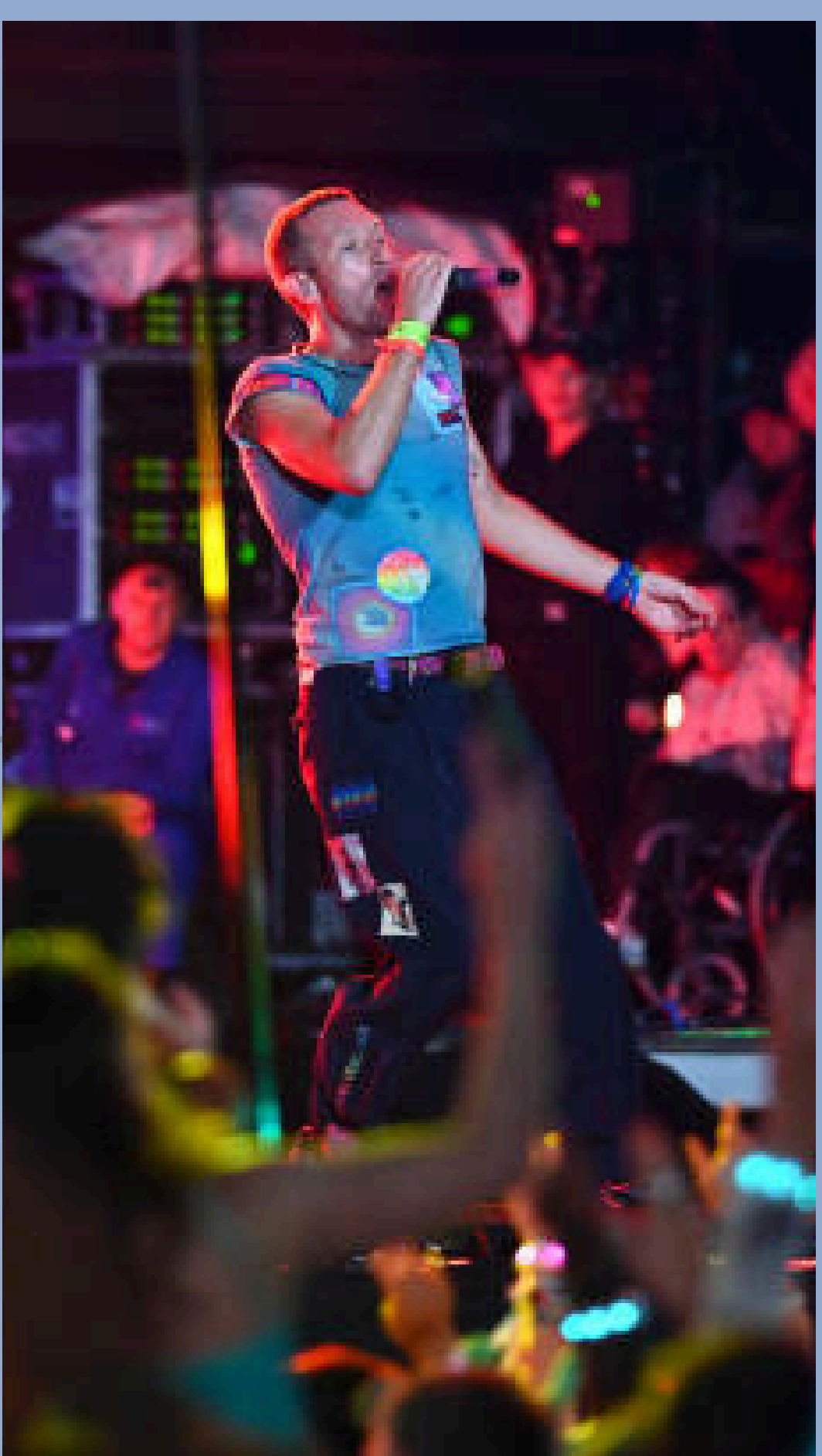
Unprovoked and unjustified? It’s like poking a bear repeatedly and then acting surprised when it roars back. Announcing to the world that they provided approximately \$64.1 billion in military assistance to Ukraine to combat Russia's attacks, while simultaneously playing a major role in igniting the war, is hypocritical to say the least. In a world where geopolitical maneuvers often prioritize power over principle, the actions of the United States and NATO stand as a stark reminder of the complexities of International Relations and more importantly, the way international media can shape narratives to serve specific agendas.

True global leadership requires not just a show of providing financial aid, but a commitment to basing actions on global diplomacy and a respect for the sovereignty of nations. Until these lessons are learned, the cycle of conflict, blame and hypocrisy will continue, leaving ordinary people (in this case Ukrainians) to bear the consequences.



Keep your friends close, AND YOUR LOVED ONES CLOSER

Natsala Sudeep'25



I waited patiently, the numbers on the clock ticking down in time to my anticipatory heartbeats as I anxiously tapped my fingers on my desk. Chris Martin stared down at me from my wall, the Coldplay posters scattered around the walls of my room holding their breaths in the same anticipation as me.

I'd been on tenterhooks the entire past week, ever since I'd seen the tour announcement on my for you page. I had been listening to Coldplay ever since I was five years old in my parent's car; the opportunity to see them live was too tempting to pass up. It was just too bad that half of the country had the exact same thought process... The page on my laptop reloaded, now displaying the updated front page of a popular ticketing site instead of my Coldplay wallpaper.

"COLDPLAY TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW!" it screams at me in brightly coloured letters, practically jumping off of the screen. I screamed in excitement, fingers flying across the keyboard as I joined the queue of people waiting.

The number of people in the queue jumped out at me in bold numbers. I was the 1,50,000th person in the queue? What a terrifying reminder of the time I'd given a competitive exam and checked my rank...

I could feel my heart sink as I watched the seats in the virtual stadium turn blue one by one, like they were mocking me—each blue seat a personal betrayal. I half-expected Chris Martin to pop up on my screen, shaking his head in disappointment, saying, "Sorry, mate, maybe next time!"

I sighed and clicked off the screen, my head falling into my hands. I'd failed in my mission—to see my favourite band at least once. I suppose it had been an unreachable dream anyway, but that didn't mean it wasn't a little disappointing.

More than a little disappointing. I felt absolutely crushed. The vibrant colors that once screamed excitement now felt like mockery, taunting me for my unfulfilled dream. Distractions didn't work either, because everyone on all my social media apps was either flexing their tickets or mourning their lack thereof. Being too ticketless to join group one and too sad to join group two, I instead opened what people called a reliable reselling site and checked the prices of maybe even a level three ticket.

Pay a lakh just to be standing in the nosebleeds? Absolutely not. I tossed my phone aside the moment I saw a vision of my wallet opening itself and the notes inside sprouting wings and flying off.

Villains are not born; they are made. I had not truly understood the meaning behind the saying until that day.

If I couldn't see Coldplay, nobody would.

It only took about a week before the news was everywhere. The rumours had spread like wildfire, and I was more than happy to add fuel to the fire.

Remember those that were reselling their tickets for exorbitant prices? Well, it didn't take too much digging to find out that the practices behind that reselling weren't exactly ethical. Being an upstanding member of society, I took it into my own hands to inform everyone of that fact.

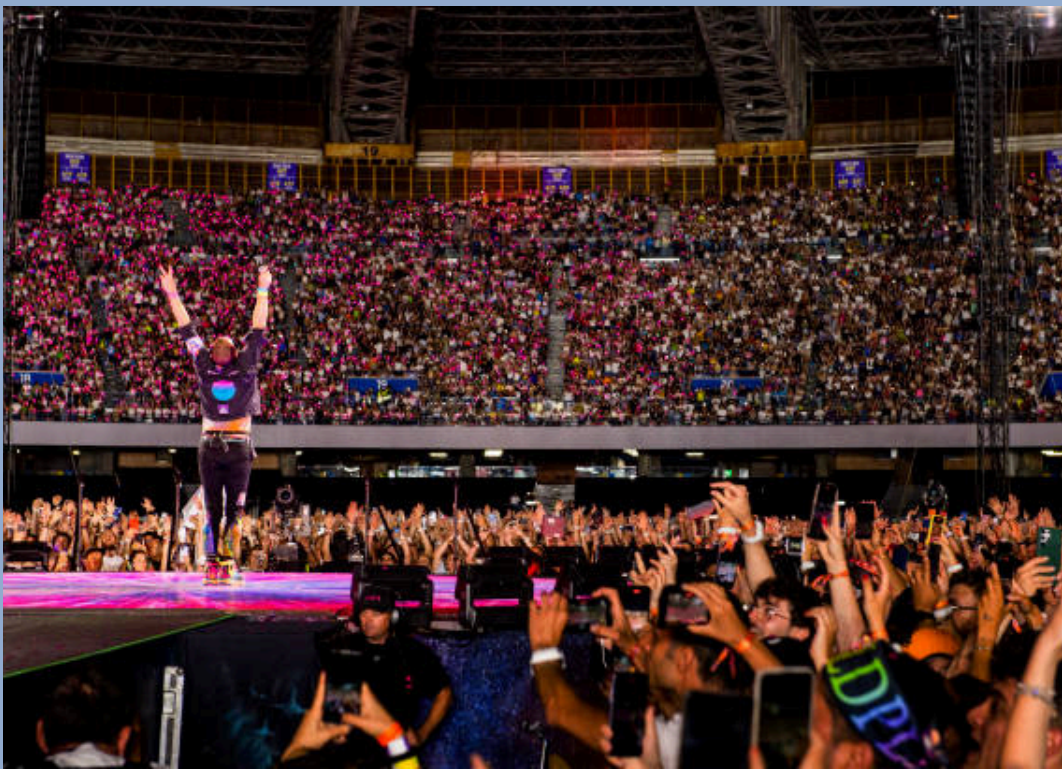
Everyone, including law enforcement. How moral of me.

I walked down the street to the corner shop to pick up maybe a snack or two for my rewatch of Coldplay: A Head Full of Dreams (fifth rewatch, but who's counting?). The crowd mills around me as people whisper hurriedly. "Tour cancelled?" "He'll be arrested..." "What about my refund?"

Never mind about your refund, random person in the crowd. At least you got your hands on a ticket in the first place—I hadn't. I had been stopped from fulfilling one of my dreams. Anyone in my place would have done the same. Anyone that understood the heady frenzy of loving people that didn't know you existed.

I couldn't possibly be misunderstood: doing this was my way of proving my dedication.

Right?



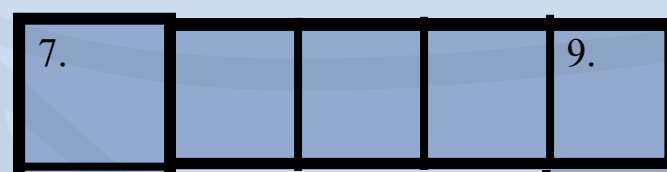
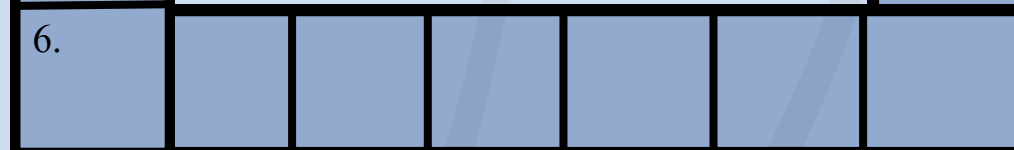
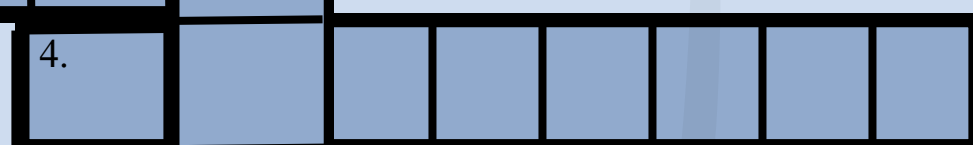
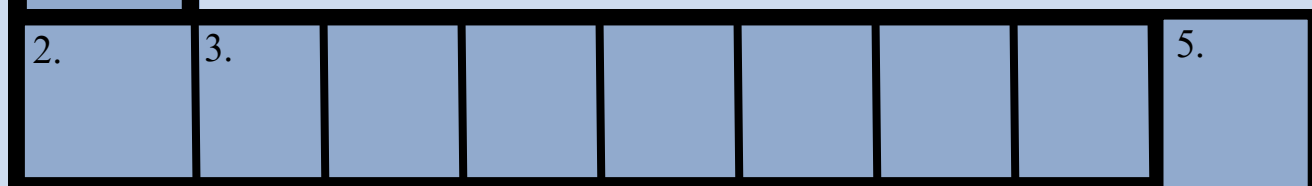
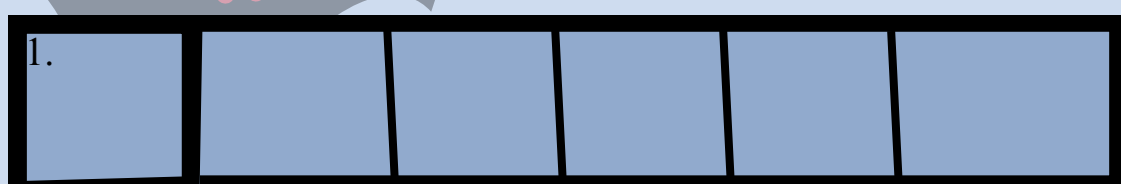
Cross word

HALLOWEEN EDITION



ACROSS

1. The large orange vegetable (7 letters)
4. The witching hour; known to be the spookiest time of the day (8 letters)
2. A farmer's best friend, used to keep away birds (9 letters)
6. Halloween started out as a season to celebrate the season of _____ (7 letters)
7. The Chinese partake sweeping _____ as part of the Qing Ming festival (5 letters)
8. The genre most popularly watched during this month (6 letters)



DOWN

1. Carved beets used by English children during Mischief Night (7 letters)
3. The treat kids receive during Halloween when they go around to people's houses. (5 letters)
5. Women were accused of being a certain species in medieval Salem (5 letters)
7. Trick or (5 letters)
9. The Irish Halloween, known to be the first known origin of the festival as we know it today. (7 letters)
10. The opposite of a dream. (9 letters)



Answers

ACROSS

1. Pumpkin
2. Scarecrow
4. Midnight
6. Harvest
7. Tombs
8. Horror

DOWN

1. Punkies
3. Candy
5. Witch
7. Treat
9. Samhain
10. Nightmare