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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Their back stories tell you just how many boundaries and ceilings they each had to breach to get to the pinnacle of white-ball cricket. Shafali Verma disguised herself as a boy to play cricket in the rough-neck country of Rohtak, Haryana. Amanjot Kaur, a carpenter's daughter, first batted with a willow hand-crafted by her father from leftover wood. Deepti Sharma had to hone her skills alone at dawn in the shadow of the Taj Mahal, but now has her street named after her. Jemimah Rodrigues, a pastor's daughter, found her path in life when she watched Sachin Tendulkar from her Bandra balcony as an 11-year-old. Captain Harmanpreet Kaur, while on tour, makes video calls back to her family in Moga, Punjab, to hear the hymns from the local gurudwara. Together, with other teammates who each possess an enchanting life-story, they scripted a symphony of success like no other.

To say that India's historic win in the 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup sparked a wave of elation nationwide would be both true and an understatement. It was the culmination of a hard 51-year journey of heart-breaks and near-misses, since the time the Indian women's team was formed in 1974. Many are likening it to Kapil's Devils pulling off the World Cup victory in 1983. The parallels are all there: long, frustrating decades, even longer odds. Then a euphoric moment of triumph that seems to change everything, not just cricket. With this women's team, that feeling is sharper. The 52-run victory over South Africa is so much more than a sporting milestone. In a country still grappling with gender inequality, what it signals is a whole new era of empowerment.

The sense of occasion was infectious. The 40,000 screaming supporters jampacked into DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai were just the tip of the iceberg. Combined TV and digital viewership, already 60 million halfway through the tournament, peaked at 190 million for the final. The team didn't let them down. Here were young women looking destiny in the eye, not blinking, and plucking it out of the sky. Like Amanjot who dived after a fumble for the catch that swung the match. Or Shafali, still sporting the 'boy cut' her father gave her as a young girl, who smashed 87 off 78 balls, with seven fours and two sixes, and returned to bowl seven overs, taking two wickets with her 'golden arm'. Or wicket-keeper Richa Ghosh, whose whirlwind 34 off 24 balls was scored despite a hairline fracture. The veterans shone too. Smriti Mandhana, the 29-year-old star southpaw, averaged over 54 in the tournament, ensuring fightable totals for her team. Harmanpreet, now 36 and in the national side since 2009, has seen the heartbreak of the 2017 final

when India lost by a whisker. But here she was, captaining with rare calmness, even pulling off a magical catch to give India the victory.

History was at hand, literally. Present at the stadium was the entire women's cricketing galaxy, from the first generation of Diana Edulji and Shanta Rangaswamy to the stars of the near past, like Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami, all partaking of the unbelievable scenes of jubilation and tears of joy. Together, they trace an epic odyssey where women's cricket was always given the short shrift and never got a fraction of the spotlight male superstars enjoyed. Mithali, who captained the 2017 World Cup team, writes for us about those times. Not too long ago, women got just Rs 1,000 as match fees. That has been changing. In 2022, the Indian board, then under Jay Shah, launched the Women's Premier League (WPL) and announced equal match fees for men and women: Rs 15 lakh for Tests, Rs 6 lakh for ODIs, Rs 3 lakh for T20s. Even here, the 2025 Cup set new benchmarks, with India's champions receiving a record prize money of \$4.48 million (roughly Rs 40 crore), more than double from last time, besides a Rs 51 crore cash prize from the BCCI. The WPL, too, became a talent nursery like the IPL: young Shree Charani from Andhra Pradesh's Kadapa, who wove a web of spin around the best in the final, was fast-tracked into the team straight from the league.

Women stars have been a relative rarity in Indian sports, still making the transition from the sporadic individual brilliance of a P.T. Usha, a Sania Mirza, a Mary Kom or a P.V. Sindhu to those who show signs of a system being there, like the wrestlers. This changes that permanently. That's why the legendary Sunil Gavaskar, exulting with everyone else in the stands, calls the win "one of the greatest in the history of Indian cricket", gender no bar. Our cover story, by Deputy Editor Suhani Singh, catches the pulse of the moment as well as the depth of history, along with thumbnail sketches of the stars.

We hope no girl has to hear the lines Deepti heard in her childhood: "*Mat khilao Sharmaji, ladki hai.*" This victory is not just about cricket. It's about rewriting the rules of what's possible when talent meets opportunity, when grit meets recognition, and when a nation finally learns to celebrate its daughters with the same fervour it reserves for its sons. Call it a watershed moment. Call it long overdue. Either way, it's ours to cherish and build upon.



▲ Aug. 16, 2021

(Aroon Purie)

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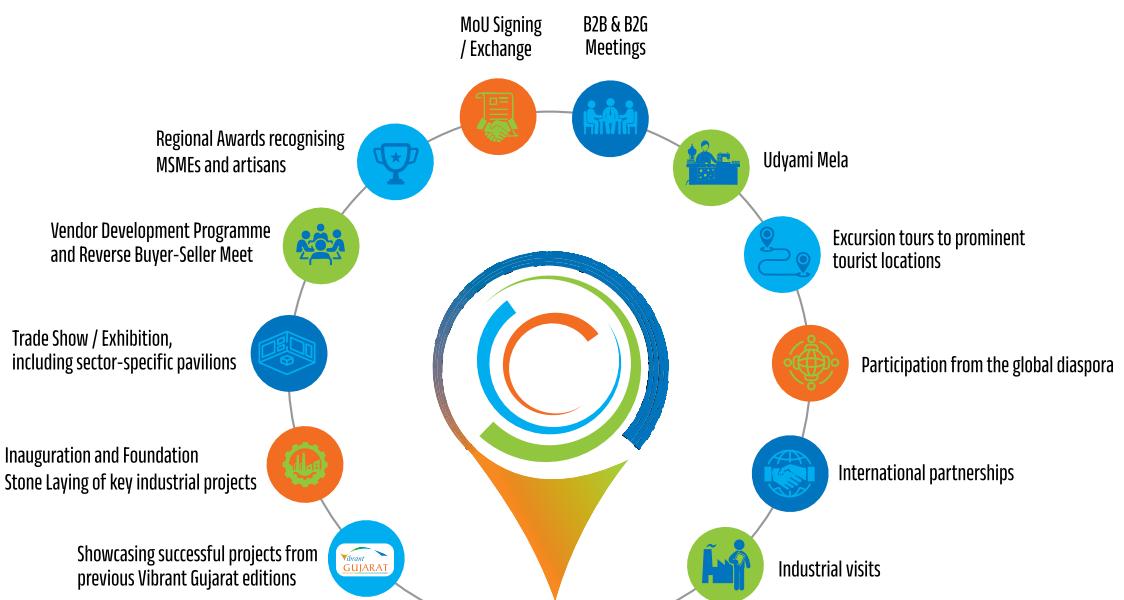
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KEY FEATURES OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCES





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Hon'ble Prime Minister

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Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Gujarat



"Gujarat will achieve the dream of Viksit Bharat through regional development"
Shri Harsh Sanghavi, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Gujarat

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Marked by geographical diversity and cultural vibrancy, Kutch and Saurashtra combine natural heritage with dynamic economic growth. The region thrives on its maritime legacy and strategic ports, serving as a gateway for logistics, trade, and maritime industries. The region is a pioneer in Petrochemicals, Ceramics

and Engineering supported by robust infrastructure and innovation-driven initiatives. Spiritual and Heritage tourism flourishes alongside industrial development. Kutch and Saurashtra reflect a resilient, forward-looking Gujarat, balancing tradition with industrial and economic evolution.



UPFRONT

COLUMN: TRUMP RAISES N-STAKES PG 10

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► FIRING
RANGE Rahul
Gandhi at the
press meet in
Delhi, Nov. 5

► HARYANA POLL FRAUD

H-BOMB OR FIRECRACKER?

Rahul Gandhi presents 'explosive' evidence of vote *chori* in Haryana, accuses ECI of collusion. They ask why now, and not before polls

By KAUSHIK DEKA

ON NOVEMBER 5, AT THE CONGRESS HEADQUARTERS IN NEW DELHI, Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi faced the national press with an explosive charge: Indian democracy, he declared, had been "stolen". Citing thousands of pages of voter data, Rahul alleged that the BJP had turned a widely predicted Congress victory in the 2024 Haryana assembly poll into defeat through a "centralised operation" involving fake, duplicate and deleted voters. The Election Commission of India (ECI), he contended, had acted in concert with the ruling BJP, enabling a "systematic theft of democracy".

THE HARYANA DOSSIER

The core claim: approximately 2.5 million of Haryana's 20 million voters, or 12.5 per cent of the electorate, were compromised. Despite exit polls predicting 54-62 seats for the Congress, the party lost by 118,000 votes statewide and

by a combined margin of only 22,779 votes across eight constituencies. The Congress leader presented granular data as evidence to support his claim that fake votes were engineered to turn the BJP's defeat into victory. He showcased ECI-certified pages where the photograph of a Brazilian model appeared 22 times in the Rai constituency under different names, calling it the most glaring example of fake voting. He also presented documents indicating 521,000 duplicate voters, 93,174 invalid addresses, and 1.9 million bulk voters registered at addresses with over 20 people each.

Rahul also alleged cross-state voter duplication, claiming thousands of voters, including BJP-linked sarpanches from Mathura district, were listed in both UP and Haryana rolls. Referring to large-scale deletions, he asserted that 350,000 voters, about 2 per cent of the electorate, were removed between the LS and assembly polls.

EC'S REBUTTAL

As in August when Rahul cited data to show manipulation in Karnataka's Mahadevapura segment (Bengaluru Central LS seat) in the 2024 general election, within hours, ECI sources sought to brush aside the latest allegations, saying there had been no appeals/formal objections filed against Haryana's electoral rolls before the polls. Out of 90 constituencies, only 22 election petitions were pending in the Punjab and Haryana High Court, the ECI sources said. An election petition can be filed within 45 days of the announcement of results in the HC.

In response, Rahul has challenged the ECI to share CCTV footage of the voting booths, a demand the poll body has so far declined to entertain on the grounds of protecting voter privacy. In December 2024, the Centre had amended Rule 93(2)(a) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, on the EC's recommendation, restricting public access to election-related documents, including electronic records such as CCTV footage, webcasting data and video recordings. Critics called it a

A HARYANA HURRICANE

■ **Rahul alleges 2.5 million Haryana voters were 'fake', helped BJP win '24 state poll**

■ **ECI says no formal plaint; Cong. argues time window too short for full review**

■ **ECI's credibility under question. Ex-CECs say suo motu inquiry warranted**

■ **Cong. says legal recourse now procedural trap, pushing for trial in public court**

■ **Rahul's charges give legitimacy to SIR exercise, for it seeks to clean up voter rolls**

blow to electoral transparency.

Rahul alleges that the ECI's data-sharing system prevents timely scrutiny. Parties get voter lists "at the last moment" and in fragmented booth-level PDFs, not as searchable, machine-readable data. Without consolidated digital files, statewide anomalies like duplicate or bulk voters can't be detected in the short window before polls. While parties receive soft copies—PDFs or data CDs—through district agents and can track booth-level changes on the ERO-Net portal, many ex-election commissioners agree that providing statewide, machine-readable data could enhance transparency; as former chief election commissioner S.Y. Quraishi notes, it could help detect anomalies more effectively.

Most experts argue that the poll body must not brush aside these allegations just because they were not raised before the polls. "The specific instances cited merit a point-by-point response. Any other explanation will only hurt the credibility of the ECI. Technically, their stand may be correct, but it is not convincing," says former election commissioner Ashok Lavasa.

THE SIR DILEMMA

Ironically, the ECI's ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR)—the second phase of which began a day before Rahul's presser—was designed to address exactly these issues. Conducted first in Bihar recently, the SIR is a house-to-house verification drive to remove duplicate, dead, migrated or illegitimate voters while enrolling new ones. In Bihar, the process trimmed the rolls to 74.2 million, a purge of 4.7 million names, and now it has been extended to 12 states and UTs, including poll-bound Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and West Bengal.

But what the ECI sees as an audit, the Congress calls an instrument of manipulation. At the press meet, Rahul even presented four individuals from Bihar whose names were deleted from the rolls despite possessing valid documents. On November 2, 44 Opposition parties decided to challenge the SIR in the Supreme Court, calling it "anti-democratic". The Bihar SIR, too, had faced a challenge in the SC over its timing and methodology, but the court allowed it to proceed after modifications, including accepting Aadhaar as valid voter identification.

On 'vote chori' in Haryana, Rahul is unwilling to move courts. Congress insiders call legal action a time-consuming trap, preferring public mobilisation over prolonged litigation. "We challenged the SIR in Bihar, but gained little," says a party general secretary, framing the fight as one between institutional capture and public conscience. That was Rahul's closing plea, too. Calling the Haryana and Maharashtra governments "illegitimate", he appealed to Gen Z to act, evoking youth-led movements in Bangladesh and Nepal as models of democratic renewal beyond courts and commissions.

As of now, the Congress leader's allegations strike at the core of electoral credibility, while the ECI's defence invokes procedural propriety. Between these competing narratives lies a larger question: can democratic faith endure when trust in the referee itself is contested? ■

▼ VIEWPOINT

TRUMP RAISES THE NUCLEAR STAKES

The US president's call to resume tests has shaken a fragile non-proliferation order, raising the spectre of a new arms race



BY RAKESH SOOD

On October 30, US president Donald Trump shocked the world, including his own nuclear establishment, by announcing on Truth Social that he had “instructed the Department of War to start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis. That process will begin immediately”. His justification was that Russia and China were engaged in testing nuclear weapons and while “Russia is second, and China is a distant third, but will be even within 5 years”.

The confusion generated was palpable. The same day, appearing for confirmation hearings before Senate Armed Forces Committee, Vice Admiral Richard Correll, nominated as head of the Strategic Command, when asked about Trump’s announcement, affirmed full confidence in the “reliability” of the US nuclear arsenal (the STRATCOM certifies it annually in January) only to add that “I wouldn’t presume the President’s words mean nuclear testing”, maintaining that he was “not reading anything into it or reading anything out”.

The confusion was compounded because the US nuclear labs and the Nevada test site fall under the Department of Energy and not the Pentagon. Second, while Russia and China have been developing new weapons, neither has carried out an explosive test; they have tested delivery systems.

On October 21, Russia tested a nuclear-powered cruise missile, Burevestnik, followed a week later by a nuclear-powered underwater drone (Poseidon), somewhat like a torpedo. China has been testing hypersonic missiles and, in 2021, tested a nuclear-capable hypersonic glide vehicle carried on a rocket, capable of orbiting Earth before approaching its

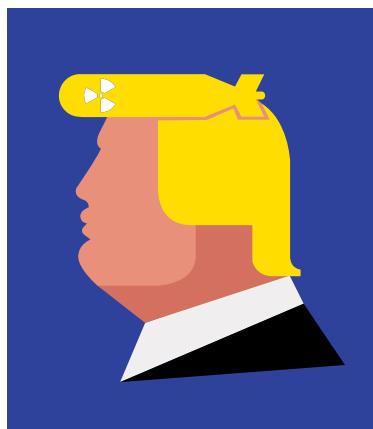


Illustration by RAJ VERMA

A NEW CYCLE OF EXPLOSIVE TESTING WILL KILL THE UNENFORCEABLE CTBT, BUT INDIA HARDLY NEEDS TO SHED ANY TEARS FOR IT

target from an unexpected direction, passing it off as a satellite launcher.

In his testimony, Admiral Correll stated, “To my knowledge, the last explosive nuclear testing was by North Korea, and that was in 2017. But Russia and China have not done an explosion that we know of.” Was Trump mixing up weapon system tests with nuclear explosive tests?

In a TV interview on November 2, Trump doubled down on resuming nuclear testing, this time including Pakistan and North Korea among the countries that are testing. The pushback came the same day from energy secretary Chris Wright on Fox News, calling the US tests ‘systems tests’. “These are not nuclear explosions. These are what we call noncritical explosions,” he said.

Russia’s last explosive test was in 1990, while the US declared a

moratorium on tests in 1992. In 1993, President Bill Clinton took the lead in pushing negotiations in Geneva for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). China and France concluded their tests in 1996, six months before the negotiations ended. Even though 187 countries have signed on to it, it has failed to enter into force. China and the US have not ratified it, and Russia withdrew its ratification in 2023. India, Pakistan and North Korea never joined; while India and Pakistan tested in 1998, North Korea conducted six tests between 2006 and 2017.

A new cycle of explosive testing will kill the flawed and unenforceable CTBT, but India hardly needs to shed any tears for it. It has been observing a voluntary moratorium, but if explosive testing resumes, India will seek to validate its boosted fission and thermonuclear designs with tests. Undoubtedly, Pakistan will follow, though given its growing strategic linkages with China, as witnessed during Operation Sindoar, this need hardly add to our concerns. A resumption of explosive testing will certainly tempt the nuclear wannabes and mark the unravelling of the NPT-led non-proliferation regime.

The sole surviving US-Russia arms control agreement, New START, is due to expire on February 4, 2026, and there are no prospects of any talks on the horizon. An incipient nuclear arms race was already underway; a resumption of explosive testing will just take the lid off. Trump has just raised the global nuclear stakes. And there may be many takers. ■

The writer is a former diplomat, and a foreign policy and strategic affairs expert

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► ANIL AMBANI

UNDER ED FIRE

Anil Dhirubhai Ambani's troubles have now taken a darker turn. On November 3, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) attached assets worth several crores belonging to the Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG), under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, tightening scrutiny around the industrialist. The agency said it is "actively pursuing perpetrators of financial crime and is committed to restituting the proceeds of crime to their rightful claimants". With further investigations under way, here's how the alleged fraud unfolded, what was seized and what the embattled group has to say about the national agency's action.

Text by M.G. ARUN / Graphic by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

ATTACHED ASSETS

₹7,500 cr.

Value of the properties attached by the ED

132

ACRES

Land of Dhirubhai Ambani Knowledge City in Navi Mumbai, as part of "Reliance Communications Ltd's (RCOM) bank fraud case"

Value

₹4,462 cr.

42*

No. of other properties, including office premises, residential units and land parcels, linked to various entities of ADAG

Value

₹3,083 cr.



RCOM and other group companies
availed loans from domestic and foreign lenders from 2010-2012 onwards, of which **₹40,185 crore** is outstanding. Lenders, including the State Bank of India, Bank of India and Bank of Baroda, have declared the loan accounts of the group as fraud

WHY THE ED ACTION

- ADAG was under scrutiny by probe agencies after lenders classified its loan accounts as 'fraud' due to alleged unfair practices and illegal diversion of funds
- Much of the trouble can be traced to August 2024, when Sebi barred Anil and 24 other entities from the securities market for five years for allegedly perpetuating fraudulent schemes
- The ED's investigation was based on a CBI FIR under various sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1989, against RCOM, Anil Ambani and others

*Include a residential property at Pali Hill in Mumbai, the Reliance Centre at Maharaja Ranjit Singh Road in New Delhi, and multiple assets across Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, Mumbai, Pune, Thane, Hyderabad, Chennai (including Kancheepuram) and East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh

THE ALLEGED 'FRAUD' TRAIL

Financial misconduct, as claimed by the ED

 Loans taken by one entity from one bank were used to repay loans taken by other entities from other banks, transfer to related parties and invest in mutual funds—in contravention of the terms and conditions of the loan sanction letter

 RCOM and other companies diverted over **₹13,600 crore** for evergreening of loans, of which over Rs 12,600 crore went to connected parties and over Rs 1,800 crore was invested in FDs and MFs, which were substantially liquidated and rerouted to group entities

 Loans were disbursed without due diligence, many of them processed on the same day as the application and sanction. In certain cases, loans were extended even before applications were submitted

 Huge misuse of bill discounting for the purpose of funnelling funds to connected parties. Certain loans were siphoned off outside India through foreign outward remittances

 Large-scale diversion and on-lending of funds to group-linked entities were "intentional and consistent control failures"

 Between 2017 and 2019, Yes Bank invested Rs 2,965 crore in Reliance Home Finance Ltd (RHFL) and Rs 2,045 crore in Reliance Commercial Finance Ltd (RCFL) via various instruments, which turned non-performing by December 2019, with Rs 1,353 crore outstanding for RHFL and Rs 1,984 crore for RCFL

 Funds collected by Reliance Nippon Mutual Fund from the general public through MFs were allegedly routed via Yes Bank's exposures to RHFL and RCFL. These eventually found their way into group companies

WHAT ADAG SAYS

“A majority of the assets, by value, attached by ED, belong to Reliance Communications, which is under the control of the Resolution Professional and the committee of creditors, led by State Bank of India”

— Reliance Group statement

“We wish to inform that certain assets of the company have been provisionally attached by ED for the alleged violations under PMLA. There is no impact on the business operations, shareholders, employees or any other stakeholders of Reliance Infrastructure Limited. Anil D. Ambani is not on the Board of Reliance Infrastructure Limited for more than 3.5 years”

— Reliance Infrastructure

UP FRONT



A PRESIDENTIAL SORTIE

It was no ordinary flight, and certainly no ordinary passenger. President Droupadi Murmu, strapped into the rear cockpit of a gleaming Rafale fighter, took to the skies over Haryana. Midway through the sortie, Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh leaned in and informed her that they were flying right above historic Kurukshetra, the land of the Mahabharata war, and that the sacred Brahma Sarovar lay glistening below. Moved by the sight, the president couldn't hold back her emotions. In a moment that blended power with poetry, she radioed in a message. While praising the Rafale jet, she said: "I am witnessing the ancient land and the sacred Brahma Sarovar, symbols of our cultural diversity and historic journey. My faith in our military capability has become even stronger...."

Stirring words from the First Citizen on both ancient battlefields and modern ones.

Illustrations by **SIDDHANT JUMDE**

▼ TROUBLED WATERS EVERYWHERE

TAKING THE PLUNGE

On November 2, while canvassing in Bihar's Begusarai, Congress leader **Rahul Gandhi** joined the Dalit fishermen there and took an impromptu plunge in a muddy pond. The Congress quickly contrasted Rahul's muck-soaked symbolism of Dalit solidarity with the cordoned off "sanitised pool" readied for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Chhath rituals on the polluted Yamuna in Delhi. While Modi eventually skipped the



event, Rahul's optics got murkier in Assam. Congress student wing NSUI mocked minister **Pijush Hazarika**, making a derogatory reference to him as a *mas bepari* (fish trader) while attacking him over an alleged AI-generated video. Hazarika, a Dalit, from the fisherfolk community, hit back, invoking Rahul's '*Mohabbat ki dukan*' slogan to accuse Congress of hypocrisy and an anti-Dalit bias, turning Rahul's muddy plunge into a political self-goal.

SWADESHI WHATSAPP

After BJP Union ministers dumped Microsoft for Zoho's indigenous office suite, the RSS, too, has joined the swadeshi surge, moving its internal communications to messaging app **Arattai** (Tamil for chit-chat). Also developed by Sridhar Vembu's Zoho, Arattai has seen eight million downloads since the switch. The move aligns with Prime Minister Modi's recurring call for "digital sovereignty". But can the "banter app" unseat Meta's **WhatsApp**, which has over 500 million Indian users? Experts say nationalism may bring downloads, but not loyalty. Well, the Sangh is certainly trying with its 'make in India' message in India's move.



THE VIDEO STAR



Ex-Union minister **Parshottam Rupala** had found himself out of the Union cabinet after his controversial remarks against the Kshatriya community during the 2024 general election campaign. Not one to fade away easily, the Patidar leader from Saurashtra has since turned into an active YouTuber and promoter of Gujarati literature and culture. The Rajkot MP's channel, 'Moje Dariya', featuring videos of his interviews with literary stars and folk storytellers, has become a huge hit, attracting thousands of 'likes' from fans.

Cultivating Next-Gen ATCs



Airports Authority of India (AAI) is taking an unconventional approach at this year's India International Trade Fair in Delhi. Instead of glossy displays and 3D airport models, it's focusing on inspiring the next generation of **air traffic controllers**. With India's aviation sector booming, the need for skilled ATCs is greater than ever. Young visitors will get to hear live recordings of pilot-controller exchanges, participate in aviation quizzes, and even attempt mock 'ATC courses'. Certificates and exciting prizes await the top performers.

Kaushik Deka with Pradip R. Sagar, Jumana Shah and Avishek G. Dastidar



By Jumana Shah

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION A DESI RED-LIST

India has launched its first comprehensive effort to assess the extinction risk of about 11,000 species of plants and animals, in a move that could redefine national biodiversity planning.

Announced by Union MoS for environment Kirti Vardhan Singh at the IUCN World Conservation

or fragmented state-level studies. "This will create the first national baseline of extinction risk, enabling evidence-based conservation policy and resource allocation," Singh said, adding the programme will train 300 red-list assessors and produce India's first National Red Data Books.

Experts say the step



Congress in Abu Dhabi recently, the National Red List Assessment (NRLA) will evaluate roughly 7,000 flora and 4,000 fauna species to determine their vulnerability. The project, led by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), will run till 2030 with technical support from the Wildlife Institute of India and the Botanical Survey of India.

Until now, India—home to nearly eight per cent of global biodiversity—has relied largely on global IUCN assessments

is overdue. India is one of 17 megadiverse countries, yet about 30 per cent of its plant and animal species are endemic and often poorly studied. Conservation scientists note that national red-list data will strengthen decisions on environmental clearances, protected-area planning and species recovery priorities.

It will also help India meet targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which calls for nations to halt biodiversity loss by the end of the decade.

DALY COLLEGE, INDORE

WHERE LEGACY BREATHES, AND THE FUTURE LEARNS TO FLY

By HH Maharaja Vikram Sinh Puar of Dewas (Senior), President – Board of Governors, Daly College

There are places that teach, and then there are places that shape the idea of learning itself. For over a century and a half, Daly College – the “Jewel of Malwa” – has stood as one of India’s most evocative educational landmarks. Its Indo-Saracenic arches, its avenues of ashoka and gulmohar, its echo of prayers and debates, all tell the story of a school that has never merely kept pace with time, but set its rhythm.

When I returned to lead the Board of Governors in 2023, it was not as an outsider or as a titular head. I came home — as a fifth-generation Old Dalian and the fourth-generation President from the House of Dewas, whose ancestors helped build this institution brick by brick, value by value. Daly College is my alma mater, my inheritance, and my responsibility. It is where I learnt that character outweighs circumstance, that leadership begins with humility, and that excellence is a duty, not a decoration.

A LIVING LEGACY OF LEARNING

Founded in 1870 as the Indore Residency School and rechristened Daly College in

1882 after General Sir Henry Daly, this was among the five original Raj Kumar Colleges — schools conceived to educate India’s princely heirs in scholarship and service.

From those beginnings has evolved a day-cum-residential institution of global stature — now elevated to the Ivy League of Indian Schools by Education World 2025-26, a recognition reserved for the “best of the best” institutions that have consistently led across academics, sports, infrastructure, leadership, and inclusivity.

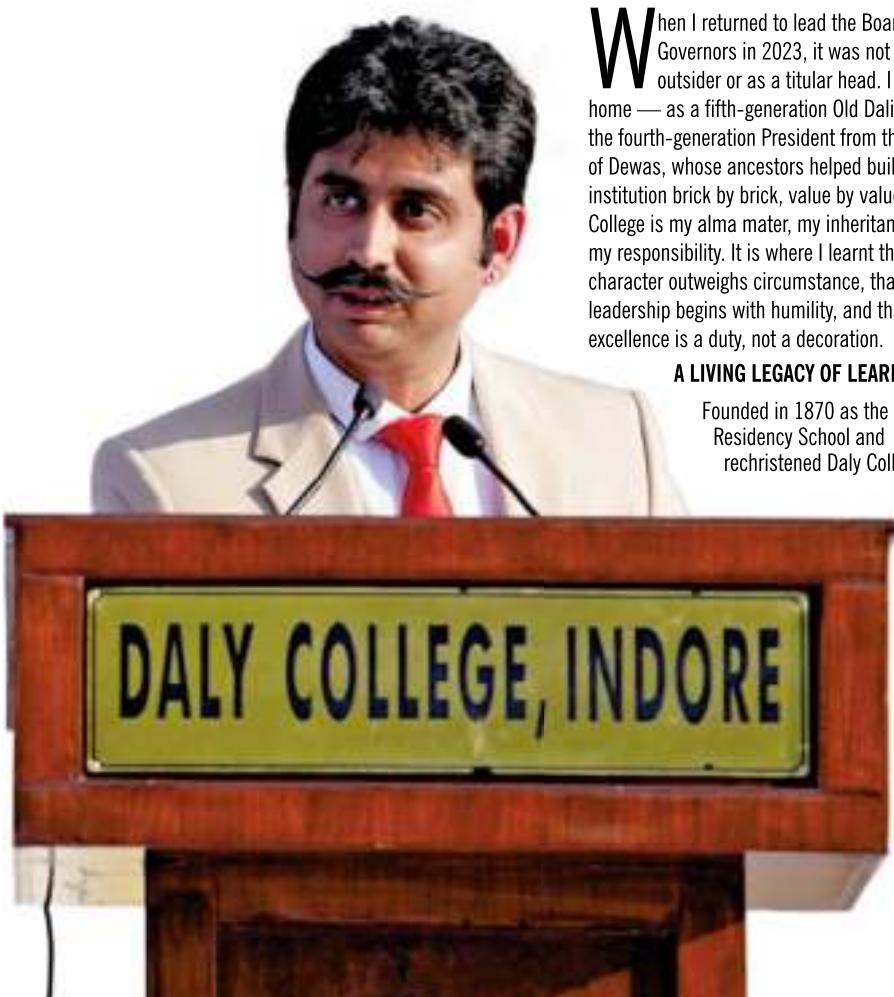
The essence of Daly’s endurance lies in its ability to reinvent without losing its soul. Over the past three years, the college has undergone an academic renaissance — every classroom air-conditioned and digitised, every subject redesigned to match international benchmarks, every child encouraged to find a voice. The motto Gyanamev Shakti — Knowledge is Power — has moved from inscription to instinct.

TRADITION MEETING TOMORROW

Our approach is simple: preserve heritage, pursue innovation. Smart classrooms and AI-enabled pedagogy stand beside the century-old Scindia Pavilion. Robot teachers co-exist with house tutors who still write hand-inked notes of encouragement. The Computer Science Block hums with code; the library whispers history. At the same time, the restored Barwani and Ashok Houses and the rejuvenated Desai Lake remind every student that modernity draws its strength from memory.

A re-imagined sports complex — complete with an international-standard turf hockey

VIKRAM SINH PUAR
Chairman, Daly Board





ground, all-weather swimming pools, air-conditioned squash courts and new equestrian stables — has made Daly College one of India's leading sports campuses. Yet, for all its records and medals, the truest measure of success remains grace in victory and dignity in defeat.

LEADERSHIP AND VISION IN HARMONY

No institution transforms without collaboration. In Principal Dr. Gunmeet Bindra, Daly College has found a leader who blends academic rigour with human warmth, and discipline with inspiration. A recipient of the President's Award for Teachers, she has been instrumental in introducing several firsts to Daly College — from AI-integrated teaching and the Cambridge Global Curriculum to structured teacher audits and the Immerse & Inspire boarding programme.

Her partnership with the Board has been one of shared purpose: to make Daly College a model of educational foresight rooted in heritage. It is under this synergy of governance and pedagogy that Daly has emerged stronger, steadier, and future-ready.

I also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the unwavering support and contribution of my fellow Board members — whose wisdom, commitment, and collective vision have been vital in steering Daly College to such renewed heights.

A GLOBAL IMPRINT ROOTED IN INDIA

The Daly College of today is proudly Indian and

effortlessly international.

Our students debate at the Oxford Union, attend Round Square Conferences across twenty nations, and welcome peers from Japan, Kenya and the UK into their own houses.

We have integrated the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into mainstream academics — bringing the timeless wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads into dialogue with modern science. In doing so, we remind young minds that global citizenship begins with self-awareness.

The institution's alumni now span continents — diplomats, innovators, scholars, and entrepreneurs whose moral compass was set here in Indore. From Oxford and Cornell to IIT Roorkee and IIM Indore, their presence reaffirms Daly College's standing as both a cradle of intellect and a crucible of values.

THE SPIRIT THAT ENDURES

Behind every milestone stands a community: teachers whose devotion defines professionalism; parents who entrust their children to the campus with faith; and students who turn every opportunity into a promise fulfilled. As chairman, my role has been to safeguard this ecosystem from noise and negativity — to ensure that integrity governs every decision, and that our institution remains above transient distractions.

Each time Daly College is spoken of with reverence, I am reminded that this is not a personal achievement but a collective covenant, renewed daily in classrooms, hostels, and playing fields.

CONTINUITY WITH VISION

We are now entering a decisive era — one where

It is not the grandeur of its arches or the weight of its trophies that make Daly College extraordinary. It is its spirit — steadfast, unbroken, ever-evolving. A spirit that refuses to be ordinary.

education must balance heritage with hyper-modernity. Daly College has embraced that challenge. From robotics and astronomy to constitutional debates and design thinking, our programmes blend intellect with imagination. A new Happiness Centre will soon open — India's first of its kind — emphasising emotional literacy, mindfulness and holistic wellbeing.

The campus today symbolises what India itself aspires to be: confident in its past, curious about its future, compassionate in its progress.

A LEGACY BEYOND GENERATIONS

As I often say, Daly College is not a chapter in a history book — it is a living manuscript, written each day by its students and staff. To walk its corridors at dawn is to hear 150 years of voices urging you forward — voices that say: Lead with integrity. Learn with humility. Serve with purpose.

THAT, TO ME, IS THE ENDURING POWER OF THIS INSTITUTION.

It is not the grandeur of its arches or the weight of its trophies that make Daly College extraordinary. It is its spirit — steadfast, unbroken, ever-evolving. A spirit that refuses to be ordinary.

And as long as that spirit endures, Daly College will remain what it has always been — a place where learning is legacy, and legacy is life.

STATE SCAN

MP: QUOTA QUANDARY PG 21

GUJARAT: KNOTTED END TO A LONG YARN PG 22

DEBAJYOTI CHAKRABORTY



► PRIDE PROMENADE

Mamata, Abhishek lead march against SIR, Nov. 4; inset, suicide victim Pradeep Kar

► WEST BENGAL

SIR 'DEATHS' RAISE FEVER

Six deaths, some by suicide. The TMC ups the ante dramatically at a massive rally, linking these to a 'motivated' SIR and fears of exclusion. Melodrama, says the BJP

By Arkamoy Datta Majumdar

INDIAN POLITY, BENGALI SOUL. FROM THE AMBEDKAR STATUE on Red Road to Jorasanko, the natal place of Tagore. On November 4, as chief minister Mamata Banerjee led thousands in this four-kilometre march on the streets of Kolkata, holding a copy of the Constitution, it sought to lay down two non-negotiable lines in the sand for everyone out there—constitutionality and the space it affords for provincial dignity. It's fruitful for the Trinamool Congress (TMC) to cast its protest against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls as being embedded within such a larger struggle. From the stage overlooking the massive gathering, Mamata captured the mood of the moment: "The very people who ignited India's freedom struggle are now being

made to prove their belonging.”

The protest capped weeks of escalating tension over the SIR. The TMC alleges the Election Commission (EC) is using the exercise to erase genuine voters, especially minorities, migrants and the rural poor, ahead of the 2026 assembly election. TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee expanded SIR as “Silent Invisible Rigging”, claiming it has created panic and despair across Bengal.

Takeaways

► **TMC stages massive march through Kolkata to highlight six deaths**

► **In her emotive pitch, Mamata describes it as a fight for Bengal's soul**

► **BJP complains to EC that state govt is freely issuing identity papers**

That sense of doom has found human form: six reported deaths, which the TMC claims are linked to the fear of being struck off the rolls. Among them: Pradeep Kar of Agarpura, 57, who left behind a note blaming “NRC” and “voter verification”; Hasina Begum of Dankuni, 60, who died of a heart attack after her name allegedly vanished from an old list; and migrant worker Bimal Santra from Burdwan, who died in Tamil Nadu, allegedly haunted by the SIR. Looking over the crowd that had assembled within 48 hours of the rally being called, Abhishek said: “In the seven days since SIR was announced, we have lost several of our citizens. Their families are here on this stage today.” He reminded the

crowd of the 13 young people who died during Mamata’s 1993 Youth Congress rally for voting rights—the episode that cemented her political rise. “Even if we have to sacrifice our lives again, we will bow only to the ten crore people of Bengal, not to Delhi,” he thundered.

The TMC’s strategy extends far beyond. Abhishek has directed party workers to keep vigil in every mohalla, ward and panchayat during the SIR period—with help desks for assistance in filling out forms, accompanying Booth Level Officers (BLOs) during verification visits et al. It has filed multiple complaints alleging that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders were threatening BLOs, forcing the EC to issue warnings.

THE COMIC COUNTER

The BJP calls it melodrama. State chief Samik Bhattacharya says the TMC is “manufacturing fear to cover up its insecurities”. The party has also lodged a complaint with the EC alleging birth and caste certificates are being issued freely, urging a strict mandate on who can issue these papers so as to preclude any illegality. Beyond that, derision, designed to instil disbelief, is a key part of its SOP.

Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari dismissed the reported suicides as “fake claims”. “Pradeep Kar did not even have four fingers on his right arm. How could he write a suicide note?” he mocked. BJP workers circulated a meme of a tiger lying dead with a note beside it blaming “NRC” for its death—a darkly comic counter. Yet it may have to contend with one fact: the deaths have already altered the political atmosphere. ■

► KERALA

A MILESTONE AND SOME DUST ON IT

Kerala claims it has eradicated extreme poverty, but Pinarayi's welfare attire isn't all stain-free

By Jeemon Jacob

TOtal literacy back in 1991, famously. After 34 years, on its foundation day of November 1, Kerala marked the next pioneer’s milestone: total eradication of extreme poverty. At least, that claim has been formally made by chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who called it a “historic moment” that embellished Kerala’s reputé as a “caring state”. With his Left-led government due to test the strength of its two-term incumbency in assembly polls next year, such a claim was not about to go without furious contestation. As pro-regime voices battle a sceptical chorus—not limited to the Opposition—the surrounding context also offered a more complex picture.

It was in 2021 that the state set freedom from extreme poverty as an absolute goal.



► **MAKESHIFT LIFE** A tribal family in Noolpuzha village, Wayanad, Oct. 30



FEM FLAMBEAU ASHA workers shine the torch on their plight in Thiruvananthapuram; the strike was called off after 266 days

Not that Kerala had much. In 2023, the NITI Aayog pegged it at 0.55 per cent of the state's 33.34 million population. Kerala's own survey yielded about 80,000 short of that: a total of 103,099 people from 64,006 families, spread over 1,032 local self-government (LSG) bodies.

FOR THE 'LAST ONES'

The key criteria, says LSG minister M.B. Rajesh, were "stress factors such as lack of food, healthcare requirements, income basis and lack of housing". Of those 64,006 families, he says, the single members of around 4,421 had died and 261 nomadic families could not be traced. Special "micro-plans" were then "designed for each family", Rajesh told INDIA TODAY. LSG special secretary T.V. Anupama elaborates that this included short- to long-term components on provision of food, shelter, healthcare, insurance, job cards and children's scholarships.

Congress leader and LoP V.D. Satheeshan calls the claim a "fraud and publicity stunt", enacted in time for local body polls due in November-December. "Who eliminated 590,174 Antyodaya Anna Yojana card holders, the poorest of the poor? Why

were only 60,006 families chosen?" he asks. Tribal activists, too, are sceptical. "Our lives are all the same. We live in poverty," K. Ammini of the Adivasi Women's Organisation told INDIA TODAY. "The state may have spent large sums to claim this unique title. But thousands of tribal children are drop-

Takeaways

- ➲ **Kerala says it has totally eradicated extreme poverty**
- ➲ **Opposition, activists cast doubt on Left govt claim**
- ➲ **266-day ASHA workers' strike sullies Pinarayi image**

ping out of school, hundreds of our families are without good shelters."

Others are celebrating. "It's a moment of pride," feted novelist Benjamin tells INDIA TODAY. "The few sceptical social scientists are out to please the Opposition or ignorant regarding the process." The CM, too, says the Opposition is being churlish at a historic moment. Perchance granting him solace, China's ambassador to India

Xu Feihong took to X to congratulate Kerala. But all this is only one part of a rancorous debate. Destitution itself is a threshold phenomenon; Kerala is not wanting in other forms of want.

ANGELS IN DISTRESS

Take an epic 266-day protest by ASHA workers, a piece of grim political theatre that saw the regime adopt stances by turn cold, hostile and, finally, as its strategic blunder dawned on it, grudgingly capitulating. The grassroots workforce was seeking, inter alia, a trebling of their Rs 7,000 honorarium. The state stalled through many rounds of negotiations, making no attempt at resolution. On November 1, Pinarayi blinked, bundling a modest Rs 1,000 hike within a mega poll sop package of Rs 10,000 crore for poor women.

The strikers went back cheering, vowing to carry on protests in the districts. But Vadakara MLA K.K. Rema, wife of the slain Marxist mutineer T.P. Chandrasekharan who now heads the CPI(M) offshoot he founded, called it a "permanent black mark" on Kerala's visage of consummate welfarism. Why did the Left regime risk a stance that ran counter to every strand of its vaunted pro-social development model?

Partly fiscal reasons. But also, the strikers were affiliated to the far-left Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI). "Meeting their demands could hurt the CPI(M)-affiliated trade union CITU. But the big unions in Kerala are all in sleep mode. Only the far left is even looking at, say, the unorganised sector," says Rema. The Left, Congress and RSS-backed unions had all stayed away from the protest, while the Congress as a party was not above backing the protesters to taunt Pinarayi.

Pinarayi had called Kerala's 26,125 ASHA workers "angels of hope" during the COVID-19 crisis. "Now, we were being ridiculed by pro-regime cyber warriors. But we're not slaves and won't be deterred from our path," says S. Mini, key mover behind the strike. Kerala has never suffered from a poverty of irony. ■



ANI

► MADHYA PRADESH



QUOTA QUANDARY

The Mohan Yadav regime stands unreservedly for OBC quotas, but it creates political unease among the BJP's traditional base

By **Rahul Noronha**

DO CASTE-BASED QUOTAS FINISH MERIT OR CREATE FUTURE MERIT? Depends on who you ask, but no one will deny that the juncture at which a fresh quota comes into play tends to be a conflictual one for society—and politics. Madhya Pradesh is at one such point, if the Mohan Yadav government has its way in a case being heard in the Supreme Court. In fact, not unexpectedly, parties across the spectrum back the hiking of job and educational quotas for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from 14 to 27 per cent. Again, not unexpectedly, only some student bodies are protesting.

But therein lies the dilemma for the ruling BJP. Its stand has massive political ramifications, with the affidavits filed by the state in the SC furnishing arguments supporting the hike causing heartburn among the

forward castes—the BJP's traditional base. Socially, too, signs of animus are visible in the Gwalior-Chambal region, where caste identities are most acute. An extra delicacy attaches in Yadav's case because he himself illustrates the pro-OBC push in leadership roles made by major parties in the state. Though, in all fairness, he may have had little wiggle room on the issue.

AN EYE ON THE VOTE

It was the Congress that first tried to harvest OBC sympathies through this policy, when then CM Kamal Nath announced it in March 2019, just ahead of the Lok Sabha election. As it happened, that poll outcome reflected no particular gratitude from OBC groups for the Congress, but the party continued to defend the move—and still hovers in the background as a

potential claimant to the trophy. If anything, Rahul Gandhi's all-out shift to the social justice plank makes that threat more manifest. So, taking the lead made sense for Yadav.

He did so in August-end, convening an all-party meet, then using the consensus there to fight the case at the apex court. That case was born in 2019, soon after the Kamal Nath policy move, when a group of students—Ashita Dubey and others—challenged it in the high court soon on the grounds that it would violate the 50 per cent mark set by the Supreme Court's landmark Indira Sawhney verdict of 1992. Pending a final verdict, it ruled that the old reservation levels would continue for the medical PG exam. This January, the then CJI Suresh Kaith decided to club all petitions in the matter. The state government acted with alacrity and

filed transfer petitions to the SC.

Madhya Pradesh, due to its demographic mix, presently has quotas of 16 per cent for Scheduled Castes and 20 per cent for Scheduled Tribes—both roughly equivalent to their populations. That leaves only 14 per cent for OBCs, who numbered 48 per cent in the 2011 census and exceed 50 per cent in many formal estimates. In 2019, after a central law, it had also implemented the 10 per cent EWS quota. That one expectedly went down everywhere without much demur on the question of merit, and also found the SC more reasonable on the 50 per cent cap. Effectively, MP is at 60 per cent now—a hike for OBCs would take quotas to 73 per cent.

For all that, OBC leaders feel the government is not honest about enhancing the quota for them. “The

Takeaways

■ **Mohan Yadav regime backs 27% OBC quotas in SC, bid to thwart Cong. claiming credit**

■ **16+20% for SCs/STs left only 14% for OBCs, half the state's population. Plus, there's EWS**

amendment was done by Congress CM Kamal Nath. The BJP government feels that if the court allows it, the credit would go the Congress, which they wish to avoid,” says senior HC advocate Rameshwar Thakur. The OBC Advocates Welfare Association, of which he’s president, has filed an application in the SC demanding that OBC quotas be enhanced to 50 per cent in line with the population.

The back story to all this: the past 25 years have seen a resurgence in OBC identity politics in MP. All the four BJP CMs in its 21-year reign—Uma Bharti, Babul Gaur, Shivraj Chouhan and Mohan Yadav—have been OBC. The Congress, on the other hand, has had two non-OBC CMs, Digvijaya Singh and Kamal Nath. But as PCC presidents, it has had three OBCs: Subhash Yadav, his son Arun Yadav, and incumbent Jitendra Patwari. ■

► GUJARAT

KNOTTED END TO A LONG YARN

Cotton stares at an uncertain future in its heartland as iffy economics, new crops wean farmers away

By **Jumana Shah**

A THREAD THAT RUNS FROM ANCIENT TRADE to contemporary geo-economics?

Yes, India’s cotton story is as old as recorded history—going back to Harappan days—and Gujarat was always part of that weave. Even if it’s not exactly in danger of fading out like that civilisation, the fabric is running thin. Days before the Centre waived import duty on raw cotton in August, kharif sowing data from Gujarat showed a 15 per cent decline in area under cotton cultivation. It stood at 2.03 million hectares, registering the third straight year-on-year (YoY) dip.

Gujarat is India’s second highest cotton producer, after Maharashtra. Together, they account for about 55 per cent of our cotton area and volumes, though Maharashtra also saw a 3 per cent dip in 2024-2025. Gujarat’s cotton farmers are shifting to groundnut as part of the National Mission on Edible Oils (NMO), which targets expanding oilseed cultivation by 4 mha nationally by 2030-31. Gujarat is a priority state here: it already contributes 24 per cent to India’s primary oilseed kitty.

With the cotton crisis, the paradox lies in its warp and weft: shrinking acreage along a glut in stock. Overall, India’s cotton production has dipped 20 per cent



HINDUJA TIMES

in four fiscales since 2020-21: from 37.1 million bales to about 29.4 million. Yet, the sector is looking at the century’s largest carry forward stock of 5.6 million bales at the end of the season, says Atul Ganatra, president, Cotton Association of India. Usually, that weighs in at 3.9-4 million bales on the scales.

MISMATCH TONNES

So, how does low production create excess supply? Put it down to imports and exports. In 2024-25, exports had declined 13 per cent YoY. Significant in itself, that pales on a decadal scale. From 2014-2015, the drop is a staggering 82 per cent. It’s into this bleakness that Donald Trump lumbered in. “To give relief to textile exporters

▼ **BALE OUT** Unloading at a cotton unit in Ahmedabad; left, a farmer in rural Rajkot with his groundnut crop



after the US tariffs, the Centre waived import duty on raw cotton till December 2025, to allow mills to import cheaper cotton from Brazil, Australia and African countries,” says Ganatra.

Problem is, the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has “over one crore bales in its stock”, he adds. “They could have dispensed it now, at a discount, and saved precious foreign exchange.” In the event, India is saddled with a cotton glut. “Prices are going to crash, and it’s going to hit farmers hard. They will be heavily dependent on the government for procurement,” adds Ganatra.

The RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), the leading farmers’ body in Gujarat, fears the worst for the state’s 1.5 million cotton farmers. The minimum support price (MSP) this year has been fixed at Rs 7,710 for the

Takeaways

► **Gujarat's acreage under cotton declines steeply: 15% dip this year. Future grim for India's top global ranks**

► **Low yields, distortions in price due to imports see farmers shifting to oilseeds. Environmentalists happy**

medium staple variety and Rs 8,110 for long staple. “Due to the glut, we expect the open market price will slide to around Rs 2,400 per quintal, which will be unsustainable,” says R.K. Patel, BKS general secretary in Gujarat. The union has written to the Centre to reinstate the import duty on raw cotton

immediately to save the cotton farmers. “If not, cotton will disappear as a crop, from Gujarat at least,” he adds.

In 2024, India logged 20 per cent of raw cotton production in the world, with 24 million bales, close to China’s 26 per cent with 32 million bales. But a whole series of variables skews any chance of simple economics. From the weather, to input costs and the MSP, to a textile industry caught in a delicate global demand-supply web, it’s a canvas where price distortions are the norm. Last year, the CCI had to buy nearly 10 million bales—45 per cent of India’s output—to rescue farmers. Open market prices went so high against global prices that local buyers couldn’t buy local!

FAKE 'BT COTTON' MENACE

Besides, 95 per cent of the crop grown in Gujarat and the Deccan since 2002 has been the genetically modified Bt cotton. Introduced by US firm Monsanto, the technology was illegally replicated by local seed manufacturers, particularly in Gujarat, and supplied to farmers across India. Dr B.G. Solanki, a retired cotton scientist associated with the Navsari Agricultural University, says this caused yields to drop continuously. In the past two years, in parts of Saurashtra, the entire crop failed.

Farmers partook indiscriminately of duplicate Bt cotton, disregarding natural weather cycles and extending harvesting by months against advisories. “The price gap was so wide, no awareness drive worked,” says Solanki. The RSS’s support for local manufacturers—against multinationals—also encumbered the Centre, still a sticking point in negotiations with the US.

Ironically, imitation Bt cotton lacked resistance to pests like mealy bugs, white fly and, lately, pink bollworms. “This ruined harvests. The soil damage from increased pesticide use will take years to reverse,” says natural farming activist Kapil Shah. Had the government stepped in sooner with new seed technology or soil restoration advisories, rues Patel, India could have retained its top spot in cotton. ▀



BUILDING SWARNA ANDHRA

CHANDRABABU NAIDU'S VISION OF GROWTH, INNOVATION AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

Andhra Pradesh is regaining its reputation as one of India's most investor-friendly states. What new strategies or assurances are being offered to rebuild investor confidence, and how does your current approach stand apart from your previous tenure?

It is an inspiring time for India and for Andhra Pradesh. In my earlier tenure, we built the foundation - ports, power, roads, and digital networks. Today, we are building a plug-and-play ecosystem for industries. We have introduced new, best industrial policies. The Industrial Development Policy 4.0 (2024–29) and 24 focused sectoral policies in green energy, electronics, semiconductors, aerospace, MSMEs, and more. These ensure clear incentives, fiscal support, and transparent execution. From Ease of Doing Business, we have moved to Speed of Doing Business with single window clearance and best incentives.

The results speak for themselves. In the past year, Andhra Pradesh has attracted over USD 117 billion in investments, creating potential employment for 9 lakh people. Within a year, we have achieved a growth rate of 8.2%, the second highest in India. Projects like Google's USD 15 billion AI and Cloud Hub in Visakhapatnam are proof that Brand AP is back again.

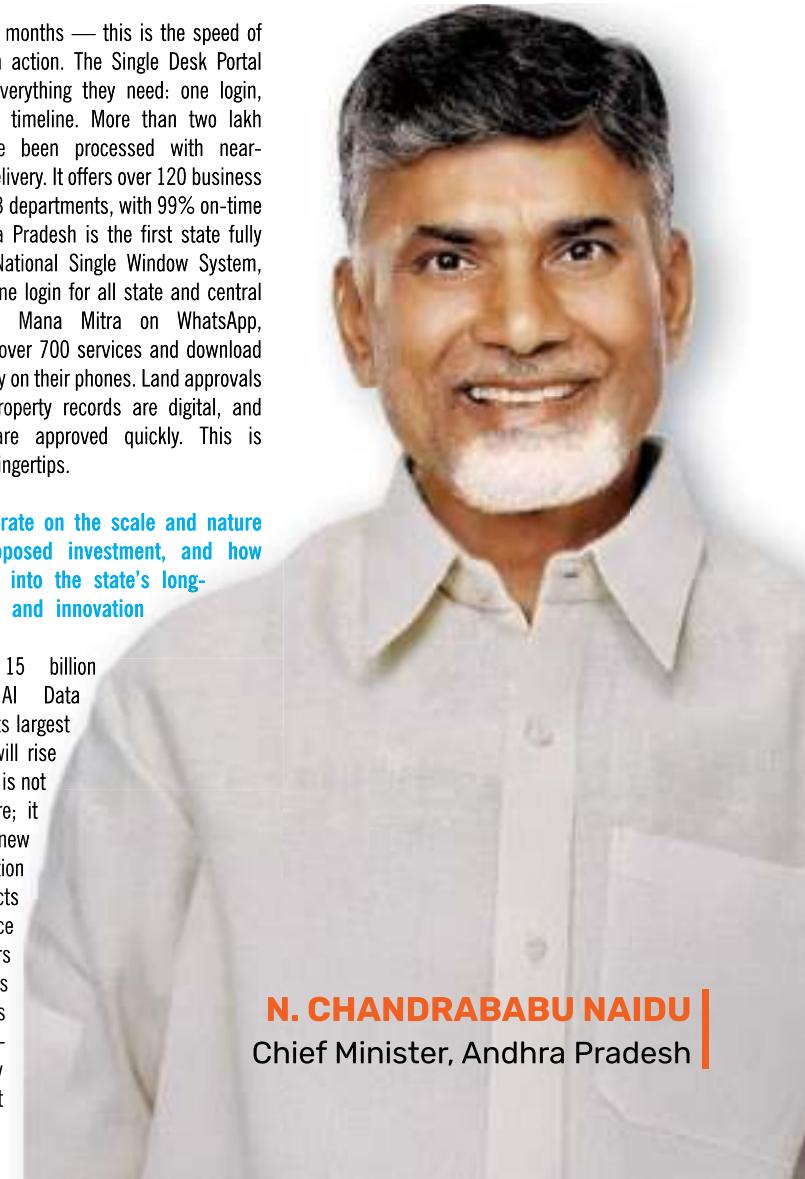
Which specific reforms, especially in digital governance, are being rolled out now to make business setup and operations even smoother for investors?

Andhra Pradesh has always been a leader in technology. We have adopted technology to upgrade our business ecosystem, and we will continuously enhance it based on industry feedback. We have built a seamless system where approvals are

done in days, not months — this is the speed of doing business in action. The Single Desk Portal gives investors everything they need: one login, one window, one timeline. More than two lakh applications have been processed with near-perfect on-time delivery. It offers over 120 business services across 23 departments, with 99% on-time approvals. Andhra Pradesh is the first state fully linked with the National Single Window System, giving investors one login for all state and central clearances. With Mana Mitra on WhatsApp, people can track over 700 services and download certificates directly on their phones. Land approvals are automatic, property records are digital, and building plans are approved quickly. This is business at your fingertips.

Could you elaborate on the scale and nature of Google's proposed investment, and how this project fits into the state's long-term technology and innovation roadmap?

Google's USD 15 billion Gigawatt-scale AI Data Center Campus, its largest outside the US, will rise on our coast. This is not just a data centre; it is the seed of a new digital revolution in India. It reflects the confidence global investors have in our state's potential. This facility is a multi-layered technology campus that



N. CHANDRABABU NAIDU

Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh

integrates AI compute infrastructure powered by Google's tensor processing units and high-density GPU clusters. A new international subsea cable gateway will make us a global connectivity hub. This project aligns with our Swarna Andhra @2047 vision, a future built on innovation, sustainability, and inclusion. It will attract companies in semiconductors, cybersecurity, and cloud services, create thousands of skilled jobs, and make Visakhapatnam a hub for digital India. Andhra Pradesh led the IT revolution; now it is leading the AI revolution.

Which sectors—technology, manufacturing, renewable energy, logistics, among others—are receiving priority for new investments? What differentiated incentives are available for each to attract marquee projects?

We are focusing on sectors that define the future: technology, manufacturing, renewable energy, logistics, and innovation. We have identified priority for our growth. These include renewable energy, electronics and semiconductors, aerospace and defence, technology, logistics and blue economy, food processing and agro-industry, tourism, textiles and minor minerals and rare earths. The Industrial Development Policy 4.0 gives every sector, from green hydrogen to tourism, its own playbook for success. To support investments such as Google and Sify, the state has introduced the LIFT (Land Incentive for Tech Hubs) Policy, offering strategic land parcels, power subsidies, and tax reimbursements. We aim to do one step better - Whatever other states are offering, Andhra Pradesh will offer +1.

With robust infrastructure like ports, industrial corridors, and reliable power, how is Andhra Pradesh leveraging these assets to cement itself as a preferred logistics and manufacturing hub?
Andhra Pradesh has many advantages. Our strategic location on the East Coast, combined with world-class infrastructure, gives us a unique advantage in logistics and manufacturing. We are the only state in India to have three national industrial corridors — Visakhapatnam–Chennai, Chennai–Bengaluru, and Hyderabad–Bengaluru. We have six operational ports, Andhra Pradesh is India's true gateway to the East. Nearly a third of the country's east coast cargo already flows through our ports. Beyond ports, we have invested in strong road, rail, and waterway networks, warehousing capacities and cold storage units. Reliable and affordable power is one of our biggest strengths. We want to make it easier for industries to move goods, reduce logistics costs, and scale faster, and become the most efficient manufacturing hub in India.

Amaravati is envisioned as a world-class capital. What are your plans to accelerate its development and what role will private investment play in this transformation?

Amaravati will be the pride of our state and the nation. I am blessed to have had the opportunity

to build not one but two capitals in my lifetime – Hyderabad earlier, and now Amaravati. Amaravati is a unique experiment in inclusive development. It is being built through the land pooling system, where thousands of farmers have become partners in the city's growth. Spread over 217 square kilometres, Amaravati is designed to run on 100% renewable energy, supported by electric mobility and intelligent infrastructure. The city will have nine themed zones; Knowledge, Finance, Health, Tourism, Justice, Government, Sports, Electronics, and Creative, each designed to support governance, business, and community life in harmony.

The city is home to three major initiatives. The first is Quantum Valley, which is India's first state-led quantum computing testbed. It will be a hub for advanced research, skill development, and global partnerships. The second is Green Hydrogen Valley, which supports India's clean energy transition through electrolyzer manufacturing, hydrogen logistics, and export infrastructure. The third is the Ratan Tata Innovation Hub (RTIH), which connects Amaravati with five regional centres, Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Vijayawada, Anantapuram, and Tirupati, to drive sector-specific innovation and entrepreneurship.

These initiatives reflect our broader approach: the government builds the foundation and creates the right environment, while the private sector drives innovation, investment, and execution. With over USD 2.8 billion in investment commitments in the past year, Amaravati is quickly emerging as a hub for global capital, talent, and technology.

Recognising investor demand for skilled manpower, what initiatives are underway to equip Andhra Pradesh's youth for emerging sectors such as AI, semiconductors, and green energy?

Our people are our greatest strength. During the IT revolution, Telugu youth took on the world. Now, they will lead again, in AI, semiconductors, and green energy. Through Naipunyam, we are training lakhs of young people in digital and technical skills with partners like Infosys, Cisco, and Microsoft.

Our universities, ITIs, and polytechnics are being upgraded to match the needs of new industries. We are also building on Google's USD 15 billion AI campus in Visakhapatnam by rolling out large-scale AI skills under the Digital AP Mission.

Back in the 1990s, I said One Family, One IT Professional. Today, I say One Family, One Entrepreneur, One AI. By 2030, every household in Andhra Pradesh should have at least one entrepreneur and one AI-literate person. I always say, think globally, act globally, distance is not a constraint. We are building a generation that will not just work in the new economy but shape it.

The state is rich in natural resources and agricultural prospects. How is your government balancing rapid industrialisation with sustainability and equitable socio-economic development?

Sustainability should be a way of life. Every month, we are driving the Swachh Andhra Swarna Andhra movement, leading from the front to make our state cleaner, greener, and stronger. We are taking the lead in renewable energy and sustainable growth. Whether it is rooftop solar, electric mobility, or clean industries, every decision we make reflects our responsibility to the environment. Through our Integrated Clean Energy Policy 2024–29, we are targeting 160 GW of renewable energy, 1.5 million tonnes of green hydrogen every year, and 5,000 EV charging stations across the state. Equitable socio-economic development means the fruits of progress must reach the last person in society. Welfare and development are two sides of the same coin — true welfare comes from growth, and development gains strength when it empowers people and creates wealth for all.

Given your reputation for global investor engagement, are new international partnerships or major summits planned to showcase Andhra Pradesh's renewed potential?

Andhra Pradesh is a brand. Location, policy, infrastructure, skilled people - whatever investors look for, you name it, Andhra Pradesh has it. AP is India's Gateway to the East. We are hosting the Global Partnership Summit 2025 in Visakhapatnam on November 14 and 15. The summit will bring together business leaders, investors, and government representatives from around the world to explore opportunities in AI, clean energy, semiconductors, logistics, tourism, and manufacturing. Andhra Pradesh will continue to take part in global events like the World Economic Forum and COP summits and organize its own expos in sectors such as green hydrogen and semiconductors. We are actively engaging investors through roadshows abroad and inviting them to explore Andhra Pradesh as their next growth destination. Our message to the world is simple: when you invest in Andhra Pradesh, your project becomes our project.

What is your economic vision for Andhra Pradesh in terms of GDP growth, job creation, and the state's evolving role within the national economy by 2035?

My vision for Andhra Pradesh is a Happy, Healthy, and Wealthy Swarna Andhra that contributes to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji's dream of a Viksit Bharat @2047. The double-engine ki NDA sarkar is putting in double the efforts in Andhra Pradesh. By 2029, we aim for ₹30 lakh crore in new investments, five lakh new manufacturing jobs, and exports of USD 40 billion. By 2047, we want a USD 2.4 trillion economy powered by renewable energy, digital innovation, and skilled youth. Andhra Pradesh will be a growth engine for India.



THE POWER OF SPEED: HOW ANDHRA PRADESH IS REDEFINING INVESTMENTS.

From Ease to Speed of Doing Business

Andhra Pradesh has always been the front-runner in Ease of Doing Business. Under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu, the state is now setting a new benchmark - Speed of Doing Business.

In a world where time defines competitiveness, Andhra Pradesh is transforming its governance model to match investor pace, from approvals to execution, and from policy to partnership. Every project here moves not in years but in milestones.

Once a company invests, it becomes a shared responsibility between the investor and the government-a partnership built on trust, speed, and shared outcomes.

The message is simple: if you are driven by speed, Andhra Pradesh is your natural choice.

1. Logistics: Powering India's Growth at Speed

Andhra Pradesh is fast emerging as India's logistics capital-a seamless convergence of ports, roads, rails, airways, and digital highways. The advantage the state holds lies in its geography, governance, and the speed at which infrastructure is turned into opportunity.

A Network that Never Stops

The state has 1.6 lakh km of roads, with massive upgrade works going on in all national and state highways. As many as 147 major railway projects, costing over ₹1 lakh crore, are being executed, thereby connecting every industrial corridor from Visakhapatnam to Chennai and Bengaluru.

Andhra Pradesh has the second-longest coastline in India, which is its trade gateway. With one major and five non-major ports handling more than 182 million tonnes annually and four new

greenfield ports adding another 100 million tonnes, Andhra Pradesh is redefining maritime logistics.

Air connectivity is equally robust: six operational airports, eight in development, and Bhogapuram International Airport nearing completion. Inland waterways and Ro-Ro projects are turning multimodal transport into a competitive advantage.

Growth-Move Jobs

Logistics growth in Andhra Pradesh is people-centric. Within the last 16 months the state has managed to attract investments worth Rs 10.7 lakh Crores with a potential of creating over 9 lakh jobs many of them have already seen the light of the day. The government is also establishing Logistics and Aviation Universities, training 5,000 professionals annually to meet future industry needs.

The result is that it moves goods more quickly, industries grow faster, and more jobs are given to people.

2. Tourism: Building India's Capital of Experiences

If partnerships are the engine, tourism is Andhra Pradesh's flywheel. It is that one sector which simultaneously pulls mobility, hospitality, culture, craft, fintech, and climate action, converts them into livelihoods rooted in local pride.

From Postcard to Portfolio

From destinations, Andhra Pradesh's tourism vision



has moved onto investable corridors: from the Vizag Waterfront with Blue-Flag-grade beaches and a vibrant night economy to the safe adventure camping at Gandikota Canyon, to Araku's tribal highlands that blend coffee, culture, and trekking, the state is designing tourism as a connected investment network.

The Konaseema Backwaters boast boutique homestays and ethnic food; Coringa Mangroves near Kakinada turn into "blue-carbon classrooms." Heritage sites like Buddhist Nagarjunakonda and Lepakshi are being integrated into scholar and heritage tourism circuits.



A Fast-Moving, Inclusive Sector

Tourism in Andhra Pradesh provides speed with social impact. Each jetty, or trail, or craft lab becomes a revenue source within months for boatmen, café owners, guides, and artisans. The Scenic Villages Programme will convert 100 clusters into standardised homestays and craft hubs.

The corridors are being managed through destination management organisations, which are being constituted with government, operators, and community participation. Indeed, the model rewards performance and not mere paperwork through single-window, time-bound clearances, viability gap funding, and outcome-based incentives.

Experience Meets Investment

For investors, the opportunities range from boardwalks, ropeways, boutique resorts, and craft cafés, through to digital tourism platforms and blue-green finance projects.

The message: Invest where India travels, tourism turns public goods into private livelihoods faster than any other sector.

3. Food Processing: Powering Global Value Chains with Trust and Quality

Andhra Pradesh's contribution to India's USD 543 billion food processing industry is USD 49 billion, nearly 9% of the national output. It is not just India's food bowl; it is fast becoming a global food hub where investors find scale, supply, and speed.

Production Powerhouse

With 1,053 km of coastline, 6 operational ports, and 7 airports, Andhra Pradesh ensures that farm produce reaches global markets in the shortest time. The state leads in the production and export of rice, shrimp, mango, banana, chilli, turmeric, and spices, and is ranked first in the export of chilli, lemon, cocoa, oil palm, papaya, and fish.

Plug-and-Play Infrastructure

Nine Integrated Food Parks, 17 lakh MT of cold storage capacity, and 33 lakh MT of warehousing enable end-to-end value chains. Chittoor's fruit



pulp hub, Guntur's spice clusters, coastal shrimp units, and Palasa's cashew processors form the backbone of Andhra's agri-industry.

The new Food Processing Policy 4.0 offers tailor-made incentives, top-up subsidies, and handholding support to the investors for the period 2024–29. The state targets ₹30,000 crore in investments and 3 lakh new jobs, with MSME parks planned in every assembly constituency.

Innovation and Agri-Tech at Speed

The agri-tech applications being pioneered in Andhra Pradesh range from AI-based advisory systems and drone monitoring to IoT-enabled irrigation for real-time efficiency.

The commitment is clear: the state that once led in Ease of Doing Business is now leading in the Speed of Doing Business. Approvals, utilities, and clearances are being processed through a single-desk portal to make sure investors spend their time building, not waiting.

Shared Growth, Shared Responsibility

In Andhra Pradesh, investment is a partnership, not a transaction. After an MoU has been signed, the state stands with the investor all the way until the project becomes operational. From logistics to tourism to food processing, the accountability of outcomes is a shared one with the government.

This is the Andhra model: speed with sincerity, efficiency with empathy, and growth with shared purpose. Because when companies are driven by speed, they pick Andhra Pradesh.



COVER STORY

WOMEN'S CRICKET

BREAKING B

INDIA'S HISTORIC WORLD CUP WIN IS A GAME-CHANGING MOMENT



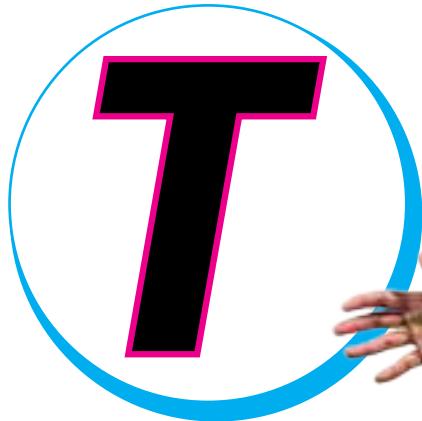
ROUNDFARIES

NOT JUST FOR CRICKET BUT FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

By SUHANI SINGH



CUP OF JOY The victorious team, with Player of the Tournament Deepti Sharma lifting the ICC Women's World Cup trophy at the Dr DY Patil Stadium, Navi Mumbai, Nov. 3



That night on November 2, there were several heart-stopping moments when Indian cricket fans—a record 190 million of them watching the 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup final on television and streaming services, and another 40,000, dressed mostly in blue, present at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai—sensed that victory for the home team was nigh. One was when an athletic Amanjot Kaur—already the star of a stunning direct runout—took a fumbling, tumbling sky-high catch that stopped South Africa captain Laura Wolvaardt in her tracks just as she seemed poised to take the game away from India. Another was when Deepti Sharma yorked Annerie Dercksen to take the third of her match-winning five wickets—all that after a steady, run-a-ball 58 while batting. Then there was the stroke of pure genius by captain Harmanpreet Kaur, Harry Di to teammates, when she took the high-risk gambit of getting Shafali Verma, known more for wielding the willow, to bowl. Verma delivered handsomely by taking two priceless wickets. Finally, the captain herself took a magical leaping catch to close off the match.

'Harry's Heroines'—most born a generation after Kapil's Devils—have scripted not just India's first-ever women's World Cup victory but etched out a game-changing moment for gender empowerment in the country. "It's a win for the ages," declared cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar, who was part of that legendary team that won India's first men's World Cup in 1983. "It will rank as one of the greatest in the history of Indian cricket." Tennis star Sania Mirza, who had herself blazed a lonely trail, turned emotional, saying, "This win feels personal. The next time a young girl tells her parents, 'I want to be a Smriti Mandhana', they will not think it is a ridiculous dream." Ten-year-old Straina Soumya Biswal, a Smriti fan, perhaps encapsulated that exact sentiment as



Harmanpreet Kaur | 36

Innings: 8; Runs: 260; Average: 32.5

GETTY IMAGES

"We know how it feels to lose, but we are really looking forward to seeing how it feels to win," said Harmanpreet Kaur after the semis. The lady from Moga, Punjab, had experienced the heartbreaks of the 2017 WC final, when India lost by nine runs to England and the T20 World Cup final in 2020 when India was outclassed by Australia. In her maiden ODI World Cup as captain, Kaur was on a mission to exorcise those demons as a leader respected by all team members, besides being the emotional core of the squad. Whether it was to go with her gut feeling and give the ball to Shafali Verma in the final or forging that incredible 167-run third-wicket partnership with Jemimah in the semis, 'Harry Di', as she's known amongst the girls, was the leader who delivered when it mattered most.



India at the World Cup

India's 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup win is historic as it marks the first time the title comes to an Asian team. Australia has been crowned champions 7 times, followed by England (4) and New Zealand (1)

- **1973** At the inaugural Women's Cricket World Cup, India didn't compete as the national side came into being only in 1974 with the formation of the Women's Cricket Association of India (WCAI)
- **1978** Only four teams competed; India stood last, losing all matches
- **1982** In a field of five, finished fourth
- **1988** Didn't compete. The team was training at a camp in New Delhi when they were informed their entry was withdrawn from the tournament. Friction between WCAI and sports minister Margaret Alva is said to have been a factor. Last-minute appeal by Rajiv Gandhi to hosts failed
- **1993** Finished fourth in a field of eight
- **1997** Reached the semi-finals, losing to eventual winners Australia
- **2000** Lost in semis to eventual champions New Zealand
- **2005** Reached finals for the first time, losing to defending champions Australia
- **2009** Finished third by defeating Australia in the playoff
- **2013** Knocked out in the group stage
- **2017** In their second finals appearance, lost to England by nine runs
- **2022** Finished fifth, narrowly missing out the semis by a point
- **2025 CHAMPIONS**

BANEGA TOH BADHEGA INDIA

Har naye stadium ke saath
ban rahe hai naye champion



Our Midnight Tryst With Destiny

In monetary gain, perception shift and the realisation of a long-held dream, the 2025 World Cup marks a watershed for women's cricket in India



When Harmanpreet leapt forward to grab that World Cup-winning catch and the roar of DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai shook the night sky, I felt something shift deep within. It wasn't just a victory. It was a dream fulfilled—one that generations of Indian women cricketers carried in our hearts. For years, we spoke of 1983—that golden summer when Indian cricket changed forever. All us women used to wonder, 'When will women's cricket in India have its 1983 moment?' Last Sunday night, we finally did. India lifted its first-ever ICC Women's Cricket World Cup trophy, defeating South Africa.

This triumph was not born overnight. It was in the making for a couple of decades—a story of resilience, belief and collective will. I saw those same emotions mirrored in the faces of Harmanpreet, Smriti, Shafali, Jemimah, Richa, Deepti—young hearts who carried the hopes of a nation with grace and grit.

Women's cricket in India began as a story of borrowed kits and empty stands. Many of us played when recognition was a luxury. But things started to change in the last few years—not just in the game, but around it too.

Much of this transformation

Just as 1983 inspired my generation to dream, 2025 will inspire the next. A girl from anywhere in India playing cricket knows that, with hard work, success is within her grasp



Mithali Raj is a former captain of the Indian women's cricket team

owes to the intent and vision of a few. In his capacity as BCCI secretary and now as ICC chairman, Jay Shah has ushered in reforms that offer real change—introducing pay parity for women, launching the Women's Premier League, investing more in grassroots talent development, increasing prize money and match fees across domestic tournaments.

When the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup returned to India after 12 years, expectations were high. Record prize money of \$13.88 million (Rs 123.1 crore)—a steeper increase than in any of the previous editions—made a statement: women's cricket was no longer an after-thought, but a mainstage spectacle.

Accessible ticket prices starting at Rs 100 opened stadium gates to families and first-time fans. Broadcasts in five Indian languages—and for the first time an Indian Sign Language feed—turned it into a celebration of inclusion. Thus, the 2025 World Cup marks a watershed for women's cricket. The records made in stadium attendance and by a viewership of millions across platforms speak of a perception shift among fans. Key region-specific activities and a trophy tour that touched millions across venues proved that women's cricket is not 'emerging' anymore—it has arrived.

Just as 1983 inspired my generation to dream, 2025 will inspire the next. When a girl from any corner of India will choose cricket, she won't have to wonder if it's practical to dream big. She now knows that, with hard work and dedication, success will always be within her grasp.

Because we didn't just win a World Cup—we changed what victory looks like once and for all by shattering the proverbial glass ceiling. Need I say this is only the beginning! *Aage aage dekho picture abhi bahut baaki hai...*



she stood in the stands that day holding a poster that read 'Wonder Women of India—Go India Go!'

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

It took the Indian women's cricket team nearly half a century to get here. On the way were familiar hurdles—patriarchy, gender bias, organisational apathy and lack of money, facilities and, most importantly, self-belief. "There were male cricketers who said women should not play cricket but be in the kitchen," recalls Diana Edulji, the 69-year-old veteran cricketer who was part of the first women's cricket team in 1974. Nearly all families faced taunts sending their daughters into a sport traditionally seen as a male preserve—"Ladki hai, kahan bhej rahe ho" being a common refrain. In the small towns and villages that the girls came from, hanging out with the boys wasn't deemed appropriate.

In Moga, Punjab, it would take Harmanpreet till Class 10 to understand what comments like "she's too grown-up to play with boys" actually meant. Shafali in Rohtak, Haryana, would disguise herself as a boy so that she could get coaching.

"...The success of the latest @ICC Women's @CricketWorldCup is a testament to so many who have been working openly and behind the scenes to see this growth and evolution materialise,"

— JAY SHAH, Chairman, ICC, on X

GETTY IMAGES



Smriti Mandhana | 29|

Innings: 9; Runs: 434; Average: 54.25

By her own lofty standards, ICC's ODI Cricketer of the Year for 2024 and the highest paid Women's Premier League player only had a 'decent' tournament. That means still scoring 434 runs—second only to the tally of South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt—which included a typically graceful, and crucial, century in what was a do-or-die league stage match against New Zealand and 50s against Australia and England. The poster girl for Indian women's cricket from Sangli, Maharashtra, whose #18 jerseys were ubiquitous at the DY Patil Stadium, is the most followed female cricketer on social media (13.2 million Instagram followers and counting) and is poised to be the future leader of the squad.



BANEGA TOH BADHEGA INDIA

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ban rahe hai naye champion

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Jemimah Rodrigues | 25

**Innings: 7; Runs: 292;
Average: 58.4**

Earlier this January, Jemimah was at DY Patil Stadium, jumping and swaying to Coldplay's 'Paradise' and 'Viva la Vida'. Little did she know that nine months later, she'd command the same stage—not as a fan, but as the rockstar of both the stadium and the nation—playing her most inspired innings, an unbeaten 127 against seven-time champions Australia, to carry India into the finals. That the innings came after being dropped mid-tournament made it all the more impressive. The squad's de facto cheerleader, one who strums the guitar in team hotels and makes the funniest reels with her teammates, Jemi, as she's popularly known, is much beloved. It was in her honest post-match interview that she added more to her fanbase. "I have almost cried every day through this tour," she admitted. "I was going through anxiety. I knew I had to show up and God took care of everything." It's in Jemimah that a nation now believes.

Kranti Goud could play with the boys in her native Ghuwara in Chhattarpur, Madhya Pradesh, only because of her 'boy cut' hair. Others had the equivalent of a Mahavir Singh Phogat for fathers, who would go against the grain to support their sporting dreams. So, Amanjot's carpenter father would handcraft a bat for his daughter, while Harmanpreet's would buy his newborn girl a shirt saying, "Good batting", unknowingly sealing her fate. Jemimah Rodrigues's father was her first coach; Pratika Rawal's was a BCCI-certified umpire, and her biggest cheerleader accompanying her to academies and tournaments.

There were few female sporting icons to look up to, and if there were, they were restricted predominantly to individual disciplines like badminton, boxing and wrestling. In cricket, the heroes were mostly



"Women's cricket has been on an upswing for a while. What's made a difference is that now they have been made to feel they are not just among the best but the best."

— SUNIL GAVASKAR
Cricketing legend

men: Kranti's was Hardik Pandya, while Shafali modelled her emphatic striking after Virender Sehwag. Very few, including big-city girl Jemimah, even knew of the existence of a women's cricket team. Nooshin Al-Khadeer, who was part of the historic team to play the 2005 World Cup finals, remembers being used to the none-too-benign neglect the women's team received. They had no sponsors, would often have to sleep in dormitories or on the ground, prepare pitches after sweeping the ground of pebbles and play to empty stadiums. There was no concept of match fee until the BCCI took charge of the women's game. "We had to pay from our pockets to play for India," says Edulji. Nooshin recalls how in 2005 they were paid Rs 8,000 for their efforts—Rs 1,000 per match played. Matches themselves were scanty. In fact,

One For All and All For One

For long, the Indian women's team leaned heavily on individual brilliance. In this World Cup, like Kapil's Devils in '83, each member stepped into an arc of inspired performances

By Nikhil Naz



took 11 attempts, but the Indian women's cricket team are finally world champions. And make no mistake—this wasn't destiny, nor a stroke of luck. It was the culmination of a system that has been building, brick by brick: the skyrocketing popularity of the women's game, the Women's Premier League, pay parity and the unflinching backing of the BCCI. But there was one factor—subtle on the surface yet seismic beneath—

that perhaps mattered most of all: team architecture. Not a new-wave innovation, but the return of an age-old blueprint for sporting success. Michael Jordan, six-time NBA champion and eternal sporting deity, summed it up best: "Talent wins games, teamwork wins championships." Teamwork, true teamwork, goes way beyond hugs at the end of a win. It's about having a squad full of players who can transform a bad day for one into glory for all. The same principle revived Indian women's cricket in 2025.

For too long, India's women's team lived on a diet of individual brilliance. Between Jhulan Goswami and Mithali Raj, and later Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana, very few match-win-

ners emerged. The supporting cast existed—but rarely did they steal the show. This year, that changed.

Amanjot Kaur dragged India over the line against Sri Lanka. Richa Ghosh dug into Pakistan and South Africa in the league matches. Pratika Rawal kept her cool against New Zealand. Jemimah Rodrigues tamed Australia in a high-pressure semifinal. And then, under the brightest lights of all, Shafali Verma slammed the door on South Africa in the final. All this while big guns Harmanpreet, Smriti and Deepti didn't just show up; they led, they chipped in, they infused calm.

In finance, it's about not putting all your eggs in one basket. In team sport, it's spreading the burden—and the joy—across players. Success is collectivised, pressure diffused. Opponents can't plan for a single target—there are too many to contain. It's just smart, sustainable success.

Unsurprisingly, the class of 2025 is being compared to the 1983 World Cup winners. Sure, both teams conquered the world for the first time. But a deeper link runs through the way they did it. Kapil Dev sent Zimbabwe packing. Yashpal Sharma toppled England. Roger Binny made the ball whisper. Mohinder Amarnath did a bit of everything. There was no one shining god.

Just a galaxy of timely stars—much like the women in blue today.

The writer is Consulting Editor, Sports, India Today TV

GETTY IMAGES



QUIET RESOLVE
The Indian team in a huddle
during the semi-final
against Australia, Oct. 30

Teamwork goes way beyond hugs at the end of a win. It's about having a squad full of players who can transform a bad day for one into glory for all. This principle revived Indian women's cricket in 2025



BANEGA TOH BADHEGA INDIA

Har naye stadium ke saath
ban rahe hai naye champion



Deepti Sharma | 28

**Innings: 7; Runs: 215; Average: 30.71
Wickets: 22; Strike Rate: 22.18; Economy: 5.52**

India has Deepti's family to thank for backing her when neighbours in Agra questioned her choice of cricket as a career. Their faith paid off spectacularly, as she was named Player of the Tournament. In the opener against Sri Lanka, she rescued India with a composed 53 and, in the final, her five-wicket haul—highlighted by the dismissal of Annerie Dercksen just as South Africa were settling in—sealed the title. A complete all-rounder, Deepti brings balance to every department: sharp throws from the deep, dependable middle-order runs, and spin that can unnerve any batter.



AP

GROWING KITTY

- When the women's team returned after their first WC final in 2005, each player was paid Rs 8,000 in total—Rs 1,000 per match
- On reaching the 2017 finals, each player was given Rs 50 lakh for the feat
- It's a different ballgame now. For winning its first ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, Team India raked in prize money of \$4.48 million (approx. Rs 40 crore); the BCCI also announced a handsome prize of Rs 51 crore

MATCH FEES

In October 2022, the BCCI implemented its pay equity policy, ensuring that both men and women in blue drew similar match earnings in international cricket

TESTS	ODIs	T20Is
Rs 15 lakh	Rs 6 lakh	Rs 3 lakh

ANNUAL PLAYER RETAINERSHIP

Sizeable discrepancy still exists in players' contracts, but then, women cricketers didn't even have contracts until 2015

TIER A **Rs 50 lakh:** Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma

TIER B **Rs 30 lakh:** Renuka Thakur, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh, Shafali Verma

TIER C **Rs 10 lakh:** Yashika Bhatia, Rasha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil, Arundhati Reddy, Titas Sadhu, Amanjot Kaur, Uma Chetry, Sneh Rana, Pooja Vastrakar

the Indian women's team played no international cricket in 1978-83 and then again in 1987-91, the latter of which also meant missing the 1988 Women's Cricket World Cup in Australia. Indian women cricket's greatest bowler Jhulan Goswami says the same—there was uncertainty as to when the women's team would play. "Sometimes we'd play one series internationally in the whole year," she recalls. "It was very disappointing to see players who lost out on playing at the peak of their careers," says Shubhangi Kulkarni, former India captain and currently a member of the IPL Governing Council, the first woman in the position. The team made do with playing on matting and cement wickets, and muddy outfields. "There was no question of diving and stopping," adds Shubhangi. Jhulan cites how lack of professionalism hurt their prospects. Financial constraints meant procuring quality cricketing gear was a task.

TURNING OF THE TIDE

All it takes is just one win. For India, it came when the Mithali Raj-led team reached the finals of the 2017 World Cup, a televised tournament. It gave Indian women cricketers hope that they could perhaps conquer the last mile and fostered a sense of self-belief, which stood the team in

Richa Ghosh | 22 |

Innings: 8; Runs: 235; Avg: 39.16

Being the only girl training at the Baghajatin Cricket Coaching Centre in Siliguri, West Bengal, turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Richa. Playing day after day against boys, she learned early to handle pace, bounce and the sting of hard leather. That fearlessness came to the fore at the World Cup, where the wicketkeeper-batter repeatedly rose to the occasion—whether easing pressure on Jemimah Rodrigues in the semifinal against Australia or backing up Deepti Sharma in the final. With a strike rate of 133.52, and a haul of 23 fours and 12 sixes, Richa not only powered India's big totals and audacious chases but also delighted spectators with her clean, fearless hitting. A member of the 2023 Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup-winning squad, she has since cemented her place as a key pillar of the senior side.



good stead in the 2025 edition when faced with a hat trick of losses against formidable opponents. Inside the team camp, the atmosphere was “positive” even when things were not going their way, says Harmanpreet. “The coach [Amol Muzumdar] kept reminding us that we are capable of something extraordinary.” This was no one-woman show; they played as a team, with every member contributing to the herculean effort.

Kranti, 22, who had come into the senior side just five months earlier, was entrusted with the responsibility of opening the bowling attack alongside Renuka Singh Thakur. Jemimah, the squad’s most effervescent member, delivered a century knock of a lifetime to help India defeat seven-time world champions, Australia, in the semi-finals. “We had ups and downs, but each of us looked out for each other,” Jemimah told the Sports Today channel after the win. “That’s what a real champion team is all about—knowing how to pick yourself up after a fall.” This was also a team unafraid to show their emotions on the field. “I am a very emotional person. I cry a lot,” Harmanpreet said at one post-match press conference. “I tell my teammates, you don’t need to control your emotions. Just keep enjoying.”

Things had also started improving for the Indian women’s cricket team three years ago, when the BCCI intro-



“This win should bring out a lot more girls to take up the game and for domestic cricket to improve”

— DIANA EDULJI, veteran cricketer who was part of the original 1974 India team

duced key measures in the women’s game. With Jay Shah as president, there was pay parity in match fees, access to better training facilities, a more active match calendar and, most significantly, the start of the Women’s Premier League. The WPL has had three editions so far, which has led to the infusion of fresh, young blood into the national side. “The WPL has narrowed the gap between domestic and international cricket. There’s financial support and recognition even if you can’t make it to the national side,” says Jhulan, a bowling coach with two-time WPL champions Mumbai Indians. “The quality of the game has improved because you are sharing the dressing room and playing with overseas cricketers. You see how they prepare for the game and control their nerves. There’s belief that we can defeat them.”

What has also helped lift the quality of the women’s game is Indian cricketers getting to hone their skills in overseas leagues like the Big Bash and The Hundred. Both Harmanpreet and Smriti have made trips abroad and returned with a sharper focus on fitness. In fact, days after the World Cup win,

Jemimah jetted off to Australia, becoming the only Indian cricketer to compete in the Big Bash League. “You get to



GETTY IMAGES

Shafali Verma | 21

Innings: 2; Runs: 97; Average: 48.5

Call her destiny's child. Left out of the initial World Cup squad, Shafali was training at the SRNCC Academy in Sultanpur, Haryana, when fate intervened. A freak ankle and knee injury to opener Pratika Rawal during the league match against Bangladesh opened the door for her return. Stepping into the squad only in the semifinals would unnerve most players—but not Shafali, the fearless hitter who once cut her hair short to pass as a boy just so she could play cricket. Having already led Indian women to their maiden ICC title—the 2023 Under-19 T20 World Cup—she brought the same composure and fire to the final, producing her career-best ODI score of 87 and best bowling figures of 2–36. In doing so, she became the youngest player ever—across men's and women's cricket—to be named Player of the Match in a World Cup final or semifinal.

learn a lot," she said earlier this year. "Knowing that a franchise has picked you gives you a lot of confidence, as does doing well against quality players and in different conditions."

THE MARCH FORWARD

From having a minimal match calendar, there's a gradual upswing in women's cricket. In 2023, the ICC introduced the under-19 T20 World Cup (India have won both editions); 2026 will see the tenth edition of the Women's T20 World Cup before which there will be the new season of WPL from February-March; 2027 will mark the inaugural Champions Trophy, a competition in the T20 format. What is needed are more Test matches—the longest format of the game is a test of true grit and skill. ICC doesn't even have a team or players' rankings for women in Tests.

But change is in the air. The last time India hosted the World Cup in 2013, the matches ran to empty stadiums. But the packed arenas in Visakhapatnam and Navi Mumbai, and the record TV and streaming viewing for the India matches show how far women's cricket has come. "For women's cricket to go upwards," Jhulan tells INDIA TODAY, "we needed a big *dhamaka* like the 1983 World Cup. It will help budding cricketers find role models and take up the game professionally."

To retain the momentum of this win, Shubhangi suggests,



"For women's cricket to go upwards, we also needed one big *dhamaka* like the 1983 World Cup. It will help young budding cricketers find role models"

— JHULAN GOSWAMI, Ace bowler

state associations must focus on cricket at the grassroots and also prioritise fitness among players. Right now, that happens only if you play for the national team. Nooshin bats for an increase in domestic match fees. Currently, it is Rs 20,000 for ODIs and Rs 10,000 for T20. An increase in earnings will mean less chances of dropouts, since many young girls opt for a career with guaranteed earnings once they graduate.

What this historic win reiterates is that a nation progresses rapidly only when its women are as empowered as its men in every field. On November 2, India's women in blue took a giant leap in that direction by overcoming self-doubt and smashing the glass ceiling in sports. ■



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एकद से

► EVERGREEN CM

Nitish at a party rally
in Danapur, Patna
district, Oct. 24



PTI

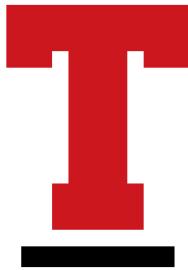


ASSEMBLY POLLS | BIHAR

THE POWER OF NITISH

HIS ENDURING EQUITY AMONG WOMEN AND EBCS MAKES THE BIHAR CM
AN INDISPENSABLE FIGURE ON THE STATE'S ELECTORAL CHESSBOARD

BY AMITABH SRIVASTAVA



THE GREY SKIES LOOKED

OMINOUS, but Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar was still on the road on November 1, addressing four election meetings on the day. One of them was in Jandaha in Mahnar constituency, Vaishali district, from where Umesh Kushwaha, the state president of his Janata Dal (United), is contesting.

Dressed in an immaculate white kurta, Nitish, 74, showed none of the portentous stiffness his opponents ascribe to the ‘tired septuagenarian’. On the dais, he accepted garlands with an affable smile and took in the audience, a sea of female faces, with a smattering of old allies and earnest young men. “Aap toh jaante hi hain (You all know by now),” he begins, in a voice weathered by two decades in office and the many more running such campaigns. He soon gets down to it, listing the many works his government has done—the roads paved, the schools opened, electric poles erected across sleepy villages—summoning in the same breath the possibility that things could regress: the spectre of ‘jungle raj’ rising on the horizon. He called out the frictions that scarred the state under Lalu Yadav’s rule back in the early noughties and then, with gentle insistence, asked not just for another term but for time: another chapter to complete the project he began two decades ago.

Having planted the seeds of doubt about the Opposition, Nitish turned to a theme that has come to define much of his political identity: women’s empowerment. Remind-

NITISH'S SWOT TEST

STRENGTHS

- Durable support among EBCs and women, built through targeted welfare and local outreach

- Reputation for steadiness and better law-and-order situation—a reassuring face in swing constituencies

- Essential alliance asset for the NDA; his presence consolidates votes across blocs

WEAKNESSES

- Age and fitness rumours dent perceptions of vigour

- JD(U)'s organisational reach shrinking; party no longer big brother to BJP

- Repeated alliance switches have bred opportunist image

OPPORTUNITIES

- NDA's combined vote share is also one that is transferable at party/assembly seat level

- Visible welfare measures (free electricity units, doles to women) are proof of delivery of social schemes

- No strong anti-incumbency against Nitish. The anger is of a more diffused variety

THREATS

- Tejashwi-led Opposition's youthful, job-centred pitch could mobilise first-time voters

- Alliance friction/demoralised local cadre could erode ground mobilisation gains

- Promised jobs and investment slow to come; pre-poll dole offers may not materialise into votes

- Prashant Kishor could bag some of the anti-RJD and youth votes

ers about reservations in police and government posts aside, it'll be the ‘*dashazari yojana*’—the Rs 10,000 Mukhya Mantri Mahila Rozgar scheme announced just before the election, money handed out to 12.1 million eligible women (one per household) to start small businesses—that should ensure the support of this relatively caste-neutral constituency.

As Nitish spoke, scores of women in the crowd raised their hands in approval; many were members of self-help groups, known as JEEViKA. Many are expecting it soon, but several have already received the money. They spoke of buying new clothes and Diwali sweets, of repaying part of a micro-loan—small transactions that, in the campaign’s rhetoric, consti-

tute the currency of “empowerment”. Later on, JD(U) working president Sanjay Jha’s brief speech stressed another point: “*Yeh paisa nahin lautana hai* (You don’t have to return the money)”. Meaning, it’s all a bonanza.

The Nitish Calculus

Over the past two-and-a-half decades, Nitish has been CM nine times—propped up by the BJP on seven occasions and twice in alliance with the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), now led by Lalu’s son Tejashwi Yadav. Nitish now fronts the NDA once again against the brisk, young energy of Tejashwi’s Mahagathbandhan (MGB). What explains Nitish’s resilience? Well, among reason-



ably large blocs of the electorate, there's a persistent reluctance to back the RJD—it's still battling an image trap. Against that negative, for that cohort, Nitish's era still evokes happy memories. His firm footing among women and the EBCs (Extremely Backward Classes) is grounded in the material life-chances he opened up for them.

That's also why the NDA rests on an assured base: its combined vote pool in the 2024 LS poll could yield leads in 176 of Bihar's 243 assembly segments. Corruption allegations surface at times against the Nitish government and disappointment runs through parts of the electorate, yet it rarely coalesces into burning outrage. "What is the option?" asks an elderly Muslim man in Nawada, pointing to the lack of a convincing alternative (though he does concede his own family will back Tejashwi's RJD). "That's precisely it," a JD(U) leader explains. "Surveys may show his popularity ebbing, but the moment you pit any individual opponent as a CM alternative, Nitish's ratings spike." The remark captures the contradiction at the heart of his appeal. Ally BJP, too, seems to have realised this. After vacillating on the issue for the longest time, BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have been endorsing Nitish as their CM candidate.

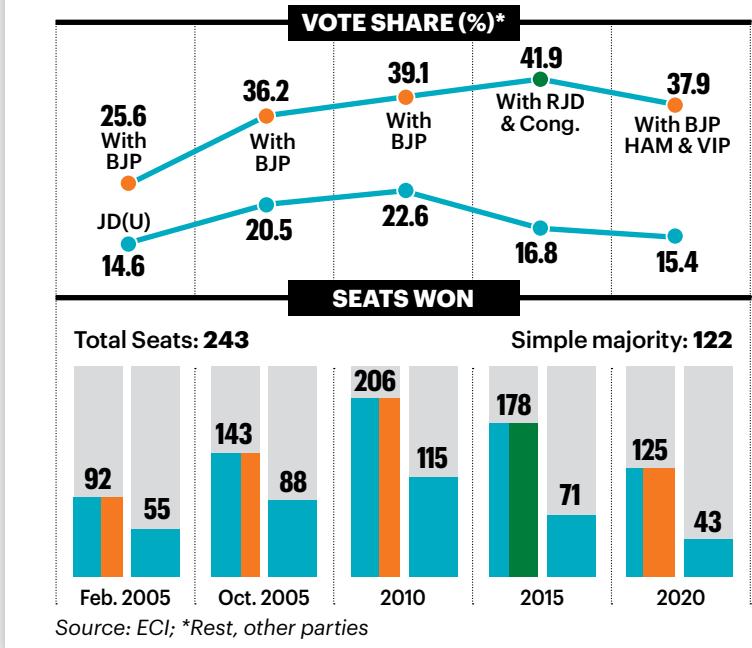
The party, JD(U), is equally resili-ent. In 2020, when it won just 43 seats, its lowest tally since coming to power, it still polled 32.8 per cent votes across the 115 (out of 243) constituencies it con-tested. That tally, recorded when parts of ally BJP's base swung towards Chirag Paswan, attests to a durable core, another reason why Nitish remains a prized ally in Bihar's volatile arithmetic.

The NDA has also proved adapt-able. When Tejashwi released the MGB manifesto on October 28—promising a government job to one member of every family, Rs 2,500 monthly pension to women, review of the liquor law, et al—the NDA switched gears almost immediately. Their Sankalp Patra, published on October 31, promised 10 million jobs and help for 10 million

BALLOT BALLAST

Why Nitish's JD(U) is crucial to winning in Bihar

■ JD(U) | ■ JD(U) + ■ BJP alliance | ■ JD(U) + ■ RJD alliance



The NDA has adapted well, with their Sankalp Patra going above and beyond the Mahagathbandhan's social security poll promises

women to become lakhpatis. Incidentally, even before the poll dates were out, Tejashwi had accused Nitish of filching the Opposition's ideas—the same social security plank (increased pensions, free electricity, domicile in government jobs)—yet the more charitable appraisal is that the latter operationalised those policy cues into subsidy DBTs (Direct Benefit Transfers) and programmes on the ground. Of course, the fact that they blunt the anti-incumbency appeal is a big political advantage for the NDA.

Alliances and Arithmetic

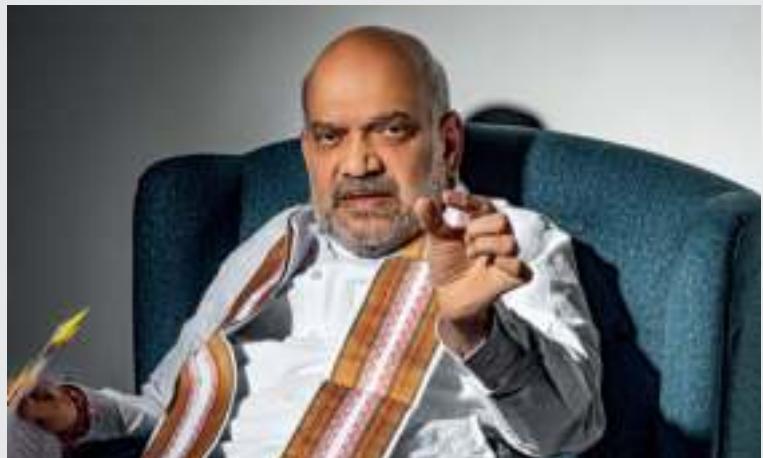
The BJP has set the campaign tempo, as Modi leads from the front with high-octane roadshows and rallies across key districts. Union home minister Amit Shah has operated as a strategic conductor, sharpening the law and order message and micromanaging organisational deployment, while party president J.P. Nadda criss-crosses the state to stitch up local coalitions into the

bigger narrative. The BJP's organisa-tional heft is unmistakable. It has carved the state into five operational zones, deputed '*pravasi pramukhs*' to oversee pockets of influence, and reactivated the panchayat- and booth-level committees with almost corporate discipline. The micro-targeted outreach—volunteers armed with voter lists, grievance track-ers, door-to-door activation—is visible in wide swathes of the state.

Crucially, organisation has been matched by alliance engineering. The reintegration of Chirag Paswan and his Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) into the NDA was painstakingly curated—Nitish visited Chirag's home during Chhath, and the latter publicly touched the CM's feet to get his blessings, gestures intended to erase the bitterness of 2020 and reassure the sceptics. The political math suggests Chirag's presence could swing votes by several percentage points in constituencies where his Dalit/ Paswan base is concen-

“NDA will win with a majority of 160+ seats”

On the campaign trail in Madhubani, Aaj Tak's Anjana Om Kashyap caught up with Union home minister Amit Shah. Excerpts:



Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

On the NDA's prospects: We will win with a 160-plus majority. All the alliance partners will have similar strike rates.

On the NDA Sankalp Patra's promise of creating one crore job opportunities: In the past 11 years, we have strengthened the infrastructure for industry, be it roads, bridges or power plants. We have also set up a number of factories—two textile hubs, a fertiliser plant in Barauni. Bihar is already the biggest producer of ethanol in the country. If we consider all that we have already done, it's already created employment worth over 7 crore man-days. Our promise is backed by arithmetic and planning.

On finding the money to fund promises: You don't need a government budget to finance private sector jobs. We have spent Rs 18.7 lakh crore on infrastructure. The jobs will come from private firms that have come because roads, airports, bridges are ready; the government jobs will come to support them.

On whether Rs 10,000 dole to women amounts to buying of votes: If 25 women pool in their Rs 10,000, they will have Rs 2.5 lakh, which can serve as seed money for a Rs 20 lakh loan and help them start a small business. The Opposition may call it buying of votes but we see it as empowering women.

On blaming Tejashwi for Lalu's 'jungle raj': Who is Tejashwi? Lalu's son. Who hands out tickets? Lalu Yadav. He still runs the party. The RJD's ideology is *lathmar* (wielding the stick). If they win, I can assure you, it will be a return to 'jungle raj'.

On a Sita temple in Sitamarhi: The party and its workers believe culture and religion are a big part of our social life. We will not set it aside for the sake of appeasement.

On there being no vacancy for CM or PM and not calling a press meet to declare Nitish CM candidate: What is a press meet? We have said it at public functions. Isn't that enough? ■

trated. At the same time, the return of Upendra Kushwaha and his Rashtriya Lok Morcha to the NDA fold shores up another slice of the OBC arithmetic—his namesake Kushwaha cohort.

But there are still worries. Apart from the MGB, there is concern that Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraaj project could siphon off some of the youth and migrant workers' vote which might otherwise lean towards the NDA. There is also no denying the fatigue from two decades in power. Welfare cheques and freebies can shore up the turnout, but they are not a solution for long pent-up aspirations. The JD(U)'s diminished organisational heft also means Nitish increasingly relies on senior partner BJP's poll machinery—an asymmetry that could create friction. Finally, in triangular contests where the anti-RJD votes split, outcomes could become unpredictable.

Steady on the Steering

Nitish's long-standing outreach programmes for the EBCs and women have translated into voter caches that opponents have found difficult to dislodge. Even as rumours about fitness circulate, the image that sticks is of a stabilising influence rather than a spent leader.

On the stump, Nitish's rhetoric performs double duty, harking back to the litany of achievements even as it points to a better future, incremental as it might be. This is the language of stewardship: we have tended to your affairs; allow us to continue. But the speeches are also defensive. 'Jungle raj', once a slogan, is now part of the campaign lexicon. It's a blunt message, but in many parts of Bihar, it still resonates.

If he wins, history is likely to record Nitish as Bihar's long-serving reformer—flawed, flexible but undeniably a legend. If he loses, his career will be read as a cautionary tale: a leader who reinvented himself so many times that identity became both scaffolding and hazard. Whatever the outcome, this election, the grammar of politics in Bihar will change. The state will have opened another chapter. ■

BATTLE FOR A JET ENGINE

FRENCH FIRM SAFRAN HAS BEEN CHOSEN TO JOINTLY DEVELOP ENGINES FOR THE AMCA STEALTH FIGHTER JET IN INDIA, MARKING AN ESCALATION IN ITS RIVALRY WITH AMERICA'S GENERAL ELECTRIC, THE ENGINE SUPPLIER FOR THE TEJAS LCA

By PRADIP R. SAGAR

AFTER DECADES OF WAITING, HOPES FOR A TRULY 'made in India' fighter jet engine might finally be realised. New Delhi and Paris are preparing to co-develop a cutting-edge power plant—a project set to propel India into the elite club of nations with access to high-thrust engine technology. Experts from the Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), part of the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), are in advanced talks with France's Safran Aircraft Engines to jointly design and build a 120-140 kN (kilonewtons) class engine that will power India's 5th generation stealth fighter, the twin-engined Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) and the Twin Engine Deck-Based Fighter (TED-BF) for aircraft carriers. The deal is estimated to be worth around \$7 billion (Rs 62,149 crore) for around 100 engines. The breakthrough announcement by Union defence minister Rajnath Singh, confirming Safran's partnership to jointly design, develop, test and produce the engine with 100 per cent transfer

of technology came just a week after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day appeal, urging Indian talent to build indigenous jet engines.

While the proposed collaboration with Safran may not be quite as *swadeshi* as the PM's exhortations, it is a step in that direction and an in-principle decision has been made to pursue it. The proposal is awaiting intra-defence and inter-ministerial clearances before it can be placed in front of the Cabinet Committee on Security for final approval. The AMCA is expected to be ready for production only by 2035. In all, India is projected to be needing around 1,100 engines for its fighter aircraft programmes by 2035.

The decision to choose Safran as the partner for development of the AMCA engine happened after deliberations with several international aerospace companies. Though Rolls-Royce of the UK was also in contention, the selection of Safran was a vote of confidence over General Electric (GE) of the US. There



A JET ENGINE FACE-OFF

General Electric's F414 is the chosen engine for Tejas Mk 2 and the first batch of AMCA. Now, the later AMCAs will have an engine co-developed with Safran. What do the two firms offer India, and at what stage are the deals?

GENERAL ELECTRIC

► Under the 2023 agreement, the GE F414, meant for Tejas Mk 2 and early AMCAs,

will be made in India with 80% transfer of technology

► But the commercial details of the deal are still being worked out

► The F414 is an afterburning turbofan engine with 97.9 kN thrust

► The company is also to deliver 99 GE F404 engines for the Tejas Mk 1A fighter under a 2021 deal worth Rs 5,375 cr

► It has sent only four F404s in 2025, attracting a penalty for delayed delivery by India

is good reason for this. Engines for the other two indigenous fighter jets—the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk 1A and the LCA Tejas Mk 2—are tied to engines manufactured by GE, and progress here has been unsatisfactory. GE engine delivery is running behind its estimated timelines and has hampered the Tejas programme. HAL is in the process of procuring GE F404-IN20 engines from GE Aerospace for its Tejas Mk 1A fighter jets, with a Rs 5,375 crore deal for 99 engines signed in 2021 and a follow-on \$1 billion (Rs 8,559 crore) deal for 113 engines expected to be signed soon. Though delivery was to start in March 2023, GE Aerospace has delivered the first four engines this year.

₹62,149 CRORE
Or \$7 billion—estimated cost of the planned deal between Safran and DRDO/ HAL to make jet engines for the 5th generation AMCA

SAFRAN

► DRDO/ HAL and Safran plan to co-develop a jet engine of 120-140 kN class for the advanced version of the stealth AMCA, to be in production by 2035

► The proposal is awaiting inter-ministerial clearances before the Cabinet Committee on Security gives final approval

► The plan is for 100% transfer of tech for around 100 engines, all parts to be India-made

► The engine will be a more powerful version of the M-88 used in Rafale

► Safran has also developed the Shakti helicopter engine with HAL

► Shakti also promised to include all Indian parts, but less than 50 per cent are fully indigenous



Consequently, not a single Mk 1A of the initial 83 ordered by the Indian Air Force has been delivered. GE blamed global supply chain disruptions for the delay, which has forced India to impose penalties on the firm.

Simultaneously, commercial aspects of the much-vaunted \$1.5 billion (Rs 13,317 crore) deal between HAL and GE for co-production of the

GE F414 engines in India in the 98 kN thrust class with 80 per cent transfer of technology are still being negotiated. The GE F414 is to power the Tejas Mk 2 fighter, as well as the first batch of the AMCA. The penalties imposed by India on GE are said to have complicated the talks.

Some aeroengine experts maintain that the GE F414 engine will be inadequate for both the AMCA and the Tejas Mk 2. "The AMCA is designed for an engine with 120kN thrust," one scientist tells INDIA TODAY. Similarly, the GE F414 may be inadequate for Tejas Mk 2—a medium-weight fighter of 15-18 tonne range carrying a five-tonne combat payload.

There is another issue that goes against a new deal involving the GE F414. Even though 80 per cent tech transfer is assured for the GE F414s meant for the LCA Mk 2 and early AMCAs, sceptical Indian designers are aware that the Americans are loath to share high-end technology despite selling almost \$20 billion (Rs 1.77 lakh crore) worth of defence material to India in the past 15 years. But France, which supplies a wide range of military platforms to India, is keen to enhance its strategic partnership.

The engine Safran will develop with India will be a more powerful version of the M-88, the 75 kN engine that powers the Rafale. And Safran will help DRDO/ HAL with full transfer of knowhow, from creating assembly lines, testing facilities and helping with complex metallurgy. Crucially, all parts are going to be sourced from within India. The reason why the estimated cost of this project is much higher than both the GE F414 and the GE F404 deals is that the plan with Safran is to develop a much more potent engine from the ground up—including building manufacturing and testing facilities—as well as the promise of full transfer of technology and intellectual property rights.

However, 'technology transfer' often doesn't materialise to its promised degree. For example, HAL and Safran



JET FOR A NEW GENERATION A full-scale model of the AMCA at Aero India 2025, Bengaluru

THOUGH THE COLLABORATION WITH SAFRAN FOR AN ENGINE FOR AMCA IS A NECESSITY, EXPERTS SAY INDIA CANNOT EXPECT THE FIRM TO HAND OVER A COMPLETE DESIGN, IP RIGHTS

have jointly produced the Shakti engine for Indian helicopters since 2003 under a similar contract, but less than 50 per cent of parts are made in India with full tech transfer. The Sukhoi Su-30MKI programme with Russia, which promised 60 per cent indigenous content, ended up with only about 13 per cent Indian-made parts. "One should know what to ask for...unless you ask for it, the original equipment manufacturer will never share something that took decades to develop," says a scientist.

A LONG HAUL

The struggle to produce a jet engine poses something of a paradox. How is it that India can make world-class nuclear submarines and cruise/ ballistic missiles, but not jet engines? Defence analyst Girish Linganna points out that jet engine development takes decades of research, testing and analysis of failure data. Modern jet engines face rapid acceleration and deceleration, have to withstand high temperature and travel several times the speed of sound.

In 1986, India launched the Kaveri engine project, aiming to develop a homegrown jet engine to power its LCA Tejas. T. Mohan Rao, former director of

the GTRE, says that India's indigenous engine fell short by only about 10 per cent in thrust. "A gas-turbine engine has nearly 30,000 components, each performing under extreme temperatures. Even nations like Russia, the US or France took 30 to 35 years to master this technology," he says, adding that critical technologies such as single-crystal turbine blades and specialised bearings were not available in India at the time. "But no country was willing to share these core technologies."

India developed nine prototypes of the Kaveri, but none met the parameters to power a fighter jet, despite an expense of over Rs 3,000 crore. The project was shelved in 2011.

The impending collaboration with Safran, thus, is a necessity for India's aerospace industry. India can't remain dependent on foreign suppliers. Experts also say India should not expect Safran to hand over a complete design/ IP rights; Indian development must begin with its own design initiative. A consortium approach with private sector agility, public sector infrastructure and foreign knowledge is essential. However, real success lies in how much technology stays with India when French engineers fly back home. ■

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A GROWING PIGEON MENACE

By **DHAVAL S. KULKARNI**

The humble pigeon has fluttered through **human history**—as messenger, companion and cultural symbol. Bollywood even immortalised the ubiquitous bird as an emblem of love in the 1989 romantic blockbuster *Maine Pyar Kiya*. But in today's urban India, the bird has become an object of ambivalence—evoking compassion in some and seen by others as a harbinger of disease and civic decay.

Mumbai is witnessing such tensions of late. On November 3, Jain monk Nileshchandra Vijay launched a protest at Azad Maidan against the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) decision to shut down the iconic *kabutarkhana* in Dadar, one of the city's largest pigeon-feeding sites. For the Jain community, feeding pigeons is a pious act. Earlier, the monk had warned that the community would "take up arms" against the crackdown.

Meanwhile, the BMC's move to permit controlled pigeon feeding at four new locations has drawn protests from residents of Lokhandwala, Andheri. They fear that large-scale feeding could drive away the 100-odd migratory and exotic bird species that frequent the Lokhandwala lake. Earlier, a proposal by the state government to set up feeding centres in areas such as the Sanjay Gandhi National Park was opposed by wildlife conservationist Kedar Gore, who cautioned that these sites would attract other species along with pigeons, exposing them to the zoonotic diseases the birds carry.

The conflict first began sometime in July, when Maharashtra's legislature debated the health risks of pigeon droppings at 51 feeding sites across Mumbai. Industries minister Uday Samant said the BMC would be asked to shut them down. Animal rights activists rushed to the Bombay High Court, which, in an interim order, ruled that "human health was paramount", but halted demolition of the feeding stations. In August, when the BMC covered the sites with tarpaulin sheets to prevent feeding, the feeders resisted. Hundreds of them stormed the Dadar *kabutarkhana* and tore down the sheets. Around 50,000 pigeons were sustained there on roughly 1,500 kg of grain daily, offered mainly by members of the Jain community. The protesters defied police orders and sparked sectarian unease in India's financial capital.

The issue is not unique to Mumbai. Pigeons are testing civic patience across the country. Delhi's municipal body is weighing



AVIAN AILMENTS

With growing concerns over pigeons causing illnesses, Dr Amit Sakaria, senior consultant physician at Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune, lists some of the serious diseases caused by pigeon exposure

► **Histoplasmosis:** Caused by fungi like *Histoplasma capsulatum* found in pigeon droppings; can lead to serious lung complications

IN MUMBAI, PIGEON-FEEDING SETS FAITH, ECOLOGY AND POLITICS ON A COLLISION COURSE. THE REAL WORRY, THOUGH, IS PUBLIC HEALTH



BHASKAR PAUL

BIRDS OF CONTENTION

A file picture of pigeons being fed at the Gateway of India in Mumbai

↳ **Cryptococciosis:** A lung disease that targets the central nervous system, posing greater risk to people with weakened immunity

↳ **Psittacosis:** A bacterial infection from pigeons that can progress to pneumonia if left untreated

↳ **Allergies:** Pigeons can trigger allergic reactions in predisposed individuals

↳ **Asthma:** Repeated contact with feathers, droppings or dust can cause respiratory difficulties

↳ **Pigeon breeder's lung:** Also known as hypersensitivity pneumo-

monitis, caused by inhaling fine dust particles from droppings, leading to lung inflammation

↳ **Parasitic infections:** Pigeons often carry mites, lice and fleas that spread into human surroundings, causing skin allergies, itching and secondary infections



TAMING THE PROBLEM

How to balance compassion, cleanliness and ecological health

- » Allow limited feeding hours or designated zones to respect faith, while protecting public health
- » Run civic awareness campaigns on the health and ecological risks of overfeeding instead of relying only on fines
- » Act against unauthorised *kabutarkhanas* that fuel unchecked pigeon growth
- » Frame policy on ecology and scientific evidence, not sentiment
- » Cut food surplus so pigeons forage naturally and predators like kites and cats thrive

CLIPPED WINGS BMC shuts down *kabutarkhana* at Dadar after court orders, Aug. 11

restrictions. Pune fines offenders. In Mysuru, BJP MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar persuaded Jains to stop feeding birds near the city's palace, citing risks to both health and heritage. Globally, the response is similar: feeding is regulated in New York and London, and fined in Singapore.

SCIENCE VS SENTIMENT

What began as a routine civic crackdown in Mumbai soon spiralled into a full-blown clash over health, religion and identity. Shiv Sena MLC Manisha Kayande, who raised the matter in the legislative council, argued that an issue of scientific and medical importance had been turned into an emotional one. A former professor of zoology, she described pigeons as “flying rodents” responsible for spreading zoonotic diseases (see *Avian Ailments*). The myofibrils (protein filaments) on their bodies, she explains, often find their way into human lungs and trigger respiratory disorders. Such risks, she notes, have prompted countries worldwide to control pigeon populations. In the past, she adds, even grocery shops encouraged informal feeding spots for commercial gain.

Petitioners contest that view. Sneha Visaria, one of them,

“An issue of scientific importance has been turned into an emotional one... health risks have prompted countries worldwide to control pigeon populations”

Manisha Kayande, MLC, Shiv Sena

claims that no scientific study directly links pigeon exposure to respiratory ailments. “They are not ready to understand that these are rarest of rare cases that do not happen in an open environment,” she says, pointing out that for eight months, the civic body has been cracking down on *kabutarkhanas* in Khar, Gowalia Tank, Naigaon and Lalbag. Instead of bans, she urges that feeders be permitted to offer grain in three one-hour blocks across the day. A trustee of the Dadar Kabutarkhana Trust adds that the ban has led to “thousands of pigeons dying due to hunger and thirst”. Similarly, Atul Shah (Dadhi), trustee of Jain organisation Vardhaman Parivar, says any ban on feeding would infringe on the fundamental rights of birds, who “have their own niche in the ecosystem”. He cites RTI replies from civic-run hospitals that appeared to downplay the scale of the threat: between July 2024 and July 2025, Sion Hospital recorded 12 cases of hypersensitivity pneumonitis, of which just four patients had been exposed to pigeons; KEM Hospital had eight cases, with two linked to the birds.

Doctors disagree. Dr Deepak Bhanushali, a pulmonologist at state-run JJ Hospital, says his team sees two to three new cases each month of hypersensitivity pneumonitis caused by exposure to pigeon feathers or droppings. “Though there are no tests to prove that it is caused only by pigeons, exposure to pigeons is among the most common causes,” he explains. The disease’s progression can be slowed, he adds, but not reversed. Lung transplants, too, are rare and only about half of them succeed. “Such diseases should be prevented rather than faced,” he warns. Voices of reason have emerged within the Jain community too. Dr Kalyan Gangwal, a senior physician from Pune who describes himself as a “staunch Jain”, advises against pigeon-feeding in thickly populated areas because of the health risks involved. He says easy availability of food has eroded the birds’

natural instinct to forage and he advocates for controlled feeding instead. However, for some like Chetan Kamble, founder of the citizens' group Chachak Dadar, the problem is urban order. He says pigeons at feeding stations pose risks to traffic, especially two-wheelers. Kamble also points to what he sees as "hypocrisy": a Jain temple near the Dadar *kabutarkhana* has installed nets to keep pigeons out, even as Jain groups insist the birds be fed in public spaces.

FAULT LINES TO THE FORE

The language-driven divides of Maharashtra's polity, especially in Mumbai and its surrounding areas, have made the pigeon-feeding controversy sharply polarising—pitting Marathi speakers against the Jain community. Relations between the two had already been strained in recent years over a range of issues: meat-eating Maharashtraans being denied housing in neighbourhoods dominated by vegetarian Gujaratis, Marwaris and Jains; the mushrooming of Jain-only gated complexes in former working-class Maharashtrian localities; and the shutting down or relocation of fish markets located near such buildings. The monk Nileshchandra Vijay had appealed to Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray to intervene. But Thackeray, for his part, sought action against those who continue feeding pigeons, asking the monk to adhere to the HC order.

After the Dadar *kabutarkhana* row, the nativist outfit Marathi Ekikaran Samiti (MES) organised a morcha of Maharashtraans and local residents in support of the ban. MES vice-president Pramod Parte questioned why a minor issue like a ban on pigeon-feeding had been given a religious colour by the Jains, alleging that the community's show of strength was directed against Marathis.

Analysts say pro-Marathi parties such as the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) and the MNS—despite their strong presence in Dadar and a history of physically attacking Hindi speakers—have been muted in the face of aggression from the wealthier Jains. "The established political parties are beholden to the Jains and cannot afford to hurt them. This has exposed the limitations of politics around Marathi," notes academician Deepak Pawar of the Marathi Abhyas Kendra. He says the growing assertion of Jains can be traced to the BJP's reign and "the power of numbers of North Indians, the resources of the Jains and the ideology of the RSS".

The issue also gave the Shiv Sena (UBT) a stick to beat the ruling Mahayuti with. Lok Sabha MP Anil Desai, whose constituency covers Dadar, accused the state government of indulging in vote-bank politics for electoral gains. But a party source attributes the Sena (UBT)'s lack of aggressive stance to the Jains' ability to vote en masse and tilt the balance. The MNS argues that the BJP is banking on a Jain and non-Maharashtrian consolidation to win the forthcoming BMC polls. The BJP, however, rejects the charge, with state spokesperson Keshav Upadhye insisting that Fadnavis will "evolve a solution that will strike a golden mean between the faith of the society and the health of the masses".

Environmentalists say that the easy availability of food and overfeeding have driven a sharp rise in the pigeon population, accompanied by a parallel surge in rodents that thrive on the leftover grain. Natural predators such as kites and cats

have been unable to keep pace. The State of India's Birds 2023 report notes that the numbers of the rock pigeon (*Columba livia*) have increased by 158.47 per cent since 2000, effectively making it an invasive species. Each bird, estimates suggest, produces around 11.5 kg of droppings annually. The health risks apart, these droppings are also a hazard to Mumbai's heritage structures, a senior BMC official points out. They can often trigger chemical reactions, leaving stains on iconic monuments.

Kishor Rithe, director of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), stresses the importance of maintaining an ecological balance. The surge in pigeon numbers, he notes, has coincided with a decline in native bird species such as flycatchers. "In wildlife management, it is an established fact that the dominance of one species is dangerous to others," he explains, adding that science,

not sentiment, should guide the debate on pigeon-feeding. Jay Shringarpure, an environmentalist who heads the MNS's environment wing, argues that illegal *kabutarkhanas* have fuelled the unchecked growth of pigeons. His campaign targets awareness rather than punishment. "If pigeons were not fed, they would follow their natural impulse to search for food and water," he says. Wildlife conservationist Kedar Gore calls it a problem without an amicable solution. "It is either *aar* or *paar* (this way or that way)," he says.

The bird itself is oblivious to all the chaos erupting around it, flocking around the feed left for them. It is humans who have to choose between faith and sanitation. ■

—with Sonali Acharjee

MORE THAN J BABY F

Childhood obesity, especially in early years, is emerging as India's new public health concern, driven by screens, snacks and sleep loss. The fix, experts insist, begins with families, not pharmacies

BY SONALI ACHARJEE

Imaging by NILANJAN DAS / AI

Aarav's parents always thought their four-year-old was just bigger than other kids. But when he started running out of breath after a few minutes of play in their Bengaluru apartment complex, they took him to a doctor. When his weight was checked, the scale read 28 kg, some 12 kg more than what's ideal for his age and height. The doctor also found elevated fasting insulin and early signs of metabolic stress. "We thought he was just a healthy eater," says his father Rohan Menon, who works in IT. "I never thought obesity could become a medical emergency at this age."

Aarav's story might seem unusual, but it mirrors a quiet epidemic unfolding across Indian homes. For a country long preoccupied with malnutrition, the opposite end of the spectrum—overnutrition—is growing with startling speed. Since children gain both height and weight as they grow, what matters most is the trajectory—a sudden jump in weight without a matching increase in height can be an early red flag. According to the World Health Organization's Child Growth Standards, a child under five is con-

JUST AT



“ MATERNAL DIETS HIGH IN Refined carbohydrates, sugary drinks and processed foods are increasingly linked with infants born with higher birth weights and greater adiposity (body fat) ”

DR ANITA GUPTA, Delhi-based gynaecologist

3.5%

SHARE OF OVERWEIGHT CHILDREN IN UNDER-FIVE AGE GROUP IN INDIA, UP FROM 1.5% IN 2005-06

14%

OBESITY AND OVERWEIGHT PREVALENCE AMONG KIDS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS, TWICE THE 7.2% IN GOVT SCHOOLS

sidered overweight when their weight-for-height/length score is more than two steps (+2 standard deviation, or SD) above the healthy median for their age group and gender, and obese when it's three steps (+3 SD) higher. That's why tracking a child's growth with a paediatrician is more reliable than judging by appearance or family perception.

Recent data shows why early vigilance matters. A 2024 Cambridge University Press study based on the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) found the proportion of overweight children under five has doubled—from 1.9 per cent in earlier rounds to around 4 per cent—in many states. The UNICEF-WHO-World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates (2025) place it at 3.5 per cent nationally, up from 1.5 per cent two decades ago. The risk deepens with age and affluence. A 2024

review in the *Indian Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism*, analysing 21 studies conducted between 2007 and 2022 and involving nearly 71,500 school-going children aged 5–18, found that combined overweight and obesity rates exceeded 14 per cent in private schools—roughly twice the 7.2 per cent recorded in government schools. Once dismissed as a western affliction, childhood obesity is now among India's fastest rising health threats.

Dr Ganesh Javalikar, director of Paediatric Endocrinology at Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, calls the trend “extremely concerning”. For, ‘adiposity rebound’—the point at which body fat starts to rise again—used to earlier occur around the age of six or seven years. “Now, it’s shifting downwards,” says Dr Javalikar. “Obesity at an early age is associated with a higher risk of adulthood obesity and metabolic syndrome. The rise in the incidence of non-communicable diseases and their occurrence at younger ages is also a direct result of childhood obesity.”

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

In a country that once measured child health by calories gained, the pendulum has swung the other way: calories now need restraint. Public health experts describe this as a clear epidemiological transition, where malnutrition and obesity now coexist—sometimes within the same family.

So, what's driving this silent surge? The roots often form long before a child takes their first steps—or even their first breath. Mothers who gain excessive weight during pregnancy or develop gestational diabetes expose the foetus to elevated glucose and insulin levels, altering metabolic set-points for life. “Maternal diets high in refined carbohydrates, sugary drinks and processed foods are increasingly associated with infants born with higher birth weights and greater adiposity (body fat),” says Dr Anita Gupta, a Delhi-based gynaecologist. “Such infants tend to gain weight rapidly in early life, suggesting a nutritional influence even before birth.” And this is being observed with growing frequency in India, she notes.

TRIGGERS AND FIXES

Everyday habits fuelling obesity in kids and simple solutions to fight back

Trigger: Night bottles stretching into toddler years
Fix: Stop bottle-feeding by 18–24 months unless it's medically advised

Trigger: Children 'grazing' all day with no meal rhythm
Fix: Offer structured meals—three mains along with two snack windows

Trigger: Sugary milk and juices replacing real food
Fix: Swap liquid sugars for fruit and plain yoghurt

Trigger: Screens invading bedrooms and sleep hours
Fix: Keep bedrooms screen-free to restore healthy sleep

Trigger: Little movement, too much sitting
Fix: Encourage daily physical activity—even in small spaces

After birth, feeding habits deepen these imprints. Rapid weight gain in the first two years—especially among babies fed high-protein formula and large milk volumes—raises later obesity risk. "Overfeeding in infancy is common," says Dr Gupta. "Many mothers breastfeed for extended periods when 20 minutes per breast is sufficient. Prolonged or continuous feeding can contribute to regurgitation, disturbed sleep and excess calorie intake." Infants, thus, should be encouraged to self-feed and develop internal hunger, or satiety regulation, she adds.

THE CULTURE OF EXCESS

Pediatricians say these patterns often stem from cultural norms and anxiety among parents. "For decades, advertising and baby food marketing in India have idealised the image of a round, chubby infant as the picture of health," says Dr Raman Goel, Diabetes and Bariatric Surgeon at Wockhardt Hospital, Mumbai. "That image has stayed in cultural memory. Yet excess weight in infancy is not a sign of health but an early indicator of metabolic stress." The 'Children in India 2025' report, released by the Union ministry of statistics and programme implementation, warns that more than a third of children aged 5–9 show elevated triglycerides and bad cholesterol levels—early markers of heart disease—linked to excess weight.

Modern lifestyles only amplify the risks. Late dinners, sugary snacks and excessive screen time suppress physical activity and distort sleep cycles—each a



DR SANDEEP AGGARWAL
Chairman,
Manipal
Institute of
Minimal Access,
Bariatric, GI &
Robotic Surgery

“THERE IS NO DEFINITIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR OBESITY IN MOST YOUNG CHILDREN. CHANGING HABITS AT THE FAMILY LEVEL IS FAR MORE EFFECTIVE”

critical regulator of metabolism. "Sleep is the missing pillar in most obesity conversations," says Dr Sandeep Aggarwal, chairman of the Manipal Institute of Minimal Access, Bariatric, GI & Robotic Surgery, Delhi. "Infants who do not get adequate or good-quality sleep show higher hunger hormone levels and tend to gain more weight. Unfortunately, irregular sleep and late bedtimes are now common even among toddlers."

Two toddlers illustrate this problem. In Pune, Anaya Singh—born weighing 4.2 kg—was fed sweetened cereals and watched hours of cartoons while her parents worked from home. By age three, she weighed 18 kg and showed early fatty liver changes. In Noida, two-and-

HEALTH / CHILDHOOD OBESITY

a-half-year-old Taran, doted on as *mota bachcha* (chubby baby) by grandparents, was given milk bottles every two hours and cream biscuits through the day. His screen time far exceeded his play time. When his preschool teachers noticed constant thirst and poor attention, blood tests revealed elevated liver enzymes.

RESETTING THE ROUTINE

Most parents, according to Dr Goel, don't even consider that a baby can be overweight, leading to under-reporting. "Infants cannot be blamed for what they eat," he says. "Every calorie comes from an adult who feeds them. In adults, we can talk about willpower or lifestyle, but in babies, obesity reflects the habits of the household."

Newer anti-obesity drugs such as GLP-1 agonists are being tested globally for older children, but those aged under five, experts agree, remain best treated through environment and routine (see *Triggers and Fixes*). "There is no definitive medical treatment for obesity in most young children," says Dr Aggarwal. "In extreme cases, surgery becomes a compassionate, life-saving measure...but these are extraordinary circumstances. What works is sustained behavioural intervention—structured routines, mindful feeding, adequate sleep and physical play. Changing habits at the family level is far more effective than any therapy."

Evidence backs this up. A 2024 review of Indian prevention strategies in the medical journal *Cureus* found that a multipronged approach combining nutrition counselling, active play and screen-time reduction was feasible and effective in preschool settings. Policy can help—by curbing junk food marketing, improving play spaces and educating parents. But the biggest shift must occur at home.

The encouraging fact is that toddlers respond quickly. Their biology is adaptable, their habits still malleable. Early interventions—especially before the school years—can yield lasting results. Ultimately, success won't just show on a weighing scale. It will be visible in a child's energy, confidence and joy in motion—markers of a childhood defined not by excess, but by balance. ■

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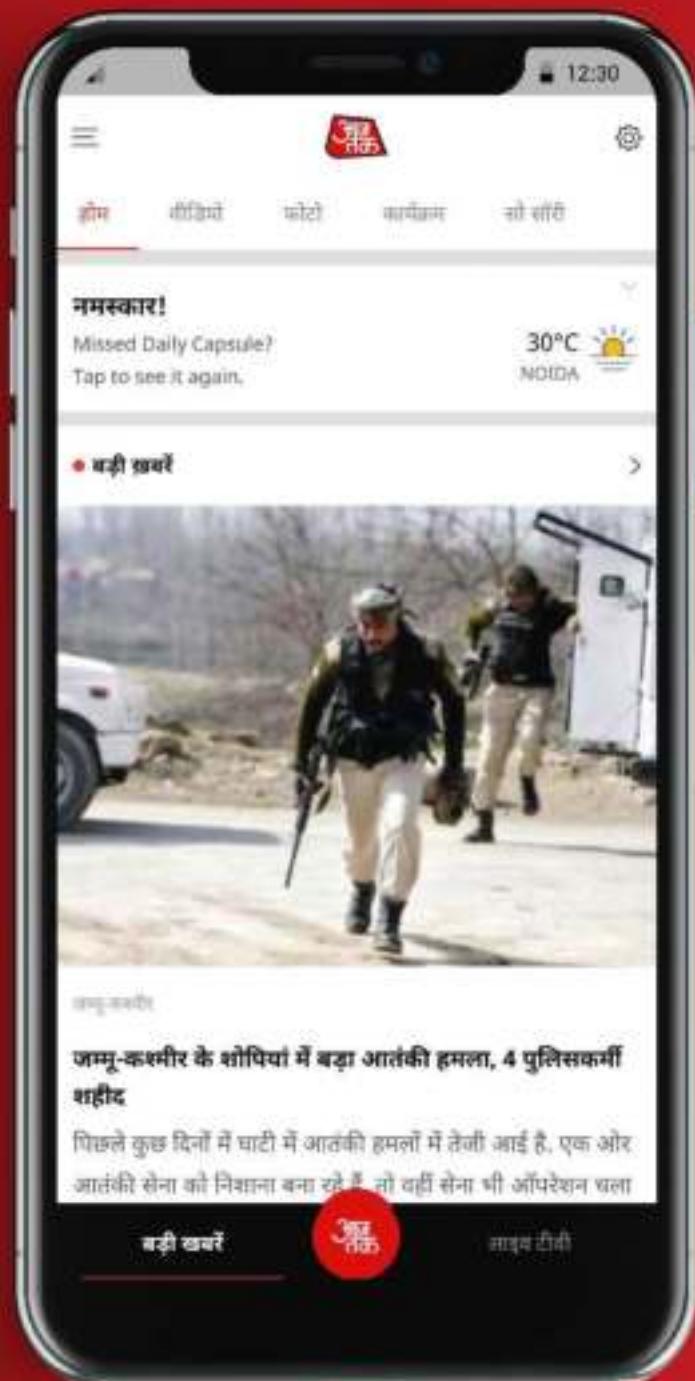
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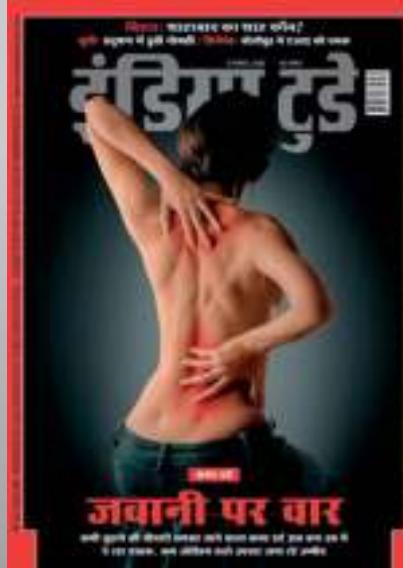
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BOOKS ▼

It's (Not) the Final Chapter!

HE'S ALWAYS BEEN BIG IN INDIA AND NOW, EVEN WITH HIS 'LAST NOVEL' UNDER WAY, BESTSELLING AUTHOR JEFFREY ARCHER STILL HAS A LOT TO SAY

MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

Archer has also recently released *End Game*, the conclusive novel of the William Warwick books

Photograph by DANI HEAVEN

W

WITH OVER 300 MILLION COPIES SOLD IN 115 COUNTRIES IN 48 LANGUAGES,

Jeffrey Archer holds the distinction of being one of the most popular authors in the world, India being one of his biggest markets. Ask him why he thinks he has such a loyal readership in India and he remarks, "Leading authors ask me, 'why are you so popular in India, Jeffrey?' Well, you people are an aspirational, hard-working race. You all think you're Abel. You're all fighting to get to the top, which I admire so much." Archer's love for cricket probably helped too and he counts V.V.S. Laxman and Rahul Dravid among his fans. "Sunil Gavaskar is an old friend. The Nawab of Pataudi and I were at Oxford together and remained friends. Indeed, he once held a dinner in my honour in Delhi," he recounts.

At 85 years of age, Archer is penning his final novel. He has done a couple of drafts so far and expects to finish it sometime before Christmas. The idea for the novel came to him six years ago when he was reading a speech by Adolf Hitler. "Then I read Winston Churchill's response to it and realised that WWII could have ended on September 15, 1941. Three books had been written about what happened that day, all by distinguished historians but no one had tackled the subject as a novel. It has been the biggest challenge of my life," he says. He's not modest about it either. "I think it's the best thing I've ever done—even better than *Kane and Abel!*" Considering the 1979 novel is counted among the world's top 100 best-selling books, that is a tall claim indeed.

However, before he does that, there's one more 'final' act, so to speak. He has recently released *End Game*, the conclusive novel of the William Warwick books (2019-2025). The protagonist of the popular series first appeared as a detective in *The Clifton Chronicles* (2011-2017) and Archer recalls fans

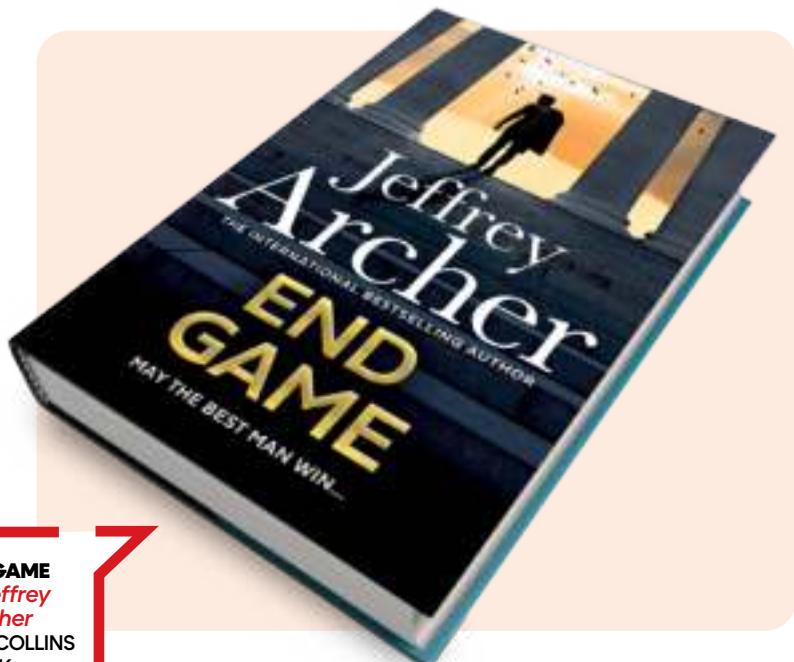
LEISURE

writing to him to know more about Warwick. "I was 77 years old when I wrote the first novel featuring him and had no idea there would be eight volumes taking me right through to the age of 85," he chuckles.

Along with him, the readers have seen Warwick rise up from the ranks to become a Commander in Scotland Yard. His latest release is set against the backdrop of the London Olympics of 2012. "I met Commander Bob Broadhurst, who was in charge of the Olympic security, and asked him if anything at the games had

financial crisis, with debts amounting to £400,000. Twelve publishers turned his novel down, but the 13th gave him a £3,000 advance, and the book sold 3,000 copies. In 1979, he published his masterpiece *Kane and Abel* which became a global bestseller, enabling him to enjoy the next five decades of writing.

Yet another hurdle came his way when he was imprisoned for two years from 2001 to 2003 following charges of perjury over a 1987 libel case. During his time there, Archer wrote a three-volume prison diary



END GAME
by Jeffrey
Archer
HARPERCOLLINS
UK
₹499; 384
pages

gone wrong. He told me about 13 things that went

wrong which the public are not aware of—two of them, which the security forces stopped, would have made the front page in every country on earth! All 13 of those incidents are in the book, plus nine of my own imagination and it is up to the reader to decide which of them were real and which were not," he reveals.

Archer's initiation into the world of writing was not exactly smooth. When he sat down to write his first novel, *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less*, in 1975, he was in an incredible

series—*Hell, Purgatory and Heaven*. Looking back upon his time there, Archer shares that he is lucky to have a strong family and many good friends. "And the readers remained absolutely loyal!" he remarks.

On the subject of readers, Indians certainly love the storyteller! At the Jaipur Literature Festival in 2019, more than 8,000 people turned up to listen to him speak. "I thought some pop star was coming and they were waiting for him!" he guffaws. His books have been the subject of many an unauthorised adaptation, a situation prompting

him to sign a deal with Applause Entertainment to secure adaptation rights to six of his most celebrated works. "I got fed up with people stealing my films and my ideas, and printing my books and selling them in the streets at a third of the price! I'm not complaining though, because I like being read," he adds with a smile.

He may be writing his last novel, but he is far from

Archer hopes to keep writing short stories, plays and film scripts among other things

putting the pen down. "I hope to keep writing short stories, plays and film scripts among other things," he says.

And although he has entertained the idea of writing a memoir, Archer believes he might never write one. But, if he were to, what would he call it? He thinks for a second, before responding—"Proust said, 'we all end up doing the thing we're second best at.' I'd have to find a title that described that, because I should have captained the England cricket team. I should have been Prime Minister. I should have won a gold medal at the Olympics, but I ended up being a storyteller! And again, I am not complaining, because telling a story is like being a ballet dancer or an opera singer. It's a God-given gift." ■

—Deepali Dhingra



WELCOME
ALL DDLFs
curtain raiser
at Sahitya
Akademi,
New Delhi

FESTIVAL ▶

Voices in the Valley

The latest edition of the **DEHRADUN LITERATURE FESTIVAL** from Nov. 14-16 will gather leading writers, artists and thinkers for three vibrant days of ideas and performances

The 2025 Dehradun Literature Festival (DDL) will be held at Doon International School from November 14-16. This will be the seventh edition of the festival, which began in 2017. This year, the DDLF will host a wide range of practitioners across disciplines—writers, translators, publishers, actors, filmmakers, musicians and so on. The invited speakers include Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Shobhaa De, Abhay K., Arundhati Subramanian, Sam Dalrymple, Sean Doyle, Imtiaz Ali and Divya Prakash Dubey.

"When we began in 2017, I wanted to set up a literature festival in Dehradun simply because I knew that this is such an important educational centre, and that we would receive a terrific response from students and teachers [at Doon International

School]," shares DDLF founder Samraant Virmani. "During the first year, we had only 10 events and maybe 1,000 visitors, and now we are sitting on over 50 events and 50,000-plus visitors. What has remained constant is that we have never charged for entry. We want to

and events focusing on cinema and the performing arts. For example, a panel on inclusivity in cinema will reunite several people involved in the recent Aamir Khan film *Sitaare Zameen Par*, which depicted a sports team of differently abled youngsters.

Justice Chandrachud will headline two separate conversations involving Indian democracy, including one with schoolchildren. There are panel discussions around folk music traditions, not to mention musical performances in the evening.

"There's so much going on every day at the festival, so many ideas and concepts being discussed," says Virmani, "that sometimes visitors can get overwhelmed." The musical performances, he hopes, will act as a kind of mental reset. ■

THIS
WILL BE
THE SEVENTH
EDITION OF THE
FESTIVAL, WHICH
NOW HOSTS OVER
50 EVENTS FOR
50,000-PLUS
VISITORS

keep it that way."

During the festival, a pair of awards named after Shivani and Ruskin Bond (two of the best-known writers from the hills of Uttarakhand) honour resilience, empowerment and literary achievements. In addition to a full lineup of literary conversations, there are also panels

—Aditya Mani Jha

CINEMA ▼

A MUSICIAN'S SWAN SONG

A month and a half after his death, Zubeen Garg's final film has turned theatres across India into spaces of collective tribute

The lights come on, and the end credits of the just-released Assamese film *Roi Roi Binale* (*Tears Still Flow*) fade into silence. The audience sits frozen, eyes red, cheeks streaked with tears. Two young women sob and hug each other, an older lady wipes her face with her dupatta, and a group of men linger in the last row, trying to hide what's written all over their teary faces.

For this crowd of Assamese residents in Gurugram, the heartbreak isn't about the film itself, but the fact that this is the last time they will see Zubeen Garg—the voice

of their home state—alive on screen. The multifaceted singer, who drowned while swimming in Singapore a month and a half ago, left behind a void that runs deep. Over three decades, he recorded more than 38,000 songs in 40 languages, directed and acted in films, and championed social and environmental causes.

In the film, which he wrote, scored and starred in, Zubeen plays a blind singer whose defiance mirrors his own. His mannerisms, dialogues and philosophy of living fearlessly reflect his real-life persona. The title song reimagines his 1998 track of the same name,

layering nostalgia and a cinematic sweep rarely seen in Assamese cinema. Certain scenes—his monologue on mortality, his love for the sea—now feel uncannily prophetic.

Finishing the film after his death tested the crew, logistically and emotionally. "The background music and dubbing were incomplete, and we had to ensure that everything reflected Zubeen's musical style and creative vision," says co-producer Shyamantak



Gautam. "We brought in sound experts from Mumbai and used AI to recreate Zubeen's voice for the dubbing." The team managed to complete and release the film on the planned date of October 31.

Since then, *Roi Roi Binale* has packed theatres not just across Assam but in 46 Indian cities, rewriting the reach of cinema from the Northeast. "The emotional value is driving the viewership, but the film would have succeeded on its own as well," says Gautam. *Roi Roi Binale* feels less like a film release and more like Zubeen Garg's final concert—one where the curtain falls, but the music never really stops. ■

—Satarupa Paul



BIJU BORO

***Roi Roi Binale* feels less like a film release and more like Zubeen Garg's final concert**

CINEMA ▼

Seeing the Unseen

With *Working Girls*, filmmaker **Paromita Vohra** turns her lens on India's blue-collar women, crafting an empathetic portrait of feminist resilience

Indefatigable multihyphenate Paromita Vohra has been travelling across India, screening her new docu *Working Girls*, a continuation of her relentless investigation into urban feminisms that began with her 2002 production *Unlimited Girls*.

The 135-minute film tracks blue-

MUSIC ▼

JAZZ IN

BENGALURU JAZZ FEST BRINGS TOGETHER INDIAN MAESTROS AND INTERNATIONAL ARTISTES FOR SOUL-STIRRING PERFORMANCES





STRENGTH IN SWEAT A poster of *Working Girls*

collar working women such as erotic dancers, ASHA workers, egg donors, care workers, farm labourers, grassroots organisers and union leaders. Vohra's thesis—what you imagine when you think of a working girl and what their life could possibly be like—is an invitation to consider modes of feminist livelihood and resistance outside mass-mediated

tropes of caste-Hindu, white-collar female workers.

Touchingly enough, most of these interviewees have seen the film. Vohra feels fortunate to have seen "the shades of emotion ripple over their faces... women whose work is made invisible have drawn on a cer-

tain self-possession to withstand the world's humiliations and uncaringness... I think they took the respect of the film with that same self-possession but also *sukoon* at having been seen."

Among the film's highlights is Vohra's mishmash of funky animation, tongue-in-cheek voiceover and clever use of music. In all her docs, Vohra has steadfastly

refused the "narrowness of linear character-driven narratives" that have "colonised our non-fiction forms, making for dispassionate films".

Vohra's oeuvre includes non-fiction on Bollywood, screenwriting the acclaimed 2003 film *Khamosh Pani*, her platform Agents of Ishq that celebrates positive depictions of sex in media and culture, and goofy appearances in Channel [V] India ads in the '90s.

Noting that her varied work is "mostly motivated by curiosity and delight", she adds feeling "a deep impatience for flat-footed understandings of people and reality, devoid of contradiction and self-doubt that pass for politics and art in our times". Here's hoping this agent of *ishq* stays forever unlimited. ■

—Devarsi Ghosh

THE AIR

Jazz-lovers are in for a treat as the Bengaluru Jazz Fest, supported by Bosch, is all set to enthrall them over the course of three music-filled weekends across the city. Featuring an eclectic line-up of jazz stalwarts, including Gerard Machado and Radha Thomas; Carnatic

greats such as Sukanya Ramgopal and Karthik Mani; and international artistes like Magnus Dauner and Peter Natterer, and the Bosch Big Band, the programme promises an unforgettable celebration of sound and soul. "The idea has been on the horizon for a long time," says Jagadeesh M.R., musician-guitarist and director of Bangalore School of Music, who is part of the curating team. "We wanted a platform that would host international artistes and highlight India's own jazz journey."

The event will also highlight the city's age-old connection with Germany. "Many artistes of Bengaluru have been collaborating with German musicians for 50 years. Pioneering among them was the late Rama Mani, who recently passed away," he says. "In fact, hundreds of European musicians have shown great interest in Carnatic music, especially the *konnakol*, and studied at the Karnataka College of Percussion."

Some of the highlights of the show



IN PERFECT SWING
Members of the
Bosch Big Band

THE FESTIVAL WILL ALSO HIGHLIGHT THE CITY'S AGE-OLD CONNECTION WITH GERMANY

include the Indo-German Jazz Fusion featuring Sukanya Ramgopal; Raghuram Collective featuring Karthik Mani; MoonArra world fusion with Peter Natterer leading up to the finale event featuring the Bosch Big Band. The festival will unfold across interesting venues such as Sabha, the Goethe-Institut and Jagriti Theatre, and also spotlight the city's young and vibrant jazz talents. ■

—Deepa Natarajan Lobo

The Bengaluru Jazz Festival will be held over three weekends from Nov. 8-22. Entry free through RSVP. Visit www.bengalurujazzfest.com

MUSIC ▼

Make a (Musical) Note!

STARTING WITH COLDPLAY'S RECORD-BREAKING SHOWS IN JANUARY, THIS HAS BEEN A YEAR WHEN INDIAN MUSIC FANS HAVE BEEN SPOILT FOR CHOICE WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO WATCH CONCERTS BY INTERNATIONAL STARS AT HOME. HERE ARE THE MARQUEE ACTS YOU CAN CATCH BETWEEN NOW AND EARLY 2026

POP/DANCE

► Jason DeReulo, The Script (Sat.)/ **Diplo** (Sun.) will headline the Cherry Blossom festival in Shillong (Nov. 14-15) Tickets: Rockskitickets.com

► Jacob Collier will bring his 'Djesse Vol. 4' world tour to Bengaluru (Nov. 28), Mumbai (Nov. 30) and Delhi (Dec. 2) Tickets: Skillboxes.com

► Akon will return to play gigs in Delhi (Nov. 9), Bengaluru (Nov. 14) and Mumbai (Nov. 16) Tickets: District.in

► **Passenger** will perform his first set of concerts in Delhi (Nov. 19), Mumbai (Nov. 21) and Bengaluru (Nov. 22) Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► Tyla will top the bill at the Indian Sneaker Festival in Mumbai (Dec. 6-7) Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► Blue will celebrate their 25th anniversary tour in Shillong (Dec. 11) and Gangtok (Dec. 13) Tickets: District.in

► **David Guetta** will headline Sunburn in

Mumbai (Dec. 19, 21) Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► Calum Scott will present his tour in support of new album *Avenoir* in Gurugram (Jan. 23, 2026) Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► **The Lumineers** will take their tour for their *Automatic* album to Gurugram (Feb. 1) Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► **Calvin Harris** will stage his long-awaited

debut India tour, rescheduled from November, in Bengaluru (Apr. 17, 2026), Mumbai (Apr. 18) and Delhi (Apr. 19) Tickets: BookMyShow.com

ROCK/METAL

► **Tom Morello** will perform under the Bandland on Tour banner in Gurugram (Dec. 17), Mumbai (Dec. 19) and Bengaluru (Dec. 21) Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► Marty Friedman will return to Mumbai (Jan.





GETTY IMAGES

16, 2026), Delhi (Jan. 17) and Bengaluru (Jan. 18)
Tickets: District.in

► **John Mayer** will finally visit India, for a solo gig in Mumbai (Jan. 22)
Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► **Linkin Park** will close out the fourth edition of Lollapalooza India in Mumbai (Jan. 24-25,

2026)
Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► **Dream Theater** will commemorate their 40th anniversary in Bengaluru (Jan. 30) and Kolkata (Feb. 1)
Tickets: Skillboxes.com

► Muse and Train will top the bills at the Bandland festival in Bengaluru (Feb.

14-15, 2026)
Tickets: BookMyShow.com

HIP-HOP

► **Travis Scott** will end the current run of his Circus Maximus world tour, in Mumbai (Nov. 19)
Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► Central Cee and Wiz Khalifa and Don Toliver and **Karan Aujla** will headline stages at the inaugural edition of Rolling Loud India in Mum-

bai (Nov. 22-23)
Tickets: District.in

► G-Eazy will be the main attraction at the MusicHead Festival in Itanagar (Nov. 22-23)
Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► **Post Malone** comes back for a date in Guwahati (Dec. 8)
Tickets: BookMyShow.com

► Playboi Carti will play his debut gig at Lollapalooza India in Mumbai (Jan. 24-25)
Tickets: BookMyShow.com

—Amit Gurbaxani





ART ▼

A GLOBAL CANVAS

ART MUMBAI BRINGS TOGETHER SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING VOICES IN ART, CONNECTING THE REGION'S CREATIVITY WITH THE WORLD

Since its debut in 2023, ART MUMBAI has quickly established itself as a defining platform for modern and contemporary South Asian art. Returning for its third edition, the fair—co-founded by Saffronart's Minal and Dinesh Vazirani, Conor Macklin of London's Grosvenor Gallery and Nakul Dev Chawla of New Delhi's Chawla Art Gallery—continues to grow in scope and ambition.

This year, it will feature over 80 exhibitors, including prominent Indian galleries such as Experimenter, DAG, Akar Prakar, Nature Morte, Chemould Prescott Road, Vadehra Art Gallery, Gallery Espace and TARQ, and international galleries, including Lisson Gallery, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, Galleria Continua and Ben Brown Fine Arts. "The growing

participation of international galleries and the strong attendance at the fair reflect how collectors, curators, artists and galleries from around the world are being drawn to the region's rich histories and vibrant contemporary practices," says Minal Vazirani. "The axis is clearly shifting, and ART MUMBAI is helping connect South Asian art and audiences

with a wider global community."

Foundations like the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and the Saffronart Foundation will return with special presentations that underscore the fair's commitment to public engagement and cultural dialogue. Beyond the booths, the 'Speaker Series' brings together curators, collectors and cultural thinkers to explore how South Asian art

continues to shape global narratives. Panellists, including Kiran Nadar, Ranjit Hoskote, Mitchell Crites and Pheroza Godrej, will discuss everything from shifting

A WIDE ARRAY This year, ART MUMBAI will feature over 80 exhibitors from India and around the world



museum practices to navigating the art market. Additionally, Yusuf Mehta, Himani Dehlvi and Roobina Karode will explore Tyeb Mehta's legacy and global impact, alongside a retrospective exhibition celebrating the artist's centenary.

Another highlight will be the 'Sculpture Walk' dedicated to women artists, featuring works by Savia Mahajan, Tarini Sethi, Vinita Mungi, and more. Public performances, curated walks and food and lifestyle offerings will further reflect Mumbai's multi-disciplinary energy. ■

—Prachi Joshi

ART MUMBAI will be held at Mahalaxmi Race Course from Nov. 13-16

The 'Speaker Series' will bring together **curators, collectors and cultural thinkers** to explore how South Asian art continues to shape global narratives

THE LISTICLE

Art exhibitions to look out for this month



▼ DOHA | At QM Gallery Katara; till Feb. 7, 2026

Journey of an Artist

The Rooted Nomad: M.F. Husain is an immersive exhibition presented by Qatar Museums in collaboration with KNMA and charts Husain's artistic journey from his formative years in India to last years in Doha, Qatar. Initially presented alongside the Venice Biennale in 2024, the exhibition reimagines Husain's legacy through an immersive, multi-sensory experience.



▼ MUMBAI |
At NGMA; Nov. 11-Dec. 10

CENTENNIAL MAN

A landmark exhibition at NGMA, Mumbai, affords a rare opportunity to get up close with one of the living legends of Indian art. Commanding all four floors of the gallery, *Krishen Khanna at 100: The Last Progressive* brings together an eight-decade oeuvre—from the Partition paintings to abstract works, the iconic Bandwallahs and monumental murals. Many of these are never-before-seen works from Khanna's personal archives, family collections, and leading institutions.

▼ MUMBAI |
At Tao Art Gallery;
Nov. 8-Dec. 20

Power of Two

Systems, Silhouettes, Synchronicities brings together the works of two abstract artists—Isha Pimpalkhare, with her delicate textile compositions, and Anni Kumari, who constructs dense, interdependent structures inspired by numerical algorithms and optical illusions.



▼ NEW DELHI | At Latitude 28, Defence Colony, till Nov. 30

NEW DIRECTIONS

Latitude 28's second gallery, flaunting long sight-lines, strong beams, modular false walls and natural light, has launched in Defence Colony (B-74, Ground Floor), with a group exhibition titled *Dramaturgies of Space*. Artists featured include Chandan Bez Baruah, Monali Meher, Riyas Komu and Waswo X. Waswo.



▼ NEW DELHI | At CCA, Bikaner House; Nov. 15-23

Lady on the Terrace

In Bloom: A Journey through the Five Decades of Shipra Bhattacharya traces the evolution of the veteran artist's signature figuration, from early works exploring the solitude of urban women to later pieces that channel collective trauma. Bhattacharya's iconic motif of the woman on the terrace recurs throughout.



▼ KOLKATA | At Emami Art; till Dec. 24

THE HUMAN CONDITION

Arndam Chatterjee's solo exhibition—Avamānavā—shows a new body of thought-provoking works, which grapple with Francis Bacon's notion of the "brutality of fact". The title itself draws from Tagore's translation of 'sub-human'.

—compiled by Amit Dixit

Q. You are performing with your sons and grandsons for IBTIDA-Ek Mehfil on Nov. 15. How special is it for you?

To share the stage with my children and grandchildren is the greatest blessing of God Almighty. The nature of every human being comes out through their music. The way [my son] Amaan plays is very distinctive. He has created his own world and he sounds like Amaan Ali Bangash. His younger brother Ayaan has also created his own world.... Abeer and Zohaan have just begun their journey. All credit goes to their parents, Ayaan and Neema, for planning their day so that they get to practise sarod beyond studies.

Q. There has been a re-emergence of baithaks and mehfils that encourage live music. What do you think about them?

There used to be mehfils and baithaks in the olden days, which is why it makes me happy to see them. Intimate settings always inspire artists. We have performed for the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, where 10,000 people were in the audience. Chamber concerts are a very special setting in western music as well.

Q. How do you want the world to look upon your legacy?

The legacy carries on with the blessings of God Almighty and the people of India who respected and encouraged my forefathers. Historically, the great musicians were patronised by the rajas and maharajas. Our forefathers were the court musicians of the Scindia Parivar of Gwalior. When their rule was over, the people of India respected, encouraged and accepted all the great musicians.

Q. How do you think music and art help connect the world?

India is like a beautiful bouquet of flowers. We have so many religions, traditions and ways of life, but we depend on each other. This dependency is our strength. As a musician, I feel we belong to every religion of the world because music is a precious gift of God.

—with Deepali Dhingra

Rhythm Q+A Divine

Sarod grandmaster **Ustad Amjad Ali Khan** is all set to perform with two generations of his family at the Safdarjung Tomb in Delhi



HINDUSTAN TIMES

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