

(From far left) An 1857 Japanese woodcut by Utagawa Hiroshige.

A 1954 lithograph by Andy Warhol.

Detail of Cats, Lions and Dragons, a 1517 sketch by Leonardo da Vinci, who is believed to have said 'even the smallest of felines... is a masterpiece.'

A still from the Oscar-winning animated film Flow (2024), about a cat in a post-apocalyptic world. WIKIMEDIA, THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS) NEW YORK



(Left) A Kalighat painting (1850-1890). The iconic cat and prawn imagery serves as a comment on priests who target the weak. (Above) Woman, Cat (2005) by Chandana Hore. IMAGES: WIKIMEDIA, MUSEUM OF ART & PHOTOGRAPHY; SHUTTERSTOCK

{ CARELESS WHISKERS } CLAWING THROUGH MYTH AND LEGEND

Smitten with the kitten

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Deep in the marshes of the Nile, a tawny cat leaps into the air, battling birds away. Nearby, also swatting birds away, is Nebamun, a powerful scribe in the golden era of Ancient Egypt, c. 1350 BCE.

The cat's gilded eye tells the rest of the tale. This isn't a pet; it is the sun god, vying to keep light and order by defeating enemies that hover over Egypt's fertile lands.

This mural on Nebamun's tomb is generally considered the earliest surviving intact depiction of a house cat (scientific name *Felis catus*).

By the 5th century BCE, the Greek historian Herodotus was reporting that when a household cat died in Egypt, entire families shaved their eyebrows in mourning.

Around this time, felines were growing in importance in Greece too.

Two coins from this era depict the Greco-Roman heroes Iokastos and Phalanthos, founders of two cities in present-day Italy, playing with their pet cats. This is the first depiction of felines as pets in Europe. (Before this point, incidentally, weasels were adopted as rodent-killers.)

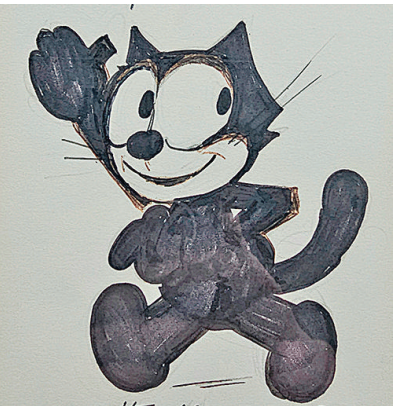
Incidentally, the ancient Greek word for "cat" was the delightfully whimsical "ailouros", or "thing with the waving tail".

In plays from the 4th century BCE, cats turn up as a comic effect, assigned blame when things go wrong.

In ancient Chinese mythology, meanwhile, cats have been worshipped for thousands of years as the feline deity Li Shou, associated with fertility and the protection of crops. (An evocative detail, since cats were first domesticated to keep standing crops and storehouses safe from rodents.)

In Jewish folklore, the first cat lived in the house of Adam, and kept it free of mice. In another origin tale, it is said that the cat was born, from the sneeze of a lion, on Noah's ark, as God's way of helping Noah protect the stores from rats.

Cats appear in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In the latter, a passage tells of



(Above) Still Life with Fish (1980) by KG Subramanyan. (Top) Felix the Cat, created by Otto Messmer in 1919; a precursor to Tom & Jerry's Tom. WIKIMEDIA, MAP

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Brave new world: Cats in videogames

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Cats are famously impossible to control on movie sets, yet filmmakers continue to cast them. They add something to a scene that a dog simply cannot, directors say: an element of intrigue or menace, a sense of being watched, and likely judged. (Scan the QR code alongside for more on our favourite and most troublesome cat-stars in cinema.)

Videogames, of course, are a different matter. See how cats are being cast at will in these worlds, and how humans are being invited to step into their boots.



(Above) Cover art for the 1939 poem 'Macavity' by TS Eliot, with art by Arthur Robins.

(Left) A representation of the Egyptian goddess Bastet, often depicted with the head of a cat and body of a woman.

The African wildcat that is the ancestor of most domestic cats in the world.

Stray (2022): Trapped in an underground city

An orange feline wakes from a nap in a post-apocalyptic world, mistakes a jump, and tumbles into an underground cyberpunk city. Injured and far from its family, it must now learn to navigate this realm, in the company of a defunct drone named

BI2, and ascend the three levels to escape.

Right down to the languid stretching, short napping and sharpening of claws, Stray perfects the physicality of the feline.

Created by the French studio Annapurna Interactive, the art in grey and neons is effective, as is the idea of a world in which there are no humans; just a bustling world of animals and droids.

Cat Quest (2017; right): Kidnap, rescue, myth, on a magic island

Out on the open seas, a cat and his sister are attacked on their boat, the latter abducted by an evil white feline and the hero knocked unconscious. He wakes to find himself on the shores of the magic island kingdom of Felingrad.

Expect real-time combat, surprise dungeons and special tools and weapons, in the

action role-playing game in which the player must fight to rescue his sibling. There's a twist along the way. (He realises he isn't just trying to save his sister but living out an ancient prophecy, as a warrior destined to fight dragons.)

Created in 2017 by the Singapore-based Gentlebros and published by PQube, the brightly coloured art is charming and light-hearted. Two sequels, Cat Quest II and III, have since been released.

Night in the Woods (2017; above): Holding on to hope in a dying town

Set in a fictional, dying Rust Belt town called Possum Springs, populated by zomorphic animals, Mae, a young cat, returns home after dropping out of college, to find that her best friend, Casey, has gone missing.

From her parents' attic, she starts to



a cat Lomasa and a mouse Palita helping each other escape death.

In more recent years, the Kalighat paintings of 19th century Kolkata depict thieving cats, faces entrenched with purpose. There's more to these canvases than whimsy.

"The cat and the prawn imagery, which emerged around the Kalighat temple now in West Bengal, became a commentary on priests belonging to higher castes targeting those who could not stand up for themselves," says Khushi Bansal, curator of Many Lives of the Cat, an ongoing show that traces depictions of the feline in Indian art, at MAP (Museum of Art and Photography, Bengaluru). That's one reason, she adds, that Kalighat paintings often depict the cat wearing a tilak.

The modern-day equivalent of feline worship, of course, occurs in pop culture, entertainment and on social media.

When Lewis Carroll wanted a maddening, whimsical creature full of riddles for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865), whom did he cast but a Cheshire. Then came Felix the Cat (b. 1919), precursor to Tom & Jerry's Tom. TS Eliot's delightful 1939 poem Macavity, about a thieving feline:

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw /

For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law. /

He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair; /

For when they reach the scene of crime—Macavity's not there!

Then the cynical, self-absorbed, lasagna-loving Garfield (b. 1978; left). The arc entered a new phase in 2006, with one of the world's first memes, impudent felines nicknamed LOLcats, with grammatically incorrect slogans about cheezburgers.

Our favourite modern throwback? A rather evocative 2007 digital print in vintage Japanese woodcut style by artist Galina Zhiganova. (Scan the QR code below for a slideshow of this and other art works).

The digital print represents the story about a woman cutting the hem of her kimono so as to not wake her cat. A timeless tale about a timeless feeling. How do they exert such a hold on us?



READ: Web Beneath the Waves: Wknd chats with the author of a new book on the world's undersea internet cables

{ THE SPORTING LIFE }
Rudraneil Sengupta

Debutants' ball

As the T20 World Cup opens the game up to more countries, meet their young heroes

Thomas Draca, who is leading the bowling for Italy as that country makes its ICC T20 World Cup debut, has one of the game's legends to thank for his introduction to cricket.

Born to a Neapolitan mother and a Yugoslavian father, the 25-year-old grew up in Sydney, obsessing about football. Then, Draca's father, a wine connoisseur, met Dennis Lillee at a wine event. The two men hit it off. At some point, Lillee asked if his son played cricket, and was told he did a bit of fast-bowling.

Lillee invited the boy over for a session. And that's how Uncle Lillee, as Draca calls him, became the young Australian's fast-bowling mentor.

Draca made it onto Italy's national team last year.

Love it or hate it, there is one thing the T20 format has done for cricket: helped it spread to countries without a cricketing culture, and helped those countries rise rapidly through the ranks (the learning curve for the T20 format is so much shorter).

With the format's World Cup expanding to 20 teams in 2024, nearly all nations that play cricket

faster than transmission lines and substations can be built. Electrical infrastructure, after all, moves on a decadal clock.

This underpins the sudden corporate embrace of nuclear energy, which is seen as offering steady output, low carbon intensity and predictable costs over decades.

Oil is the new oil

Meanwhile, if Ireland is the cautionary tale, the Middle-East is the counter-example. Energy-rich states are discovering that electricity abundance can be parlayed directly into global AI relevance. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar are using cheap, reliable power, backed by sovereign balance sheets, to position themselves as AI hubs.

This logic increasingly resembles old industrial geography. Aluminium smelters went where power was cheap. AI infrastructure will likely do the same.

Over time, this "compute arbitrage" will matter as much as chip access or the availability of talent. Sovereign wealth funds already finance data centres the way they once financed refineries: capital-intensive assets justified by a long-term edge in energy supplies.

India sits at these crossroads. The country's data-centre market is scaling from a small base into an infrastructure build-out. Installed data-centre capacity currently stands at about 1.4 gigawatts, with projections of more-than-five-fold growth to 8 gigawatts by 2030.

This expansion is being driven by the hyperscalers (large cloud-computing companies), domestic conglomerates and a swelling digital economy, plus a new pressure: national ambition for sovereign AI.

India's data-centre electricity demand is projected to rise sharply alongside capacity, reaching tens of terawatt-hours by 2030, still modest as a share of national consumption but concentrated in specific states and cities.

Announcements over the past two years point to a rapid scaling of data-centre capacity across Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and the National Capital Region (NCR).

The success of India's AI push will hinge as much on developing world-class AI models locally as on delivering gigawatts of reliable, affordable power without destabilising the grid.

As IEA points out, data centres are set to be one of the fastest-growing sources of electricity demand this decade.

As grid planning, renewable build-out, nuclear options and cooling standards are aligned with data-centre siting and AI roadmaps, leadership in artificial intelligence will accrue not only to those with the best models and chips, but to those who can finance, build and operate gigawatt-scale infrastructure at acceptable costs.

The pursuit of machine intelligence, it turns out, leads back to one of humanity's oldest constraints: how to keep the lights on.

now get the chance to compete on the big stage. This means many more players can compete at this level too.

Among the others making their debut at the ongoing World Cup is Zainullah Ihsan, who was 16 when he arrived alone in Scotland, seeking asylum, three years ago. Back home in Kabul, he had been known as a tape-ball quickie. In Glasgow, he watched young men play cricket in a park and felt the deep pull of familiarity. Ihsan asked if he could join, and had soon been inducted into the local club, then Scotland's U-19 team and now the national team.

Canada's opening batter Yuvraj Samra, 19, has an interesting tale too. He was named after Yuvraj Singh, his father's favourite cricketer.

Like Singh, who has hit spectacular 12-ball fifties at World Cup matches, this Yuvraj cemented his place on the Canadian squad with a 15-ball 50 against Bahamas last year.

Haider Ali, 25, UAE's main bowling weapon, was born in a small village in Pakistan's Punjab and worked as a waiter at a high-way dhaba and sold fruits on the streets of Lahore as he chased his cricket dream. When that did not materialise, he moved to UAE to look for work, and ended up chasing the dream there.

Shubham Ranjane's grandfather played for India in the 1950s. His father played for Maharashtra. Ranjane played in the Ranji tournament for Maharashtra, Mumbai and Goa, before moving to the US to try his luck there. Now, at 31, he is at the World Cup.

Here's hoping the debutants have a wonderful experience, as the game opens up to new parts of the world.

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culture

Locked in the volt

AI giants are starting to lean on nuclear power. There may be no other way to fuel their dreams for the future. Where does India stand, at this crossroads? Take a look



A coal-fired power plant in Virginia. Data centres accounted for roughly 1.5% of global power demand in 2024. This could more than double by 2030. AI is the fastest-growing slice of total data-centre load. ADOBE STOCK

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- Google is backing the construction of seven small nuclear reactors in the US.
- Amazon has signed a string of deals for nuclear energy to power its data centres.
- Microsoft plans to reopen the second reactor at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island (the first was shuttered following a partial meltdown in 1979; the second for economic reasons in 2019).

Why is Big Tech turning to power generation, and what are the lessons for India?

AI looks weightless because it travels by fibre and appears "wirelessly" on screens. Increasingly, it is turning into an industrial process that converts electricity into prediction (and heat).

Training large models such as ChatGPT and Claude is energy-intensive; but the process of inference, the serving of billions of queries and searches, is many orders of magnitude hungrier in the aggregate.

As AI scales, the limiting factor may no longer be data or code or chips but something far older: electricity, and the question of how it can be delivered reliably, at scale.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), data centres used roughly 415 terawatt-hours of electricity in 2024, about 1.5% of global demand. This could more than double by 2030. AI is the fastest-growing slice of total data-centre load.

Reliable energy, then, is not some background cost. It can become a core competitive advantage.

Where electricity is scarce or slow to arrive, national AI ambitions can stall. In Ireland, for instance, data centres already consume more than a fifth of all electricity generated, and grid operators, faced with reliability risks, have effectively paused new data-centre connections around Dublin.

Across Europe, grid congestion and permit delays are quietly redrawing the map of digital infrastructure.

In the traditional hubs of Frankfurt, London, Amsterdam and Paris, connecting a large new data centre can now take seven years. The result is a migration of investment toward regions with spare capacity: southern Europe, the Nordics, or any-where that electrons can be delivered faster than permits.

America's version of the problem is less national and more local.

Northern Virginia, the world's densest data-centre cluster, now channels a significant share of the state's electricity to server farms. According to the US Department of Energy, data centres consumed about 4.4% of American electricity in 2023, and that could double or triple by 2028.

In practical terms, AI demand is arriving

