

Business: The Protein Gold Rush**ASSAM: POLITICS OVER ZUBEEN / CINEMA: MAKING OF HOMEBOUND**

www.indiatoday.in



NOVEMBER 10, 2025 ₹100

OC

Volume 50-Number 45; Published on every Friday of Advance Week; Posted at UPC Delhi - RMS - Delhi - 110006 on Every Friday & Saturday; Total number of Pages 60 (including cover pages)

INDIA TODAY

**TEJASHWI YADAV**

FIGHTING FOR CHANGE

- CAN HIS JOBS-FOR-ALL PITCH WOO BIHAR'S YOUTH?
- WILL HIS RAINBOW CASTE COALITION DELIVER?
- CAN HE SHED THE 'JUNGLE RAJ' IMAGE OF LALU'S RULE?

*Roz khao ande
without bhool
cos eggs are cool.*



NATIONAL
EGG CO-ORDINATION
COMMITTEE

(Non-Government Public Charitable Trust)

A single egg contains 6.3 gms of protein, 13 essential vitamins, omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants and minerals like calcium, iron and potassium. Isn't that cool! Have this coolest source of energy every day and make your body strong and tough.

SUNDAY HO YA MONDAY
ROZ KHAO ANDE.

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

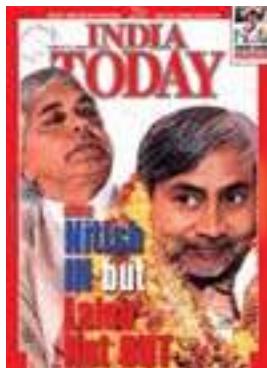
India is not short of dynastic stories, but this one carries a special note of fascination. For, Tejashwi Yadav, the protagonist, is the son of Lalu Prasad Yadav, who was a mould-breaker in terms of his personality as well as his politics. Tejashwi was a four-month-old infant when Lalu first took power as Bihar's chief minister, inaugurating a long reign around the radical and disruptive slogan of Mandal. Thirty-five years later, the son is the closest he has ever been to occupying the same chair. Anointed as the chief ministerial candidate of the Mahagathbandhan (MGB), he is the face of the campaign against an entrenched incumbent, the Nitish Kumar-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). To make the last mile, the young Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief has armed himself with a strategic blend of social and economic drivers. Its grid is a rainbow caste alliance, an expanded version of the Mandal formula that once underwrote Lalu's reign. Animating that is a grandiose jobs-for-all pitch and high welfarism that taps into the present and future anxieties of a 74 million-strong electorate, especially its massive youth component.

As Bihar races towards a humdinger of an assembly election, the final steps of the electoral math are still a puzzle. But Tejashwi has grabbed the momentum due to a combination of circumstances. Nitish is a name most politicians across the ages have wanted on their side. Both alliances in Bihar have prospered in his company. But after 20 years of being at the helm, age and anti-incumbency could be catching up with the Janata Dal (United) helmsman. Besides, the NDA has still not explicitly endorsed him for the top post, leaving his eventual fate in a limbo. And there is no one of comparable stature in the BJP, the NDA's biggest component in Bihar. Against this indeterminacy, the MGB's strategic clarity, a bare fortnight before voting, has catalysed the field.

However, Tejashwi's legacy is both an asset and a liability. The NDA has worked hard to revive the phobia of Lalu's 'jungle raj', which is deeply embedded in Bihar's collective memory. For years, this fear has driven counter-consolidation, among the elite castes whose old domination was challenged violently by Yadav power, as well as the non-Yadav Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) who rallied around Nitish for two decades. This psychological resistance translates into a stiff numerical challenge for Tejashwi. The old Muslim-Yadav (M-Y) base of the RJD adds up to a formidable 32 per cent, but it has never been sufficient without a good portion of the 36 per cent EBC and 20 per cent Dalit cohorts joining in. Can Tejashwi bridge that gap and overcome the repel-

lent force that still operates on those groups? Aware of this handicap, he repeatedly pledges he will tolerate no wrongdoing, not even from those closest to him.

Backing this reformative promise is the 'A to Z' caste formula. This seeks to replace the old M-Y duopoly of the RJD with a big tent that offers food and shelter to a wide spectrum of caste groups. Besides Tejashwi, the MGB has projected Vikassheel Insaan Party chief Mukesh Sahani, the 'son of Mallah', as its deputy CM face. Mallahs may be only a 2 per cent vote, but as a boatman caste, they are spread out across Bihar's riverine landscape. The gesture itself is rich in symbolism, with more EBC/Dalit faces promised at that level, and over half of the RJD's tickets going to non-M-Y groups, further burnished by its 23 women candidates, the highest among all parties. Lending all this a ring of sincerity is the presence of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who seems to have rekindled the dormant Congress base with his turn towards Ambedkarite social justice and *vote chorhi* campaign. The party's Bihar president, Rajesh Ram, belongs to the Ravidasia Dalit community (5 per cent) and the Congress is not seen as the weak link, as in 2020.



▲ March 13, 2000

To outdo the NDA's potpourri of attractive poll sops, Tejashwi has pledged to provide one state job to every family that lacks one, among other enticements. In a state where chronic unemployment has seen hordes of Biharis migrate to other states, this should be a powerful pull factor. But with Tejashwi's pledge likely to cost around Rs 12 lakh crore, or four times Bihar's annual budget, it has been dubbed by the NDA as a "fiscal fantasy". Also, Bihar is often won and lost on extremely thin margins, with about 50 out of its 243 assembly seats decided by margins below 5,000 votes. In his first outing at the helm of MGB, Tejashwi himself had come close to clinching the 2020 election: the alliance fell only 12,000 votes short of the NDA's tally. He comes into his second inning with his punch and panache intact, but wiser and more mature. As a one-time dabbler in cricket, his highest first-class score was 19. In politics, he needs to pilot the MGB to score more than a century of seats, with 122 being the majority mark. Will he succeed? This week's cover story reads the compelling contest unfolding in Bihar via a spotlight on the Tejashwi persona. Senior Editor Amitabh Srivastava sees in it both promise and paradox and says, "Without doubt, this is the youthful RJD leader's biggest test."

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Aroon Purie'.

(Aroon Purie)

CHAIRMAN AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Aroon Purie
VICE CHAIRPERSON AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Kalli Purie
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dinesh Bhatia

GROUP EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: Raj Chengappa

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Manoj Sharma

GROUP CREATIVE EDITOR & CHIEF OF AI: Nilanjan Das **GROUP PHOTO EDITOR:** Bandeep Singh

EDITOR (FEATURES): Kai Jabil Fries

MANAGING EDITORS: Sunil Menon, S. Sahaya Ranjit, Manisha Saroop, Kaushik Deka
MUMBAI: M.G. Arun

SENIOR DEPUTY EDITORS: Anillesh S. Mahajan, Sangram K. Parhi, Sasi Nair

DEPUTY EDITORS: Pradip R. Sagar

JAIPUR: Rohit Parihar; **MUMBAI:** Suhanvi Singh

SENIOR EDITORS: Sonali Acharya, Ashish Mukherjee, Saikat Niyogi

PATNA: Amitabh Srivastava; **BHOPAL:** Rahul Noronha

SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Sonal Khetarpal

MUMBAI: Dhaval S. Kulkarni; **AHMEDABAD:** Jumana Shah

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Avishhek G. Dastidar, Vipul Grover; **BENGALURU:** Ajay Sukumaran

ASSISTANT EDITOR: KOLKATA: Arkamoy Datta Majumdar

PRINCIPAL CORRESPONDENT: LUCKNOW: Avaneesh Mishra

PHOTO DEPARTMENT: Chandra Deep Kumar, Rajwant Singh Rawat (Deputy Chief Photographers), Arun Kumar (Principal Photographer)

MUMBAI: Mandar Suresh Deodhar (Chief Photographer)

PHOTO RESEARCHERS: Prabhakar Tiwari (Deputy Visual Research Editor),

Saloni Vaid (Chief Photo Researcher).

Jodha Singh Adhikari (Principal Photo Researcher)

GRAPHICS EDITOR: Tammo Chakraborty

ART DEPARTMENT: Sanjay Pipalani (Creative Editor),

Angshuman De (Senior Art Director), Rajesh Kumar Angira, Bhoomesh Dutt Sharma (Associate Art Directors), Santosh Kumar Sharma (Assistant Art Director), Praveen Kumar Gummadi (Chief Designer), Siddhant Jumde (Chief Illustrator)

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT: Harish Agarwal (Chief of Production), Naveen Gupta (Chief Coordinator)

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER:

Suparna Kumar

IMPACT TEAM

Senior General Managers: Jitendra Lad (West and East), Syed Naveed (Chennai)

General Manager: Mohan Bisht (North)

Deputy General Manager: Raghunandan P (Bengaluru)

GROUP CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER: Vivek Malhotra

SALES AND OPERATIONS

Deepak Bhatt, Assistant Vice President-Sales and Distribution

Rajeev Gandhi, General Manager (North)

Yogesh Godhanlal Gautam, Regional Sales Manager (West)

Manawer Hossain, Regional Sales Manager (East)



Volume 50-Number 45; For the week

November 4-10, 2025, published on every Friday

• Editorial/Corporate Office Living Media India Ltd., India Today Group
Mediaplex, FC-8, Sector-16A, Film City, Noida - 201301; Phone: 0120-4807100

• Subscriptions: For assistance, contact, email: wecare@intoday.com;

Phone / WhatsApp: +91 8597 778 778 (Monday to Saturday, 9.30am - 5.30pm).

• Sales: Direct all trade enquiries to General Manager (Sales), Living Media India Limited, C-9, Sector-10, Noida-201031 (UP).

• Regd. Office: F-26, First Floor, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001.

• Impact Offices: 1201, 12th Floor, Tower 2 A, One Indiabulls Centre,

(Jupiter Mills), S.B. Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai-400013;

Phone: 022 69193355; Fax: 66063226

• E-1, Ground Floor, Videocon Towers, Jhandewalan Extn, New Delhi.

• Door No: 610, 610A, 612, 5th Floor, Block A, Imperial Chaitanya Building, Anna Salai, Teynampet, Chennai, Tamilnadu-600018.

• 201-204 Richmond Towers, 2nd Floor, 12, Richmond Road,

Bangalore-560025; Phones: 22212448, 22213037, 22218343; Fax: 22218335;

• 52, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, 4th Floor, Kolkata-700071; Phones: 22825398;

Fax: 22827254; • 6-3-885/7/B, Somajiguda, Hyderabad-500082;

Phone: 23401657, 23400479, 23410100, 23402481, 23410982, 23411498;

Fax: 23403484 • 39/104/ Karakkal Road, Kochi 682016; Phones: 2377057,

2377058; Fax: 2277059 • 2/C, "Surayath Bldg", 2nd Floor, Behind White

House, Pancharati, Office C.G. Road, Ahmedabad-380006; Phone: 26560393,

26560929; Fax: 26565293 • Copyright Living Media India Ltd. All rights

reserved throughout the world. Reproduction in any manner is prohibited.

Printed and published by Manoj Sharma on behalf of Living Media

India Limited. Printed at Thomson Press India Private Limited,

18-35 Milestone, Delhi Mathura Road, Faridabad-121007, (Haryana)

and at Rajhans Enterprises, 134, Industrial Town, 4th Main Road, Rajajinagar,

Bengaluru-560044, (Karnataka).

Published at F-26, First Floor, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001.

Editor: Raj Chengappa.

• INDIA TODAY does not take the responsibility for returning unsolicited publication material.

All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only

CONTENTS

UPFRONT: A CRUDE OIL SHOCK PG 6

STATESCAN: ANTI-SLIP TURF FOR MAYAWATI PG 14

24

COVER STORY

WAR FOOTING
Tejaswi Yadav waving to supporters in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, Oct. 29

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH



TEJASHWI YADAV

FIGHTING FOR CHANGE

- CAN HIS JOBS-FOR-ALL PITCH WOO BIHAR'S YOUTH?
- WILL HIS RAINBOW CASTE COALITION DELIVER?
- CAN HE SHED THE 'JUNGLE RAJ' IMAGE OF LALU'S RULE?

Note to the reader

From time to time, you will see pages titled 'An Impact Feature' or 'Focus' in INDIA TODAY. These are no different from advertisements, and the magazine's editorial staff is not involved in their creation in any way.

Cover Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH



Readers are recommended to make appropriate enquiries before sending money, incurring expenses or entering into commitments in relation to any advertisement appearing in this publication. The India Today Group does not vouch for any claims made by the advertisers of products and services. The printer, publisher, editor-in-chief and the editor of the India Today Group publications shall not be held liable for any consequences in the event of such claims not being honoured by the advertisers.



SCAN HERE TO SUBSCRIBE

E-MAIL to:

letters.editor@intoday.com or log on to www.indiatoday.in

FOR SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANCE, CONTACT:

email: wecare@intoday.com | Phone / WhatsApp: +91 8597 778 778
(Monday to Saturday, 9.30am - 5.30pm)



For reprint rights and syndication enquiries, contact
syndications@intoday.com or call +91 120 4078000
www.syndicationstoday.in

34 Politics Around an Icon's Death

The call for justice from millions in Assam over Zubeen Garg's death has forced the BJP government to pander to it. Six months before the state polls, the Opposition is grabbing at the issue too



ANI

► BUSINESS

38 The Protein Gold Rush

India's protein-based food market is growing at a furious pace, as FMCG firms and a host of startups rush to tap rising demand. But not all of it is healthy, warn experts

► CINEMA

44 For the Boy Left Behind

How *Homebound*, Neeraj Ghaywan's film about the lives of two migrant labourers who faced the COVID pandemic together, came to life



► LEISURE

51

Designs on Deco

Art Deco Alive! celebrates 100 years of the Art Deco aesthetic across Miami and Mumbai



Presenting India Today Insight

For sharp analysis on topical issues by the editors of INDIA TODAY, log on to www.indiatoday.in/india-today-magazine-insight

SPOTLIGHT: SIR CREEK

India's wargame, Pakistan's rhetoric set to spark fresh face-off?

By Pradip R. Sagar

The coming weeks will test the balance of power along this volatile frontier, where strategy, ambition and national pride converge in the shifting waters of Sir Creek

<https://shorturl.at/TVwwZ>



FROM THE STATES: RAJASTHAN

Why Rajasthan let its camels walk free again

By Rohit Parihar

After 11 years of an inter-state transport ban, which had crippled herders and shrunk desert fairs, the state has lifted restrictions to revive camel culture and livelihoods

<https://shorturl.at/BKuLr>



FROM THE ARCHIVES:

REMEMBERING PIYUSH PANDEY

Piyush Pandey: The man who rewrote Indian advertising

By Anjali Doshi

Piyush Pandey, who has died at the age of 70, made a rather late entry into advertising, but went far and fast, crafting award-winning campaigns

<https://shorturl.at/csQXY>

THE STORY OF THE DAY

China's WTO salvo against India trade war or strategic move?

By Anilash S. Mahajan

The WTO complaint challenges India's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for EV components, spotlighting the strategic stakes of New Delhi's clean-tech ambitions

<https://shorturl.at/ljoU5>

POLLUTION: THE HEALTH PREMIUM PINCH

'AQI load': Will your health insurance now pay the price for the city's polluted air?

By Sonali Acharjee

Climate-health pricing may well be in action as insurers say toxic air is pushing up hospital admissions for respiratory conditions and heart ailments

<https://shorturl.at/4O7Ho>

UPFRONT

HEALTHWATCH: HAZARDS OF REUSED OIL PG 9

GRAPHIC: THE BIG VOTER ROLL CLEANUP PG 10



► SANCTION HEAT The Reliance oil refinery in Jamnagar, Gujarat

GETTY IMAGES

WHEN THE US TREASURY sanctioned Russia's oil giants Rosneft and Lukoil, the shockwaves travelled from Moscow to New Delhi. The move hit at the core of a three-year equation, in place since 2022, that had powered India's refining boom—cheap Russian crude, easy payments and record margins. That comfort is now cracking. So far in 2025, Russian crude has accounted for 35 per cent of India's imports, with Reliance Industries (RIL) alone soaking up nearly half the uptake.

As Washington's expanded sanctions target companies supporting Russia's oil export network and caution global banks and insurers against facilitating such trade, the disruption for India could be seismic. Refiners have been given until November 21 to wind down existing contracts, triggering a scramble for alternatives. However, the price gap between Russian and non-Russian crude ranges from

\$2 to \$12 a barrel. Market estimates suggest that replacing Russian oil with West Asian or Atlantic Basin grades could raise India's landed cost by \$2-3 per barrel, adding \$6-8 billion (Rs 5.3-7 lakh crore) to the annual import bill. Every additional dollar per barrel raises India's oil import expenditure by roughly Rs 10,000 crore.

Adding to the squeeze, the European Union has announced a ban on

Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports from January 2027, further reshaping global energy flows. As European utilities pivot to Qatar, the US and Africa—the very suppliers that India too will rely on—the competition is driving up prices. Analysts estimate India's landed LNG costs could rise \$1-2 per MMBtu (metric million British thermal unit), hitting sectors from fertilisers to power.

► RUSSIAN OIL

CRUDE SHOCK

India's refining boom powered by cheap Russian barrels is faltering under new US sanctions, pushing New Delhi into a costly global oil reset

By ANILESH S. MAHAJAN

REFINING STRATEGY

Petroleum and natural gas minister Hardeep Singh Puri remains confident. He says there is sufficient crude supply in the global market and that disruptions from one source can be offset through alternative channels. However, India will need to make necessary adjustments at its refineries for fresh crude adaptability. Arvinder Singh Sahney, chairman and MD of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), said the company would comply with all sanctions imposed by the international community. His officials later clarified that Rosneft and Lukoil account for 55 per cent of India's seaborne crude imports from Russia. "We are absolutely not going to discontinue buying Russian crude as long as we comply with the sanctions. Russian crude itself is not sanctioned, it's the entities and shipping lines that are," says Anuj Jain, director (finance) at the state-owned firm. India consumes about 5.6 million barrels of oil a day, a figure expected to rise to 6 million in the coming quarters. Of this, around 1.75 million barrels currently come from Russia.

It isn't as though New Delhi was blindsided. On September 9, Puri's ministry set up an inter-ministerial working group. It issued an internal advisory on October 2, recommending that refiners increase term contracts with West Asian suppliers by 15 per cent and step up spot purchases from Africa and Latin America. Both the state-owned and private refineries reduced their deliveries.

The diversification effort marks a near-return to India's pre-war energy mix—60 per cent West Asia, 15 per cent Africa, 10 per cent Latin America and barely 2 per cent Russia. That flipped after 2022, when cheap Russian crude rose to take up nearly 45 per cent of India's imports at its peak.

Officials have explored increasing US WTI (a benchmark indicator of US oil prices) crude imports, but the economics are poor. "It takes 45 days for a US cargo to reach India

35%

Share of Russian oil in India's total imports so far in 2025

\$60/barrel

Maximum price India paid for Russian oil; shifting to non-Russian supplies to cost more

\$2-12/barrel

Price gap between Russian and non-Russian crude

₹10,000 cr.

Increase in import bill for every \$1 hike/barrel

5%

Expected rise in crude prices; likely to push up import bill by Rs 35,000 cr.

(Government sources)

versus three days from the Gulf," says a petroleum ministry official. "The logistics erase the price advantage." For PSU refiners operating under government price caps, the hit to margins is immediate. IOC, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), which earlier had limited exposure to Russian grades for governance and compliance reasons, moved first: they paused or sharply curtailed new Russian loadings as discounts narrowed and Washington turned up the heat. They also accelerated the investments in adaptability. IOC's Panipat refinery is being upgraded to handle a broader crude slate, while BPCL's Bina plant is expanding its hydrocracker capacity. The combined investment, about Rs

25,000 crore, was aimed to shield the system from future shocks.

Margins were already thinning. IOC's gross refining margin (GRM) fell to \$8.2 per barrel in Q1FY26, down from \$13 a year earlier, with HPCL and BPCL reporting similar declines. Reliance's export spreads have also narrowed as global diesel prices stabilise. While Reliance and other private complex refiners can partly cushion the impact by optimising crude blends and product slates—keeping GRMs near \$9-10 per barrel—the PSU companies lack that flexibility. The "super margins" era that began with the Ukraine war is clearly ending. Moreover, PSU refiners may see their already thin cash profits erode further as the pass-through of higher crude and freight costs to consumers is delayed. Although India formally decontrolled petroleum product prices in 2010, domestic pricing continues to be managed to contain inflation.

BARREL DIPLOMACY

The bigger challenge for Puri now is to rebalance geopolitical terms and actively revive the old oil ties in the neighbourhood. Saudi Arabia remains India's second-largest crude supplier, with about 19 per cent market share. Riyadh has hinted at more flexible pricing, but wants something in return: long-term offtake guarantees for Saudi crude. That's where New Delhi balks. PM Narendra Modi has built his personal rapport with Mohammed bin Salman, but the stand-offs in the energy sector had been a thorn in the flesh.

For New Delhi, the crude shock has hit home. Now, it needs to balance affordability, security and diplomacy in a world where every barrel comes with strings attached. The petroleum ministry's instructions to refiners are blunt: build redundancy, hedge freight and secure flexibility—even at higher cost. As one senior official put it, "We can no longer depend on discounts as a policy." ■



LIGHTS AND SLIGHTS IN AYODHYA

The Ayodhya Deepotsav might have set records for most diyas lit and such, but it hasn't brightened up the fog in the ruling BJP in Uttar Pradesh. Both deputy chief ministers, **Keshav Prasad Maurya** and **Brajesh Pathak**, skipped the event after finding their names missing from the government's official ads. Governor Anandiben Patel also backed out for the same reason. The ads, splashed across newspapers, carried photos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister **Yogi Adityanath**, along with two ministers tied to the event, but omitted the rest of the state's top brass. The result, Yogi landed in Ayodhya alone, while the rest of the cast sat and stewed in Lucknow. The slight has set off fresh murmurs within the BJP ranks.

Illustrations by **SIDDHANT JUMDE**

▼ INFRA DIGS

DKS BLOWS HIS TOP

Karnataka deputy chief minister **D.K. Shivakumar** blew a fuse earlier this month over Bengaluru elites **T.V. Mohandas Pai** and **Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw's** rants on social media about the sorry state of the city infrastructure. His broadsides about home-grown corporate honchos tarnishing the city's image set off a minor storm on the microblogging site X. A rapprochement,



then, was in order and it came last week with DKS declaring that he had a fruitful meeting with the duo (accompanied by pictures of both sides looking suitably unmiffed) who gave "good suggestions for Bengaluru" and are now on the city's civic advisory committee. Time now for fixing the city.

UNIFORM DRESS CODE

Rajasthan education minister **Madan Dilawar** has declared that all schools,

government and private, will have the same uniform, minus ties. The rationale: to curb ‘visible inequality and arbitrary pricing’. But aren’t school uniforms more than just outfits, lending an identity, a sense of belonging and pride? The irony here: Dilawar’s department has been in the news for all the wrong reasons: school building collapses, lack of washrooms, teachers.... But the BJP minister isn’t worried: next up, teaching lady teachers to “dress modestly”, and salary cuts for those who don’t sing the national anthem and song daily.



Conflicting Symbols



The **Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS)** in Telangana is miffed that the

Election Commission is handing out such a deluge of symbols that their ‘car’ could “easily be mistaken” and get drowned in the crowd.

Some of the symbols in question for the November 11 assembly bypoll to the prestigious Jubilee Hills seat: the ‘chapati roller’, bagged by the Alliance of Democratic Reforms Party; the ‘camera’ of the Praja Velugu Party; and the AIMIM’s ‘ship’. How any of them would resemble the BRS’s ‘Ambassador’ is anybody’s guess. In all, the bypoll will see 58 candidates flaunting everything, from a pressure cooker to a briefcase, from grapes to a gas cylinder.

IN A MOOD FOR JUGGLERY

As part of a grand bureaucratic game of musical chairs, the **Mamata Banerjee** government in West Bengal just swapped 527 officers in one go, including over a dozen district magistrates, all timed just as the Election Commission launched its roll-revision blitz. The Trinamool Congress regime says it’s just spring cleaning; critics say it’s a tactical reshuffle ahead of the big electoral vaudeville show. With the administrative realignment accomplished, whispers are that the police cadre are next. Still, with new faces at the helm, Bengalis will be hoping there is some positive change in their lives too.



HEALTH WATCH

By **Sonali Acharjee**

THE TOXIC TRUTH REUSED OIL IS HAZARDOUS

The National Human Rights Commission has asked the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the health ministry for a state-wise action taken report after finding “widespread” reuse of cooking oil by roadside vendors and eateries—a practice it calls a serious threat to public health. The notice high-

injury, raises ‘bad’ cholesterol (LDL) and can damage kidney tissue. Similarly, a 2022 study in *Nutrition & Metabolism* showed that ingesting oxidised oil compounds can lead to insulin resistance and early signs of heart disease and diabetes.

When oil reaches its smoking point, it begins to degrade rapidly, forming free radicals and toxic



lights the reuse of dark, foamy or overheated oil and demands tighter checks on how such oil is being disposed of or reintroduced into the food chain.

Science strongly supports these health hazard fears. A 2023 study in peer-reviewed international journal *Foods* found that reheated oils generate harmful aldehydes and trans fats that trigger oxidative stress and inflammation in the liver and blood vessels. Another 2023 paper in *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* reported that repeatedly heated oil elevates markers of liver

compounds. Even oil that hasn’t smoked accumulates harmful residues with reuse. FSSAI’s RUOC (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil) guidelines advise discarding or recycling such oil instead of returning it to the kitchen.

Yet, cost is a major factor—edible oil prices have risen sharply in recent years. Public health experts are also warning about India’s high per capita transfat exposure, linked to deep-fried snacks and reused oils. Oils with higher smoking points, such as refined sunflower, rice bran, mustard and groundnut oil, are considered relatively safer.

WHY IT IS BEING DONE NOW



► **CEC Gyanesh Kumar** says the SIR is needed to address migration, non-removal of deceased voters and wrongful inclusion of foreigners

► This marks the ninth such intensive roll revision since Independence; the previous one was done in 2002-04

12

No. of states/
UTs to be
covered under
SIR Phase 2

103

DAYS
Time given to
complete the
exercise

510

MILLION
Electors to be
covered

530

THOUSAND
No. of booth-
level officers

KEY DATES

Printing/training
Oct. 28-Nov. 3, 2025

House-to-house enumeration
Nov. 4-Dec. 4, 2025

Publication of draft electoral rolls
Dec. 9, 2025

Claims & objections period
Dec. 9, 2025-Jan. 8, 2026

Notice phase (hearing/verification)
Dec. 9, 2025-Jan. 31, 2026

Publication of final electoral rolls
Feb. 7, 2026

WHY POLL-BOUND ASSAM IS EXCLUDED

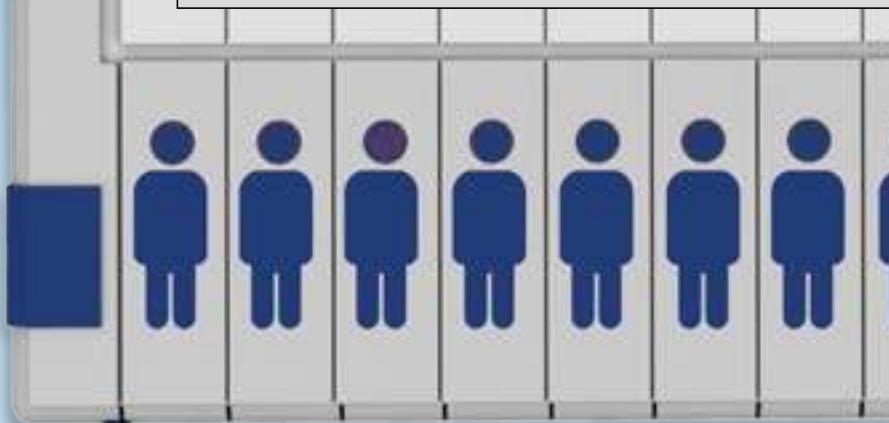
► Assam's case is unique due to special provisions (Sec. 6A) of the Citizenship Act and the Supreme Court-monitored NRC process, which is nearing completion

► Hence, the SIR order of June 24 does not apply to it. The EC will notify a separate SIR for Assam later

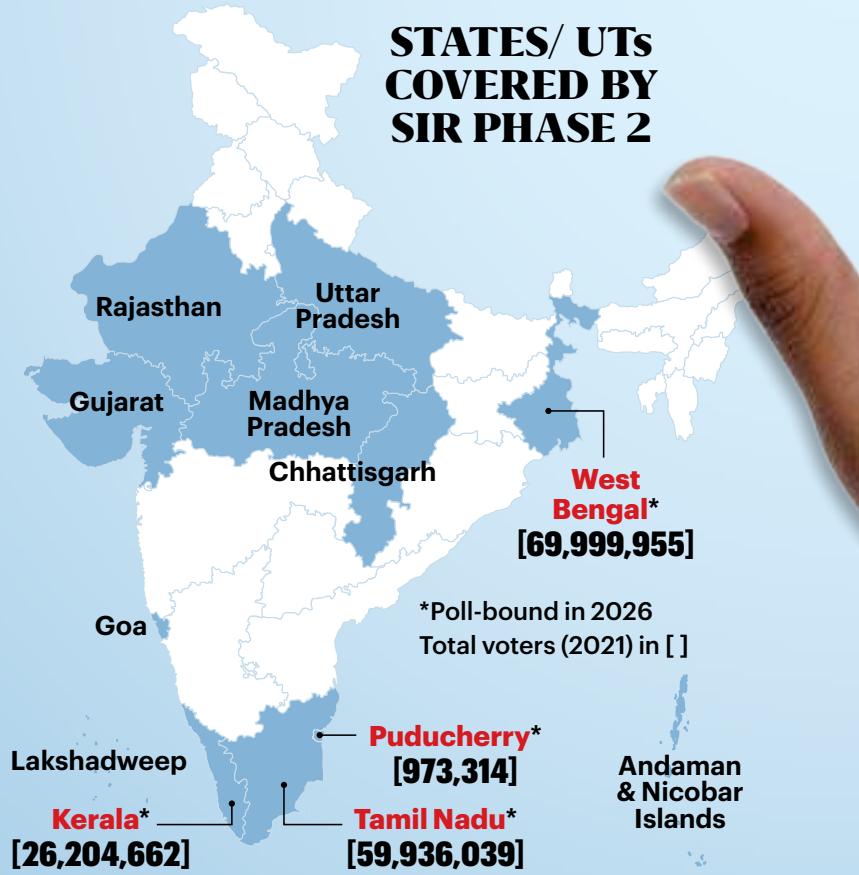
► SPECIAL INTENSIVE REVISION

THE BIG VOTER ROLL CLEANUP

As EC launches its biggest electoral list revision in two decades, Opposition-ruled states headed for polls cry foul



STATES/ UTs COVERED BY SIR PHASE 2



HOW IT WILL BE DONE

THE ELECTION COMMISSION has launched Phase 2 of its Special Intensive Revision (SIR), a nationwide house-to-house verification of electoral rolls—the first such large-scale cleanup in over two decades. Building on the Bihar pilot earlier this year, the new phase, rolled out on October 28, covers 12 more states and Union Territories. The exercise seeks to weed out duplicate, deceased, migrated or ineligible voters, while adding new, eligible ones. In Bihar, for instance, the number of voters dropped from 78.9 million to 74.2 million after the revision. Of the four poll-bound states and UTs covered in this round, three are Opposition-ruled—and they're crying foul, wary that Bihar's sharp data fluctuation may soon be replicated in their own rolls.

Text by KAUSHIK DEKA | Graphic by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

- Voter lists of the 12 states/UTs frozen now
- Voters will be matched against the 2002-04 voting lists; available on voters.eci.gov.in
- All voters on that list will be given Unique Enumeration Forms by booth-level officers (BLOs)
- At the pre-enumeration stage, BLOs will fill these forms. They will go door-to-door at least thrice for each voter's verification
- Individuals (or their parents) listed in the 2002-04 rolls will not be required to provide additional proof; filling out the form will suffice
- Those who have temporarily migrated or are unavailable during office hours can complete the verification process online on their own

WHAT THE POLL-BOUND STATES ARE ALLEGING



► Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin (DMK) called the SIR "hasty and opaque", alleging it's meant to "help BJP". Critics flag the risk of migrants being added



► West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee (TMC) has alleged a "deep-rooted conspiracy" to delete voter names in the name of SIR



► Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan (CPI-M) called the move "ill-motivated", warning it could be a backdoor attempt to implement NRC

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

For inclusion/verification, voters must fill enumeration forms and provide any of these 13 admissible documents

1. Govt/PSU ID card or pension order
2. Birth certificate
3. Passport
4. Educational certificate (matriculation or higher)
5. Residence certificate by state authority
6. Caste/tribe certificate
7. NRC extract (where applicable)
8. Family register
9. Land/house allotment certificate
10. Forest rights certificate
11. Identity certificate issued before Jul. 1, 1987
12. Bihar SIR roll extract (for parental proof)
13. Aadhaar, but only as identity proof, not citizenship



**RP - Sanjiv Goenka
Group**

Growing Legacies



Nature's Basket



Naturali



Esquire

manifest

Robb Report

Follow us on | www.rpsg.in

200

YEARS.
NUMEROUS LEGACIES.
CONTINUOUS GROWTH.

nanovace®



ICML
INTEGRATED COAL MINING LIMITED

CPL
Crescent Power Limited

spencer's
Makes fine living affordable



HARRISONS MALAYALAM LIMITED



FORTUNE



Hollywood REPORTER



STATE SCAN

J&K: UPPER HOUSE, UPPER CUT PG 16

KERALA: WAYANAD SURVIVORS FACE APATHY PG 20



SUMIT KUMAR

► UTTAR PRADESH

ANTI-SLIP TURF FOR MAYAWATI

Out of power for 15 years, and facing an erosion to her base from SP-Congress as well as new Dalit voices, the ex-CM's 'comeback' is a grim attempt to hold on

By Avaneesh Mishra

IT'S NEVER A BAD TIME TO OBSERVE THE DARK IRONIES of Dalit politics in Uttar Pradesh. On October 1, in Rae Bareli, a young Dalit was lynched on suspicion of being a thief. A piece of ritual-like debasement came 20 days later: an elderly Dalit allegedly forced to lick his own urine off the ground near a temple at Kakori, outside Lucknow. On October 9, bracketed between those two events, Lucknow saw a rally—moving to its own inner logic, in another orbit.

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati, long-time patent-holder of Dalit representation, was making her first big address since 2021. Visually, her army conquered Lucknow: some 200,000 BSP workers, in blue *gamchas* and waving their blue flag, streamed in. The Kanshi Ram Memorial ground ran out of space. On the eponymous party founder's death anniversary, his protégée was making a rare statement.

BUT WHAT'S THE GAME?

Context, they say, is everything. By next October, as UP enters the home stretch for the 2027 assembly election, Kanshi Ram would have been a memory for 20 years. Mayawati would be going on 71, her last stint in power also a fading memory. In

the 15 years since, the ex-CM has had exponentially diminishing returns: 0, 10 and 0 seats in three Lok Sabha elections, and a starker fall in state polls. Ranking from the BSP's 2007 peak of 206 assembly seats out of UP's 403, she went from a losing 80 in 2012, to 19 in 2017, to a measly 1 in 2022.

That day, a couple of clear steps came from her. The BSP would go solo in 2027, she said. Two, verbal and visual cues confirmed Akash Anand, her young nephew, was back as her heir—

late: drift and unpredictability with decisions, prevarication on the INDIA bloc, confused silence on the rise of alternate Dalit youth icons like Chandrashekhar Azad and, most notably, retreat from the mainstream of Dalit activism.

That last bit shone through in her response to the recent events in UP: only a nominal tweet on October 22, saying “all states” must stop anti-Dalit atrocities. The contrast with the forceful protector style of Azad has not gone unnoticed. And, dramatically enough, Rahul Gandhi was on the victim’s lips in Rae Bareli—caught on video—and on the spot days later, meeting the family.

ELEPHANT AND CRAB

BSP leader Dr M.H. Khan says writing off the party in 2027 would be a big mistake. “Going solo is a totally correct step. Behenji is going to be the next CM. There were some shortcomings, and she has been continuously addressing them. Everyone is active, the rally was proof of this,” he told INDIA TODAY.

Sceptics abound. Prof. R.K. Mishra, former head of political science at Lucknow University, feels compulsion rather than choice forces her hand. “The cases against her put her at the Centre’s mercy. It has harmed her credibility—that shows in the recent vote shifts,” he says.

Mayawati’s old monopoly is indeed a bit shaky. In 2024, only 44 per cent of her 23 million-strong core Jatav base and 15 per cent of non-Jatav Dalits voted BSP. Overcoming a long antipathy for the SP, 25 per cent of Jatavs and an overwhelming 56 per cent of other Dalits voted for INDIA candidates. Mayawati knows, therefore, whom to mark out as Enemy No. 1. ■

Takeaways

➤ **Mayawati makes a splash with her first big rally since 2021**

➤ **Says BSP will go solo in 2027. Nephew Akash projected heir**

➤ **Recent atrocities show her stewardship on Dalit issues as weak**

ending an erratic spell marked by an expulsion in March. Besides that, Behenji lit into the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress. Less expectedly, far from ducking the slur of being a ‘B-team’ of the BJP, she thanked the Yogi Adityanath regime for “maintaining the parks and memorials built by the BSP”.

ELEPHANT AND CRAB

Naturally, questions followed. Opposition leaders alleged the BJP had quietly facilitated the event—to keep the BSP in play as an axis in state politics. If such suggestions are gaining currency, it owes to the sideways patterns the elephant’s padded footprints have been making of

► PUNJAB

IS IT FAITH ACCOMPLI IN TARN TARAN?

Part of the LS seat won by radical Amritpal in 2024, a bypoll tests the mood anew

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

I T MAY LOOK LIKE JUST ANOTHER

assembly bypoll. But, for Tarn Taran, it’s a vote that taps into questions of identity and belonging. Rajwinder Kaur, a young schoolteacher, expresses it well, walking past colourful posters of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate Harmeet Singh Sandhu and shaking her head: “We want development—roads, schools, clean water. But we cannot ignore who speaks for our community and faith.”

A few streets away, elderly men in turbans chant slogans invoking Sikh pride, and young volunteers hand out leaflets urging panthic solidarity. The saffron-and-blue flags of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) fluttering nearby



PRABHUJOT GILL

► **RADICAL PICK** Mandeep Singh (left), the Waris Punjab De candidate for Tarn Taran bypoll

may have once invoked those ideals. Now, there's another totem that speaks the narratives. Tarn Taran is part of the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha seat. The one that shot to spotlight in 2024 when Amritpal Singh, the Khalistani propagandist booked under NSA, won the election from behind bars.

PANTHIC PANOPLY

All three candidates, to be sure, seek to strike the panthic chord. AAP's Sandhu, a three-time former MLA, is poached from SAD. Sukhbir Badal's party candidate, former school principal Sukhwinder Kaur Randhawa, is the wife of a 1984 army mutineer, a cohort known as *dharma faujis* (soldiers of faith). No doubts about her politics—she had supported Amritpal in 2024. But then, the genuine article is on offer

between AAP and Congress. AAP mopped up 48 per cent of the vote in 2022, reducing SAD to a sad 16 per cent, but its aura has waned amid perceived bureaucratic lethargy and law-and-order concerns. The Congress, with a steady base among rural Jat Sikhs and Dalits, sees Tarn Taran as its comeback chance. Its threat: the BJP snatching urban Hindu and rural Dalit votes. The result comes on November 14, three days after voting.

Punjab is gradually warming up for the 2027 assembly poll. This bypoll will feed the narrative, deciding who owns the panthic vote. SAD is striving to reclaim its old turf with renewed posturing. It could have been more sanguine but for the hardliners, who have pushed the envelope. Mandeep exemplifies that. His brother, Sandeep Singh, is



► J&K

Takeaways

► The Tarn Taran bypoll, on Nov. 11, pits the traditional parties against radicals

► Amritpal's Waris Punjab De backs Mandeep, the brother of a jailed Sikh militant

► The Akali Dal is seeking to reclaim its old turf, but is up against a faith-led narrative

► AAP rests its hopes on an ex-Akali, Congress seeks to hold base against BJP ingress

too: Mandeep Singh, backed by Amritpal's Waris Punjab De.

Amritpal's 2024 win, by a mammoth margin of nearly 200,000 votes, had stated without ambiguity where Khadoor Sahib's preferences lie. Tarn Taran itself had gone towards a more modernist line in 2022, choosing Kashmir Singh Sohal, a career doctor. But his untimely death in June 2025 has yanked it back to a threshold where rational issues like governance must contest with the aggravated emotions faith evokes.

Tarn Taran's 170,000 electorate is 78 per cent rural, and its nearly 65 per cent Sikh bloc has a decisive Dalit Sikh segment that swings

accused of the 2023 broad daylight murder of Hindu activist Sudhir Suri in Amritsar. In September, he made news again—this time allegedly killing a former cop and injuring two others in Patiala jail, all accused of extra-judicial encounters in Tarn Taran in 1993 and, as luck would have it, in the same jail.

Soon, Ranjit Singh Damdami Taksal, chief of the Sikh Youth Federation (Bhindranwale), reportedly persuaded Mandeep to contest. Waris Punjab De endorsed him. The high-decibel campaign, featuring images of slain and jailed Sikh terrorists, has activated a beehive of hardliners. Thus was an MLA born? If Tarn Taran chooses. ■

UPPER HOU

Omar, still shy of statehood dream,

By Kaleem Geelani

RAMESHWAR SINGH, THE MLA FROM BANI in Jammu & Kashmir's Kathua district, spoke in a conspiratorial tone. "I'm in hiding, not telling anyone where I am. This attention is rare and joyful," he told INDIA TODAY. "I'm not giving my vote away too easy, without conditions and commitments to my constituency." Singh, the lone Independent MLA from Jammu, was feeling a rare surge of importance, like his peers in the year-old assembly. The province had a renewed tryst with Rajya Sabha elections on October 24, for four seats lying vacant since February 2021—and both sides were seeking his favours. The unsung MLA was at last in demand!

In the end, the ruling National Con-

► VICTOR'S SPOILS

Gurwinder Singh Oberoi (centre) with CM Omar Abdullah and NC legislator Tanvir Sadiq; (inset) BJP's Sat Paul Sharma



side. The NC, with 41 MLAs, had with it the Congress (6), PDP (3), one each of CPI(M), AAP and Awami Ittehad Party, plus five of six Independents. With 58 among

87 electors—Sajad Lone choosing to abstain—it should have been a cinch. But Sharma won, with three votes declared invalid and four MLAs cross-voting.

Who? The irate CM, Omar Abdullah, had no doubts. On October 24 evening, right after the results, he called it a betrayal by other parties, dismissing any chance of subversion within his own. “Does the BJP’s secret team have the guts to put their hands up and own up to selling their souls after promising us?” he thundered, claiming to know the errant MLAs.

That, however, didn’t wash even within the NC. Instead, it gave an opening for its bottled-up dissent to unspool a bit. Aga Ruhullah Mehdi, the voluble Srinagar MP, dared Omar to reveal the names, saying not doing so was itself a “betrayal of public trust”. Not mincing words, he said: “This is not someone’s private shop

where such things can be hidden. This information is public property.” Soon, the Gujar MP from Anantnag-Rajouri, Mian Altaf Ahmad Larvi, was aiming barbs at Omar. He said the recruitment drive—central to the NC’s promise of one lakh jobs—has failed to take off as expected, and cautioned the CM over his U-turn on smart electricity meters.

THE FRENEMIES

Omar’s vocalised rage is in sync with the path he has evolved for a year, where friendship was always in danger of colliding with its opposite. The NC, formally with the INDIA bloc, began cultivating a distinct coolness towards the Congress right after fighting the 2024 assembly election together. A behavioural nuance seen as a bid to please the Centre, the idea is to not allow any hurdle in achieving Omar’s larger goal of statehood—its endless deferment is his main source of grief.

Only a shell remains of the NC-Congress pact, crafted amid much bonding with Rahul Gandhi. No Congress MLA finds a place in Omar’s ministry. Communication is scant; all essential dialogue is outsourced to his father, NC chief Farooq Abdullah, liaising with Sonia Gandhi in Delhi. The RS episode only turned that frenemy status shades darker. It was left to Farooq to try and cool tempers, shrugging off the fiasco as normal in politics and thanking everyone—from the Congress to the Independents. ■

SE, UPPER CUT

battles a surge of dissent after RS poll fiasco

ference bagged only three seats; its plans of a clean sweep were sabotaged by the Opposition BJP springing a surprise with a nail-biter on the fourth one. For the NC, Choudhary Mohammad Ramzan and Sajjad Ahmad Kichloo, a duo that had managed to flop even during their triumphant assembly poll outing, were the first to go through to Parliament.

KNOTS, CROSSES

The blip came in a third round that decided two seats. NC treasurer and Omar aide Gurwinder Singh Oberoi scraped

through, but spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar came up short. Instead, BJP state unit chief and old-timer Sat Paul Sharma won with more votes than the party’s strength in the House.

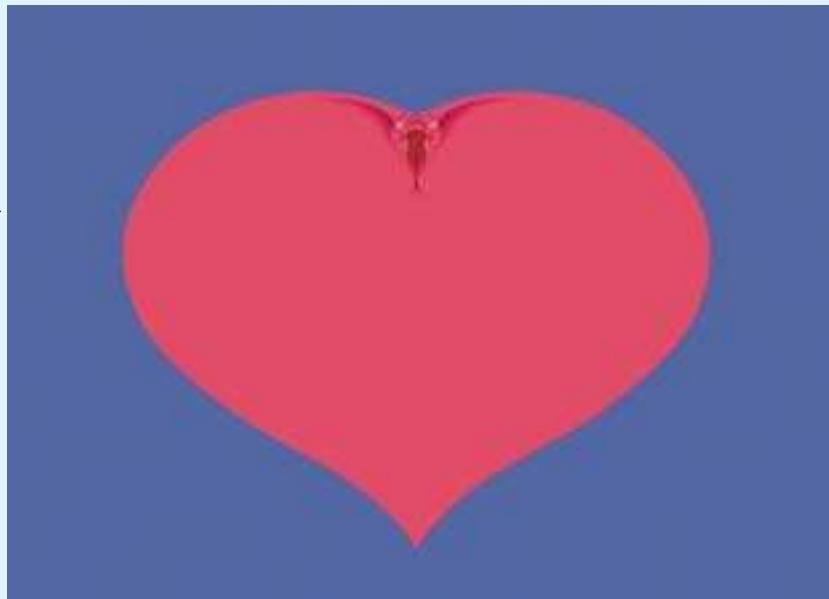
That’s what raised temperatures on the non-BJP

Takeaways

► **J&K CM vents his ire against other parties after cross-voting thwarts an NC clean sweep of RS poll; only three win, BJP wrests an upset**

► **Two party MPs fire salvos against Omar, one implies subversion. The CM has kept up a harsh line on Congress to assuage New Delhi**

ABID BHAT



► WEST BENGAL

LOVE, LOOT, LOGOUT

The heart wins over mind—and money—as a new online fraud targets women with fake matrimonial profiles

By Arkamoy Datta Majumdar

T COULD SCREAM A DIME NOVEL...‘a chilling saga of deception, trust and heartbreak’. Or think of it as a runaway marriage between two eminently compatible forms of online behaviour: the pursuit of love, and of money. The cybercrime sleuths of Hooghly Rural Police first thought it was a routine case of online fraud. But they saw it had a pattern all its own: the victims missed as many heartbeats as they did hard dough. The first complainant, a 29-year-old woman from Singur, had been duped of Rs 43 lakh—by a man she met on a matrimonial website.

He called himself Anupam Roy, supposedly a wealthy rice mill owner from Bardhaman. The online acquaintance began last December: innocent at first, perhaps even hopeful, like many such modern-day matches.

Takeaways

- ➥ **A Singur woman lost Rs 43 lakh to a fake groom in a web of emotional deceit**
- ➥ **Police uncover a Rs 3 cr. racket, putting a question mark on matrimony websites**

On January 13, ‘Anupam’ reached out with a plea. His bank account, he said, had been frozen due to some tax complications. Could she please help? The woman’s family, especially her mother and grandmother, saw this as a test of goodwill—and sent him money. A few days later, ‘Anupam’ sent them an image of a bank deposit slip, claiming he had returned

Rs 9 lakh. It bore a State Bank of India seal from the Kable branch in Arambagh, Hooghly—a detail that lent false authenticity. He told them the amount would reflect once his account was restored. But it never did.

THE PLOT THICKENS

From then on, it was a downward spiral. The man kept asking for money. Each time, the mother obliged. The victim herself had grown suspicious and asked her mother to stop. “She’d say he’s an orphan and we should help,” she recalled. “But every time I tried to call him on video, he would say he was in a poor network area.”

By May, his matrimony profile had vanished, his number went unreachable, and the family realised they had been conned. In five months of interaction, they had never met him—not even on a video call. On May 27, the woman finally knocked on the doors of the law. The sleuth work that followed was swift. On July 3, police arrested Avishek Roy, a 32-year-old model, whose bank account was one of the five used to receive the money. Within a week, police arrested Zahir Abbas (42); three months later, on October 14, they got to the mastermind—Zamir Abbas (31), hiding at a beach resort in Mandarmani, Purba Medinipur.

The Abbas brothers were seasoned operators. Using stolen photos and videos of a South Indian model, they created fake matrimonial profiles that projected wealth, decency and emotional warmth. The mothers, it seems, fell for ‘him’ too—those desperate to see their daughters married. “It was emotional manipulation more than cyber fraud,” says a cop.

The gang had duped at least 20 women—from Bardhaman, Howrah, Tarakeswar, even Delhi—snaffling over Rs 3 crore. Each script was the same: love, loot and logout. The case raises questions: why are matrimony websites not mandated to verify user identities? “Anyone can create a profile on these websites. Verification should be mandatory,” says Kamanasish Sen, SP, Hooghly Rural. Especially since the internet may have changed how we find love, not how love can blind us. ■

QUESTIONS IN PRISON, ANSWERS AT LARGE

A recruitment racket blows the lid off Odisha's police exams, revealing criminal syndicates spanning states as well as official collusion

By Arkamoy Datta Majumdar

THREE LUXURY BUSES, 117 ON BOARD, destination Vizianagaram. If not for a tipoff, no one would have noticed. But once the entourage was stopped near the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border on September 30, the chain of revelations that ensued was truly eye-popping. After day-long interrogation, 114 turned out to be sub-inspector hopefuls, set to write an exam run by the Odisha Police Recruitment Board (OPRB) on October 5-6. The remaining three were middlemen. The whole lot was being ferried to a "special coaching" camp based on leaked question papers. Each aspirant had allegedly agreed to pay Rs 25 lakh in instalments—ten upfront, the rest after bagging the job.

All 117, including the middlemen, were arrested. Once a wider probe began, it became evident that what the Berhampur police had caught that day was one strand of a mammoth recruitment racket: an elaborate operation with organised criminal syndicates operating across states and with footprints running deep into

ANI



▲ **TAIANTED PROCESS** Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi at a police induction ceremony; (inset) Sankar Prusty, prime suspect in recruitment scam



officialdom. This particular scam, which targeted an exam that had attracted over 153,000 applicants for 933 posts, could turn out to be the biggest of its ilk in Odisha's history.

The probe, since taken over by the Odisha Police Crime Branch, has exposed a tangled network of private contractors and sub-contractors trailing out from what should have been a watertight state-run process. The OPRB, a small body with only three members and a handful of staff, had outsourced the technical aspects of the exam to ITI Limited, a central PSU under the telecom ministry. ITI

in turn sub-contracted its work to the private firm Silicon Techlab, which then passed on key tasks to another Bhubaneswar-based firm, Panchsoft Technologies. This chain of outsourcing left critical responsibilities in the hands of private entities. Both Silicon Techlab and Panchsoft's offices in Bhubaneswar have since been sealed.

WEB OF COLLUSION

The prime suspect, Panchsoft promoter Sankar Prusty, has been absconding. The Crime Branch has issued a lookout notice for him and several others while conducting raids in Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar. Investigators believe Prusty, operating under his wife's name, had previously engaged in similar malpractices with another firm, Kedarnath Technologies. Intelligence reports submitted to the Director General of Police, Y.B. Khurania, had indeed waved a red flag: some senior police officers had been visiting the offices of these private firms frequently. Due diligence, the report warned, was grossly neglected while outsourcing such a sensitive exam.

Takeaways

► **Odisha's police recruitment exam scam exposes a nexus of leaks, middlemen and private contractors**

► **Deep official collusion behind rigged selections sparks statewide protests and a political storm**

Investigations revealed the syndicate had booked hotel rooms for over a 100 candidates in Digha, West Bengal, for similar coaching sessions. None of them, however, turned up after the buses to Vizianagaram were intercepted. The racket appeared to have contacted nearly 500 aspirants in all, promising them leaked question papers in exchange for bribes ranging from Rs 15-25 lakh. Members allegedly included brokers, transporters and habitual offenders active in multiple states.

Among those identified as key players is Pradeep Sethi from Khallikote, earlier detained for his role in an Odisha Teacher Eligibility Test (OTET) malpractice case. The discovery that many of the arrested aspirants had links to the Banik Coaching Centre in Bhubaneswar led to a raid, but Banik's MD Subrat Chhatoi denied any wrongdoing and assured full cooperation to the police. The Crime Branch says several key conspirators are still on the run. So far, 123 people have been arrested.

OUTRAGE OUT THERE

The scandal has caused public outrage, with protests erupting across the state. After hundreds of aspirants took to the streets demanding justice, the OPRB has promised the exam—indefinitely postponed for now—would be conducted transparently after the probe. But public trust stands shattered. Last year, similar protests had erupted when the Odisha Subordinate Staff Selection Committee (OSSSC) outsourced recruitment for Revenue Inspectors and other posts to private agencies.

Opposition parties have expectedly raised their pitch. The Biju Janata Dal alleged influential figures were involved, accused the BJP-led government of shielding the guilty and demanded a CBI probe. The Congress called for a court-monitored probe. CM Mohan Charan Majhi has said the probe would be handed over to the CBI, citing the scam's inter-state nature. As its special skills come into play, what's at stake are uncomfortable questions related to transparency and accountability. ■

► KERALA

WAYANAD SURVIVORS FACE APATHY

Having lost their all in the 2024 landslides, the needle moves slowly as the Centre and state play politics over relief

By Jeemon Jacob

IT WAS ON JULY 30, 2024, IN THE pitch dark before dawn, that hell and high water came hurtling down on a serene corner of Wayanad. Two villages, Mundakkai and Choormala, were wiped off the map. Some 298 lives were stubbed out, 35 others could not be traced. Over a year later, Kerala is battling to stave off a disaster of another kind. At its centre is an empty space: nothing has yet filled the blanks nature left on those high ranges. State succour has been a slow-moving mirage, till now. Reason: the animus between Kerala and New Delhi.

The irony is that politics, often the nemesis of the rational and humane path, may yet offer some redemption. Kerala is due for an assembly election by May 2026, and the unfinished Wayanad rehabilitation would constitute a big blot on the Pinarayi Vijayan government if the situation is not amended soon. The incentive is high, therefore, to put the spurs on a 'Wayanad Model Village' project currently under



BADUSHAP.T.

construction. It was in February this year, after six months of frustrating negotiations with the Centre, that the LDF government announced that it would finance the rehabilitation substantially on its own, earmarking Rs 750 crore for it.

MODEL TO REALITY

What that's feeding presently is a brand-new colony for survivors at Elstone Estate: 410 2BHK housing units of 1,000 square feet each on seven-cent plots. The district administration is working overtime to complete the project by December 31. The initial plan was for two model townships—at Nedumbala Estate and Elstone. The state's cussedly politicking



◀ A VIEW OF THE FUTURE
The rehabilitation project site in Elstone Estate, Kalpetta, Sept. 16

Takeaways

- Centre refuses to declare Wayanad tragedy a 'national disaster', which would have entitled Kerala to more funds
- With polls due in 2026, the state has rushed work on a Rs 750 cr. 'Model Village' to rehouse survivors

parties, with the Congress and Muslim League launching their own rehab projects, were not the only source of the surrounding din. Land acquisition posed hurdles, and both projects ended up in court. But 64.5 hectares at Elstone finally got legal clearance.

Wayanad district collector

Meghashree D.R., a Karnataka native, bore witness to the crisis from day one: just 19 days into her posting when the landslides struck, she's been navigating the thicket of disputes and delays ever since. "On April 12, we got the government's word that the Supreme Court had cleared the way. We acquired the Elstone land the same day," she recalls.

The path to that point could vie to go into a textbook on cynicism. Sparking rage in most quarters in the state, the Centre refused to declare the tragedy a 'national disaster', which would have entitled Kerala to more funds. Then it made conditional whatever aid it was parting with as a 'capital expenditure loan'—the Rs 529.5 crore released in February this year came with a caveat that the sum be used by March 31 or it would attract penalties.

Then, it was after 14 months of repeated requests from the state's political class as well as Kerala High Court directives that a committee chaired by Union home minister Amit Shah approved Rs 260.56 crore from the National Disaster Response Fund. The demand, based on Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, was for Rs 2,221 crore. BJP-ruled Assam and Uttarakhand, meanwhile, received Rs 1,270 crore and Rs 1,658 crore, respectively. Perhaps there's no grace in competitive victimhood, but Kerala clearly felt orphaned.

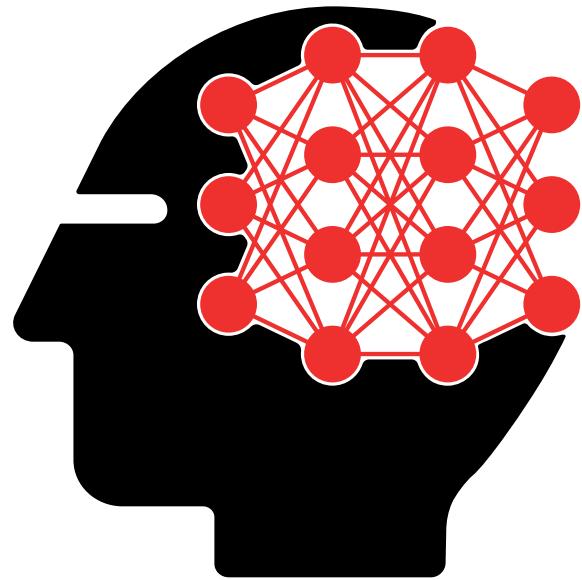
LIVE TO TELL THE TALE

Persistent rains are not the only obstacle at Elstone, there's also a parallel disruption in the face of a vigilance probe on charges that the beneficiaries' list has been tampered with. But work is proceeding apace across the project's five zones. Nearing October, there were some 500 workers on site. Plans include a soccer ground, market and open-air theatre. J.S. Arun, the project's chief operating officer, is confident of being able to "avoid further delays". Among the survivors, 104 families have opted out of the project, choosing to go for a Rs 15 lakh compensation.

Most survivors are still picking up the thread of their lives. Basheer, 60, ran a bustling tea shop at Chooralmala for 30 years, but is now a waiter. It's a whole universe he has lost. "I miss my daily customers and friends," he says, preparing one of his famous 'meter teas'. "They are all dead." Mundakkai, too, stands deserted by everyone except ghosts and police pickets—even the Punnapuzha river has changed course.

M.T. Aneesh, 37, has managed to rebuild his life, working as a jeep driver/guide at 900 Kandi, an ecotourism spot. But a quiet ritual pulls him and his wife Sayana to a different site that now houses three of their kids—the youngest a baby—as well as Aneesh's mother. A mass graveyard in Puthumala. "Sometimes, we bring chocolates and toys, and we can almost hear them cheering... they always wanted chocolates when I got back from work." ■

**INDIA
TODAY**



ROBOTICS & AI CONCLAVE

PRESENTED BY



SATHYABAMA

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
CATEGORY - 1 UNIVERSITY BY UGC

**6TH NOVEMBER, 2025
HYDERABAD**



D. Sridhar Babu

Minister for Information Technology,
Electronics & Communications, Telangana



Gopalakrishnan C S

Wholetime Director &
Chief Manufacturing Officer,
Hyundai Motor India



Kisshhan PSV

Chairman – All India Robotics
Association (AIRA),
Founder, H-Bots Robotics;
CEO, Anvi Robotics



Rajiv Gupta

Managing Director
& Senior Partner,
Boston Consulting Group



Dr L Lakshmanan

Professor, CSE,
Sathyabama Institute of
Science & Technology



Dr Narayan Panigrahi

Scientist-'G', Group Head GIS,
Centre for Artificial Intelligence &
Robotics, Bangalore



Dr John Bruce

Director-Placements &
Corporate Affairs, Sathyabama
Institute of Science & Technology



Pranav Vempati

Founder & CEO,
MakersHive



Jaspreet Bindra

Managing Director
& Founder, Tech Whisperer



Rahul Arepaka

Founder,
Harvested Robotics



George Mathew

Founder,
Harvested Robotics

WATCH LIVE
www.indiatoday.com



@IndiaToday



@indiatoday



@IndiaToday



@India-Today



IndiaTodayLive



COVER STORY



► NEW DAWN?

RJD leader
Tejashwi Yadav in
Samastipur during
the Bihar Adhikar
Yatra in September

TEJASHWI YADAV

FIGHTING FOR CHANGE

THE RJD LEADER PROMISES JOBS FOR ALL, INCLUSIVITY AND RADICAL REBOOT TO WOO BIHAR'S YOUTH. BUT TO WIN, HE MUST SHED THE JUNGLE RAJ' IMAGE OF LALU'S RULE

By AMITABH SRIVASTAVA



Photograph by
CHIRAG BABU



COVER STORY

TEJASHWI YADAV

E

Early on October 29 morning, clad in a beige shirt sporting his party's election symbol, the lantern, Tejashwi Yadav boards a waiting VT-JSF helicopter at Patna airport en route to addressing seven rallies that day, including one in Samastipur. The de facto chief of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and chief ministerial candidate of the Opposition Mahagathbandhan alliance is racing against time and geography to reach as many voters as possible. His rallies are not assemblies but dense, kinetic gatherings of young voters waving smartphones like torches of affirmation. It is no different in Samastipur. Near the stage, young men in the party's green colours jostle for space, phones raised high, eager to capture a breathless fragment of their leader.

Tejashwi's speeches, often extempore, deftly weave unemployment, migration and dignity into a single emotional narrative. The RJD's campaign anthem—*'Bihar badalne wala hai, sarkar badalne wali hai* (Bihar is going to change, the government is going to change)—encapsulates a spirit of renewal. In his idioms, Tejashwi has moved from his father Lalu's grammar of social justice to one of economic aspiration. "Naukri milegi pakka, bhrashtachar, berozgaari ko karenge out, aur rishwatkhori ko karenge clean-bowled," he tells the crowd, promising jobs, an end to corruption and unemployment, and a 'clean bowling' of graft.

The 35-year-old Tejashwi has got the rhythms of oratory down pat—that mix of grievous hurt, humour and warmth his father mastered all those decades ago. But his tone is less mocking, more conciliatory. The previous day, he had addressed six public meetings, criss-crossing Saran, from Manjhi's baked plains to Amnaur's surging crowds. In the days ahead, his daily tally of rallies may touch double digits. While Rahul

Tejashwi has learnt the rhythms of oratory, the mix of grievous hurt, humour and warmth Lalu had mastered. But his tone is less mocking

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH



THE ELECTORAL ROLLERCOASTER

Feb. 2000*

Forms government

Nitish Kumar invited to form government, but resigns within a week. Rabri Devi sworn in as CM with Congress and other parties' support, on condition that RJD would back the creation of Jharkhand that year

Feb. 2005

The end begins

Hung assembly; no party could form the government; the House was dissolved

Graphic by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

With CPI(M)

29.2% ○

28.3% ○

*Undivided Bihar

324

293

124

27.3%

With CPI & CPI(M)

25.1%

243

215

75

Total seats; RJD: Seats contested Seats won



THE NEW DEAL

Tejashwi with alliance leaders at the MGB manifesto release in Patna, Oct. 28

The RJD's performance in assembly polls since 2000—from dominance, decline, to revival under Tejashwi Yadav—in partnership with allies

Oct. 2005

In the Opposition
JD(U)-BJP combine wins 143 seats together, forms government with clear majority

With Cong. & NCP
30.4%

23.5%

243

175

Oct.-Nov. 2010

Worst show

JD(U)-BJP sweep the polls, winning 206 of 243 seats; Nitish at his peak

25.6%

18.8%

243

168

Oct.-Nov. 2015

Resurgence time

Tejashwi's debut from Raghpur is a success. RJD, with Nitish and Cong., is the largest party in assembly

41.9%

18.4%

243

101

80

Oct.-Nov. 2020

Tejashwi's leadership established

RJD emerges as the single largest party in the assembly in the first poll without Lalu Prasad's direct campaign

37.3%

With Cong., CPI(ML), CPI & CPI(M)

243

144

75

23.2%

BROADBASING SUPPORT

Caste break-up of RJD candidates

RJD's total candidates

143*
Women **23**

OBSC 80

Yadav: 51
Kurmi: 3
Kushwaha: 15
Vaishya: 10
Sonar: 1

Muslim

18

ST

1

SC 17

Paswan: 5
Ravidasi: 6
Musahar: 3
Pasi: 2
Chaupal: 1

EBC 13

Sudhi: 2
Chourasia: 1
Mallah: 2
Chandrawanshi: 2
Kalwar: 2
Nonia: 2
Gangota: 1
Bind: 1

Upper castes 14

Rajput: 5
Bhumihar: 6
Brahmin: 3

*142 valid after one rejection
NB: MGB has filed 252 nominations

— Vote share of RJD — Vote share of alliance



COVER STORY

TEJASHWI YADAV

Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra are doing a few rallies, the burden of the battle rests squarely on Tejashwi's shoulders. With Lalu sidelined by age and illness, every microphone, slogan and headline must amplify Tejashwi's voice. While the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) flaunts its collective power and administrative continuity, the MGB alliance answers with one man's self-belief and drive. In 2025, it is unmistakably Tejashwi versus the NDA.

TURNING OF THE TIDE

Just days earlier, the MGB poll campaign in Bihar had looked rudderless, squabbling over seats, with major partners refusing to see the big picture. That changed on October 23 with the Congress stepping off its high horse and greenlighting the formal declaration of Tejashwi as MGB's CM candidate, leading the alliance into battle against an entrenched incumbent, the NDA government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Janata Dal (United). That decision gave the faltering MGB the momentum it needed. Tejashwi now fights his toughest battle, but it's his best chance yet—the closest he's ever been to winning. He also exhibits the vigour of a man still running only his second full race, and seems at his most mature ever.

A tangible epitome of that is his many-hued chariot, the MGB. At a recent press conference, he projected a tableau of inclusivity, flanked by Mallah leader and newly anointed deputy CM candidate, Mukesh Sahani of the Vikasheel Insaan party (VIP), and a Dalit face from the RJD, ex-minister Shiv Chandra Ram. He knows that in a straight fight against the NDA, stitching together the more colourful rainbow coalition of castes could decide the outcome. Hence his announcement of "a one-time, interest-free financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh for traditional working-class communities such as barbers, potters, carpenters and blacksmiths, to help them achieve economic upliftment and self-employment". It was a social and electoral manoeuvre aimed at bringing an additional five per cent votes into the MGB kitty. According to the Bihar caste survey, barbers account for 1.6 per cent of Bihar's roughly 130 million population, carpenters 1.5 per cent, potters 1.4 per cent and blacksmiths 0.6 per cent—small groups, but significant in a state where wafer-thin margins often decide political destinies. Shiv Chandra and Congress's Bihar president Rajesh Ram, both of whom are Ravidasi Dalits (5 per cent of the population) should also exert a major influence on that community's vote. There is also the Left's vote to consider; the CPI(ML), especially, has an extremely loyal base among its disempowered cohorts.

Having missed the chief minister's chair in 2020 by just 12 seats, or 12,000 votes (with a respective vote share of 37.23 and 37.26 per cent, the difference between the



ANI

Cognisant of Tejashwi's efforts to broadbase his support, PM Modi launched the NDA campaign from Samastipur, home district of EBC icon Karpoori Thakur

MGB and NDA was a minuscule 0.03 per cent), Tejashwi now appears to have taken a methodical approach that covers all bases and expects to make the lantern glow in corners of Bihar where it has long flickered but rarely burned bright. Bihar's EBCs (nearly 36 per cent of the population) and Dalits (19.6 per cent) hold the key to power. Not only has Tejashwi stitched up a caste coalition that goes beyond the RJD's core 32 per cent M-Y cohort (17.7 per cent Muslim and 14.3 per cent Yadav), he has also upended the campaign narrative in other ways. He has made jobs—or specifically the promise of one government job per every family in Bihar—central to every poll-related conversation in the state, and also extended welfare benefits to contractual government employees while doubling honorariums for panchayat and kachahri members. An MGB poll promise that may aid the cause is the review of prohibition. Some 85 per cent of the 1.27 million jailed in liquor cases are from the Dalit/EBC/OBC category and the manifesto promises them 'immediate relief'.

Women are the other crucial vote bank in Bihar, and have been the mainstay of Nitish's victories. The RJD is fielding 23 women candidates this time (the most among



NO RIPPLES PM Modi with CM Nitish and other NDA leaders at a rally in Samastipur, Oct. 24

all parties), and among the ‘Tejashwi Pran Patra’ commitments are Rs 2,500 monthly payouts for all women and Rs 30,000 salary to the 14 million Jeevika Didis (community mobilisers) in the state. On the RJD’s prospects, sociologist and professor Gyanendra Yadav of Patliputra University says, “Apart from the M-Y constituency, a significant cohort of aspirational young voters seems attracted to his jobs narrative today.” Yet, the professor identifies winning over EBCs and Dalits as a key challenge. A series of pledges are crafted around this: three decimals of land in urban areas and five decimals in rural areas for all landless, scrapping the 50 per cent cap on quotas, a separate judicial system to deal with atrocities against Dalits (as well as for women).

A WELL-CRAFTED CAMPAIGN

Tejashwi’s campaign also looks markedly different from 2020. What he lost by a whisker in numbers then, he won in perception—Bihar’s youth saw him as a credible alternative. Five years later, he is trying to convert that perception into reality. His campaign slogan, *Naya Soch, Naya Bihar*, seeks to reframe the RJD as a party of aspiration rather than grievance.

Also, having secured his position as the MGB’s CM candidate, Tejashwi has been hammering home the point that since the NDA has so far not officially declared “*Chacha* (Nitish)” its CM candidate, the old war horse would not be given the post if the ruling alliance wins. Sensing the blowback of such ambiguity, BJP leaders—from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to deputy CM Samrat Choudhary—have begun stressing that the JD(U) chief remains the NDA’s CM choice. On October 29, Union home minister Amit Shah even declared that “there was no vacancy

WAR OF PROMISES

From jobs and electricity to pensions and quotas, both sides go all out

MAHAGATHBANDHAN

- » **One government job per family:** This will be completed within 20 months of forming the government
- » **Jeevika Didis:** Govt employee status, with Rs 30k monthly salary, for 14 mn community mobilisers. Insurance cover, loan relief for SHG women
- » **Land for landless:** Three decimals of land in urban areas, five decimals in rural areas for all landless
- » **Health:** Free health insurance up to Rs 25 lakh for BPL people, emergency ICUs in all subdivisions
- » **Village boost:** Double honorarium, insurance, pension for members of panchayat/gram bodies; honorarium, hiked margins for PDS distributors
- » **A step forward:** 50% quota cap to go. EBC quotas in urban/village bodies to be hiked from 20% to 30%
- » **Prohibition:** Lift the ban on *tari* (toddy), review Prohibition Act. Immediate relief for jailed poor/Dalits
- » **Free power for all:** 200 units for every family
- » **Interest-free support for skilled workers:** Traditional communities such as barbers, potters, carpenters and blacksmiths will get a one-time, interest-free financial aid of Rs 5 lakh for five years

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

- » **Mass employment drive:** A pledge to create 10 million jobs and employment opportunities over five years
- » **Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana:** One-time seed grants of Rs 10,000 to 12.1 million women through self-help groups
- » **Women-led businesses:** Up to Rs 2 lakh for women whose business proposals are deemed viable
- » **Subsidised electricity:** Up to 125 units/month free power for eligible families, with a push for solar rollout
- » **Expanded pensions and targeted welfare:** Higher pension payouts and increased stipends/allowances for vulnerable groups as immediate relief
- » **Infrastructure and industry boost:** Commitments to new roads and bridges, health and education recruitments and industry clusters to spur jobs and growth
- » **Socio-demographic outreach:** Policy measures and symbolic gestures to consolidate support among OBCs, EBCs, Dalits and economically weaker sections



COVER STORY

TEJASHWI YADAV

of CM as there was no vacancy of PM”, a statement seen as endorsement of Nitish’s continuation. As a senior BJP leader admits, “Everyone understands that a part of Nitish’s support base among EBCs and women could turn less enthusiastic if the alliance does not speak in one voice.”

The NDA is also hitting where it hurts most, with leaders, including Modi and Nitish, relentlessly invoking the old bogey of a return to “jungle raj”, shorthand for the alleged decade of lawlessness during his father Lalu and mother Rabri Devi’s rule before 2005. To neutralise any inherited guilt from that fiercely contested legacy, Tejashwi turns the lens inward. “I have never harmed anyone. No one has any

grievance against me,” he says, suggesting he cannot be held responsible for what happened before.

The strategy is deliberate: distancing himself from the troubled baggage of the past without naming it. This election, in many ways, is Tejashwi’s attempt to rewrite the RJD’s script in his own image. The party today is as much about him, as the social-

To neutralise criticism of his troubled political legacy, Tejashwi turns the lens inward. “I’ll take action even if my shadow is seen to do any harm”

ist, power-to-the-underclasses movement was once about his father. He alone carries the family’s electoral torch; no other Yadav from the clan is on the RJD ballot (estranged elder brother Tej Pratap is contesting from his own party). “Tejashwi is asking you for one chance. You gave the NDA 20 years, give me 20 months. Together, we will build a new Bihar,” he declares, casting himself as the face of generational change; a man trying to unshackle himself from his father’s shadow and Bihar’s political fatigue.

ENTER TEJASHWI THE POLITICIAN

The son of Bihar’s first couple of politics, Tejashwi grew up in a world where the boundaries between myth and power blurred early. A Class 9-pass, he flirted with professional cricket—even warming the benches for IPL team Delhi Daredevils—before trading it all in for political rallies. Tejashwi’s first brush with campaign politics came in 2010, when he accompanied his father to a rally during the Bihar polls—a baptism by fire in an election that proved disastrous for the RJD. He returned to Delhi to pursue cricket, but the family crisis in 2013, when Lalu was convicted in

INTERVIEW

“WE WILL FORM A NEW GOVT FOR A NEW BIHAR”

On October 27, as the campaign for the first phase of the Bihar election wound down, Mahagathbandhan CM candidate **Tejashwi Yadav** spoke to India Today TV’s **Marya Shakil** on the poll build-up, his counter to the NDA campaign, the poll promises and how he’ll fulfil them. Excerpts:

On the NDA campaign: Well, Prime Minister Modi came, Amit Shah came, central ministers are coming, but no one has explained how they will free Bihar from poverty, migration, unemployment...increase Bihar’s per capita income, and how, they might take Bihar to among the top states. Even now, they are in the field campaigning, but not a single word is being said about Bihar’s progress. In fact, Shah has said factories and industries can’t be set up here due to land shortage...he has clearly stated factories and industries can’t be set up in Bihar. Also, remember the 2015 election, when PM Modi had promised to make Bihar an IT hub. Ten years have passed, what happened to the IT hub? And now Shah is saying they will build an AI hub. You can’t trust these guys, the NDA is just full of rhetoric.

On the big promise: a government job for every family: Experts say that this will inflate Bihar’s salary bill to Rs 6 lakh crore (given that there are 25 million families in the state). But then, last time (when Tejashwi was deputy CM in 2023), they had said the same when we talked of creating 1 million jobs. CM Nitish Kumar, too, had asked how he will create the jobs. Today, those same people are talking about 10 million jobs and giving Rs 10,000 as dole to women. We have worked on the jobs issue with experts and will soon present the blueprint, including how we’ll generate revenues, to the people of Bihar.

On friendly fights in 10 seats: That is strategic for us. You see, we had friendly fights in Jharkhand too, and in Jammu and Kashmir. This is in keeping with the internal strategy of the Grand Alliance.



Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

On weaning the women's vote crucial in Nitish's 2020 win: Well, last time, the vote per cent difference between both sides was less than one. This time, we have had extensive dialogues with women, and at the grass-roots level. In all our interactions, their unhappiness with the government was clear, be it individually or in groups like Jeevika/Anganwadi workers or CM Didis. It's after these talks that we devised our sops, including interest waivers.

On allaying fears of the 'jungle raj': Look at the situation today. There's not a day when a rape case is not reported in Bihar. If you go through NCRB data, the top two crime-ridden states are UP and Bihar. So, the situation is the same even today. In fact, crime has been on the rise since 2005.... If we want to bring industry to Bihar, we'll have to work hard on two things: improving law and order and our energy requirements. I have been made the CM face, so I want to tell the people of Bihar that if even the shadow of Tejashwi does any wrong, action will be taken. People know me, my nature, my character, Tejashwi will never compromise on this at any cost.

On unemployment, migration, whether he'll announce dole for

"IN 2015, PM MODI HAD PROMISED TO MAKE BIHAR AN IT HUB. IT'S BEEN 10 YEARS. WHERE IS THE IT HUB? NOW SHAH'S TALKING OF AN AI HUB. YOU CAN'T TRUST THEM"

the unemployed: You have to be absolutely clear about the process of providing jobs. We started in those 17 months (when Tejashwi was deputy CM, from August 2022 to January 2024). Before that, even vacant posts were not being filled. We created and cut many posts, recruited teachers through the Bihar PSC. Nothing has happened in the interim.

On announcing Mukesh Sahani as deputy CM candidate, the Muslim issue: Look, Sahani won't be the only deputy CM; in the future, members of other communities will also hold the post. In many places, there are five deputy CMs. In UP, the BJP has two, and both from their own party! At least, being an alliance, we have to

consider the opinions of various parties. These BJP members were trolling us a few days ago, claiming the 18 per cent (Muslims) are not getting a deputy CM. When we announced an EBC as a deputy CM candidate, suddenly they are feeling uneasy. Earlier, they were telling them (the Muslims) to go to Pakistan, calling them infiltrators. Today, the BJP is also talking about them.

On the crucial EBC (extremely backward class) vote, PM Modi starting his campaign from late CM and socialist icon Kapoori Thakur's village in Samastipur:

The BJP is anti-reservation. These same people used to hurl insults at Kapoori when he first implemented reservations (in 1978) and brought down his government. Today, they have to bow before the power of numbers, the power of bahujans. After the 2023 caste survey, we increased the EBC quota to 27 per cent. The total SC, ST, OBC and EBC quota is now 65 per cent and total reservation (including EWS) is 75 per cent.

On Nitish as sushasan babu: The NDA has been in power for 20 years, yet Bihar is still the poorest state. Our per capita income is the lowest, unemployment the highest. Why is it so if they have worked so hard?

On the Bihar Adhikar Yatra and Vote Adhikar Yatra: Our questions were about the voter ID documents being demanded by the Election Commission. You are asking for documents people don't have...where will they get them and provide them in such a short time? We raised questions about the timing, how our people and the large number of Biharis settled outside the state will become voters. People who were alive were declared dead in the voter list, so we took those cases to the Supreme Court. At least now, our fight has yielded this verdict. The twelfth document will now be the Aadhaar card.

On what happens after November 14 (results day): After the 14th, the work of eradicating unemployment will begin in the state. The people will form a new government, for we want to see a new Bihar. ■



COVER STORY

TEJASHWI YADAV

the fodder scam, brought him back to Patna: mother Rabri summoned him home, and a conscious decision was taken to convert the sportsperson into a politician.

Within two years, the transformation was evident; he began giving interviews with a composure that surprised many and, in 2015, successfully contested the Raghpur seat. It was followed by a swift elevation to the post of deputy CM in the Nitish-led MGB government, before it came undone in 2017 with the JD(U) returning to the NDA. The same scenario played out again in August 2022, when Nitish switched to the RJD-Congress alliance and Tejashwi became his deputy again—only for the alliance to crumble in January 2024. For Tejashwi, the revolving door of Nitish's alliances has been both a curse and a moral on statecraft. "Politics in Bihar can't just be about arithmetic, it's also trust," he said recently, in a subtle jab at the chief minister.

Though it lasted just two years, Tejashwi managed to make a mark in his second innings as deputy CM. He focused on filling long-vacant posts in the health and education sectors and pushed for recruitment drives, signalling some intent. He even managed to cultivate an image of quiet diligence and approachability, qualities that struck a chord with the state's younger electorate. Now, on the campaign trail, he cites that record as proof of his administrative maturity. "I have seen governance from within," he tells the crowds. "I know what works, and what doesn't."

THE NDA RETORT

Tejashwi's efforts to broaden his social base have not gone unnoticed. On October 24, when PM Modi launched the NDA campaign, it was Samastipur he chose to start from. It was a conscious attempt to co-opt the socialist legacy of the former CM Karpoori Thakur, who was awarded the Bharat Ratna posthumously last year. Thakur, revered as a pioneer of the political empowerment of Bihar's EBCs, remains a touchstone across caste lines. Addressing a massive rally in his home base, with Nitish on the dais with him, Modi drew a sharp contrast between "Nitishji's tireless work for a new era" and, yes, the RJD's "jungle raj". In a deft moment of theatre, Modi asked the crowd to switch on their cellphone torches. As the lights flickered across the ground, he smiled and said, "There is a light in every hand, does Bihar still need the lantern?"

And despite rumours around his declining health, Nitish hasn't lost his ability to twist the knife in. He knows that an older section of Bihar's electorate—traders, government employees and some OBCs—continue to associate the RJD years with insecurity. At every NDA rally, the CM invokes "those bad days" as a cautionary lesson, even as Shah adds a rhetorical edge, reminding voters of "goonda raj" and warning that "one mistake could undo years of stability". In Siwan, the Union home minister pointed to Tejashwi

TEJASHWI'S TRAJECTORY

From cricket fields to politics, the RJD scion's journey charts the party's next chapter

EARLY LIFE

Born on November 9, 1989, Tejashwi studied in Delhi before leaving school in his teens to pursue cricket

CRICKET CAREER

Represented Delhi's age-group sides and was briefly part of the Delhi IPL franchise, though he never played a main-series match. A middle-order batsman and right-arm bowler, he appeared in one first-class game for Jharkhand before retiring from cricket in 2013

SONU KISHAN



POLITICAL DEBUT

Entered active politics in 2015 and soon emerged as political heir of Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi. Won from Raghpur in both 2015 and 2020

IN OFFICE

Served as deputy CM twice—from Nov. 2015 to Jul. 2017 and again from Aug. 2022 to Jan. 2024—holding several ministerial portfolios. He has also been leader of the Opposition twice, from Jul. 2017 to Aug. 2022 and again since Feb. 2024, becoming the RJD's de facto leader

POWER CENTRE

In Jan. 2025, RJD national executive in Patna granted Tejashwi powers equal to those of party president Lalu Prasad, authorising him to amend the party constitution and allocate tickets. He had already proven his mettle by leading RJD to becoming the single-largest party in the 2020 polls

As deputy CM, the RJD leader cultivated an image of quiet diligence and approachability, qualities that went down well with the younger electorate



ANI



Kishor's Jan Suraaj has found resonance among sections of Bihar's youth, and even a modest turnout in his favour could unsettle both coalitions

fielding the late *bahubali* Mohammed Shahabuddin's son Osama Shahab as evidence of the RJD's legacy of intertwining crime and politics (in Darbhanga, he called the MGB alliance a "*thug-bandhan*"). Meanwhile, a report by the Association of Democratic Reforms and Bihar Election Watch says 65 per cent of BJP candidates have criminal cases registered against them; the figure is 76 per cent for the RJD.

The NDA is also attacking Tejashwi's 'one government job per family' promise. Shah was among the first to call it "a baseless promise that defies all conventional accounting". Assuming one member each from 25 million families gets a government job, the annual salary bill would be at least, according to Shah, Rs 11.7 lakh crore, nearly four times Bihar's current budget of Rs 3.17 lakh crore. Tejashwi says he has worked out the blueprint with experts, and will present it to the people soon. Fiscal fantasy or not, the fact remains that the pledge has made jobs, or the lack of them, the core emotional issue of this election. It has also exposed a raw nerve in the NDA's flanks as it lists achievements of the past 20 years.

OTHER HINDRANCES

Besides the BJP's formidable election machinery, Tejashwi has to reckon with two other forces—resurgent Dalit leader Chirag Paswan, who is repositioning himself as the "youth face of Bihar", and political strategist-turned-politician Prashant Kishor, who, though a new entrant, is expected to eat into the vote share of both alliances. Chirag, who nurses chief ministerial ambitions, has aligned himself with the NDA this time, assuring them of the 5 per cent Paswan vote. Kishor's Jan Suraaj campaign has, by all accounts, found some reso-

nance among sections of Bihar's youth, and even a modest turnout in his favour could unsettle both coalitions. In the 2020 state polls, the NDA and MGB had together secured 74.5 per cent of the vote. This left a volatile 25.5 per cent scattered among independents and smaller parties. Kishor's strategy is to capture a slice of that unclaimed quarter, and alter the geometry of power. In a state where 50 seats are often decided by margins of less than 5,000 votes, even a single-digit statewide share could transform Jan Suraaj into a spoiler for both sides.

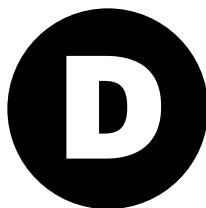
For the Congress and Left allies in the alliance, Tejashwi is now the undisputed face of the MGB. As the Congress's peace broker Ashok Gehlot said rather succinctly, "Tejashwi is our collective choice because he represents continuity and change—both of which Bihar needs." This is also his best chance, with Nitish seemingly ailing and the BJP without a clear leader. If he loses, Tejashwi's claim to Bihar's future leadership may dim irreversibly. If he wins, he becomes not only the state's new face but also the Opposition's most credible youth leader in the Hindi heartland.

But it won't be easy. Even as the campaign set off in right earnest in October, a Delhi court, helped by a CBI chargesheet from October 2024, framed charges against Lalu and his family in an alleged land-for-job scam, accrued from his tenure as Union railway minister (2004-09). Tejashwi, too, has been named, which the RJD leader calls "pure political vendetta", claiming the timing, just weeks before polls, was "no coincidence". The optics will hurt, but this is just another front as he takes on the combined might of the BJP-JD(U)—a political juggernaut fielding half a dozen national and regional heavyweights. In this battle for Bihar, Tejashwi Yadav stands almost alone, the solitary spearhead of the MGB campaign. ■

POLITICS AROUND AN ICON'S DEATH

The emotional call for justice from millions in Assam over Zubeen Garg's death has forced the BJP government to pander to public sentiment. Six months before the state goes to polls, the Opposition has seized on the issue too

BY KAUSHIK DEKA



"DON'T VOTE FOR US IN 2026 IF WE FAIL TO DELIVER JUSTICE FOR ZUBEEN GARG."

With that one line, delivered barely a week after the death of musician Zubeen Garg on September 19, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma turned mourning into a political gamble. What began as collective grief over the untimely demise of a wildly popular cultural figure had morphed into protests and conspiracy theories. Sensing the mood, Sarma tied his own fate to a probe that could yet prove to be his undoing. Sarma's critics accuse him of politicising grief; his supporters say he's been forced into damage control by an Opposition doing the same. The truth likely resides in between. Six months before Assam votes, its most adored artiste has become a political fault line.

On that day in September, Zubeen, 52, collapsed while swimming off Singapore's St John's Island. He was visiting as a headliner at the Northeast India Festival. Singapore authorities ruled the death a drowning. A video on social media showed Zubeen joyfully jumping into the sea from a yacht wearing a life vest, only to remove it and re-enter the

water minutes before tragedy struck. Yet for millions of Assamese, this explanation felt woefully inadequate. The grief snowballed into an emotional crusade to uncover the truth behind Zubeen's death, coalescing into a social media campaign hashtags #JusticeforZubeenGarg.

Sarma moved with alacrity. His efforts to court Zubeen's teeming Gen Z following bordered on the theatrical—proclaiming himself among his “top ten fans”, personally receiving the body, performing a Zubeen song for the cameras and orchestrating funeral arrangements. This after he had initially dismissed talk of foul play, citing the Singapore authorities' findings.

THE PUBLIC OUTCRY

The wave of public anger focused on two individuals present in Singapore with Zubeen: Shyamkanu Mahanta, organiser of the Northeast Festival, and Siddhartha Sharma, the artiste's manager. It was speculated that the singer, who had battled seizures for two years and had been medically advised against going into water, might have suffered an episode whilst swimming. The duo ignored this fact, which proved fatal, people alleged.

The emotional catharsis soon acquired political dimensions, largely owing to Shyamkanu's connections. Shyamkanu is the brother of two powerful figures: Assam's information commissioner and former DGP Bhaskar



BIJU BORO

Mahanta, and Nani Gopal Mahanta, vice chancellor of Gauhati University and, until recently, education advisor to the Assam government with cabinet rank. Nani Gopal, a close associate of Sarma, is also close to the RSS and has hosted its chief Mohan Bhagwat twice at his residence. Shyamkanu ran a consultancy firm and organised high-profile events, drawing sponsorships from state and central governments. After Zubeen's death, social media exploded first with photos of Shyamkanu alongside Sarma, followed by images showing him with every major leader in Assam across parties, proof of how deeply embedded he was in the state's power network.

Within a week of Zubeen's death, a conspiracy theory alleged that the singer was silenced after he discovered that Shyamkanu and Siddhartha were exploiting him financially. In the days that followed, over 60 FIRs were filed, accusing the two of offences ranging from criminal negligence to murder.

Sensing the direction of public fury, CM Sarma changed his position. Singapore had conducted an autopsy confirming drowning, a report that was shared by October 1. However, Sarma ordered a second post-mortem at Gauhati



◀ **MOURNING A TITAN** Himanta Biswa Sarma pays tribute to Zubeen Garg at Delhi airport, Sept. 21; Left, the charismatic singer who millions idolised; below, Rahul Gandhi at Zubeen's funeral site in Sonapur, Oct. 17



Photographs by ANI

“If I resign today, 50 per cent of the protests will end immediately. And if Gaurav Gogoi is made chief minister, the remaining 50 per cent will also stop”

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA

Chief Minister, Assam, alleging a Congress hand in violent protests on Oct. 15 over Zubeen Garg’s death

Medical College Hospital just hours before Zubeen’s cremation on September 23. Viscera samples were sent to Delhi’s Central Forensic Science Laboratory to check for toxins, addressing conspiracy theories ranging from negligence to poisoning. A 10-member special investigation team was formed with a two-week deadline for preliminary findings. The government also appointed a one-man judicial commission headed by a retired judge to probe systemic lapses.

The politically astute Sarma seemed determined to prevent the kind of Gen Z unrest seen in Nepal. On September 25, when a mob attempted to storm Siddhartha’s Guwahati home, precipitating a police lathicharge, Sarma appealed: “Don’t turn Assam into Nepal. Don’t weaponise Zubeen’s death.” The ‘Nepal’ warning resurfaced on October

7, when Sarma vowed to file cases against those “provoking unrest” over Zubeen’s death.

REVIVING AN ALIEN SPECTRE

Even opposition leaders like Gaurav Gogoi will be questioned,” Sarma vowed, adding that police would register an omnibus case similar to those filed during the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019. The comparison was significant. Like many Assamese, Zubeen had vehemently opposed the CAA, a sentiment the Opposition is now seeking to revive. The anti-CAA agitation had lost steam, and the BJP returned to power in 2021, with Sarma firmly defending the law. The CAA reference was a reminder to the Opposition of that lost battle.

As demands for accountability intensified, authorities responded with a flurry of arrests that transformed the case from an accident probe into a criminal inquiry. On October 1, the CID arrested Shyamkanu and Siddhartha on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder. But aware that the case was legally weak, the government activated financial irregularity charges and brought in the Enforcement Directorate to probe Shyamkanu’s past financial deals.

The plot thickened when Shekhar, one of Zubeen’s bandmates who was present in Singapore, told the police that Zubeen had been poisoned by Shyamkanu and Siddhartha, contradicting his earlier statements asserting death by drowning. On this basis, the police upgraded the case to murder

and arrested Shekhar and a female singer also present in Singapore. Soon after, Zubeen's cousin Sandipan Garg, a policeman who had accompanied him to Singapore, was arrested as well.

On October 11 came the arrest of two of Zubeen's private security officers provided by the government. Nandeswar Bora and Paresh Baishya, both from Assam Police, were booked after the SIT flagged suspicious bank transactions. The probe widened as some members of the Assam Association in Singapore, which hosted the yacht party, came under media glare. All of them, barring one who is a Singapore citizen, gave their statements to the SIT in Guwahati. Every development was scrutinised in millions of social media posts, turning the probe into a public spectacle. People questioned why the SIT hadn't inspected the 'scene of crime'. Eventually, a two-member team was sent. Under mounting pressure, Singapore authorities, while reiterating there was no foul play, opened an inquiry under the Coroners Act, a procedure for unexplained deaths.

POLITICAL THEATRE UNFOLDS

It didn't take long for political parties to seize on the public outrage. Gaurav Gogoi accused Himanta of shielding Shyamkanu and later alleged that he continued to receive privileged treatment despite arrest, sealed home, frozen accounts and being forced to wear the same clothes for a week in jail. He also questioned the SIT's composition, claiming it included only Himanta's loyalists.

Gogoi brought the Congress high command into the fold by persuading Rahul Gandhi to visit Zubeen's funeral site on October 17. Rahul's visit, 28 days after Zubeen's death, signalled how the tragedy could become Assam's central political flashpoint ahead of the 2026 election. On October 19, the opposition staged a show of unity at a public memorial in Guwahati, which was attended by members of Congress, Rajoij Dal, Assam Jatiya Parishad and cultural figures.

Rajoij Dal's Akhil Gogoi, Sarma's rival from college days, accused the CM's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, of showing

CAST OF A TRAGEDY IN MANY ACTS

Key players caught in the storm surrounding Zubeen Garg's death

► **On September 19, Assamese singer and icon Zubeen Garg died while swimming off Singapore's St John's Island. He had been partying on a yacht with about a dozen people, including his manager, a police officer cousin, and several Assamese expatriates. He was in Singapore to attend the Northeast India Festival**



► His sudden death triggered massive outrage in Assam. Many blamed Northeast Festival organiser **Shyamkanu Mahanta** (left) and Zubeen's

manager **Siddhartha Sharma** (right) for taking an ailing Zubeen to Singapore and letting him swim, despite medical advice against aquatic activities following two years of seizures

► Opposition parties and social media influencers alleged that **CM Himanta Biswa Sarma** was shielding Shyamkanu because of his family ties

► Shyamkanu is the brother of Assam Information Commissioner and former DGP **Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta** (left), and Gauhati University Vice Chancellor **Nani Gopal Mahanta** (right, Sarma's close associate who also hosted RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat twice at his home)



► Despite Singapore ruling out foul play, conspiracy theories continue. A second autopsy was done on Sept. 23, and the government formed a probe team that arrested Shyamkanu and Siddhartha for culpable homicide on Oct. 1

► Police later arrested singer Amritprabha Mahanta (left) and band member Shekhar Jyoti Goswami (right) on Oct. 2 and Zubeen's cousin DSP Sandipan Garg (below) on Oct. 8. All were present on the yacht



► Shekhar Jyoti had alleged Zubeen was poisoned by Shyamkanu and Siddhartha, turning the case into a murder probe. Later, Zubeen's two government-appointed security guards, Nandeswar Bora and Paresh Baishya, were arrested on Oct. 10 over suspicious bank transactions

► Zubeen's wife, Garima Saikia Garg, initially defended Siddhartha, triggering a vicious social-media backlash accusing her of an affair with him. She later reversed her stance, alleging foul play. Though offered the autopsy report on Oct. 4, she refused to read it, saying she trusted the government

► On October 13, Garima demanded justice within 10 days; CM Sarma has urged patience



“gross insensitivity” by allowing her fashion show in the Northeast Festival in Singapore, organised under her brand Golden Threads of Assam, to continue despite news of Zubeen’s death. Riniki denied the allegation and filed a criminal defamation suit.

THE MIYA FACTOR

The Miya community, or Bengali-speaking Muslims of immigrant origin, are claiming Zubeen as a unifying cultural symbol. Sarma’s popularity partly stems from his hardline stance on the Miyas, whom many indigenous Assamese view as a cultural and demographic threat. His critics now point to Zubeen’s rejection of religion and caste. Sarma hit back, citing the singer’s Shiva tattoo and a song about freeing Assam from illegal settlers. In an interview with INDIA TODAY in 2022, Zubeen had clearly said he disavowed religion and caste, but stood firmly against illegal immigration. This attempt to appropriate Zubeen’s agnostic legacy is also a subtle challenge to Sarma’s anti-immigration politics and eviction drives, particularly in Upper Assam, where Gaurav Gogoi’s emergence threatens to wean Ahom support from the BJP. Given Miyas’ traditional Congress allegiance, the two forces could pose a formidable challenge to the BJP in 2026.

When the accused, including Shyamkanu and Siddhartha, were moved to Baksa jail, mobs rioted, pelting stones and torching police vehicles. Two dozen people were injured, and several arrests followed, among them, two Miyas. Sarma portrayed the unrest as a Congress-Miya nexus. “If I resign today, 50 per cent of the protests will end. And if Gaurav Gogoi is made chief minister, the remaining 50 per cent will also stop,” he declared. The genuine mourners—“fans who admired Zubeen while he was alive”—had been replaced, he said, by those who saw political opportunity in his death. To appropriate the protests, Sarma’s BJP

launched a statewide campaign from October 22–26, demanding “justice for Zubeen”, ironically from its own government.

Zubeen’s cremation ground at Sonapur near Guwahati has become a pilgrimage site, attracting massive crowds daily. As reports emerged of unruly behaviour and alcohol consumption, particularly at night, the government capped visiting hours at 6 am to 10 pm. Opposition figures and civil society groups interpreted the restrictions as attempts to control public mourning and evidence of the government’s discomfort with spontaneous expressions of grief that could fuel anti-establishment sentiment. The visiting hours were extended by an hour.

POLITICS OF DISTRACTION

Ensuring the outrage over Zubeen’s death could cause electoral damage, the Sarma government has moved to redirect public attention with agendas critics call diversionary or polarising. On October 22, Sarma announced that the November assembly session would introduce “historic bills,” including laws against ‘love jihad’ and polygamy. Congress leader Debabrata Saikia accused him of “trying to polarise voters after Zubeen Garg’s death”. Two days later, the cabinet decided to table the long-suppressed T.D. Tiwari Commission report on the 1983 Nellie massacre, in which over 2,000 Bengali Muslims were killed. Withheld for four decades, the report will be made public on November 25. “After Zubeen’s death blunted his Hindu-Muslim narrative, he’s reopening old wounds before elections,” Saikia said.

Zubeen’s death has become a mirror reflecting Assam’s volatile intersection of emotion, identity and power. The hashtag campaigns, the continuing probes and the political manoeuvring indicate that this is far from over. The resolution of the political firestorm ignited by the tragedy may well determine who governs Assam after 2026. ■

THE PROTEIN GOLD RUSH

India's protein-based food market is growing at a furious pace, as FMCG firms and a host of startups rush to tap the rising demand from health-conscious customers. But not all of it is healthy, say experts

BY SONAL KHETARPAL

W

HEN INFLUENCER REVANT HIMATSINGKA, BETTER KNOWN AS FOOD-PHARMER, RAN AN INSTAGRAM POLL IN MARCH 2024, asking “what’s missing from your diet?”, over 70 per cent of the 2,974 respondents came up with the same answer: protein. Once a staple of gym-goers trying to bulk up, millions of consumers are now watching their protein intake and asking for healthy products without compromising on taste. While growing health awareness and rising disposable incomes are driving the trend, influencers and celebrities gushing on social media about how

they have made a higher protein intake a part of their lifestyle is fuelling its expansion. And it’s not just health food startups like Yoga Bar, Troovy, The Whole Truth, SuperYou and Protein Chef who are supplying the goods, legacy players in the food and beverage industry have joined the protein race too. On the table are protein-enhanced idlis, biscuits, dairy products, bread, ice cream, coffee and even protein water. Swiggy now lists more than a million protein-rich dishes, McDonald’s offers a plant-based protein slice in its burgers and Nestlé has launched besan Maggi noodles. Protein is

Bagrry's

Whey protein muesli with chocolate, rolled oats, high-protein oats

6

High-protein products, also includes dark chocolate high-protein oats, makhana, trail mix

■ Top protein products
■ Products launched



ITC

Aashirvaad high-protein atta, soya chunks, organic moong dal

7

Includes chakki khapli atta, Svasti milk & dahi, ITC Right Shift high-protein oats

SuperYou

Protein wafers, wafer minis, protein powders

now a mainstream wellness solution for Gen Z, millennials and even seniors, so much so that just like dairy, fruits and vegetables, staples and beverages, high-protein food, too, is an FMCG category today, and the fastest-growing one.

The numbers are certainly impressive. According to market research firm IMARC Group, India's protein-based product market touched Rs 38,247 crore in 2024 and is projected to touch Rs 1.36 lakh crore by 2033, growing at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 15.17 per cent. However, behind this phenomenal growth of protein foods lie hard nutritional facts—on the nature of protein and its intake by Indians.

Proteins are nutrients made up of strings of essential amino acids vital to the human body, and are the building blocks of cells and tissues, including muscle, bone, skin and hair. They are vital to the functioning of the body and are found in meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, nuts, beans, pulses and, in smaller quantities, in cereals. According to the



“ The idea is to incorporate protein into the daily diet in an affordable and tasty manner, in formats that cater to consumers across age groups. We even offer a high-protein kulfi ”

JAYEN MEHTA, Managing Director, Amul

**₹38,247
CRORE**

Size of India's protein-based product market In 2024

**₹136,000
CRORE**

**Expected market size by 2033,
at a CAGR of 15.17 per cent**

(Source: IMARC Group)

Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN), the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) is 0.83 gram of protein per kilogram of bodyweight a day for healthy individuals. Thus, an adult weighing 60 kg needs around 50 gm of protein daily.

India's average daily protein intake has been increasing over the years. The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24 shows that intake rose from 59.3 grams per person per day in FY10 to 61.8 grams in FY24 in rural areas and from 58.8 grams per person per day in FY10 to 63.4 grams per day in FY24 in urban India. On the other hand, research published in Feb-



Yoga Bar (backed by ITC)

**High-protein oats, protein muesli,
Power Up protein bars**

50

High-protein products, also includes ProClean plant protein, protein shake cold coffee, ProClean whey protein

Amul

**High-protein buttermilk, lassi,
shakes, curd,
whey protein
beverages**

10

A dozen more coming up, including snacking cubes, paneer parathas, protein water, high-protein atta, cola bars

15

Also includes protein chips in four flavours

February 2025 by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and the Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) across six states in India found that over 80 per cent of 785 households surveyed consume less protein than is recommended.

That's primarily because Indians get 60–75 per cent of their protein intake through cereals—largely from rice and wheat. However, cereals lack the amino acids required for the human body. "The digestibility quotient of the proteins from cereals is only 60 per cent. Hence, qualitative protein deficiency remains in many people even if they are consuming the right quantity," says Dr. B. Sesikeran, former director of ICMR-NIN. He suggests increasing the consumption of pulses as well as milk, curd, nuts, seeds and eggs that can provide all the essential amino acids.

Experts recommend a balanced diet providing quality protein without the need for supplements or processed options. For instance, one egg has 6 grams of protein, a 100 gram bowl of curd has 3-5 grams, and a 250 ml glass of milk provides 7-9 grams. But many leading a faster urban lifestyle find it difficult to eat the same food in larger quantities or repetitively. That's where the FMCG companies are coming together to fill this gap.

FORTIFYING YOUR SNACKS

For the conventional eater, there is ITC's high-protein aata, where three rotis claim to fulfil 25 per cent of daily protein needs. Similarly, brands like Amul, Parag Milk Foods and Milky Mist are pushing protein-fortified paneer, curd and cheese. Amul, India's iconic FMCG brand, has set itself the target of launching 12 high-protein products this year, ranging from paneer paranthas to protein water, high-protein aata and cola bars. With these additions, its protein portfolio will have a spread of 25 products by next year, says Jayen Mehta, managing director, Amul (Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, or GCMMF).

Tamil Nadu-based dairy brand Milky Mist has introduced a high-protein paneer offering 50 grams of protein in a 200 g pack, along with Skyr Yogurt, an Icelandic staple, now providing 12 grams of protein per 100 gm serving in India. Other options include high-protein idli-dosa batter from Karnataka Milk Federation's Nandini and iD Fresh.

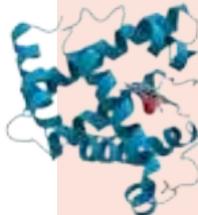
Indeed, among protein products, the largest growth is coming from dairy brands, which are driving mass adoption with affordable offerings starting at Rs 25 for curd, buttermilk and shakes. To meet rising demand, Amul doubled its production capacity of high-protein products last month and plans to double it again next month. Monthly sales have already quadrupled from last year. However, Mehta did not share revenue figures.

When it comes to business, snacking leads the way, followed by targeted protein products for women and seniors and then fortified traditional Indian foods (like millet laddus, idli and dosa batter etc.), says Adarsh Menon, partner at Fireside Ventures, a venture capital firm. 'Better-for-you' snacks are

ALL ABOUT PROTEIN

The nature of protein, what it does, its requirement in humans and if Indians get enough of it

What is protein?



It is a large biomolecule made up of chains of smaller amino acid molecules. Along with carbohydrates and fats, it is one of the three essential nutrients the body

What does it do?

- It is critical for the structure, function and regulation of tissues and organs
- It is the building block of cells and tissues, including muscle, bone, skin and hair
- It also fights viruses, breaks down nutrients in food, speeds up chemical reactions within cells, transports molecules (e.g. haemoglobin and some hormones)
- Protein deficiency causes muscle weakness, a weakened immune system and reduced energy



How much protein does one need?

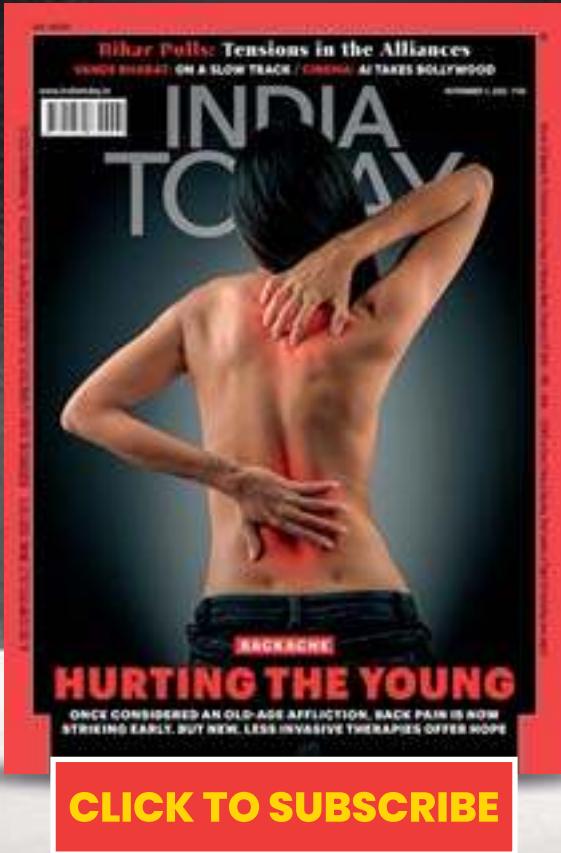
- According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, a healthy adult person needs 0.83 gram of protein per kg of body weight every day
- Thus, an adult weighing 60 kg needs around 50 gm of protein daily



How much protein do Indians consume?

- The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24 shows protein intake rose from 59.3 gm per person per day in FY10 to 61.8 gm in FY24 in rural India
- In urban India, it rose from 58.8 gm per person per day in FY10 to 63.4 gm in FY24
- In spite of this increase, a 2025 research in six states found over 80 per cent of 785 households surveyed had less protein than is needed
- This is because most Indians get 60-75 per cent of protein from rice and wheat, which lack essential amino acids

WHY IS BACK PAIN NOW STRIKING THE YOUNG?



CLICK TO SUBSCRIBE

1 YEAR UNLIMITED DIGITAL ACCESS JUST FOR ₹999!

SUBSCRIBER BENEFITS

- 1 year unlimited access to all digital issues
 - Daily newsletter
- Ad-Lite access to premium web content
 - Multiple device access

**INDIA
TODAY**
MAKING SENSE OF INDIA

PROTEIN CONTENT IN COMMON FOODS*

(*per 100 gram)



growing 1.2 times faster than traditional snacks, with one in five snacks now carrying a health association, according to Nielsen's June 2025 Snacking Habits report. "The idea is to incorporate protein into the daily diet in an affordable and tasty manner, in formats that cater to consumers across age groups," says Mehta. "We even offer a high-protein kulfi so you can meet your protein requirement while having a dessert."

Health food brand Yoga Bar, which started in 2014 with protein energy bars, has evolved from a premium brand into a mainstream one, now selling even in Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets. The brand is exploring new formats, including a plant-based protein powder for kids. It will be acquired by ITC by 2026 at a valuation of Rs 500 crore.

Similarly, SuperYou was launched in November 2024 with a single product: protein wafer bar. "We want to redefine snacking by moving from high-carb, high-fat products to offerings that are protein-rich and nutritionally balanced," says co-founder Nikunj Biyani, who started the brand with actor Ranveer Singh. "Our core positioning is that while our chips and wafer bars have fat and carbs, they also have protein," says Biyani.

The legacy category in protein is whey powders, which remain popular. While whey—the liquid byproduct of cheese production—is a good protein source, whey powders have concentrated protein and thus are difficult to digest and can cause bloating. As a result, plant-based proteins are catching up as they are easier on the stomach, says Suhasini Sampath, cofounder of Yoga Bar. Common forms include protein isolates from chickpea, soy, pea,

and moong bean. These are processed to remove fibres and minerals, leaving behind a powder that contains 80–90 per cent protein.

Protein products come at a premium because, as Rinka Banerjee, founder of F&B consulting firm Thinking Forks explains, protein isolate costs between Rs 700 and Rs 1,500 a kg. So, if a bar needs to deliver 10 gm of protein, that alone adds at least Rs 5 to the cost. However, Banerjee says their research shows that consumers are willing to pay a 15–20 per cent premium for healthier variants.

A WORD OF CAUTION

When protein is added to commonly consumed foods like milk, yoghurt and paneer, it can be a useful way to increase their protein density, but the concern arises when proteins are added to highly processed 'junk foods' high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS), like cookies, chocolates,



“ Adding protein to highly processed foods does not change their unhealthy nutritional profile. The key concern lies in excess sugars, sodium and saturated fat, and protein alone cannot negate those risks ”

BHARATI KULKARNI
Director, ICMR-NIN

cakes and kulfi. "From a public health standpoint, adding protein to these does not change their unhealthy nutritional profile. Their key concern lies in excess sugars, sodium and saturated fat, and the addition of protein alone cannot negate those risks," says Bharati Kulkarni, director, ICMR-NIN.

A protein-enriched cookie or cake, for instance, remains an HFSS food, high in calories, and is best consumed in moderation because of the associated risks of non-communicable diseases such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Kulkarni suggests that consumers, when considering protein-enriched products, should scrutinise nutrition labels beyond just the protein content.

On the increased popularity of protein powders, Kulkarni says they are not routinely needed, except for specific requirements by, say, elite athletes with high training loads or individuals with protein deficiency. Their overuse, she cautions, can cause digestive discomfort, strain kidneys and displace nutrient-rich whole foods. This is especially true for school children, she says, since their protein needs are modest (20–40 gm/day). A normal diet with cereals, pulses, milk, eggs and flesh food is sufficient. "There is no role for protein powders in otherwise healthy children, and routine use is not recommended."

As consumers seek products high on protein, brands have responded with gusto. But, beyond a single ingredient hype, the market needs to be fortified with more awareness around eating right. It's not just about consuming more protein; it's also about consuming the right type of food in the right way. ■



PR1261012500749
www.maharashtra.gov.in

P52100079477
www.maharashtra.gov.in

LUXURY, BACK IN ITS
BREATHTAKING SHAPE.

Tallest in Pune



LAUNCHING

AMANORA®
**GATEWAY
TOWERS II**

3 New, high-rise towers

2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, 4 & 5 Bed residences

175 Metres tall T 101 (Pune's tallest)

3.5 & 4.5 Bed duplexes

31 Storey twin towers (T 102 & T 103)

35+ Curated amenities

Similar iconic Tower 100 handed
over in 2020

Exclusive Blue Orchid Club

CALL 020 6689 5984 / 080691 50967

(Please add '9' as mentioned to connect)

Amanora Park Town, Amanora-Magarpatta Road, Pune 411028 | amanora.com

FOR THE BOY LEFT BEHIND

HOW HOMEBOUND, THE CRITICAL HIT ABOUT **THE LIVES OF TWO MIGRANT LABOURERS WHO FACED THE COVID PANDEMIC TOGETHER**, CAME INTO BEING

By Suhani Singh



TO THE END

A still from the film featuring actors Ishaan Khattar and Vishal Jethwa



all started with an image that went viral at the peak of the COVID-19 lockdown in May 2020. In its stillness was the implied journey of a thousand miles. Mohammad Saiyub, a factory worker from Basti, Uttar Pradesh, was cradling his friend Amrit Kumar on the side of a highway. The latter's eyes were closed and he had just collapsed from a heatstroke—they were two of the tens of millions of interstate migrant labourers across India forced to walk home after the lockdown's sudden announcement left daily wagers in the lurch without any provisions for their journey home. Only Saiyub would make it to Basti alive, his friend a victim of the chaos and state-led apathy the country was plunged into.

Journalist and author Bharat Peer came across their photo and was struck by its emotional potency. He tracked Saiyub down and discovered a moving story about a bond between two young men on the fringes—one a Muslim, the other a Dalit, both of whom worked in factories in Surat. Peer's longform piece 'A Friendship, a Pandemic and a Death Beside the Highway' appeared in *The New York Times* and immediately caught the eye of Somen Mishra, head of creative development at Dharma Productions. He turned to friend and filmmaker Neeraj Ghaywan to discuss a possible screen adaptation—"it had a caste angle, a strong humanist lens and a friendship story," he said, one which he felt Hindi cinema hadn't seen in a long time. Ghaywan, who disclosed his Dalit identity in the aftermath of

his acclaimed directorial debut, *Masaan*, was on board. Mishra signed on as producer and Dharma head honcho Karan Johar joined the team.

After a world premiere at Cannes that got a nine-minute standing ovation, *Homebound* finally arrived in cinemas on September 26 and is expected to drop on Netflix sometime in November to generate buzz for the Oscars, where it is India's official entry in the Best International Film category. "*Homebound* represents many people of India who are often overlooked by traditional media and cinema," Ghaywan told **INDIA TODAY** magazine in late September. "That it is India's entry to the Oscar is a moment for them to be seen, heard and felt."

BEHIND THE SCENES

It has taken Ghaywan nearly a decade to get his sophomore feature out. At first, his ideas revolved around a narrative on farmer suicides for which he interviewed many affected families, but the project fell through. The "politics was superseding the narrative", he says. He and Mishra had another project in development, written by Varun Grover, but it didn't materialise due to casting and budgetary woes. On this prolonged creative struggle, Ghaywan says, "The fight is with yourself, with your fractured identity, [with] what you want to say to the world.... The quest that makes you not settle for anything that's not making you get up in the morning and scream, wanting to make it."

That fire and hunger erupted in full force with the story of Saiyub and Kumar. "I [wanted to make a film to] see what they eat and love, go into their homes, see what their dreams are, how they are shattered, why do they arrive in bigger cities and go back at all," says Ghaywan.

He and Peer went on research trips to Uttar Pradesh and Surat to

know more about the boys' lives, the spaces they inhabited and the socio-economic conditions they grew up in. Meanwhile, Dharma's legal team was chasing *The New York Times* to procure legal rights, which would finally come through in 10 months. Screenwriter Sumit Roy came on board to help Ghaywan with the story and plotting. Grover and actor Shreedhar Dubey, later also the dialect trainer, contributed with dialogues. But the biggest catch was legendary filmmaker Martin Scorsese boarding as execu-



"*Homebound* is a beautifully crafted film that's a significant contribution to Indian cinema"

MARTIN SCORSESE
Director

tive producer. An admirer of *Masaan*, he had sent Ghaywan a note of appreciation and told the film's French creative producer Mélita Toscan du Plantie that he'd like to be a part of Ghaywan's next if ever an opportunity arose. Mentorship from a figure many deem Hollywood's greatest living director was a badge of honour indeed. Scorsese would offer valuable notes on the script and, during the editing stage, remind Ghaywan not to deviate from the film's core—friendship—so much so that Saiyub's love story was entirely cut out in order to make the narrative tighter.

CAMERA ROLLING

The next step was finding the right cast. Ishaan Khattar was roped in to play Shoaib, the fictional alter ego of Saiyub, and Vishal Jethwa for Chandan, that of Kumar. For Ghaywan, it was imperative that his leads, both hailing from different backgrounds in Mumbai, underwent an immersion workshop. It sent the actors, Ghaywan, Dubey and some of the production crew to villages in Uttar Pradesh—Harauni, Hassanganj, Unnao, Shekhpura and Barabanki—to familiarise themselves with the emotional and physical worlds of the characters. “It’s essential that you have to get close to their lived reality. You have to put in the work, you can’t just imagine it,” says Ghaywan.

Khattar and Jethwa loved this process of “surrendering” themselves before the film went on floors. The latter spoke of how Ghaywan asked them to “be vulnerable, share their insecurities and past, listen to each other without judgement” to forge the friendship he knew to be the film’s emotional spine. The idea is to “try and live it, let it mean something to you”, says Khattar. “You don’t always get the opportunity to do so [while making a film].” For Chandan’s character arc, Ghaywan dug deep into his own life growing up in a patriarchal Dalit household where he was the favoured male child and what his journey was like accepting his caste identity. Another asset to the film was Janhvi Kapoor, who had wanted to work with Ghaywan for a while and didn’t charge a fee to play Sudha Bharti, a Dalit woman who firmly believes in Ambedkar’s viewpoint that education is liberation from oppression.

With a budget under Rs 20 crore and set around two men surviving on the margins, *Homebound* was as “unDharma” a film can be, says Mishra. Shot predominantly in villages on the outskirts of Bhopal, followed by a schedule in Surat and a few days in Mumbai, it has “no massive sets”, says production designer

INDIA'S SUBMISSION AT THE OSCARS

Homebound is up against some heavyweights for the Best International Film prize at the Academy Awards



SENTIMENTAL VALUE (Norway)

Joachim Trier's last film, *Worst Person in the World*, was much beloved by the Academy, scoring two nominations. His latest, a drama about an estranged father reconnecting with his two daughters, won the Grand Prix award at Cannes. It's favoured to bag nominations for best screenplay, best actress and supporting actor too.

IT WAS JUST AN ACCIDENT (France)

The Iranian government has imprisoned director Jafar Panahi repeatedly but he's mastered the art of making sublime films amid censorship. The Cannes Palme d'Or winner is an early frontrunner, with many seeing the Oscar as a way to honour his impressive oeuvre and moxie.



THE VOICE OF HIND RAJAB (Tunisia)

Kaouther Ben Hania's docudrama about the killing of 5-year-old Palestinian girl Hind Rajab by Israeli forces is likely to resonate with Academy voters.

THE SECRET AGENT (Brazil)

Wagner Moura, winner of best actor at Cannes, leads this thriller set against the backdrop of the final years of the Brazilian military dictatorship.



NO OTHER CHOICE (South Korea)

Having amassed a cult following for films like *Oldboy*, *Lady Vengeance*, *The Handmaiden* and *Decision to Leave*, Park Chan Wook in his latest shows the desperate and depraved side of humanity. This one entails a high body count—as well as laughs.

INDIA
TODAY

BREAKING NEWS

JUST A TAP AWAY



DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

AVAILABLE ON



Khyatee Kanchan, who has credits like *Zubaan* and *Maidaan* under her belt. The film has “everything to do with the smallest of details”, she says. Kanchan would often go with her team to local houses to seek props to place in Chandan and Shoaib’s houses. “Neeraj gets the best out of people. There are no airs or hierarchy, everybody is allowed to put forward their ideas and opinions,” she says. “It’s literally a collaborative process.”

On set, Ghaywan’s deployment of a personal protocol called ‘Code 360’ became much-spoken about among cast and crew. In a film with a host of troubling, gut-wrenching scenes that expose how normalised and pervasive caste and religious prejudice is, it did wonders for the actors to nail their emotional cadences. It entailed the clapboard being soft, movement among crew being minimal and silence a requisite. All climax scenes were shot like this. For Shalini Vatsa, a scene-stealer as Chandan’s mother Phool, it further demonstrated Ghaywan’s sensitivity. “Acting [for screen] is a lot of breaks, you aren’t on stage. [With Code 360] there’s an understanding that the whole unit would have to go into the mood of the scene,” she says. It also involved songs that Ghaywan would play on set to guide actors. Jethwa recalls Kishore Kumar’s ‘Raah Pe Chalte Hai’, from *Namkeen*, becoming the go-to song on their way to shoot, while Vatsa remembers two songs on Ghaywan’s playlist for Phool that were favourites of hers—‘Ab Ke Baras Bhejo’ from *Bandini* and ‘Yeh Jo Des Hai Mera’ from *Swades*. What also helped actors was Ghaywan’s decision to shoot the film chronologically.

The experience was profound and transformative for Jethwa. “I didn’t know identity was such a big issue,” he says, “even though I was going through it and didn’t realise it. I used to think less of myself in front of others because I couldn’t speak English that well. Discrimination brings about a set of challenges the world over.”

THE ROAD AHEAD

Homebound may not have created ripples at the domestic box office, collecting just about Rs 4 crore, but for Mishra, it is an artistic effort that lends itself more to “making footprints in history”. The world premiere at Cannes, the second runner-up prize of International People’s Choice Award at the 2025 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), its selection as India’s official entry at the Oscars in Best International Film category are rewards in themselves. “The difference with the film,” says Vatsa, “is that the appreciation is not simply ‘great film and performance’. People are moved

by it.” *Homebound*, says Mishra, has broken even and there’s hopefully more to come from releases in international territories like France.

But he is candid about the film’s Oscar prospects in what’s a fiercely contested Best International Film category. The last time India made it to the top five was with *Lagaan* (2001). This year’s competition includes Jafar Panahi’s Palme d’Or winner *It Was Just An Accident* (France), Joachim Trier’s *Sentimental Value* (Norway), Park Chan Wook’s *Decision to Leave* (South Korea) and Kaouther Ben Hania’s *The Voice of Hind Rajab* (Tunisia), which are pretty much seen as dead locks. The more achievable



Actor Janhvi Kapoor and Neeraj Ghaywan

“Homebound represents many people of India who are often overlooked by traditional media as well as cinema”

NEERAJ GHAYWAN
Co-writer and director

target, says Mishra, is to make it to the shortlist—the top 15—with a little bit of help from Scorsese’s EP status, screenings and Q&As scheduled in New York and Los Angeles, which will help strike a chord with Oscar voters. And Ghaywan’s rallying call for empathy is much-needed in these increasingly divisive times. He says, “Even if there are people you disagree with, who don’t look like you, talk like you, whose ideology may differ from you.... Maybe we are pointing too many daggers. Let’s have a conversation and hear the other side too.” ■



देश का नं. 1 हिंदी न्यूज ऐप

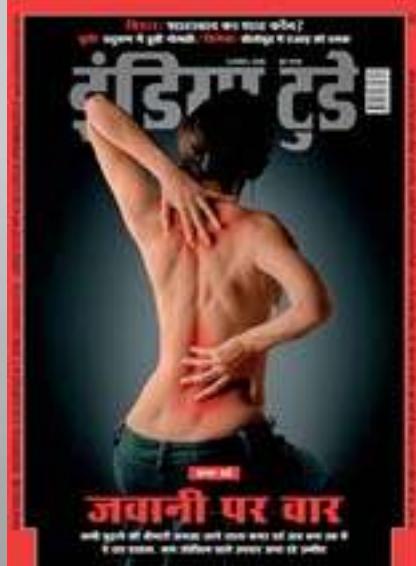
जुड़े रहिए हर खबर से,
कहीं भी, कभी भी

अभी डाउनलोड करें

aajtak.in/app

उपलब्ध है





सबसे भरोसेमंद स्रोतों से, सबसे सटीक जानकारी

सब्सक्राइब करें और पाएं 68% तक की छूट

हाँ! मैं इंडिया टुडे को सब्सक्राइब करना चाहता/चाहती हूँ

अपनी पसंद के सब्सक्रिप्शन को टिक करें और फॉर्म को इस पर भेज दें— वी केअर, लिविंग मीडिया इंडिया लि. सी-९, सेक्टर-१०, नोएडा २०१३०१ (भारत)

टिक करें	अवधि	कुल अंक	कवर प्राइस (₹)	ऑफर प्राइस (₹)	प्लान	डिस्काउंट
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 वर्ष	52	3120	999	डिजिटल	68%
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 वर्ष	52	3120	2699	डिजिटल+प्रिंट	14%

कृपया फॉर्म को ब्लॉकलेटर में भरें

मैं चेक/डीडी जमा कर रहा/रही हूँ जिसकी संख्या.....है और इसे दिनांक.....को लिविंग मीडिया इंडिया लिमिटेड के पक्ष में (बैंक का नाम).....रूपये की धनराशि (दिल्ली से बाहर के चेक के लिए ₹ 50 रूपये अतिरिक्त जोड़, समान मूल्य के चेक मान्य नहीं होंगे) के लिए बनवाया गया है।

नाम..... पता.....

..... शहर..... राज्य..... पिन.....

मोबाइल..... ईमेल.....



सब्सक्राइब करने के लिए यहाँ स्कैन करें।

ऑफर के विषय में विशेष जानकारी के लिए निम्न माध्यमों से संपर्क भी कर सकते हैं

कॉल और Whatsapp के लिए
+91 8597778778

ईमेल भेजें
wecare@intoday.com

लॉग ऑन करें
subscriptions.intoday.in/indiatoday-hindi

LE ! SURE

EXHIBITION: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE PG 54

MUSIC: BRUCE LEE MANI AND M.D. PALLAVI PG 56

ARCHITECTURE ▾

Designs on Deco

ART DECO ALIVE! CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF THE ART DECO AESTHETIC ACROSS MIAMI AND MUMBAI



PRIDE OF PLACE
Eros Cinema,
housed within the
Cambata Building
at Churchgate,
exemplifies the Art
Deco architecture
in Mumbai

In

1925, A NEW ARCHITECTURAL MOVEMENT WAS BORN AT THE *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris. In October, a first-of-its-kind twin-city celebration marking 100 years of the Art Deco movement called Art Deco Alive! kicked off in Miami in the US and will continue in India in Mumbai in November. It links the cities through their shared architectural legacy—Miami has the world's largest collection of Art Deco buildings, and Mumbai comes a close second. The American celebration, from October 8-31, included an exhibition titled *From Ocean Drive to Marine Drive: Mapping a Century of Art Deco* that explored its evolution from Paris to Miami and Mumbai through archival drawings, design objects and photographs. This was supported by leading preservation institutions, including the Miami Design Preservation League and Art Deco Mumbai Trust.

Smiti Kanodia, who is founder and Mumbai curatorial director of Art Deco Alive!, says, "Mumbai and Miami are united by their dynamic spirit, architectural heritage and



The exhibition will highlight women like Art Deco pioneer Perin Mistry and preservation activist Barbara Baer Capitman

shared identity as cultural confluences." She narrates how Art Deco Alive! started as a casual conversation while touring Miami's Deco district. Co-founders and Miami curatorial directors Gayatri Hingorani Dewan and Salma

Merchant Rahmathulla became friends when they both lived in New York, while Smiti knew Gayatri from their time together as students at NYU. Salma, who is an advocate for cultural preservation, elaborates on the similarities

THEATRE ▾

The Stage is Set

Prithvi Festival kicks off from November 1 with a bouquet of plays, fringe performances and more

For more than four decades, the Prithvi Festival has been an annual reminder of Mumbai's abundant love for the performing arts, evident in the way the city turns up to celebrate creativity, collaboration and cultural dialogue. Come November, the iconic theatre venue will host the festival once again. Many new plays, experimental

works, stage talks and workshops with theatre personalities as well as Indian classical music and dance performances are in the pipeline.

"There's an inherent buzz of activity that takes over this time of the year. We never have pre-decided themes, but this year, there seem to be several shows that centre around issues of womanhood," says

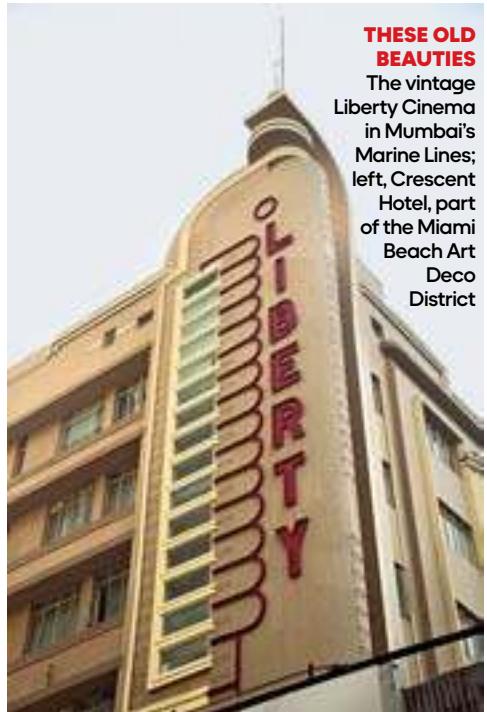
Zahan Kapoor, trustee, Prithvi Theatre.

Some plays this year include Yuki Ellias's *A Fish Ate My Cat*, Mahabanoor Mody-Kotwal & Kaizaad Kotwal's *Eden Creek*,

THIS YEAR,
THE FESTIVAL IS
INTRODUCING
WORKSHOPS WITH
LEADING EXPERTS TO
ENCOURAGE STUDY
AND PRACTICE IN THE
PERFORMING
ARTS

Daniel D'Souza's Queen, Mohit Takalkar's Anatomy of a Suicide, Akarsh Khurana's A Perfect Time to Panic and Atul Kumar's Ambaa. Dastangoi Collective's Dastan-e-Guru Dutt will delve into Bombay noir while Dastan Raja Vikram ke Ishq Ki is based on folk tales by scholar A.K. Ramanujan and the poetry of Mir Taqi Mir.

as well as differences that you can spot when viewing the Deco of both cities. "While Miami's Deco often leans into pastel palettes, nautical motifs and streamlined forms," she says, "Bombay Deco embraces tropical adaptations, ziggurats and Indian iconography.



THESE OLD BEAUTIES

The vintage Liberty Cinema in Mumbai's Marine Lines; left, Crescent Hotel, part of the Miami Beach Art Deco District

There are striking similarities, too. For example, the Colony Hotel in Miami and Regal Cinema in Mumbai both embody a cinematic grandeur; Miami's Hoffman's Cafeteria and Mumbai's Eros Cinema share dramatic curves and stepped forms." Gayatri reminisces about growing up in Mumbai, walking past apartment buildings with elegant railings and sunburst patterns, and never realising they were Deco. "Now, strolling through South Beach, I see the same language in Miami's hotels and signage. It's like recognising a familiar accent in a foreign city," she smiles.

Art Deco Alive! comes alive in Mumbai between November 6 and 25, with the exhibition displayed at the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum, along with Art Deco artefacts like jewellery, furniture, silverware and memorabilia. Deco Talks & Walks will feature discussions and curated tours for heritage buffs, typography lovers, cinema buffs and children. A retail edit, as well as a screening of Mira Nair's *India Cabaret* (1985), will bring the Deco vibe to life.

Art Deco Alive! is also hoping to shine a spotlight on women who have been instrumental in keeping the movement going, but aren't often spoken about. "Barbara Baer Capitman, the

visionary behind the preservation of Miami Beach's Art Deco District, and Perin Mistri, one of India's first women architects and a pioneer of Bombay Deco, are central to the exhibition," Salma explains. Their contributions are highlighted alongside iconic architects like Henry Hohauser in Miami and Master, Sathe & Bhuta in Mumbai. The exhibition places their work in dialogue, showing how preservation and innovation shaped two of the world's most extraordinary Deco landscapes."

When asked what they believe is the future of Deco and its relevance in modern urbanism, Smiti says, "The beauty of Deco is that it's always current. Its future lies in its ability to inspire contemporary design without being confined to nostalgia." For Salma, Deco is a lens into how cities adapt, modernise and express identity. "In Miami and Mumbai, Deco is woven into the urban fabric, and its resilience reminds us that thoughtful design can stand the test of time," she asserts. Gayatri agrees, "The challenge is to preserve this heritage while using its spirit to inspire inclusive and character-rich urban spaces. That is what makes Deco timeless—it keeps finding new ways to be relevant." ■

—Priya Pathiyani

WORLD'S A STAGE

Prithvi Theatre trustees Kunal and Zahan Kapoor (second and third from right) at the opening night of the 2024 festival

Theatre veterans such as Paresh Rawal, Feroz Abbas Khan, Jyoti Dogra and Arundathi Nag will be in conversation

with Pragya Tiwari for 'StageTalks'. This year, the festival is also introducing workshops, which Kapoor hopes to make a regular feature. "The aim is to encourage study and practice in the performing arts and have leading professionals share their insights and tools of the craft," he says. To start with, theatre enthusiasts will get an opportunity to learn from experts such as Abhishek Majumdar, Shernaz Patel and Naseeruddin Shah.

There will be live screenings of plays performed at the National

Theatre in London, including *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Inter Alia*, *Dr Strangelove* and *Present Laughter*. Prithvi Festival will also see several experimental works as well as a Bharatanatyam performance by Shreema Upadhyaya in *Leela: The Divine Play*. One of the highlights is a sitar performance by Ustad Shujaat Husain Khan. Let the show begin! ■

—Deepali Dhingra

Prithvi Festival will be held from Nov. 1-17 at Prithvi Theatre and Prithvi House, Juhu, Mumbai



EXHIBITION ▼

The Civility of Disobedience

A new exhibition and accompanying book capture the way the original disruptors in Mumbai helped pave the way towards freedom for India

AD 1930-1931, a year in the past, which impacted not only the present at the time, but has had far-reaching effects into the future. This was when anti-colonial protests gained a firm foothold in India, starting with Mahatma Gandhi leading the march to Dandi against the taxation of salt and, ultimately, leading to a mass mobilisation of ordinary citizens from all walks of life, as they became actively involved in the struggle for freedom from the British yoke. This phenomenon manifested especially strongly in Mumbai, with women participating as actively as men... making and selling salt when it was against the law; spinning yarn on charkhas so families could wear Indian-made khadi; encouraging people to buy swadeshi goods; and being fearless at the forefront of public protests.

Evidence of these small acts by everyday nationalists that led to significant consequences for the country can be viewed in the latest exhibition, titled *Disobedient Subjects: Bombay, 1930-1931*, at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS), on till March 31, 2026. Through rare archival photographs, historical objects and works by artists such as Homai Vyarawalla, Atul Dodiya and Uzma Mohsin, the exhibition, curated by Avrati Bhatnagar and Sumathi Ramaswamy, captures the moods and moments that helped the Civil Disobedience Movement in India to achieve the scale it did.

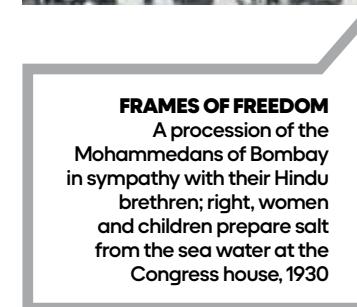
Sabyasachi Mukherjee, direc-

Rare photographs, historical objects and works by artists **CAPTURE THE MOMENTS** of the Civil Disobedience Movement



FRAMES OF FREEDOM

A procession of the Mohammedans of Bombay in sympathy with their Hindu brethren; right, women and children prepare salt from the sea water at the Congress house, 1930



tor general, CSMVS, speaks about the K.L. Nursery album, acquired by the collaborating Alkazi Foundation for the Arts over two decades ago, which provides a detailed visual record of Mumbai's transformation into a city of collective defiance. A few of the 245 photographs from the 1930s from this album are included in a book released as a complement to the exhibition. Titled *Photographing Civil Disobedi-*

ence, Bombay 1930-31 and published by Mapin Publishing and the Alkazi Collection of Photography, it features nine enlightening essays and gritty photographs around the anti-colonial protests, and a preface by Rahaab Allana, curator, Alkazi Foundation. In tandem with the exhibition, it offers a unique perspective on the average Mumbai citizen as a disruptor for positive change. An inspirational legacy that remains relevant today. ■

—Priya Pathiyani



FESTIVAL ▶ Peace to the World

THE GLOBAL PEACE PRAYER FESTIVAL IN THIMPHU IS BRINGING TOGETHER AN UNPARALLELED ASSEMBLY OF EMINENT LAMAS FROM ALL SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM FOR THE HEALING OF HUMANITY

In a world riddled with strife, comes an immersive celebration of hope. From November 4 to 19, Bhutan's capital Thimphu will host the Global Peace Prayer Festival (GPPF), an event envisioned by His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the King of Bhutan, himself. The multidimensional event is being organised by the Bhutan government and is co-funded by the Indian government.

The first seven days of the festival will see two profound ceremonies occur simultaneously: the Global Peace Prayer, comprising

non-sectarian Vajrayana prayers, and the large-scale Jabzhi Dhoechog ritual, which combines peaceful offerings with wrathful protection to cleanse and purify negative karma. More than 80 spiritual leaders will grace the Global Peace Prayer. November 12-14 will see the Kalachakra Initiation & Empowerment, a three-day initiation offering 'profound insights into the sacred interplay between the individual and the cosmos'.

His Holiness the Je Khenpo, the Supreme

Spiritual Leader of Bhutan and the head of the Central Monastic Body (Zhung Dratshang), will preside over the first day of the Global Peace Prayer (Nov. 4) and all three days (Nov. 12-14) of the Kalachakra initiation. "When the Je Khenpo personally leads a major religious ceremony, it signifies the utmost sanctity and national importance of the event," says Yangchen C. Rinzin, media lead, GPPF.

While the main events—the Global Peace Prayer and the Kalachakra initiation—will take place at the Changlimithang Ground, where a 12-foot-tall pavilion is being constructed to accommodate over 20,000 people, the Jabzhi Dhoechog will be held at Kuenselphodrang, the sacred site from where the Great Buddha Dordenma watches over Thimphu.

The Jabzhi Dhoechog, literally "the Grand Offering of the Fourfold Tantra", is among the most elaborate and esoteric tantric ceremonies of the Vajrayana tradition. "What makes it special is that it encompasses the complete tantric cycle

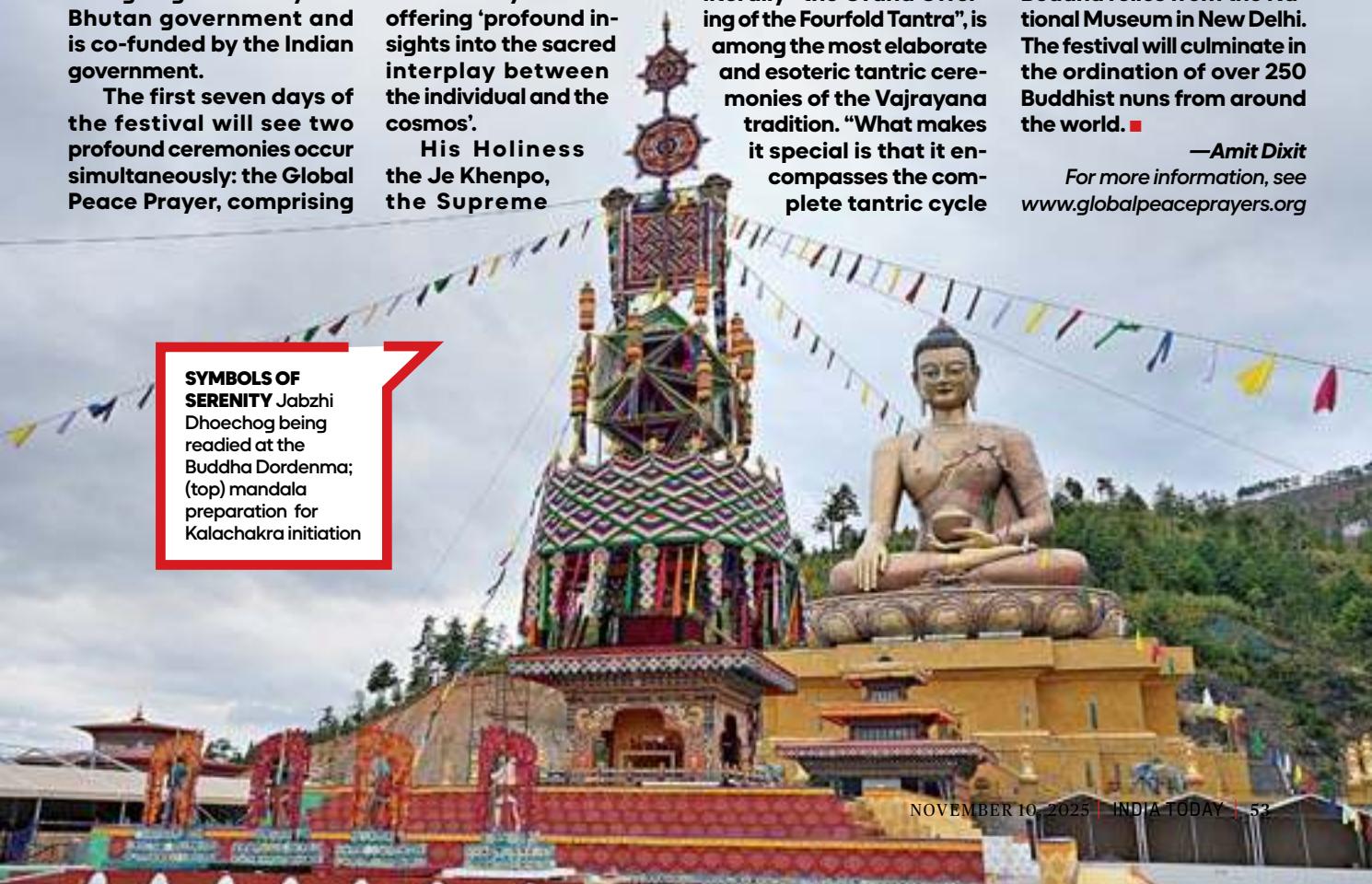
of transformation, integrating multiple deities, mandalas and ritual systems into a single vast liturgical performance," explains Rinzin. It's rarely performed owing to its complexity, which requires ritual experts. "The full seven-day ceremony also demands a large number of monks and substantial resources. Moreover, it can only be conducted by those who have received direct empowerment and instruction within the strict transmission lineage," adds Rinzin.

Open to all, GPPF also features side events showcasing Bhutan's spiritual, artistic and community traditions, including sacred relic exhibitions, mask dances, live demonstrations of the 13 Traditional Arts, and even eco-treks, yoga sessions and pilgrimage walks to sacred sites. There will also be an exhibition of sacred Buddha relics from the National Museum in New Delhi. The festival will culminate in the ordination of over 250 Buddhist nuns from around the world. ■

—Amit Dixit

For more information, see www.globalpeaceprayers.org

SYMBOLS OF SERENITY Jabzhi Dhoechog being readied at the Buddha Dordenma; (top) mandala preparation for Kalachakra initiation



ANCIENT WORDS, MODERN RHYTHMS

Bengaluru musician **Bruce Lee Mani** and singer-actor **M.D. Pallavi** bring 12th-century Vachanas to life in *Kayakave Kailasa*, a soulful fusion of poetry, philosophy and contemporary sound

Bruce Lee Mani, guitarist and vocalist of Bengaluru rock band Thermal And A Quarter, explores new creative ground with Kayaka—a collaborative project with singer and actor M.D. Pallavi that reimagines 12th-century Vachanas in a contemporary soundscape.

IMPROPTU CREATIVITY

Bruce and Pallavi's musical project Kayaka began as a jam session for a university podcast



THE LISTICLE

Upcoming musical performances you should not miss



▼ NOV. 9 | Plenary Hall, Bharat Mandapam, NEW DELHI

India Dream: Niladri Kumar

Following its acclaimed Mumbai premiere, *India Dream* arrives in Delhi with a visionary concert by sitar maestro Niladri Kumar. Blending ancient ragas with modern expression, the production explores India's vast musical heritage, from its spiritual roots to contemporary innovation. Featuring exceptional guest artists and Kumar's signature electric Zitar, this immersive performance redefines Indian classical music for the modern age. Expect a mesmerising journey of sound, emotion and discovery, celebrating India's musical soul.

▼ NOV. 1 | Phoenix Marketcity, Whitefield, **BENGALURU**

KAILASH KHER & KAILASA LIVE

Experience the raw energy and soul-stirring voice of Kailash Kher as he performs timeless hits like 'Teri Deewani' and 'Allah Ke Bande'. With his band Kailasa, Kher's earthy vocals and poetic lyrics promise an unforgettable night that celebrates India's spirit through melody, rhythm and emotion.



"The idea really began at the Azim Premji Foundation, with whom I have been associated for about two and a half years, scoring music for their podcasts. They focus on promoting constitutional values like unity, equality and social justice. The Vachanas, which were part of the Bhakti movement, resonate deeply with these principles," he shares. "For our Thermal And A Quarter projects, we have always tried to create socially relevant music, so this collaboration felt like a natural extension of that."

What began as an improvised jam session for a university podcast soon evolved into a full-fledged musical project. "Pallavi and I just sat in a seminar hall, put two mics, and recorded her singing while I accompanied her on the acoustic guitar. It was spontaneous—and it just clicked," he recalls. "That initial jam turned into something bigger and just kept grow-

ing. Now, it has evolved into a project that we both really believe in, and we even have our own band."

Blending ancient poetry with modern sound has been both organic and experimental for the two artistes. As Bruce points out, "Pallavi comes from a Hindustani classical and folk background, while I come from rock, blues and jazz. When our worlds meet, something different happens—the sound naturally becomes something fresh and hybrid—not pure classical, not rock, but a fusion of both our journeys."

Reflecting on why these centuries-old voices matter today, Bruce says, "We are living in strange times—the pace of change is dizzying, and not always for the better. Power seems to be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, and that's worrying. Compassionate, honest and kind voices feel necessary again. The Vachanas reflect that—they remind us of equality, compassion and justice."

Kayaka's album *Kayakave Kailasa* launched on October 31 at the Indian Heritage Academy, Bengaluru, and a digital release will follow later this year. The album currently features eight tracks—four full-band and three acoustic—with about 60 minutes performed live. "We're not chasing grand outcomes. We're just enjoying the process—and if our work moves someone along the way, that's more than enough," says Bruce. ■

—Deepa Natarajan Lobo



▼ NOV. 16 | The Grand Theatre, NMACC, MUMBAI

TONY ANN LIVE

Global piano sensation Tony Ann brings his extraordinary artistry to India for one night only. Famed for his viral performances and innovative compositions, the Canadian-born pianist fuses emotion, technique and storytelling in a way that transcends genre. With over a billion online views and sold-out concerts worldwide, Tony Ann reimagines classical music for a new generation.

▼ NOV. 21-23 | Tata Theatre, NCPA, MUMBAI

NCPA INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL 2025

The festival returns with a three-day line-up celebrating the diversity of jazz. Opening with the soulful Peter Cincotti, the weekend continues with the captivating bassist Nicki Parrot, the electrifying Mike Stern Band featuring Dennis Chambers, and concludes with the virtuoso bassist Brian Bromberg.



▼ NOV. 8 | World Street, Downtown Omaxe, NEW CHANDIGARH

Sonu Nigam Live in Concert

Join legendary playback singer Sonu Nigam for an evening of nostalgia, romance and electrifying energy. Known for his unparalleled vocal range and charm, Nigam will perform his greatest Bollywood hits—from heartfelt ballads to energetic anthems—with a live orchestra that brings every note to life.



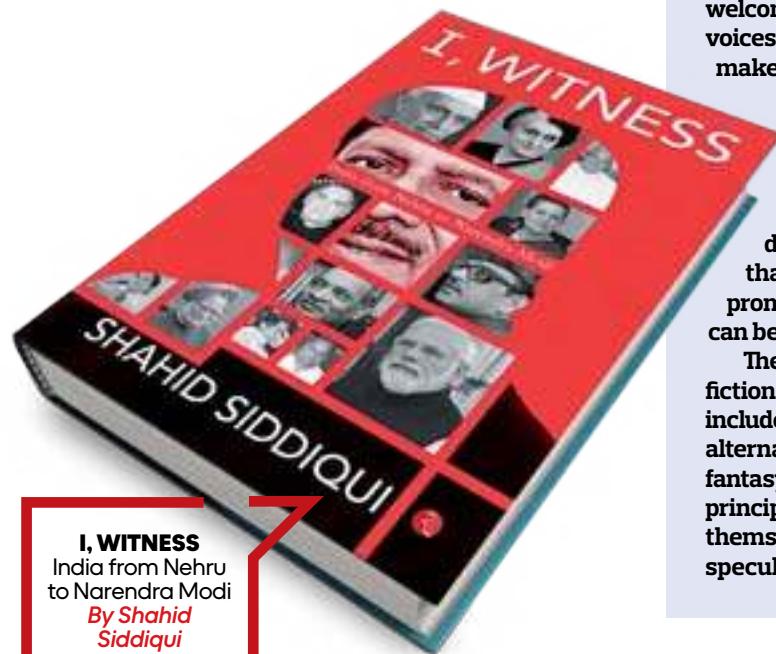
—Compiled by Nikhil Sardana

IN THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

IN *I, WITNESS*, VETERAN JOURNALIST SHAHID SIDDIQUI RECOUNTS FIVE DECADES OF INDIAN POLITICS WITH CANDOUR

I, *Witness* is a racy read, full of anecdotes, gossip, events and perspectives, as Shahid Siddiqui, editor of Urdu weekly *Nai Duniya*, saw it. He is the quintessential Dil-iliwala, born in Ballimaran, old Delhi, in post-Partition India. As a six-year-old, he is taken to meet Jawaharlal Nehru by his father, referred to as Abba, a Deoband maulana who would become an influential editor and later be jailed during the 1975 Emergency. The grown-up Shahid Siddiqui would be both journalist and part-time politician, who would interview all Indian prime ministers from Indira Gandhi to Narendra Modi—and be expelled from the Samajwadi Party for speaking to the then Gujarat chief minister.

It's as if the author sat the reader down and shared the story of regimes past through anecdotes and impressions. Besides the principal characters of the past 50 years in Indian politics, tantriks, arms dealers, fixers and operators appear. On pages 104-106, for instance, he writes about Indira Gandhi becoming superstitious in the post-Emergency Janata Party years: a Swami Dhirendra Brahmachari was apparently performing tantric rituals for her, while a Maulana Ilyasi,



I, WITNESS
India from Nehru to Narendra Modi
By Shahid Siddiqui
RUPA
₹795; 448 pages

who had occupied a mosque in Lutyens' Delhi, accompanied her to the tomb of Sufi saint Bakhtiyar Kaki in Mehrauli, where she performed rituals through the night. Ilyasi tells Siddiqui that one of the rituals involved slaying a *kaddu* (pumpkin) that symbolised slaying her opponents—who would soon collapse anyway.

Besides such hilarious anecdotes, the section describing the demolitions in Delhi during the Emergency are a reminder that bulldozers did not start moving yesterday.

Again, preceding the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992, the author is part of the Muslim worthies whom the Narasimha Rao regime is consulting. He believes the prime minister deliberately went incommunicado while the mosque fell—because he hoped to subsequently win Hindu support. Likewise, Siddiqui has a poor view of another prime minister—V.P. Singh—whom he believes implemented the Mandal Commission report as a tactic to survive and did not really want to stop the Ram Rath Yatra of Lal Krishna Advani.

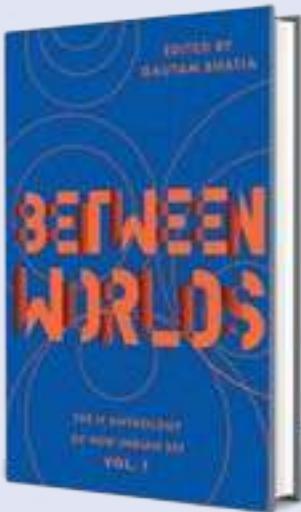
There are suggestions

The charming USP of the Indian speculative fiction anthology *Between Worlds Vol. 1* is that half the writers are debut authors. SF author Gautam Bhatia edited the collection from open submissions. This welcome faith in fresh voices is also what makes the collection wobbly; some of the stories display the amateur's fumbling in the dark. Good then that a sequel is promised, where much can be improved.

The speculative fiction suprarene includes science fiction, alternate history, fantasy, et al. The first principles of reality themselves become speculative. So most of

that there were powerful forces behind the deaths of Sanjay Gandhi in a plane crash and Rajiv Gandhi in a suicide assassination. Fingers are pointed at foreign powers and arms dealers. How he got the famous interview with Narendra Modi is also there, but Siddiqui's descriptions of the Congress years is the really racy part. If there is one figure he truly loathes, it is former congressman Arun Nehru, whom he blames for overturning the Shah Bano judgment and opening the locks of the Babri mosque. ■

—Saba Naqvi



BOOKS ▼

Brave New World

Edited by Gautam Bhatia, Between Worlds
Vol. 1 gathers young, first-time authors in a bold anthology that reimagines Indian speculative fiction

these stories have strong hooks.

Ajay Patri's 'The Last Projectionist' is a banger opener. It is an oral history of one Jayalakshmi, who can mentally project moving images in early 20th century British India. I chuckled at the writer's irreverence: there's a 1930s Englishman called Captain Russell (remember *Lagaan*?), a film critic Shubhra Joshi, surely a portmanteau of real-life critics Shubhra Gupta and Namrata Joshi, and deliberately tacky

British dialogue including "blimey" and "shite".

Frank Herbert and Ursula K. Le Guin's stamps are all over Prashanth Srivatsa's 'Muniyamma', as is Margaret Atwood's in Priyamvada Shivaji's 'Sudden Showers'. The former follows a robot with memories of an Indian midwife who helps birth rebel leaders on the planet Peranda. The latter is a coming-of-age tale in a post-apocalyptic scenario where the sea disappears. These stories, and some such as 'Dilli',

'Circa 50 N.E.', begin with promise and potential.

Unsurprisingly, the collection has a melancholic, wistful mood, even when the settings differ—post-apocalyptic rain, lunar gardens, Delhi under corporate rule. What's missing are sharper tonal contrasts: satire, playfulness, grotesque excess, or even outright horror.

Sometimes, there's tactile vividness in the prose ('A Rough-edged Confection', 'We Are All Mayflies'), but the serviceable English in most of them doesn't fully capture the strangeness of the ideas. From Vol. 2, I expect more stylistic daring, as seen in the recent *The Blaft Book of Anti-Caste SF*, that fulfills the promise of the speculative premises. ■

—Devarsi Ghosh

BETWEEN WORLDS

The IF Anthology of New Indian SF, Vol. 1
Edited by Gautam Bhatia

WESTLAND/IF
₹599; 272 pages

BOOKS ▼

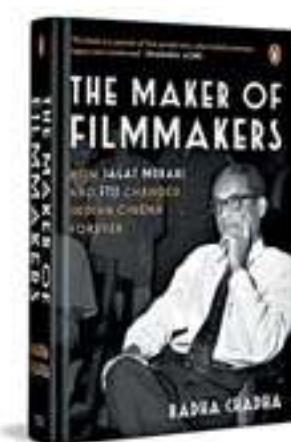
FATHERING FILMS

Radha Chadha's *The Maker of Filmmakers*
recounts Jagat Murari's seminal role in Indian cinema

How did a master's degree holder in physics become one of the most pertinent figures of Indian cinema in the immediate aftermath of the country's independence? Radha Chadha's account of Jagat Murari, principal of Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) from 1961 to 1971, a filmmaker with a prolific stint at the government's Films Division, the official entrusted to start the

National Film Archive of India—and, coincidentally, Chadha's father—is about the rise and rise and subsequent fall of a man who spent a sizeable chunk of his life battling red tape to lay the foundation of FTII, still considered India's leading filmmaking institute.

Though this is a daughter's account of her father's long—and at times fun, but mostly fraught—journey, the book is surprisingly



THE MAKER OF FILMMAKERS
How Jagat Murari and FTII changed Indian cinema forever
By Radha Chadha
PENGUIN
₹1,299; 536 pages

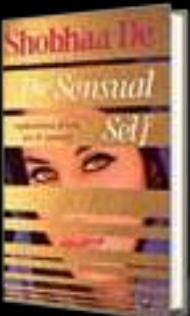
low on personal details about the man. Instead, Murari comes across as someone consumed with the multiple roles that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting assigned to him. The book reads like a narration of how FTII came to be and its many achievements during Murari's years, and how the problems it wrestles with to this day—regular strikes, for one—came to be. Where Chadha's book works is as a nostalgia ride for cinephiles yearning for the 'good old days' of Indian cinema and more so as a mirror on how little things have changed when it comes to bureaucratic interference in educational institutions. ■

—Suhani Singh

RECLAIMING ROMANCE

In her latest book, The Sensual Self, Shobhaa Dé dives deep into love, desire and intimacy with trademark honesty

Photograph by MANDAR DEODHAR



THE SENSUAL SELF:
Explorations of Love,
Sex & Romance
By Shobhaa Dé

ALEPH BOOK COMPANY
₹599; 232 pages

Q. In your new book, you say women shouldn't settle for routine 'dal-chawal' sex and men need to "put in more effort". What keeps so many people—especially women—hesitant about exploring their desires?

A woman risks losing her partner if she articulates her sexual needs, or voices disappointment in bed. Men definitely need to wake up and smell the ittar.

Q. Has India become more open about discussing sex, or are we still trapped in hypocrisy and double standards?

There has been a radical change in India. Sex is no longer a dirty word. Conversations around it are far more candid. But double standards and hypocrisy still exist. 'Dudes' can enjoy sex anywhere, anytime, with anyone. No questions asked. That's not so with young girls who want the same freedom.

Q. Today's landscape of love is crowded with 'sitationships' that blur traditional notions of commitment. How do you see people—especially women—navigating this new vocabulary of intimacy?

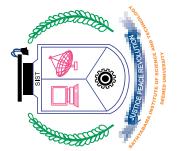
Women need to learn a thing or two about sensuality from their naanis and daadis. The new vocabulary is a bit too businesslike, stripped of magic, uncertainty and romance. Banking over bonking is the new mood-board out there.

Q. You've always written with remarkable candour about subjects many tiptoe around. Was *The Sensual Self* a more personal reckoning with your own sensuality?

It was one of the toughest books I have written. The personal perspective was essential since it spoke about universal truths, but in a real, felt way. I wanted readers to identify with the sensual experiences narrated.

—with Amit Dixit

Empowering Minds Enriching Futures



SATHYABAMA

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
CATEGORY - I UNIVERSITY BY UGC
CHENNAI • SRIPERUMBUDUR

250+ MOUs signed
 450+ Patents
 250+ Awards

50+ UG Programmes
25+ PG Programmes
 Ph.D Programmes

Top 800 Universities
in the world by Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, 2024

20000+ Publications Indexed in Scopus and WoS

Ranked 706th
among Global Institutions
 Ranked 20th
among 78 Indian Institutions
Sustainability Rankings 2025

23 Research Centres

EXCELLENT
5 Stars Ratings by QS

75+ International Collaborations



2025 Batch
Placement Statistics
(as on October 6, 2025)

460+ Esteemed Recruiters | **3833+** Placement Offers | **850+** Dream Offers | **100+** Super Dream Offers | **100+** Startups Incubated

FOR ADMISSIONS, CONTACT: +91 99400 58263 | 044 2450 3830 / 31 / 32 / 33 / 34 TOLL-FREE NUMBER: 1800 425 1770

ENGINEERING | ARCHITECTURE | MANAGEMENT | ARTS & SCIENCE | LAW | DENTAL | PHARMACY | NURSING | PHYSIOTHERAPY | EDUCATION

© Chennai · Sripurumbudur www.sathyabama.ac.in SathyabamaOfficial @sathyabamaofficial





Haq, ek behtar zindagi ka.

An expert in your profession. Why not in investments?



Start an SIP today

Power of compounding | Instills financial discipline

SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) is a feature offered for disciplined investment planning of a certain amount on a pre-decided date in a specific mutual fund scheme, regularly over a period of time.

Women in India have doubled their participation in mutual funds with 100% year-on-year growth.*
You can too. Investing today, to secure your tomorrow.

*Source: CNBCTV18

To know more, contact a MFD/RIA/AMC or give a missed call on 8655097225.

**UTI SWATANTRA®
India Invest Karo®**

An investor education & awareness initiative of UTI Mutual Fund. To know about the KYC documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc. please visit <https://www.utimf.com/servicerequest/kyc>. Please deal with only registered mutual funds, details of which can be verified on the SEBI website under "Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions." All complaints regarding UTI Mutual Fund can be directed towards service@uti.co.in and/or visit <https://scores.sebi.gov.in> (SEBI SCORES portal), or to escalate, investors may visit <https://smartodr.in/> Online Dispute Resolution Portal (ODR Portal).



Scan here to
know more

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.