

BJP'S NEW GAME PLAN FOR  
UTTAR PRADESH



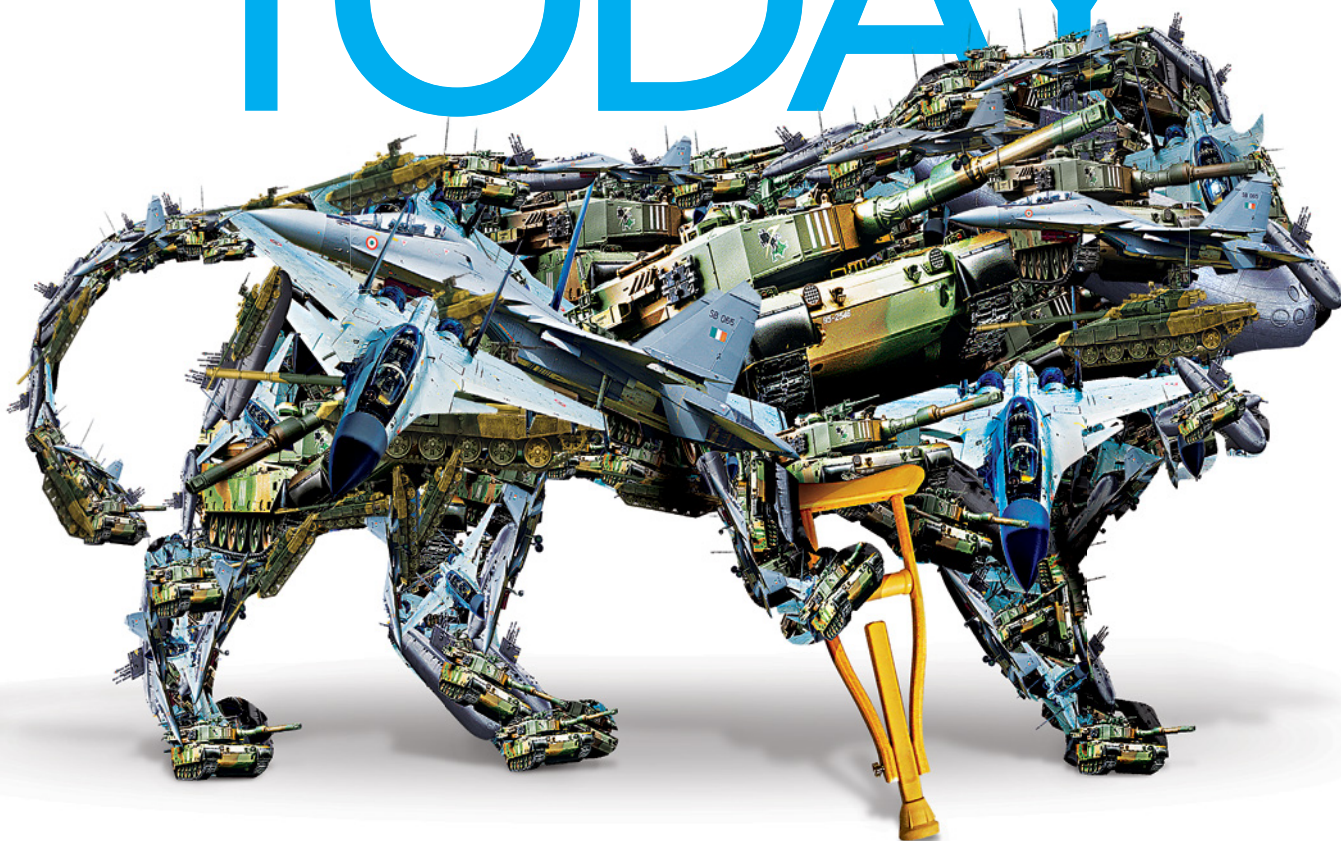
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# INDIA TODAY



DEFENCE

## UNMADE IN INDIA

HOW POLICY PARALYSIS AND BABUDOM HAVE CRIPPLED  
THE INITIATIVE TO INDIGENOUSLY MANUFACTURE MUCH  
OF INDIA'S \$100 BILLION ARMS REQUIREMENT

PLUS: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH  
DEFENCE MINISTER MANOHAR PARRIKAR

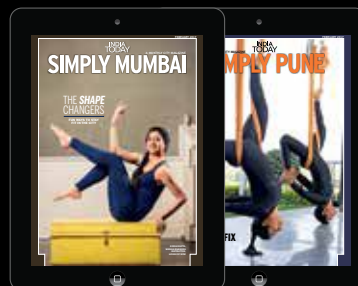
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**Volume XLII Number 10: For the week**

**Feb 28-March 6, 2017, published on every Friday**

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• Subscriptions: For assistance contact Customer Care India Today Group, B-45, Sector-37, Noida (UP)-201301; Phone: Toll-free number: 1800 1800 100 (from BSNL/MTNL lines); (95120) 2479900 from Delhi and Faridabad; (0120) 2479900 from Rest of India; (Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.); Fax: (0120) 4078080; Mumbai: 022-6063411/1412, Kolkata: 033-40525327, Chennai: 044-24303200; e-mail: [ircare@indiatoday.com](mailto:ircare@indiatoday.com)  
• Sales: Direct all trade enquiries to General Manager (Sales), Living Media India Limited, B-45, Sector 37, Noida-201301 (UP)  
• Regd. Office: K-9 Connaught Circus, 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: 66063355; Fax: 66063226 • E-1, Ground Floor, Videocon Towers, Jhandewalan Extn, New Delhi • Guna Complex, 5th Floor, Main Building, No.443, Anna Salai, Chennai-600018; Phone: 2847 8525 • 201-204 Richmond Towers, 2nd Floor, 12, Richmond Road, Bangalore-560025; Phones: 22212448, 22213037, 22218343; Fax: 22218335; • 52, Jawahar Nehru Road, 4th Floor, Kolkata-700071; Phones: 22825398; Fax: 22827254; • 6-3-885/7B, Somajiguda, Hyderabad-500082; Phone: 23401657, 23400479, 23401000, 23402481, 23410982, 23411498; Fax: 23403484 • 39/1045, Karakkatt Road, Kochi 682016; Phones: 2377057, 2377058; Fax: 2377059 • 2/C, "Suryarath Bldg", 2nd Floor, Behind White House, Panchwati, 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.  
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FROM THE

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF


**M**ake in India was one of the key planks of Narendra Modi's governance agenda and was announced with great fanfare. The programme was intended to revive manufacturing in India, currently a mere 16 per cent, to an ambitious 25 per cent of the GDP and provide much-needed jobs. The lynchpin of this was the indigenisation of defence manufacturing, which would also reduce India's dependence on defence imports. It seemed eminently doable. The government was the sole customer and the needs well-known. It was a commendable plan as the defence industrial complex has, in many countries like the US and Russia, provided a stabilising economic foundation and supported pioneering research and transformative technologies, from semiconductors to the Internet. Given that India has the world's third largest military and the sixth largest spend on defence, it would have done the same for us. In addition, there is the major benefit of substituting our defence imports, which account for nearly 60 per cent of our military hardware. India has emerged as the world's largest arms importer, accounting for 13 per cent of all global arms sales between 2012 and 2016.

Our cover story this week examines the reasons for the Modi government's poor record at rebuilding defence production despite seemingly liberal measures such as opening up the defence sector to FDI of 49 per cent and above in certain cases, introducing a specific category to promote indigenous manufacture, and roping in the private sector. Despite these noble intentions, the effort has been a dismal failure. What was not accounted for was classic bureaucratic lethargy, deliberate or congenital. The proverbial kiss of death of government undertakings has contributed to the mess. Defence public sector units are an elephantine complex, consisting of eight companies, 41 ordnance factories, 52

research labs and employing 200,000 people. Despite this massive infrastructure, they are unable to meet the needs of the armed forces. The problem is, they are inefficient—the defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs) have an average labour productivity of around \$67,000 that is one-fifth the \$370,000 average of the world's top five arms producing companies. That's not all. Most of the equipment produced by DPSUs is under licence from foreign firms.

Although a defence ministry task force recommended strategic partnerships with private players in 2016, it is yet to approve the policy change. Strategic partnerships call for creation of joint venture concerns between private sector firms and foreign partners which, with the involvement of major industrial houses, could well fill the enormous gap between demand and supply. Especially, as over the next decade, the armed forces need at least 400 fighter jets and 800 to 1,000 helicopters, according to Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar's own admission. Sadly, as he tells Executive Editor Sandeep Unnithan in an exclusive interview, he is not willing to sacrifice the public sector for it. As Unnithan notes, one of the cornerstones of ISRO's success has been the involvement of the private sector in building rockets and the creation of a large vendor base that supplies key components for its space programme. Both are missing when it comes to defence production.

In 1995, the A.P.J. Abdul Kalam committee had said India needs to make 70 per cent indigenous content by 2005. Parrikar says we can achieve 60 per cent by 2019. Yes, transformations are possible. China, the world's largest arms importer a decade ago, is today the world's third largest arms exporter. Despite the clear direction given by the prime minister, it's a pity one of his flagship schemes has floundered. Its success would have yielded rich dividends for the country.

  
(Aroon Purie)

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Cover by **NILANJAN DAS**



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JAMMU & KASHMIR

## SHOOTING FROM THE LIP

By Asit Jolly

February 17 was the first Friday in many weeks when Kashmir's Hurriyat separatists called for a shutdown. In a relative state of hibernation since the Durbār move (bi-annual relocation of the state government between Srinagar and Jammu) in October, after the violent summer of 2016, the Kashmir Valley may have just been primed for an even more frenzied 2017 by a comment from new army chief Gen. Bipin Rawat. The Friday prayers in Nowhata in downtown Srinagar and other parts of the Valley were followed by stone-pelting protests. Youngsters, some with faces masked, defied security personnel to open fire, daring the General to execute his threat.

बिपिन रावत  
BIPIN RAWAT

BANDEEP SINGH



Two days earlier, angered by the death of four soldiers, including Rashtriya Rifles officer Maj. Satish Dahiya, Gen. Rawat had threatened reprisals after stone-throwing village youth tried to interfere during an encounter with armed militants. “People who have picked up arms... and they are the local boys, if they want to continue with the acts of terrorism—displaying flags of ISIS and Pakistan—we will treat them as anti-national elements and go helter-skelter for them. They may survive today, but we will get them tomorrow,” he said after paying his respects to the fallen soldiers alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi.

Not only did the army chief threaten to treat protesting civilians like terrorists, he unwittingly articulated the first official acknowledgement that Kashmiris were alienated from India. “We find that the local population is somehow not supportive of the actions of the security forces,” Gen. Rawat said. “While our aim has been to conduct people-friendly operations, the manner in which the local population is preventing us from conducting the operations, at times even supporting the terrorists to escape...”

## The defence minister said the local army commanders were free to decide how to act against terrorists in J&K

enaging youth rather than engaging them politically” will cause further alienation and only fuel militancy. Moderate Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq said Gen. Rawat’s words reflected “the tyrannical mindset towards the people of Kashmir”.

Delhi did little to allay such assertions. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, on February 17, stressed the army’s local commanders had complete freedom to decide how to act against insurgents and terrorists in J&K. MoS Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju endorsed the army chief’s position in calling for action against stone-throwers. And that very afternoon, Jitendra Singh, junior minister in the Prime Minister’s Office, stood up to back the army chief. “He (Gen. Rawat) is worried that innocent people may end up as collateral damage,” Singh said.

Many would argue that after being forced to live under the shadow of the gun for close to three decades, young Kashmiris protest with good reason. And Gen. Rawat, by suggesting they’ll be taken down like jihadists, is lending a further edge to that sense of alienation. ■



VIVEK MENON

CONFLICT

## Can’t Bell This Cat

PTI



The tiger tried to charge once again at the elephants and, in a failed attempt, returned to the thick vegetation... The two trained elephants charged back at the tiger, trumpeting, roaring and running seemingly at will against the *mahout’s* control. My heart skipped a beat when the tiger strode past with its mouth barely a foot away from my leg.” Aaron Wesley, the Wildlife Trust of India veterinarian on call at Pilibhit, recounts yet another day in the life of a rapid response team member.

“Not many of you have heard the blood-curdling roars of wild tigers at close range. Most people are scared witless at the menacing sound.” Colonel John H. Roush’s introduction to *Hunting Dangerous Game with the Maharajas* is as relevant in India today as it was when men shot tigers for sport. The tiger Wesley, sociologist Prem Pandey and two forest officials had tracked had killed four men, a woman and a child in two-and-a-half months in just one forest patch. It was saved from being lynched by a mob, tranquilised and taken into captivity.

Three things strike me. One, this is by no means an isolated incident in today’s India. There are leopards outside Delhi and Meerut, tigers in Maharashtra’s Chandrapur and Wayanad in Kerala. In and around Dudhwa and Pilibhit alone, there have been 44 cases in the past five years. Two, tigers and leopards are big cats. If you understand big cat ecology, the irony of declaring a reserve and expecting the animal to sit inside it strikes home. It is as useless as expecting your tabby at home to not wander, come night, spray a territorial scent or two at bushes and lamp posts and scout the neigh-

bourhood for prospective mates. To keep a big cat's wild roaming instincts at bay within man-made boundaries is a plan fraught with disappointment.

Three, most of these cases are a result of the success of big-cat conservation, not its failure. Large animals need space and big cats are moving out of protected areas, seeking new territories. Unfortunately, they are surrounded by people and farms, roads and railway lines. Big cat meets angry people and one or both are in danger. Short-term solutions include primary and rapid response teams and immediate care of the animal coming out. Long-term solutions will have to include planning on use of land that sets aside enough area and prey to sustain these majestic denizens of our forests. ■

*The writer is a conservationist, author and CEO of the Wildlife Trust of India*

#### PULLQUOTE

**“Ramzan mein bijli aati hai, toh Diwali mein bhi aani chahiye... gaon mein kabristan banta hai toh shamshaan bhi banana chahiye”**



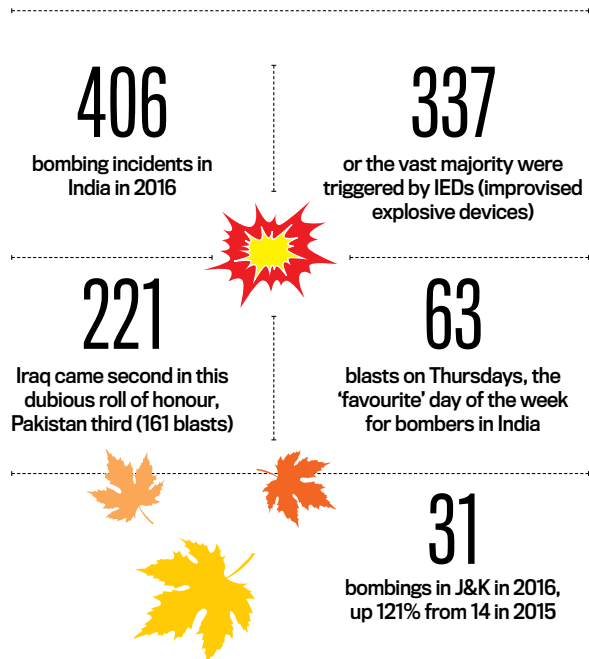
Speaking in Fatehpur, **NARENDRA MODI** was ostensibly pitching for equal state benefits for Hindus and Muslims in SP-ruled Uttar Pradesh. Modi, however, offered no evidence that power distribution in the state was being determined on the basis of religion or that the Hindu dead were neglected in favour of their Muslim counterparts. A livid Opposition is now asking if the Election Commission shouldn't sit up and take notice

#### INDEX

## Blast Capital

Remarkably, given what is happening in Syria and Iraq, a recently released report by the National Bomb Data Centre, which operates within the National Security Guard, reveals that there are **more bombings in India than anywhere else in the world.**

The data, says the report, has been compiled from police records. What is not clear from the report is the number of casualties suffered in the bombings and how this compares with some of the world's more notorious hotspots, say Afghanistan or Egypt.



#### CROSSFIRE

## STALE CORNY ASININE MUNDANE

**T**he real SCAM is the level of discourse to which UP's voters are being subjected in this election, which is turning tawdry with parties appealing to baser, atavistic instincts. Time to recall the silly acronyms doing the rounds.

SCAM means Samajwadi, Congress, Akhilesh and Mayawati, said PM Narendra Modi in Meerut on February 4, thrilled with his cleverness. Actually, countered Rahul Gandhi, in Kanpur a day later, "Scam means Seva, Courage, Ability and Modesty". A lame comeback, only slightly bettered by his ally Akhilesh Yadav: "SCAM means, Save the Country from Amit Shah, Modi."

By now, Modi had turned his sights on Mayawati. Accusing her of depositing Rs 100 crore in bank accounts after demonetisation, he said on February 20, "The



BSP is no longer Bahujan Samaj Party, it is Behenji Sampatti Party." Mayawati's counter: "Narendra Damodardas Modi means Negative Dalit Man." Credit where it's due, she has come up with the worst superhero name ever. The party slogans are models of genial wit. "Sab bolo dil se, Akhilesh bhaigya phir se", the SP urges voters. "Do baatein kabhi na bhool" is the BJP's rather wistful retort, "Narendra Modi aur kamal ka phool". Perhaps Mayawati, so often underestimated in this poll, should have the final say: "Kamal, cycle, panja hoga kinare, UP chalega haathi ke saharey". ■

BSP

# EASTERN PROMISES

By Ashish Misra

**W**ith an eye on the fourth phase of the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections on February 23, Nasimuddin Siddiqui, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) general secretary and a campaigner second only to party chief Mayawati, set up camp in Bundelkhand. He was indefatigable, speaking at rallies in every assembly constituency.

On February 20, three days before the voting in 12 districts, Siddiqui was in the Fatehpur Sadar constituency, one of the six in Fatehpur district. At noon, he arrived at a bus station where a rally would soon get under way. He gave a speech, wielding the Justice R.D. Nimesh Commission report that showed discrepancies in the arrests and evidence against suspected Muslim 'terrorists'. Siddiqui said the Samajwadi Party government accepted the report's recommendations in 2013, but failed to act on them. "Have any innocent Muslim youths been released from jail by the SP?" he asked. "No," roared the crowd.

The report, he continued, called for punishing officers who'd conspired to send innocent Muslim youth to jail on fake charges. "Has the government punished a single officer?"—Nasimuddin delivered the same charged address at rallies in other constituencies in the

district. UP demographics—whatever the Election Commission or Supreme Court might define it as—means it invariably comes down to parties appealing to prejudice to cobble together majorities. The BSP believes there is a gap it can exploit, that its coalition of Dalits and Muslims has genuine appeal and that it can attack the SP on its failure to deliver on its promises to Muslims.

"In the first three phases," Siddiqui asserts, "the BSP received huge support, particularly from Muslims." Mayawati has placed considerable faith in Siddiqui, making him responsible for the campaign in Bundelkhand, following which he will move east. Other party stalwarts like Satish Misra, Dinesh

Chandra, and state president Ram Achal Rajbhar too have specific community-based responsibilities. "In eastern UP," Rajbhar claims, "all the constituencies have 50,000 to 1 lakh supporters from the Dalit and OBC communities. Now, with the Muslims on our side, our chances are bright in the east."

Pasmanda Muslims, the so-called 'backward' Muslims, are crucial to the

**PASMANDA MUSLIMS, THE SO-CALLED 'BACKWARD' MUSLIMS, ARE VITAL TO THE BSP'S PLANS**

BSP's strategy. Mohamad Sajjad, a professor at Aligarh Muslim University, says, "Pasmanda Muslims are devout followers of the maulanas. So it was a strategic masterstroke for the BSP to secure the support of Syed Ahmad Bukhari, Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid in Delhi." Then there is the faith Mayawati has shown in alleged gangster Mukhtar Ansari, whose Quami Ekta Dal, now merged with the BSP, enjoys significant support in areas in which the party won only six out of a possible 40 seats in the last assembly polls. With several opinion polls suggesting a dead heat, a triangular race, Mayawati knows she needs eastern UP more than ever to make a return to the chief minister's chair. ■

MANEESH AGNIHOTRI



▶ TAP TO WATCH VIDEO

▲ **JUMBO RIDE** BSP's Nasimuddin Siddiqui at a rally in Hasua Fatehpur, Feb 20



NAGALAND

# NAGA POWER PLAY

By Kaushik Deka



## < THE NEW BOSS

Nagaland CM Shurhozelie Liezietsu (seated), with senior members of the NPF

# 48

OF 60

The number of Assembly seats held by the Nagaland People's Front

**N**eiphiu Rio, former Nagaland chief minister and sole Lok Sabha member from the Naga People's Front (NPF), had a dream. He wanted to be CM again. He had already served three consecutive terms, quitting in 2014 because he thought he had a shot at becoming a cabinet minister. At the time, NPF leader T.R. Zeliang had eagerly stepped in to fill the vacated post. But though Rio was elected to Parliament, he was overlooked for a cabinet post.

With Zeliang forced to resign in February this year—after Nagaland was riven by protests against his decision to implement 33 per cent reservations for women in civic elections—Rio became the obvious favourite. But in a byzantine turn of events, NPF president Shurhozelie Liezietsu was sworn in as Nagaland's 11th chief minister on February 22 instead, highlighting the BJP's role as kingmaker in the state.

The story goes back to at least last year. In May 2016, Rio was suspended

from the NPF for 'anti-party activities'; specifically, scheming to become chief minister again, at the expense of Zeliang. That was a significant setback, but when the Nagaland Tribes Action Committee (NTAC) and Joint Coordination Committee shut down the entire state before the February 1 urban local bodies polls, Rio knew he had his chance. The NTAC announced that it would not relent until Zeliang stepped down; it was probably not a coincidence that a key member of the group was closely associated with Rio.

That was when the BJP intervened. Though it has only four legislators in

**LIEZIETSU'S RISE  
IN A BIZARRE  
TURN OF EVENTS  
UNDERScores  
THE BJP'S ROLE AS  
KINGMAKER**

the opposition-less Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) coalition government—the NPF is the major constituent with 48 legislators—it wields considerable influence. On February 17, under pressure from NTAC, 39 NPF MLAs had asked Zeliang to step down. He flew to Delhi and had a closed-door meeting with BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav. The BJP had to be careful not to alienate Rio given his rapport with National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) leaders. And so, Madhav arranged a meeting between Rio and Zeliang, and a deal was struck, in which Zeliang would become finance minister in a new Rio government.

However, the deal fell through. The NSCN (I-M)'s economic blockade of Manipur had become an insupportable problem for the BJP's brass, hurting the party's chances in state elections beginning March 4. And in the end, it was Rio's earlier suspension that settled matters. Enter Liezietsu, with a rather unceremonious exit for Rio. ■

## AVIATION

# IS IT A BIRD... IS IT A PLANE?

By Uday Mahurkar

SHEKHAR GHOSH



## FREE BIRD

A gyroplane in Gurgaon

**G**yrocopters—a combination of a helicopter and a plane—will soon make their debut in Indian skies. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is in the final stages of putting together the necessary regulation, but the aircraft, also known as gyroplanes or autogyros, are already in use in other parts of the world, including the US, China, Germany and Australia. Celier Aviation, a Polish company, currently leads the race to market these vehicles in India.

Celier's gyrocopters—marketed in India by subsidiary Gyrox Aviation—run on petrol rather than aviation fuel, with running costs comparable to high-end SUVs. They are expected to serve many purposes, including that of a two-seater air taxi. Purchase prices will only be confirmed after the DGCA has framed the new rules, but are expected to be in the Rs 1-1.5 crore range.

# 400

FEET

The runway length for a gyroplane. A Cessna 152 requires about twice that

Gyroplanes only need about 400 feet of runway for takeoff. They need even less to land—about 100 feet. With a top flight speed of 190kmph, they can travel 600km on a full tank of fuel (about 80 litres). Celier also offers an air ambulance version, kitted out with medical equipment, and is working on increasing seat capacity. Gyrocopters have applications in many sectors, including defence, tourism, agriculture, health and policing. ■

## THE CHATTER



## The week in social media

@ShougatDasgupta

### Tamil Bulls Lock Horns

It used to be that two world-class heavyweights colliding in the ring was the acme of sporting achievement. In our impoverished age, it's **Subramanian Swamy** picking targets with the precision of a blunderbuss. Despite being the petitioner in the case that led to Sasikala's imprisonment, Swamy supported her as CM of Tamil Nadu; Kamal Haasan did not. Squabbling on Twitter since the furore over Jallikattu, they upped the ante this week. Asked about Haasan as a possible Tamil Nadu CM, Swamy called him a "boneless wonder and pompous idiot". Haasan fired back: Swamy "called Tamils *porikis* (good for nothings). Glad I won't have 2 oppose him (sic). People will." Swamy moved on, taking a wild swing at Karti Chidambaram instead. ■



### Voice of the People

While many might have laughed, many more will have cheered at a video doing the rounds of an elderly Pakistani woman reduced to rapidfire swearing when asked her opinion of the government. "**Yeh bik gayi hai**



**gormint (The government has sold us out!)**" was her pithy analysis. A sentiment that her neighbours across the border, also plagued by poverty, will understand. ■

### Media Trolls

The Indian media has long been—rightly—accused of gross insensitivity in its coverage of sexual assault. Reporters appear happy to broadcast salacious details and baseless speculation. **Rima Kallingal**, a former Miss Kerala runner-up and actress in Malayalam films, took furious issue with the coverage of the assault on an actress in Kerala last week.

"I spit on your third rate yellow journalism", was how her justifiably angry Facebook post ended. Any journalist worth their salt would agree. ■





## 5 QUESTIONS



# ‘Vote for me, or else’

Why do so many politicians have criminal records? Academic Milan Vaishnav, author of *When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics*, tells Chinki Sinha about his search for the answer

### Q. Why did you write this book?

**A.** In July 2008, the UPA government faced a vote of no confidence over the proposed US-India civil nuclear deal. To ensure it had the votes, it temporarily released six members of Parliament—collectively facing over 100 cases of kidnapping, murder, and the like—from jail. I desperately tried to find a book that explained this nexus but, after many months of searching, I decided I had to try and write it myself.

### Q. Why do you think it is important?

**A.** Fieldwork, surveys, interviews, data analysis... no single method could produce the answers to the

main questions: why do parties nominate criminal candidates and why do voters support them? My aim was to provide a framework for understanding [this].

### Q. You interviewed the dreaded don Anant Singh in Bihar. Were you afraid?

**A.** I had gone to see Anant Singh at a village sabha in his constituency around 2010. What was remarkable was how little he spoke. Singh’s message—“vote for me, or else”—did not require many words.

### Q. How difficult was it to get interviews?

**A.** It was not hard—nearly all of them were happy to talk. As far as criminal politicians are concerned,

most wear their reputations as a badge of honour. They do not perceive their behaviour to be criminal; they believe they are merely representing the interests of their constituents where the state is failing to do so.

### Q. Should India weed out criminal politicians?

**A.** A core message of the book is that criminal politicians are, in a surprising way, compatible with democratic accountability. This accountability may be imperfect, incomplete or offensive to our normative preconceptions, but it exists. That said, when lawmakers double as lawbreakers, their success can erode the sanctity of the rule of law. ■

## INDEX

# More Money than Sense

In its 10th season, beginning April 5, the Indian Premier League (IPL) is still as spendthrift as its English footballing cousin. Fast bowlers proved the most popular purchases, accounting for eight of the top 10 buys. However, Ishant Sharma went unsold, despite being confident enough to price himself at a base of Rs 2 crore. Irfan Pathan found no takers either, despite a relatively modest base price of Rs 50 lakh. Expect next year’s auction, when all the players will be available, to be a monster.

14.5  
Rs crore

England all-rounder Ben Stokes became the most expensive foreign signing in IPL history

16  
Rs crore

What Delhi Daredevils paid for Yuvraj Singh in 2015—about Rs 6.5 lakh for every run he scored that season

4  
Rs crore

Price of Rashid Khan, who, alongside Mohammed Nabi (Rs 30 lakh), will be the first Afghan player in the IPL

357  
players

The number of cricketers who put themselves up for auction this year

66  
players

The number of cricketers who were bought by the eight competing teams





GETTY IMAGES





## EXPOSURE

### NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

The current Odisha panchayat election offers an opportunity to revisit an ongoing people's struggle that is entirely reliant on local courage and resourcefulness rather than the help of politicians. For years now, villagers in Nayagarh district have protected their forests from timber smugglers. The entire community, mostly aged, and armed only with sticks, takes turns to patrol the forest and persuade criminals to abandon their activities. They have been shot at, even murdered, by smugglers. Police have been occasionally unhelpful, arresting villagers for their protests. And still, as this photograph taken on February 18 shows, they carry on, risking their lives to protect their state's resources and environment.



GETTY IMAGES



## GLASSHOUSE

## BJP'S ODISHA DELIGHT



**Saudan Singh**, BJP joint general secretary and party in-charge for Odisha, has earned the right to say "I told you so". His goal for Odisha, adapted from the Aam Aadmi Party, was "Congress saaf, BJD half". And at the end of the fourth phase of panchayat polls in the state, his slogan looks like educated prognostication. The BJP has

radically upped its totals, winning hundreds of zilla parishad seats presenting a stiff challenge to the Biju Janata Dal. The BJD has won more seats but its tally has slipped significantly compared to 2012. And the Congress has been reduced to its worst-ever performance in state panchayat elections. No wonder Saudan Singh is smiling.



## China Flexes Its Sea Legs

**B**eijing is mulling a new law that could bar foreign navies from accessing the South China Sea from 2020 on—or at least require that they ask permission to sail in these waters. Ahead of its annual parliament session on March 5, China's legislative affairs office invited public comments on the proposed revisions to its 1984 law on maritime safety. Among other powers, the revisions would allow Chinese authorities to fine erring ships up to 500,000 yuan (Rs 50 lakh), or even expel them.

## Lucknow Calling

**W**est Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee chose to stay out of the fray in Uttar Pradesh. Apparently the Samajwadi Party felt only lukewarm towards a proposed mini-gathbandhan for the ongoing assembly polls. But Mamata*di* is not easily dissuaded. Showing confidence in her party's future in the state, she will inaugurate a new three-storeyed party office in Lucknow on April 14, a month after the election results are announced. Mamata's trusted lieutenant Mukul Roy is already camped in UP, overseeing a major membership drive.



## Birthday Benediction

**T**elangana chief minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao is not a fan of the state secretariat. He has sought to have the buildings knocked down and replaced with new, *vaastu*-compliant versions—and in the meantime, receives visitors at the lavishly appointed Pragati Bhavan, his residence as of November 24 last year. This year, on February 17, his 63rd birthday, KCR launched 'Janahita', an annual interaction with select folks that allows him to hear grievances and grant favours. What better day to spread cheer?



## Fool's Errand

**T**he Prime Minister's Office (PMO) dispatched Minister of Parliamentary Affairs **Ananth Kumar** to Mumbai, to talk to the media about the government's decision to reduce the prices of coronary stents, wire mesh tubes that are used in surgery related to blocked arteries. Kumar spoke at length and with some passion; but attention in Mumbai is focused entirely on the corporation elections and so Kumar received no press coverage. Perhaps the PMO should have spared him the trip.

—Sandeep Unnithan with Ananth Krishnan, Romita Datta, Santosh Kumar, Kiran Tare and Amarnath K. Menon

VIKRAM SHARMA





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POINT OF VIEW

# Pakistan's Frankenstein

By G. Parthasarathy

The enchanting melody of *Dama Dam Mast Qalandar*, rendered by musical legends like Noor Jehan, Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Abida Parveen, the Sabri brothers and Runa Laila, has kept many of us enthralled for decades. It was based on a poem composed by Amir Khusro and modified by the 13th century Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, whose humanitarian teachings influenced Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike, for centuries. Lal Shahbaz is buried in Sehwan in Sindh. As a mark of respect, the last Shah of Iran, Reza Shah Pahlavi, donated a gold-plated main gate for his shrine. The shrine is visited annually by over a million pilgrims—Hindus and Muslims alike.

The evening prayers at the shrine, especially on Thursdays, are marked by Dhamaal, a meditative dance ceremony. It was during the Dhamaal on February 16 that a suicide bomber struck, killing 88 devotees and grievously wounding over 250. The events leading to this attack go back to developments in 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Revolution in Iran coincided with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Pakistan's President Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq and the ISI joined the CIA-sponsored and Saudi Arabia-financed jihad against the Soviets. Saudi money pouring into Pakistan led to the emergence and strengthening of Wahhabi-oriented armed extremists in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which not only challenged the Soviets, but also targeted the Shia and Sufi-oriented groups, including the influential and then dominant Barelvis.

The events of 9/11 and the subsequent US intervention in Afghanistan have led to increasing Wahhabi influence in Pakistan. While the ISI supports the Afghan Taliban, the army was forced to crack down on Pakistani extremist Wahhabi groups, such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and others, for challenging the writ of the government, especially in the Pashtun tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. Peri-

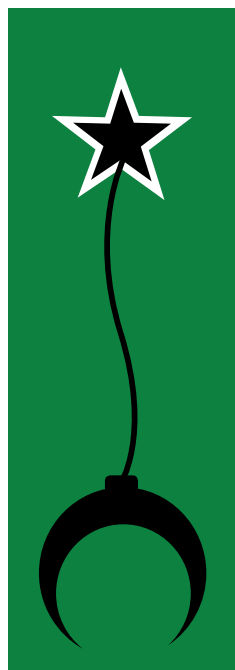
odic attacks against Shias and their places of worship in Gilgit-Baltistan, Balochistan and the Pashtun tribal areas have continued. Pakistani military operations against the TTP have displaced around one million tribals, with large numbers fleeing into Afghanistan.

These tribals, many linked to the TTP, have decided to challenge the Pakistan army and government. They have made common cause with extremist Wahhabi outfits and attacked Pakistan army and government installations. As in the past, they have targeted Shias and the so-called heretics, like the Sufis.

Pakistan has blamed the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), said to be an affiliate of the TTP, for the Sehwan attack and called on the Afghan government to act against the group. The Pakistan army has also shelled places within Afghanistan said to be camps of the JuA. Pakistan's army chief has demanded Afghanistan ensure that 76 alleged terrorists, said to be in Afghanistan, be repatriated. Afghanistan has protested against cross-border shelling by Pakistan and reiterated allegations that the Afghan Taliban uses Pakistani territory to indulge in terrorism on Afghan soil. Pakistan is faced with both Afghanistan and India accusing it of promoting cross-border terrorism. This diplomatic tangle will inevitably take substantial time and effort to resolve. Much will depend on how Pakistan, emboldened by Chinese support, responds to pressures it may face from the Donald Trump administration.

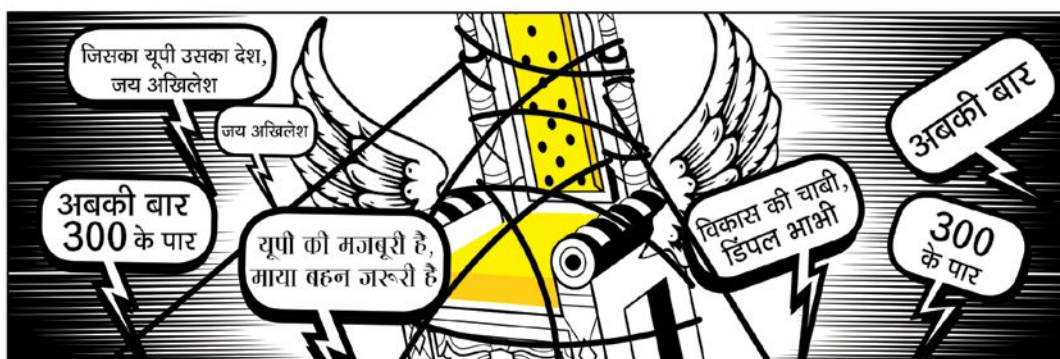
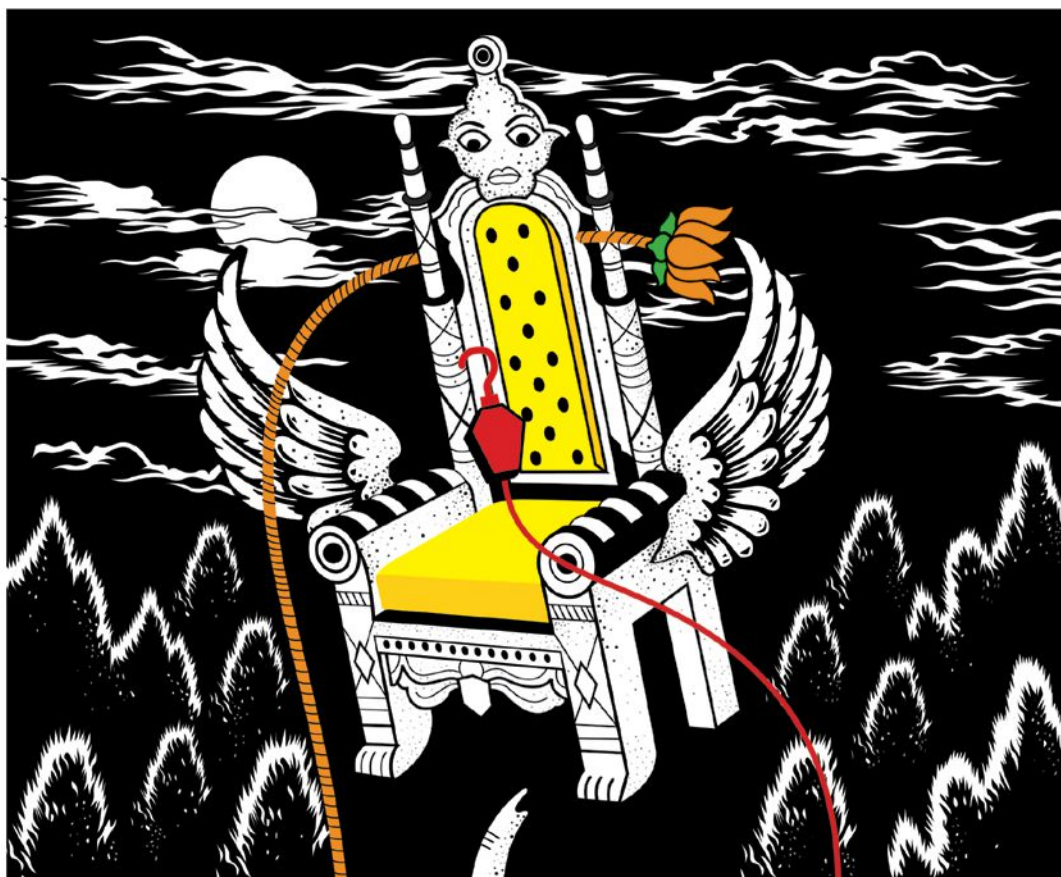
Meanwhile, scores of people in Sindh have defied terrorist threats and visited the Sehwan shrine. One looks forward to the day when Indian pilgrims and tourists can visit shrines like Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's, the Sadhu Bela Temple in Sukkur, and the Kataraj temple in Chakwal, while Pakistani pilgrims receive similar access to Sufi shrines in Ajmer and elsewhere in India.

*The writer is former Indian high commissioner to Pakistan*



**Much will depend on how Pakistan responds to pressures it may face from the Trump administration**

# KISSA KURSI KA





MAHARASHTRA: NO  
CHEER IN NASHIK  
PG 18

# STATES

JHARKHAND: GAINING  
MOMENTUM  
PG 19

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INTERVIEW PG 20

BIHAR: NEW DIGS  
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PG 21

HIMACHAL PRADESH

## Tongues Wag as Baba Gets Back Land

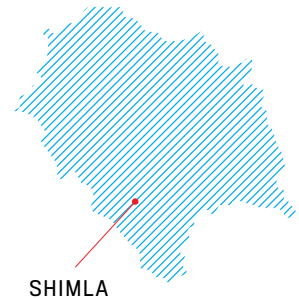
The CM retracts an earlier ban to clear a land deal for Ramdev's Yogpeeth

By Asit Jolly

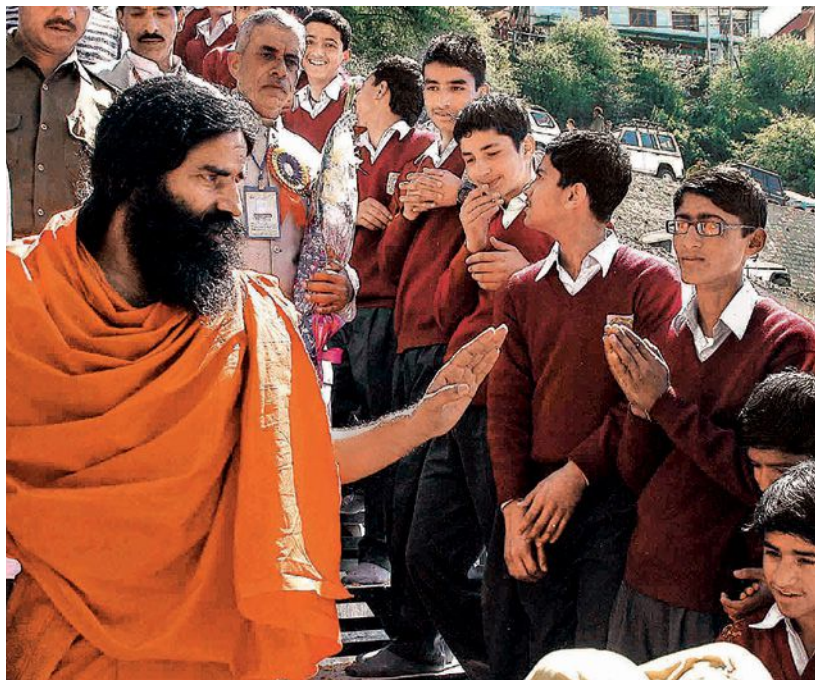
It's got the rumour mills working overtime in the hill state. Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh's curious decision to restore 96.5 bighas of prime, roadside land outside Sadhupul in Himachal Pradesh's Solan district, to yogi and businessman Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Yogpeeth is raising more than a few eyebrows in Shimla.

Barely three months after he came to power, on February 19, 2013, Singh had chaired a cabinet meeting that had a controversial item of interest on the agenda—the cancellation of a 99-year lease his predecessor, the BJP government led by then CM Prem Kumar Dhumal, had granted for the prime plot in 2010. The land was handed to Patanjali—on a ridiculously meagre down payment of Rs 17 lakh and a token fee of Re 1 annually—to set up an ayurveda hospital, a research centre and a herbal garden-cum-collection centre.

While state police and revenue officials moved in with uncharacteristic swiftness to take possession, Singh later



SHIMLA



**SHOW US A POSE**

Baba Ramdev while on a visit to the controversial land site in Sadhupul, Solan



**“WE LOOKED AT THE  
ISSUE AFRESH. THE  
YOGA GURU HASN’T  
COMMITTED ANY  
VIOLATIONS”**

**VIRBHADRA SINGH**  
CM, Himachal Pradesh

claimed the lease was cancelled and the land repossessed because of “irregularities and illegalities”. He did not, however, spell these out.

Cut to 2017 and this is what he had to say on February 14: “We have looked at the issue afresh and reached the conclusion that no violation happened.” Also dismissing earlier allegations that the facility Ramdev meant to build was an encroachment, Singh said, “The part of the land where the yoga guru proposes to invest is barren. What’s wrong if the state gets some investment that benefits Himachal Pradesh and its people?”

The CM was also curiously at pains to remind people of his regard for the yoga guru, recalling that he had hosted Ramdev’s yoga camp in Hamirpur at “personal expense” and “also attended it”. Singh now claims that he wasn’t “briefed about the actual facts regarding the issue”. It has to be noted here that the Himachal Pradesh High Court, in 2013, had ordered a status quo on the land on Patanjali’s petition, days after the state government had repossessed the holding.

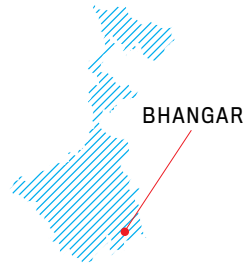
Singh, the prime accused in a disproportionate assets case being investigated by the CBI, may just have raised more questions by reviving the yoga guru’s land lease. However, the Himachal government has been circumspect enough to demand that Patanjali withdraw all litigation before the Sadhupul land is actually handed back. ■

WEST BENGAL

## Red Star Rising

A little known Naxal outfit leads anti-power plant protests in Bhangar

By Romita Datta



### SINGUR ONCE AGAIN?

Bhangar’s young protesters take to the streets against the power plant in their area

**B**hangar, comprising 35 densely populated villages in West Bengal’s 24 Parganas district, is the scene of a brand new revolution. Some 150,000 residents are up in revolt against the Mamata Banerjee government’s plans to set up a new electricity sub-station to trade power with neighbouring Bihar. The sub-station was built at Machibhanga village amid reports of coercion and forcible acquisition of land, but all of Bhangar turned out to block the installation of a high-voltage transmission line needed to complete the project. Residents fear the crisscrossing lines above their homes and farms could become a health hazard.

For close to a month now, five villages closest to the substation have been declared a ‘liberated zone’, out of bounds, for police and ruling Trinamool Congress politicians. On January 17, 20,000 protesters screaming anti-TMC slogans forced anti-riot policemen to retreat after torching a police jeep. For the moment, the authorities have deployed drones to try and keep an eye on things.

The Bhangar uprising, showing shades of Singur and Nandigram (the land agitations in 2006-07 that Mamata used to wrest the state from the Left Front in 2011), is being spearheaded by a hitherto unknown Naxalite faction—the CPI(ML) Red Star. An amalgam of three existing Naxal factions that came together after 2010, the members of Red Star were, ironically, key to Mamata’s success in Singur. “It was 2006. Mamata was reduced to a

# 35

VILLAGES

in Bhangar are now a ‘liberated zone’, out of bounds for the police, ruling TMC

single MP in the Lok Sabha. She sought our help in organising the movement,” Shankar Das, a central committee member of Red Star, confirms.

The present agitation is headed by Red Star politburo members Alik Chakrabarty and Sharmistha Choudhury. Analysts say the absence of a credible opposition—a weakened Left Front and Congress—has created the political legroom for Red Star to thrive.

The group appeared in Bhargar in November 2016 following reports of forcible land acquisition for the sub-station. Residents accuse local TMC strongman Arabul Islam of coercing them at gunpoint. Harassed villagers sought help from various political parties, but without any success. “No one came to help,” a Red Star activist says, “when 400 people were falsely charged and six villagers arrested.” The five villages were devoid of male members, he says, describing how they won the people’s confidence by securing bail for the victims.

Today, heading the Jami Jibika Vastutantra o Poribesh Raksha Committee

## SINCE RED STAR LEADER CHOUDHURY’S ARREST, THE WOMEN-FOLK HAVE TURNED MORE PROACTIVE

(Save the Land, Livelihood and Environment Committee), Chakrabarty is more popular than any politician has ever been in Bhargar. And since Choudhury’s arrest on January 25 on charges of inciting violence, residents, the womenfolk in particular, have turned more pro-active. They say they are even prepared to face police bullets for their leader.

At least in the 35 villages of Bhargar, Red Star is now the party of the movement, leading from the front and being courted by all the major political parties including the CPI(M). The fledgling outfit is also making for some very red faces in the Mamata Banerjee government. ■



MAHARASHTRA

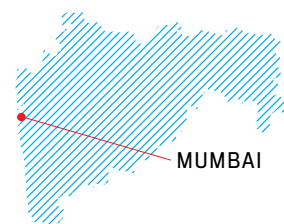
## Cheerless in Nashik

Is the government plan to withdraw tax exemptions for the wine industry a political ploy?

By Kiran D. Tare

In a perceptibly ‘political’ move, the Devendra Fadnavis government is mulling the withdrawal of a 2002 policy aimed at encouraging grape cultivators and the state’s fledgling wine-making industry. Granted initially for a period of 10 years, the excise tax exemption granted to wine-makers was extended for another decade in 2012. This, and a 16 per cent (of 20 per cent) sales tax refund, has helped the industry grow, making Maharashtra the largest producer of wine in India today.

But the Fadnavis government is now looking to ramp up revenues by taxing grape wine. “It will be a reality soon,” promises excise minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule, clearly enthused by excise department estimates that it would increase the state’s earnings by



Rs 200 crore. The minister says the wine industry is now well established and no longer needs to be supported by tax holidays. Projections for this year (2017) indicate that wine consumption in India could rise to 2.1 million litres. That’s a 73 per cent increase over sales at the end of 2013.

But the move to withdraw tax exemption would impact consumers across the country, since 75 of the 93 wineries in India are in Maharashtra (accounting for 90 per cent of domestic production).

Jagdish Holkar, ex-chairman of





< **CLEAR, HEADY FLAVOUR** The Sula Vineyards bottling facility in Nashik

the All India Wine Producers' Association, says it will be a big blow to the still nascent industry. Pointing to estimates that a Rs 600 Maharashtra-made wine would cost over Rs 1,000 if the excise tax exemption was withdrawn, he predicts that a price increase would discourage consumption and, consequently, also hit producers.

Holkar contends that "the policy was (originally) designed to help grape cultivators", and hence withdrawing it at this juncture would be unwise. The wine-maker was also keen to remind policy-makers of how in 2015 the industry had rescued grape farmers hit by hailstorms. "Almost 70 per

cent (of 8,000 tonnes) of the damaged crop was used to produce wine," Holkar says.

Many analysts see the proposed excise policy amendment as 'political'. People affiliated to the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) own a majority of the wineries and they influence local politics, especially in districts like Nashik, which has 37 vineyards. Just as two years ago it strove to contain the Congress and NCP's monopoly on the sugar mills, the current tinkering with the wine industry is seen as the BJP's bid to expand its influence in rural areas. The cagey official response has only added to the suspicions. Both principal secretary, industries, Apurva Chandra, and finance secretary D.K. Jain denied any knowledge, although the former did say "it's the government's prerogative" to amend policies. ■



< **SIGNED UP** CM Raghubar Das, centre, with Union ministers and industry leaders

Chief Minister Raghubar Das, keen to use Momentum Jharkhand as a catalyst for greater growth, inked 210 fresh MoUs with some of India's top corporate honchos, including Ratan Tata, Kumar Mangalam Birla, Shashi Ruia and others promising more investments. Das says he will ensure at least 172 of these translate to actual investments on the ground within a year. If the MoUs pan out, they have the potential of creating 200,000-plus jobs, which could be critical in bringing Das a second term after the polls in 2019.

Some of Das's confidence comes from the 4.38 lakh acre land pool his government has been able to create. So the tedious process of acquiring land for industrial projects is no longer a problem. The CM's confidence has rubbed off on others too. Tata Sons doyen Ratan Tata declared at the summit that the "time was ripe" to invest in Jharkhand. ■

210

MoUs

signed at Momentum Jharkhand may create 200,000 jobs

JHARKHAND

## Gaining Momentum

The invest in Jharkhand roadshow gets a thumbs up from India Inc

By Amitabh Srivastava

**A**t Momentum Jharkhand, a marquee event to attract fresh investment, the state also seemed to be staring at a contradiction: while Jharkhand's real income has crossed 8 per cent (in terms of GSDP) for the fourth consecutive year, last year it slipped from third to seventh position in 'ease of doing business'.

Inaugurating the mega show—av-

idly promoted by cricket icon M.S. Dhoni on TV—on February 16, Arun Jaitley spoke of Jharkhand's abundant mineral wealth as a resource that gives the state the potential to grow 4 to 5 per cent higher than the national average. The Union finance minister was, embarrassingly, referring to the fact that Jharkhand's growth rate is barely one percentage point higher than India's.

TAMIL NADU

# 'It was appropriate to wait for the SC verdict'



**CH. VIDYASAGAR RAO**, whose handling of the political crisis in Tamil Nadu as acting governor, including his ill-timed sojourn to attend a wedding in Delhi, raised many eyebrows, is back in Mumbai's Raj Bhavan. In Chennai, on February 18, he had witnessed the ruckus in the state assembly on live television, as incumbent chief minister Edappadi K. Palanisamy proved he had the numbers. A visibly relieved Governor Rao spoke to **Kiran D. Tare** in an exclusive interview. Excerpts:

**Q. You took three days to reach Chennai despite the political instability in the wake of O. Panneerselvam's resignation...**

**A.** It wasn't deliberate. I had prior engagements. In today's communications age, you need not be physically present all the time.

**Q. Did you anticipate V.K. Sasikala's conviction?**

**A.** The Supreme Court had announced that it would be delivering its judgment shortly. It was only appropriate to wait till the verdict was out.

**Q. But you drew criticism for your caution?**

**A.** All my decisions were generally welcomed. But I am thankful to even those who criticised me.

**Q. Were you under any pressure?**

**A.** I am appointed by the President of India. I have to be apolitical and function in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution.

**Q. Did you seek legal advice to resolve the crisis?**

**A.** Yes, I did consult Tamil Nadu's advocate general as well as legal luminaries like Soli Sorabjee, K. Parasharan and Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi. Whether I acted in accordance with their advice or not is a part of my report. I can't share that with you.

**"THE DELAY  
IN REACHING  
CHENNAI  
WAS NOT ON  
PURPOSE"**

TAMIL NADU

## Samy and Friends

By T.S. Sudhir

In the land of Mannargudi, Samy and friends have hit the ground running. Tamil Nadu's new chief minister, Edappadi K. Palanisamy, who realises that he gets no honeymoon period, has decided to do an Amma. The Jayalithaa brand of populism is what marked Palanisamy's day one in office.

Contrary to his predecessor O. Panneerselvam, who did not use Jayala-

lithaa's office, Palanisamy took over Amma's chambers. And following in the footsteps of the late CM, Palanisamy too decided to begin on a sober note. Five hundred more liquor vends will be shut down, in addition to the 500 closed by Jaya as part of her phased prohibition promise. This means the 6,300-odd TASMALC liquor shops which generate a revenue of Rs 26,000 crore annually, are



^ **GROUP SHOW** New CM Palanisamy (with hands folded) after the swearing in



now down by 1,000.

In Tamil Nadu, the revenue from sale of liquor is what subsidises the welfare schemes (read freebies) doled out by the AIADMK regime. That will take a hit with the closure of liquor shops. But that has not prevented Palanisamy from doling out goodies, particularly to women voters. Explaining that he was merely “following Amma’s policies”, the CM announced a few more subsidies and gifts. So it’s two-wheelers for one lakh working women, increased assistance to pregnant women, increased dole to unemployed youth and 5,000 new houses for fishermen. All put together, this would leave the state poorer by around Rs 700 crore a year—still nowhere close to what Jayalalithaa dished out in May 2016. Her initial big

## THE FREEBIES WILL COST ₹700 CR A YEAR, ADDING TO AMMA’S 2016 LARGESSE OF ₹8,000 CR

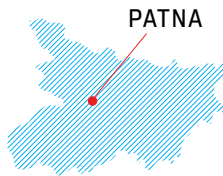
ticket decisions, including farm loan waivers, free electricity to domestic consumers and weavers left the government poorer by some Rs 8,000 crore a year.

Tamil Nadu can hardly afford indiscriminate freebies because it has debts of Rs 2.35 lakh crore, among the highest in the country. Add to that the Rs 1.60 lakh crore debt that the electricity board is under and Tamil Nadu is quite literally wilting.

“This government has no legitimacy in the eyes of the public,” says social activist A. Narayanan, reacting to the sops. The government defends itself saying Amma’s style of governance is continuing under the new dispensation, something ironically even the rival OPS camp cannot find fault with. ■

BIHAR

# The Don’s New Digs



Will the shift from Bihar to Tihar slow down Shahabuddin?



▲ CUFF PARADE Shahabuddin at the Delhi railway station en route to jail, Feb 19

By Amitabh Srivastava

So is it finally over for Mohammad Shahabuddin? The criminal-turned-Rashtriya Janata Dal politician, whose name spelt terror in Bihar’s Siwan district even after he was jailed in 2005, has been moved from the comfort of his evidently lax hometown penitentiary on the orders of the Supreme Court. Consider this: not only will the convict be under constant CCTV surveillance inside Delhi’s high-security Tihar Jail, he will be guarded by Tamil Nadu Special Police personnel who will not speak his language and, presumably, will be unimpressed with Shahabuddin’s notoriety. Surely a major climbdown from the state jail in Siwan where he held durbars attended by MLAs and ministers and everyone, including

senior prison officers, deferentially addressed him as “*Sahib* (master).”

Named in 75 FIRs, facing 45 criminal trials, and already convicted in 10 cases, Shahabuddin’s transfer to Tihar followed two Supreme Court petitions, by Asha Ranjan (widow of slain Siwan-based journalist Rajdeo Ranjan) and Chandrakeshwar Prasad, three of whose sons were killed. Both petitioners accused Shahabuddin of masterminding the murders from jail. Notably, he’s been declared a beyond-reform “Type A history-sheeter”.

Transported from Siwan by train in a second class coach in view of the SC’s instructions on not extending him any special privileges, the four-time MP had lost much of his swagger by the time the accompanying posse escorted him into Tihar on February 19. ■

# 45

**CRIMINAL TRIALS**  
still on against the  
Siwan strongman;  
convicted in 10 cases



COVER STORY | DEFENCE

# UNMADE IN INDIA

POLICY PARALYSIS AND BUREAUCRATIC  
LETHARGY COULD UNDO MODI'S **MAKE IN INDIA** PLAN  
TO INDIGENISE WEAPONS PRODUCTION

BY SANDEEP UNNITHAN

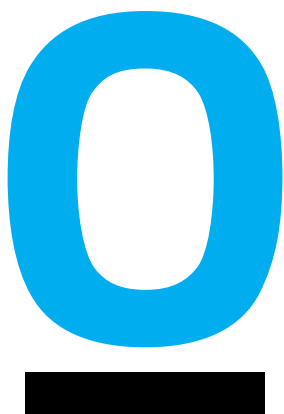




**FROM RUSSIA  
WITH LOVE**

India has been able to achieve only 33 per cent indigenization in over 222 Su-30 MKI fighters it has license-produced from Russia





**O**N FEBRUARY 15, the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) workhorse PSLV rocket thundered off a launch pad at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, for a record-making mission. The rocket disgorged 104 satellites into space, 101 of them for foreign customers. Just the day before, on February 14, global arms firms had converged on Bengaluru for the biennial four-day Aero India 2017 air show to display their fighter jets, helicopters and drones to the Indian armed forces, who are looking to buy military hardware worth over \$100 billion over the next decade.

These two recent events, just a day apart and entirely unrelated, illustrate the gap between India's capabilities. Entirely self-sufficient as a space power yet utterly dependent on imported arms for its military power. India has the world's third largest military, and with a Rs 2.74 lakh crore defence

budget this year, it is also the world's sixth largest spender on defence. However, nearly 60 per cent of its military hardware is imported. India has often held the title of the 'world's largest arms importer', and between 2012 and 2016, the country accounted for 13 per cent of all global arms exports. Figures tabled by the government in the Lok Sabha put the value of arms imports at Rs 82,496 crore between 2013 and 2016. Even as the government pitches for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, it cannot but be aware of a cruel irony—it is effectively a net importer of security from four of the five permanent members.

The reason for these imports is a capacity and capability gap. India's defence production base—a vast, lumbering network of arms factories, shipyards and laboratories with 200,000 employees—is unable to meet the requirements of the military. India's Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) will supply arms and ammunition worth Rs 57,000 crore this year, but this will be insufficient to meet the requirements of the armed forces. This gap is bridged by off-the-shelf imports, which do not result in technology gains for Indian industry. This was one of the main reasons that defence production was one of the 25 sectors identified by the Modi government's economic plan to boost the share of manufacturing in GDP to 25 per cent (from 16 per cent), and create 100 million additional jobs.

Make in India is easily the most comprehensive effort thus far to reverse such import dependence. In the past three years, the government has unveiled a slew of measures on this count, from opening up the defence sector to FDI of 49 per cent (and above in certain cases), to introducing an Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured (IDDM) category to promote indigenous manufacture.

The challenges and investments required—to create technology, product development capabilities and infrastructure—outside the public sector are significant and

hence will take time. Private sector involvement is minuscule at present, accounting for less than 5 per cent of the total defence pie. The government, therefore, has roped in private sector firms, hoping to transform them from second-rung players into independent defence entities capable of delivering defence equipment on their own. Over the past two years, the government has withdrawn the preferential treatment given to DPSUs, like excise and customs duty waivers, to create a level playing field with the private sector.

### **The Indian armed forces are looking to purchase hardware worth over \$100 billion**

While there is tremendous movement on the policy front, there is little implementation. At least three major contracts—for building landing platform docks (ships that can transport troops and military vehicles); for the development of battlefield management systems that allow mobile military formations to communicate with each other; and for constructing modern diesel-electric submarines—are yet to be awarded, though it has been over a decade since they were conceived.

The defence ministry says this is because it is yet to approve a key policy for strategic partnerships, recommended by a task force it appointed in 2016. The strategic partnerships call for the creation of joint-venture concerns between private sector firms and foreign partners in broad areas of defence platforms, networks, weapons and materials. After shuttling between the bureaucrats in the MoD, the file has now been sent to the finance ministry for another opinion—an example of what one private sector CEO calls "classic bureaucratic procrastination". "Bureaucratic apathy is among the biggest hurdles to the government achieving its Make in India targets," warns Laxman Kumar Behera, a research

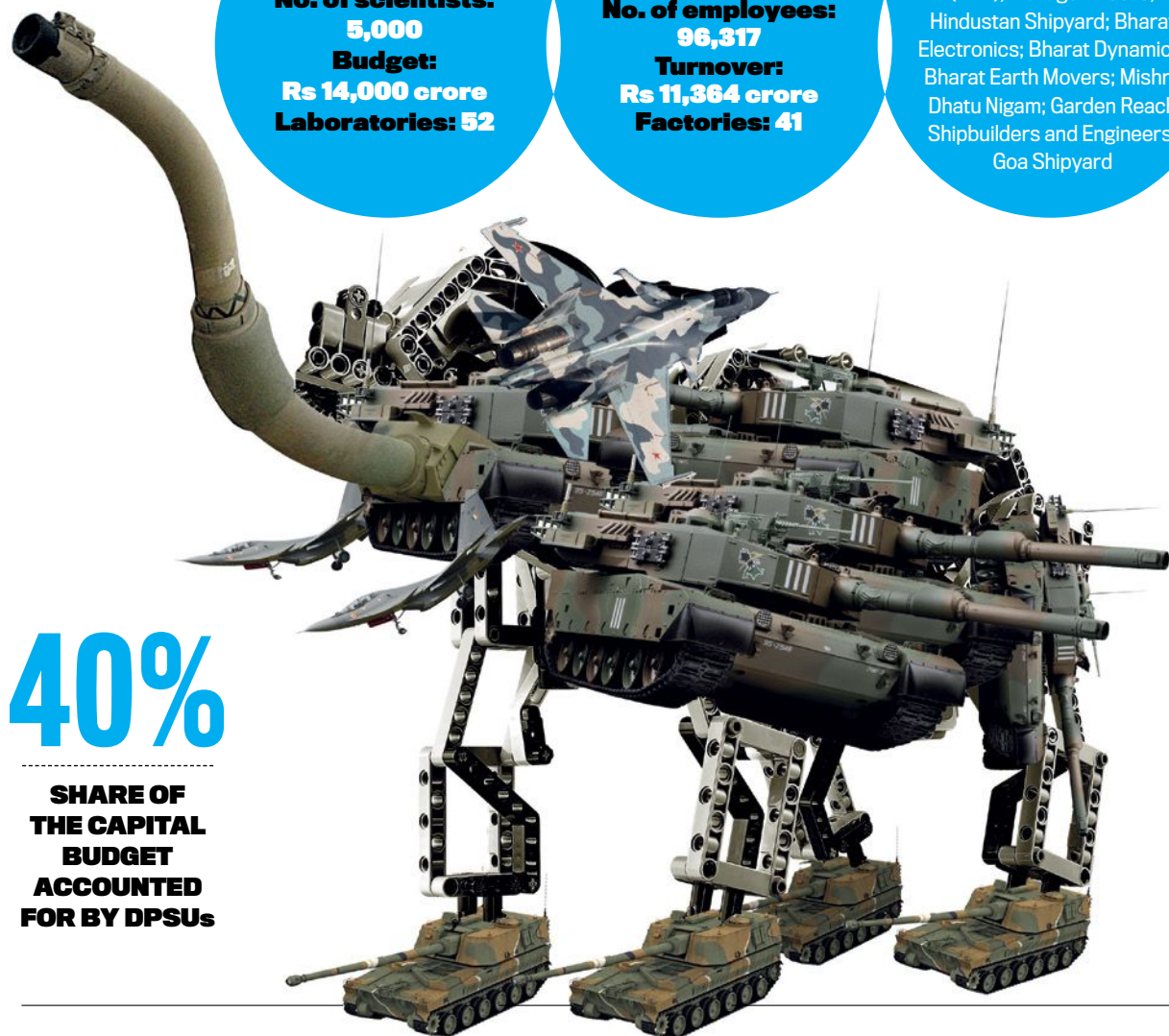
# A HERD OF WHITE ELEPHANTS

India's military-industrial complex lies overwhelmingly in the public sector and is unable to deliver results

**DRDO**  
No. of scientists:  
**5,000**  
Budget:  
**Rs 14,000 crore**  
Laboratories: **52**

**ORDNANCE  
FACTORY BOARD**  
No. of employees:  
**96,317**  
Turnover:  
**Rs 11,364 crore**  
Factories: **41**

**DEFENCE PSUs**  
Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL); Mazagon Docks; Hindustan Shipyard; Bharat Electronics; Bharat Dynamics; Bharat Earth Movers; Mishra Dhatu Nigam; Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers; Goa Shipyard



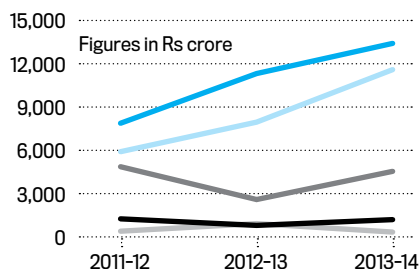
# 40%

**SHARE OF  
THE CAPITAL  
BUDGET  
ACCOUNTED  
FOR BY DPSUs**

Illustration by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

## Top five arms suppliers to India

— US — Russia — France  
— Israel — UK



# \$67,000

Average productivity of India's eight defence PSUs (total firm output divided by no. of employees), which is less than a fifth of the...

# \$370,000

average productivity of top five arms producing companies in the world

# ₹82,496

CRORE

Value of arms imports between 2013 and 2016, according to figures tabled in Lok Sabha

SOURCE: 'Indian Defence Industry—an Agenda for Making in India'—Laxman Kumar Behera, IDSA



fellow who tracks military expenditure at the New Delhi-based Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA).

Another significant obstacle to the government's Make in India policy is the lack of orders placed with the Indian private sector. At least 10 proposals, worth billions of dollars, that aim to equip the armed forces with modern infantry combat vehicles, communication systems, howitzers, helicopters and fighter jets, are still in the pipeline.

The requirements of the armed forces are enormous. An April 2013 study titled 'A Technology, Perspective and Capability Roadmap', prepared by the triservice Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, assessed India's requirements for high technology military hardware, drones, precision weapons, radars, guns, sensors and aircraft at around \$100 billion over the next 15 years.

**A**ddressing a press conference at Aero India, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar said the armed forces needed approximately 400 fighter jets and 800 to 1,000 helicopters over the next decade. "Our helicopter engine requirement in 10 years is 5,000, and we will need over 400 LCA (light combat aircraft) engines [as well]... all these aspects open huge potential," he said. But until these orders are placed, these numbers are but pies in the sky.

According to Parrikar, his ministry's indigenisation targets are on course. "The target is 70 per cent indigenisation, as per the recommendations of the Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam committee. That will take four to five years. By the end of the term of this government, we should touch 60 per cent," he said (*see interview*).

This year's defence budget, however, registered a modest 5 per cent increase—barely enough to meet inflation. It was only 1.62 per cent of the GDP. "This is the lowest since the disastrous 1962 war with China when it was 1.59 per cent of the GDP, and grossly inadequate to meet India's growing military modernisation challenges," warns military analyst Brig. Gurmeet Kanwal (retired). The next budget, the NDA's last before the onset of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, is unlikely to be any different. "There is no clarity on whether what this government is doing is different from the previous government," says Amit Cowshish, former financial advisor in the defence ministry. "There is no clear-cut Make in India in defence. It's just a rehash of earlier policies with cosmetic changes." With stagnant budgets and orders caught up in red tape, the government's Make in India dream for defence runs the risk of remaining a slogan.

Over the past year, India's diplomats and military officials have tried to stall a proposed sale of 24 China-Pakistan made JF-17 'Thunder' jets to Sri Lanka. New Delhi's anxiety over the sale, and the reason why it has pitted its homegrown Tejas Light Combat Aircraft as an

# IMPORTED BACKBONES

The mainstays of the three services are of Russian make



## AIR FORCE Su-30MKI Fighter Jet

**How many: 272**

**Dependence:** MoD to announce \$8 billion upgrade of its entire fleet of 194 jets to 'Super Sukhoi' standard with Russian help



## ARMY T-90 Main Battle Tank

**How many: 3,000**

**Dependence:** Assembled from imported kits at HVF, Avadi



## NAVY Kilo-class Submarine

**How many: 9**

**Dependence:** Refits must be in consort with Russian original equipment manufacturers

alternative to the China-Pakistan fighter jet, is grounded in Beijing's recent successes in gaining influence in India's traditional sphere of influence in South Asia. In 2014, China sold two second-hand diesel-electric submarines to Bangladesh, ensuring a toe-hold on India's eastern flank. India, whose navy has not acquired a new submarine in 17 years, had none to offer.

Such shortfalls may seem paradoxical in a country that boasts of one of the world's largest military-industrial complexes—comprising 41 ordnance factories, eight DPSUs and 52 research laboratories—producing everything from submarines to assault rifles.

But this impressive scale masks a Faustian bargain. Most of the equipment they produce is under licence from foreign firms. A 2014 in-house report of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) notes that close to 90 per cent of its Rs 13,500 crore turnover comes from technology developed outside the organisation.

**T**he backbone of the Indian air force, navy and army is made up of nearly 250 Su-30MKI jets, nine Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines and over 2,000 T-72/ T-90 main battle tanks respectively. Russian original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) have given Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's (HAL) Ozar facility in Nashik the knowhow to assemble the Su-30MKI in India, and to the Heavy Vehicles Factory, Avadi, to assemble the T-90 tanks. But because they won't part with the 'know-why'—the product design, or the source code of a particular design (between 60 and 80 per cent of the value of a platform)—India cannot even upgrade the platforms without consulting the OEM, and is in a perpetual lock-in with the seller through the life of the product.

"Lifecycle costs of a platform are the great multiplier," explains the CEO of a private sector firm. "For any platform, the lifecycle cost (the product servicing and refurbishment) is between four and seven times the acquisition cost. This ensures huge profits for the manufacturer through the life of the product." This dependence continues over the life of the combat jet, the warship or the battle tank, and is the main reason arms sales have become an adjunct of foreign policy for global powers to cultivate clout.

Poor investments in research and development—the OFB, for instance, invests only 0.7 per cent of its budget in R&D against a requirement of at least 3 per cent—make the dependence permanent. A 2016 IDSA study, 'Indian Defence Industry—an Agenda for Making in India', notes that four of the nine DPSUs do not own a single patent or copy-right. In comparison, airplane major Boeing claimed over 1,000 patents for a single programme, the 787 Dreamliner.

It's not just platforms, however. DPSUs are critically dependent on imported components to make indigenous platforms. Over the past five years, state-owned aerospace monolith HAL imported 90 per cent of aircraft parts, components and raw materials.

A 2014 Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report

found that the OFB had a miserable record of indigenisation—in two such examples, it managed only 59 of 78 codes for the main assemblies of T-90 tanks and could indigenise just 47 per cent of 84mm rocket launchers imported from Sweden. India's eight DPSUs have an average productivity of around \$67,000. This is one-fifth of the global average. The top five arms producing companies in the world have an average labour productivity of \$370,000.

Delays by the public sector arms factories happen so often that the armed forces have to resort to emergency imports. In October, just days after the surgical strikes in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, India's defence ministry initiated a massive off-the-shelf import of arms and ammunition from Russia and Israel, worth nearly \$3 billion. The OFB had failed to meet the army's 2013 projections for Rs 40,771 crore worth of ammunition for five years between 2013 and 2019, necessitating the import.

With strategic partnerships paving the way for joint ventures between Indian and foreign firms, the weak link is slow decision-making in the defence ministry, which hands out the contracts. A private sector CEO mentions how private sector proposals take between nine months to a year to get approved because the MoD regards them with suspicion.

At the recent Gateway of India Geo-economic Dialogue, private sector panelists, particularly foreign defence companies, pointed to challenges like procurement issues and offset difficulties in India's defence sector. "Addressing these issues will be critical to developing India's own defence industrial base through Make in India," says Sameer Patil, fellow, National Security Studies at the Mumbai-based think-tank Gateway House. Private sector participation to boost indigenous content is a no-brainer. It could well be the government's hidden ace in its rivalry with China.

## **This year's defence budget only increased by 5%—just enough to account for inflation**

Among the cornerstones of ISRO's success has been involving the private sector in building rockets and the creation of a large vendor base that supplies key components for its space programme. ISRO's track record is instructive for its defence ministry counterpart, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). This, as well as the government's decision to create a model for private participation in design, integration and manufacture has caused the DRDO and public sector enterprises to become efficient and aggressive, says Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Rajya Sabha MP and member of the parliamentary standing committee on defence. "Which is the real objective—because at least for the conceivable short to medium term, companies like HAL, BEL, BDL and shipyards like MDL will remain important vendors to our military preparedness," he says. The IDDM category, which the MoD's defence procurement policy seeks to encourage, is a rare category in India.



Both the LCA and the Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter use imported engines. Apart from lightly armed patrol vessels, the DRDO owns the intellectual property for just two weapons systems—the Pinaka multiple rocket system and the Akash surface to air missile system, guided by the Rajendra radar system, both of which have been offered for export to Vietnam. Both these weapons systems were developed by public-private partnerships—the Pinaka launchers by a consortium of L&T and Tata Power SED; Akash by Bharat Electricals and Tata Power. The best example of public and private sector cooperation also remains India's best-kept secret. Three *Arihant*-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) are being constructed by a consortium of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, the Indian navy and private sector firms in Visakhapatnam. The lead ship of the class, the INS *Arihant*, was inducted into the navy last year. The indigenous SSBNs have achieved up to 70 per cent indigenous content. In sharp contrast, the much smaller Scorpene diesel-electric submarines, six of which are being licence-produced from France at Mazagon Docks, feature an indigenous content of less than 30 per cent.

**D**RDO's Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) is being developed by a Tata-Bharat Forge consortium. When it is ready for induction, in five years, it will give the country a world-class 155 mm towed howitzer for export. The DRDO's 'Netra' AEW&CS, handed over to the IAF at Aero India, was developed at less than half the \$241 million cost of the four Swedish Ericsson Erieye AEW radars sold to Pakistan and has tremendous export potential.

The defence industry is a monopsony and a monopoly at the same time—the government is the single largest manufacturer as well as the only buyer. The government has attempted to dilute its monopoly by introducing private players into defence since 2001, but its commitment to a level-playing field falls flat in the absence of orders.

For nearly a decade now, the MoD has debated over a stack of military orders that will add muscle to the machine (see graphic: *Stuck in the Pipeline*). The force multiplier effect of each such order on the country's industrial ecosystem will be tremendous. It will create thousands of jobs in the sector, particularly among MSMEs, which make up 80 per cent of India's private defence capabilities. One private sector official estimates that the combined Rs 1.2 lakh crore value of the three 'Make' projects—for an FICV (Future Infantry Combat Vehicle), the battlefield management system and the tactical communication system—would add one GDP point to the Indian economy and actually realise the government's Make in India dream.

Over the past two years, private sector firms Ashok Leyland and Tata Motors have nearly eliminated the monopoly enjoyed by public sector BEML's controversial TA-

GETTY IMAGES



## INTERVIEW

## “We will touch 60 per cent indigenous content in the tenure of this government”

*If there's one thing Defence Minister **MANOHAR PARRIKAR** is chary about speaking of, it is his past as a small entrepreneur and potential supplier to the DRDO in the mid-'90s. South Block lore has it that the metallurgical engineer from the IIT Bombay class of 1978 designed and developed a hydraulic component for use in the DRDO-designed Sarvatra Bridge Laying Tank. The product passed the test, but for some reason his firm never got the order. Parrikar refuses to discuss the past and insists times have changed—“indigenous partners are now always part of DRDO projects”. In this interview at his South Block office, he tells Executive Editor **SANDEEP UNNITHAN** how he is pushing hard on indigenisation by institutionalising change in the ministry and admits to there being mindset issues. Excerpts:*



**Q. The Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam committee in 1995 set a target for 70 per cent indigenisation by 2005. By when will India reverse the 60-40 ratio of imports to indigenous content?**

**A.** There are two aspects to indigenisation. One is total indigenous content. The other is when a supplier manufactures equipment, but uses imported components, such as chips and basic electronic circuits. When we (the NDA-II government) started, only 30-35 per cent content was indigenous; we are slowly working to increase this. 'Buy Global' or direct imports is the least favoured option. The preference is for Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured (IDDM) systems.

Next is 'Buy Indian', with 40 per cent indigenous content, then 'Make' projects, and the third is 'buy and make' certain systems in India with 40 per cent indigenous component. About 70-80 per cent, or Rs 99,000 crore, of the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN, the first step in a contract) granted this year are for IDDMs. We should achieve 40-50 per cent indigenous content by the end of this financial year. The increase in indigenous content in the past two years has been 10-15 per cent, which will increase to 20-25 per cent in the next financial year.

**Q. What is the target and by when will you achieve it?**

**A.** As per the Dr Kalam (committee) report, the target is 70 per cent indigenisation. It will take 4-5 years. By the end of this government's term, we should touch 60 per cent indigenisation of content.

**Q. The Narendra Modi government has cleared several pending big-ticket imports and placed orders for Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs). There is a huge backlog of projects for the private sector, ones that have been stuck in the pipeline for years.**

**A.** FICV (Future Infantry Combat Vehicle), TCS (Tactical Communications System) and BMS (Battlefield Management System) are 'Make' projects and not Make in India projects, which means the

**“There are mindsets to be changed, and people have different ideas about things, but now, people (in the defence ministry) are at least more forward-oriented”**

industry makes a prototype that we will evaluate for further orders. There are certain issues here, which we are working out. The first major SP (self-propelled) tracked gun is before the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). It is with the private sector, purely with the private sector. That is going for the Union cabinet's approval. The file will come to me in a couple of days. Landing Platform Docks (LPDs) are also in the pipeline, a private company will get it. But I will not sacrifice the public sector for the private sector.

**Q. The allocations this year were among the lowest for defence capital acquisitions. Indeed, defence spending as a percentage of GDP seems to be shrinking. How will the defence ministry revitalise the defence industry at a time of shrinking defence spending?**

**A.** People think there is not much utilisation in defence. You have to realise that even now, we have 203 AoNs, down from 390 or 400 as of March 31, 2016. Of these, the old ones (cleared by UPA-II) will be about 70-80. There were many projects stuck in the pipeline since 2012-13 because of no decision. We are clearing many of them now. The supply chain is 8-10 years. Money now being spent is for projects signed in 2010-11. There were hardly any orders placed between 2012 and 2014, so the payment for committed liabilities was less. I cannot change that. My procurements started in 2015 and are slowly picking up. As of today, I have a commitment of Rs 2.30 lakh crore. When our government completes three years, we will cross Rs 3 lakh crore.

**Q. Strategic partnerships have been stuck for over a year. Without these, orders cannot be placed with the private sector. Why the delay?**

**A.** Strategic partnerships are a long-term policy. All issues need to be addressed and worked out properly. Even if some more time is required, it will be better than rushing through with it.

**Q. There is speculation you will move to Goa after the March 11 assembly election results.**

**A.** This is speculation. I will cross that bridge when I come to it.

**Q. Have you set in place a system in the defence ministry that your successors will follow?**

**A.** I am surely not doing this because of Manohar Parrikar's whims and fancies. Yes, there are mindsets to be changed, and people have different ideas about things. But now, people (in the defence ministry) are at least more forward-oriented. ■





### SINGLE-ENGINE FIGHTER

**How many: 100**

**Budget: approx. Rs 6,700 crore**

**Players:** Saab, Lockheed Martin with Indian partners

**Delay:** Awaiting clearance of strategic partnership



### LIGHT UTILITY HELICOPTERS

**How many: 400**

**Budget: Rs 600 crore**

**Players:** Kamov, Russia with Reliance Defence

**Delay:** Held up because Russia wants to make it under a government to government deal. No AoN issued yet



### AVRO REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT

**How many: 56**

**Budget: Rs 23,430 crore**

**Players:** Tata-Airbus consortium

**Delay:** Cleared by DAC in 2015. Held up after only a single vendor applied. Investors want a minimum order of 100 aircraft

### TRACKED SELF PROPELLED GUN

**How many: 100**

**Budget: Rs 4,800 crore**

**Players:** Tata Motors, Ashok Leyland

**Delay:** Contract negotiations completed in March 2016. Awaiting CCS clearance



TRA vehicles. The two private sector firms have snapped up contracts for 1,694 HMTs worth Rs 1,284 crore for towing field artillery guns and for mobile rocket launchers. But without more such big ticket orders, private players can get easily crowded out of the defence space.

The orders are held up for various reasons. A recent order to produce 56 medium transport aircraft within the country, the first aerospace venture by the private sector, has been held up for over a year. This is because the MoD wants only 56 aircraft, but the sole bidders for the project, a Tata-Airbus consortium, wanted a minimum order of 100 to make the project viable. A Rs 20,000 crore project to modernise infantry by giving soldiers high-tech gear, including modern rifles, mineproof boots and wearable computers, has been stuck for over a decade. Private firms were to play a major role in this contract, believed to be delayed because of internal army issues.

The MoD, meanwhile, continues to hand multi-billion dollar deals to the public sector, without any competition. In two recent deals, Goa Shipyard bagged a lucrative Rs 32,000 crore order for building mine counter-measure vessels for the Indian navy while Hindustan Shipyard bagged a naval order for five fleet support ships at Rs 9,000 crore.

Soon after taking over as defence minister in November 2014, Parrikar commissioned multiple committees to assess the problems plaguing his ministry. Four out of eight of these committees dealt either directly or indirectly with his government's Make in India mission. The committees came back with a sheaf of recommendations, which led to policies for strategic partnerships in the private sector. However, at least one private sector CEO questions this model and believes it will mean replacing public sector monopolies with private sector ones. "In the short run," he

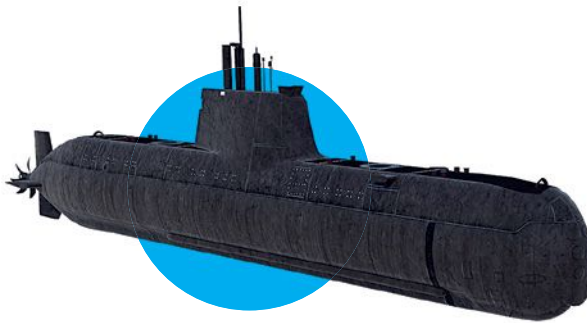
### F-INSAS FUTURE INFANTRY SOLDIER

**How many:** **200,000**  
soldiers to be equipped with high-tech gear by 2025

**Budget:** **Rs 20,000 crore**

**Players:** DRDO, OFB, pvt sector

**Delay:** No progress after 2006 nod. RFI yet to be issued. Infighting between two army directorates



### INDIGENOUS CONVENTIONAL SUBMARINE

**How many:** **6**

**Budget:** **Rs 80,000 crore**

**Players:** L&T, Mazagon Docks Ltd

**Delay:** Contract to be awarded after strategic partnership is cleared

### FUTURE INFANTRY COMBAT VEHICLE

**How many:** **2,610**

**Budget:** **Rs 26,100 crore**

**Players:** Tata Motors, Ashok Leyland

**Delay:** Approved in 2009. Five consortiums of Indian manufacturers in the fray



### TACTICAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

**How many:** **12**

**Budget:** **Rs 18,000 crore**

**Players:** Tata Power SED- L&T

**Delay:** Mooted in 2012. Change in technical specifications have held up contract



### BATTLEFIELD MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

**How many:** **600**

**Budget:** **Rs 70,000 crore**

**Players:** Tata Power SED-BEL and Rolta-BEL consortiums

**Delay:** Mooted in 2012. Stuck since 2015

### LANDING PLATFORM DOCK

**How many:** **4**

**Budget:** **Rs 600 crore each**

**Players:** : L&T with Navantia of Spain, Pipavav Shipyard with DCN, France

**Delay:** Cleared by DAC in October 2016. Awaiting commercial bids from shipyards



says, "they'll be beneficial to the armed forces as they will get an alternative supply source for hardware, but in the long run it won't bring the country any benefits as 49 per cent of the technology will still be in the control of a foreign concern. They control knowledge flow, and will block any new technology from coming up."

Turnarounds are not impossible. China, the world's largest arms importer a decade ago, is today the world's third largest arms exporter. Beijing achieved this by setting into motion a comprehensive multi-pronged policy beginning in the mid-1990s, where they acquired sensitive military technology and expertise, sometimes through dubious means, and absorbed it into local industry to create a range of defence equipment.

Technology absorption is where South Block's key technology tool, defence offsets, falters. The offset policy mandates that the foreign equipment seller buy 30 per of

the value of defence contracts over \$300 million from the local market. Last year, the MoD projected contractual offset obligations worth over \$4 billion from its defence imports. Critical deficiencies in the policy as highlighted by India's CAG in a report to Parliament in November 2012—zero value addition, equipment transfer, invalid selection of Indian Offset Partner (IOP) and weak monitoring mechanism—are yet to be addressed.

But for Make in India to succeed, DPSUs need to be transformed. Measures suggested by the committees include corporatising them and giving them more financial autonomy, boosting R&D spend and laying out a roadmap to progressively reduce their dependence on imports. Experts say indigenisation of 50-60 per cent by 2027 is easily attainable; but only if the MoD's policy reforms are taken to their logical conclusion and implemented in letter and spirit. The question is, when. ■



# A NEW SPRING IN THEIR STRIDE



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

# THE

crowd is enthusiastic and hangs on to every word he says. “When you press the button on election day, it will not be to defeat someone or make someone win. You will press the button to change the destiny of Uttar Pradesh after 15 years of corruption and *bhai-bhatijavaad* (nepotism),” Bharatiya Janata Party national president Amit Shah says to a packed election gathering at Rudauli near Faizabad town on February 18. Repeated endlessly through this campaign, it’s a familiar spiel centred around Prime Minister Narendra Modi—“a leader committed to governance” pitted against “a coalition of two corrupt clans”. The crowd cheers Shah. It’s clearly a friendly cohort.

# THE PARTY IS BANKING ON MODI'S CHARISMA AND A SPLIT IN THE DALIT-MUSLIM VOTE TO TAKE UTTAR PRADESH THIS SPRING

By Uday Mahurkar



**< SWEEP STAKES**  
Crowds at a BJP rally in Meerut on February 4

Through his 20-minute address, the BJP president doesn't ask for votes. He demands "a two-third majority in Uttar Pradesh". And, out in Faizabad, he even introduces small doses of Hindutva, albeit couched in issues of law and order and development. Shah speaks of reviving the local dairy industry. And to do this, he promises that a BJP government will "shut down all mechanised slaughterhouses within 12 hours of coming to power".

From distributing tickets to campaigning on the ground, leaders privately acknowledge that the party has employed a three-pronged strategy—religious polarisation in western UP; working caste equations in Pur-

vanchal; and emphasising the contrast in development (with neighbouring Madhya Pradesh) in Bundelkhand.

The BJP hopes to gain significant electoral advantage from the open wooing of Muslim voters by the ruling Samajwadi Party as well as the Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party.

By carefully calibrating its campaign to project either the SP or the BSP as the main rival in specific areas, the saffron leadership hopes to create circumstances where UP's 19 per cent Muslim votes get split between its rivals. Party insiders say it was part of a strategic course correction to begin projecting BSP as 'the main rival' after the Akhilesh Yadav-Rahul Gandhi alliance. "It's now in our interest that the BSP gains some strength as it will weaken the SP-Congress," says a saffron strategist. Projections seem to suggest that the strategy may be succeeding in seats where Muslims matter.

Shah and other BJP leaders are also working hard to drive home the SP's traditional caste bias. "When you go to a police station with a complaint, they first want to know your caste," the BJP chief tells voters, alluding to the predominance of Yadavs and Muslims in the police force.

It has been a sore point for other castes in the state, where 70 per cent of the constabulary recruited recently under the SP were Yadavs, and a significant number belonged to villages near the Mulayam Singh clan's home district of Etawah and neighbouring Yadav-dominated districts. Sources in the party also point out that over half the 76 deputy collectors appointed recently belong to the caste.

Shah holds up 'Gujarat under the BJP' as a 'shining example' of governance without caste or communal bias. UP, he promises voters, will be similarly transformed.

The BJP's central leadership is confident of taking UP, despite the early problems with ticket distribution and the heartburn amid old loyalists after 22 'outsiders' who joined the party ahead of the polls were nominated as candidates.

Shah and the others believe that there is yet another 'Modi wave' gaining strength in the state, driven by the pro-poor narrative initiated by the PM with demonetisation last November. The party is also banking on central government schemes, such as the Ujjwala LPG scheme for families below the poverty line, the Mudra loan scheme for artisans and small entrepreneurs and the neem-coated urea supply to farmers, all pushed with great vigour in poll-bound UP.

Saffron strategists claim that two of seven rounds of polling in the state will be "weak" for the BJP, particularly in the Moradabad and Terai areas. Even there, Shah claims a "stark contrast" between Prime Minister Modi's image and the efficient delivery of central schemes, and five years under Samajwadi rule. He dismisses UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav's claims of development as belated and empty poll slogans.

He insists that 2016, the last year of the SP's term, was the only period when one did not witness violent





## BATTLEGROUND UP

## BJP strategy for the state

- Pit NDA government's good governance and Modi's image as a clean leader with pro-poor credentials against the corrupt and inefficient BSP and SP governments
- Corner the SP government on the poor law and order situation in the state, the Muslim-Yadav bias in the police
- Expose how the SP government has failed to deliver central assistance to targeted marginalised groups in the state
- Play Hindutva issues such as the 'exodus of Hindus' in Kairana and cow slaughter in the state
- Split the Muslim vote between the SP and BSP

## VICTORY ALREADY

Narendra Modi addresses a rally in Allahabad on Feb. 20

lathicharges on farmer groups demanding urea. Shah claims that this was because of the Centre's injunction to coat all urea supplied to farmers with neem to prevent the fertiliser from being diverted for use in the chemical industry or as a whitening agent in milk.

Besides 'bad governance', the BJP is also targeting the Akhilesh Yadav government for corruption. Party leaders believe that their campaign condemning the SP government as '*loot-khasoot ki sarkar*' actually received a boost after Akhilesh opted to go with the Congress. "People want to know how Akhilesh joined hands with the corrupt Congress while talking of good governance and development," says Kirtivardhan Singh, the BJP MP from Gonda.

Om Prakash Mathur, the BJP general secretary in charge of UP, says the party's strategy is working. He points to the huge, euphoric crowds at BJP rallies. "Compare any of our election rallies with those of our rivals and you'll know who's winning," he says.

Shah's poll rally at Hasanpur in Amroha district on February 5 saw some 35,000 people stay put and hear him tear the SP and BSP to shreds, despite the pouring rain. Encouraged with the response, Shah even tweeted an image of the "*jan sailaab* (flood of humankind)" taken from his departing helicopter.

BJP strategists, including Shah, claim that the party has emerged as the main contender in a majority of the 400 assembly seats. The party's UP spokesman, Chandramohan, says having conceded more than a hundred constituencies to the Congress, and his uncle Shivpal Ya-

dav playing spoiler in another 100, Akhilesh is effectively in the reckoning in just 200 seats.

Saffron leaders are banking heavily on voter fatigue vis-à-vis the regional satraps of the SP and BSP. This, they hope, will make more voters buy into PM Modi's promise of transforming "the destiny of Uttar Pradesh" and opt for the BJP as a party that could also drive the change from the Centre.

Aside from the dissension over allocation of tickets to 'outsiders', the lack of a chief ministerial face is perhaps the BJP's other big handicap in the UP elections. But a senior party leader admitted that this was the only way to go because the "announcement of a CM would have invited more infighting" amid party ranks.

Taking no chances with UP, unlike in the 2015 Bihar assembly polls, the BJP has been careful about including local faces in its campaign in every constituency. And the campaign itself drew lessons from Bihar in crisscrossing the vast state with numerous video vans spreading the message of 'UP ke Mann ki Baat'; and making a note of local concerns and aspirations, Arvind Kejriwal-style, via ballot boxes inviting suggestions from people in every segment. "Unlike Bihar, our campaign in UP does not talk of big-ticket ventures costing thousands of crores. We are talking about what people want," says a party member.

Many pre-poll surveys predict that the BJP will emerge as the single largest party but remain shy of the halfway mark. Amit Shah, however, is confident that the voters of Uttar Pradesh will give what he is demanding—a two-thirds majority.

with Santosh Kumar

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UP ELECTIONS | **INTERVIEW**

# “ALL OUR POTENTIAL CM FACES ARE BETTER THAN AKHILESH AND MAYAWATI”

At the end of a gruelling day addressing election meetings in the Terai and Awadh regions, **AMIT SHAH** took time out to speak to Deputy Editor **UDAY MAHURKAR** aboard a chartered flight from Lucknow to Delhi. Excerpts from an interview in which the BĳP national president spoke on the ruling party’s strategies and prospects in what is a crucial poll for both him and his mentor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi



**Q. Of late, you have been saying that the BJP will win a two-thirds majority. What if Uttar Pradesh turns out to be another Bihar for the BJP?**

**A.** The situation in UP is very different from Bihar. In UP, we are seeking a vote against 15 years of SP and BSP misrule, with the promise of turning things around with a clear-cut roadmap if we come to power. In Bihar, we had been in government only for a few months at the Centre. In UP, the SP and BSP have played the politics of caste and community. So, there is anger among people. In contrast, Narendra Modi's name has emerged as a symbol of good and decisive governance. People have unflinching faith in his promise to change the destiny of the nation.

Moreover, the NDA government has launched a series of genuine pro-poor programmes. It has given 5.9 million LPG connections under the Ujjwala Yojana in UP in less than a year covering over 25 million BPL families. Plus, the prime minister has been decisive on national security issues. India's prestige has reached a new high in the international community. The youth are inspired by Modiji.

**Q. But Akhilesh too has emerged as a symbol of development...**

**A.** Akhilesh's development talk is cosmetic and mere eyewash. It was only after we won the 2014 Lok Sabha poll in UP handsomely on the basis of Modi's development promises that Akhilesh awakened to the reality of development.

But the situation on the ground in UP exposes his development talk. There is no power in villages, farmers are not getting support prices, health services and education are in dire straits, roads across UP are a mess. To top it all, central government schemes that come under the concurrent list and need matching grants from state governments have been poorly implemented because of financial indiscipline and corruption in UP. The Centre's crop insurance scheme couldn't be implemented in UP because the SP government couldn't decide on the insurance agency on time.

**Q. But isn't the lack of a CM face affecting you?**

**A.** I don't think so. Actually, all our potential CM faces are better than Akhilesh and Mayawati.

**Q. Which are those faces?**

**A.** They are in the public domain and I need not elaborate.

**Q. Who are you fighting in UP—the SP or BSP?**

**A.** The fight differs from region to region; what is certain is that we are the main contenders in every seat.

**Q. The SP-Congress alliance seems confident of winning...**

**A.** By giving over 100 seats to the Congress, which has no base in UP, Akhilesh has already conceded defeat. The coming together of the SP and Congress is a coalition of two plundering families. One looted India, the other has looted UP.

**Q. You seem to be underplaying the role of demonetisation. Is it because you fear it might hit you adversely?**

**A.** Not at all. The people of UP are with demonetisation. I am saying this on the basis of personal feedback from the remotest corners of the state. The common man saw it as a courageous move on the PM's part to tackle black money.

**Q. Issues like the 'exodus of Hindus' from Kairana and your promise to shut down slaughterhouses directly affect the Muslims. Is the BJP playing 'soft Hindutva'?**

**A.** The indiscriminate slaughter of cattle in UP's mechanised slaughterhouses has robbed farmers of their life-line in years of drought. UP is the land of Ganga-Jamuna and a state fit for a white revolution. How can the slaughter of thousands of cattle be justified? This is not a communal issue but one of farmer empowerment. Similarly, one has to see the picture on the ground before questioning Kairana.

**Q. You have been citing Bundelkhand as an example to underline the difference between the quality of governance of your party and that of others...**

**A.** Bundelkhand falls in two states—UP and Madhya Pradesh. Both Bundelkhands got a revival package from the Centre in 2009. The BJP government in MP used the package imaginatively to improve the lives of Bundelkhandis by giving them 24 hour power supply and creating good irrigation and agricultural potential. In UP, the Mayawati government and later the SP government failed to capitalise on the opportunity. Today, UP's Bundelkhand is a dark alley, underdeveloped in every way, while MP's Bundelkhand is progressing.

**Q. By announcing a loan waiver for small and marginal farmers, how different are you from your rivals if you too are distributing freebies for the sake of votes?**

**A.** The BJP has proved time and again that it is a party with a difference. The Modi government didn't make the slightest use of the 2017 budget to influence voters in the state elections, thus proving wrong the Opposition, which had sought a postponement of the budget on those grounds. In UP, small and marginal farmers are in dire straits following two years of drought during which the inept SP government couldn't give them succour, not even the benefit of the assistance released by the Centre. Today, even if the government buys their produce and gives them money against the sugarcane crop within two weeks, they can't come out of the hole they are in. So we wanted to give them a one-time benefit of a loan waiver. We have planned 40 dairies in UP as part of our vision to create a sustainable model. We might even bring the Gir cows from Gujarat to UP as part of this vision. ■





CM Ibobi Singh at an election rally in Thambol

ASSEMBLY POLLS | MANIPUR

# EVERYBODY LOVES A GOOD BLOCKADE

As an election gambit, the move to create seven new districts may work for CM Ibobi Singh. But a four-month economic blockade of two highways continues, and nobody seems to know or care how it might end

By Kaushik Deka and Chitra Ahanthem

# A

## T FIRST GLANCE,

S. Milan, a soft-spoken, bespectacled Naga man in his late 40s does not fit the profile. He is, after all, the leader of an organisation that has enforced a four-

month blockade of two national highways, the economic lifeline of Manipur. But the general secretary of the United Naga Council (UNC), the apex civil organisation of the Nagas in Manipur, flares up animatedly when asked about the harassment of ordinary citizens because of the blockade. Thanks to it, there are serpentine lines outside petrol pumps, LPG cylinders cost Rs 2,000 and prices of pulses and vegetables have doubled.

Ensnconced in a sofa in a guesthouse in the state's Naga-dominated Senapati district, Milan's voice shivers with anger as he says: "This is the only language of protest the state government and the Centre understand. This is the reason why you have come from the Indian mainland to write about us."




The ongoing blockade of the two key national highways—NH-2, which connects Imphal to the rest of the country through Nagaland, and NH-37, which connects the Manipur capital with Assam (*see map*)—began on November 1 as a protest against Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh's announcement that his government would create seven new districts in the state. Both roads crisscross the Naga-dominated hill areas of the state where the UNC commands considerable influence. "Between 1981 and 1998, the state government signed four MoUs with Naga organisations such as the UNC and the All Naga Students Association of Manipur (ANSAM), saying no administrative change will be made in Naga ancestral land without consulting the stakeholders. In 2011, the Centre had also assured us of the same," says Milan.

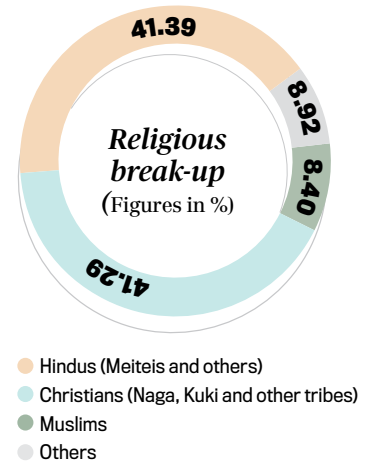
The Imphal valley accounts for 23 per cent of the total land area of Manipur; the surrounding hills make up the rest. The valley shelters 59 per cent of the total population, primarily Meiteis, while the hills are inhabited by the Nagas (18 per cent) and Kukis (8 per cent). Forty of the state's 60 assembly constituencies are in the valley where Meitei support influences electoral outcomes. The Nagas and the Kukis are the deciding factors in 20 hill constituencies. There is a long history of ethnic rivalry among the three communities and economic blockades are

## MANIPUR IN NUMBERS

### THE BIG PLAYERS

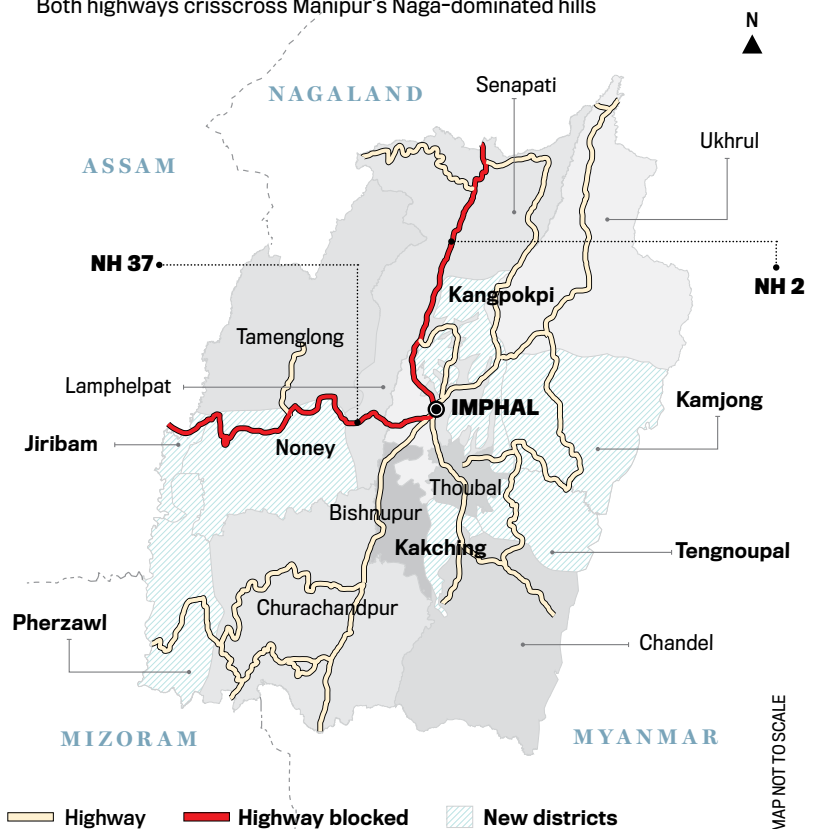
The Congress and BJP will clash for the 40 seats in Imphal valley; the NPF's performance in 20 hill seats will decide their role in government formation

Party	2012	2017
	SEATS WON/CONTESTED	VOTE SHARE SEATS CONTESTING
<b>Congress</b>		
	42/60	42.4% 58
<b>BJP</b>		
	0/19	2.1% 60
<b>NPF</b>		
	4/12	7.5% 15



### THE BIG BLOCKADE

NH-2 and NH-37 connect Imphal to the rest of the country. Both highways crisscross Manipur's Naga-dominated hills





frequently adopted as a form of protest and self-assertion.

With eyes clearly on the elections scheduled for March 4 and 8, Ibobi announced the district reorganisation decision on a day when the Meiteis and Kukis were celebrating local festivals. The creation of new districts has been a demand of both communities for over four decades, and Ibobi could not have found a better time to announce it. The UNC reacted with a blockade but the chief minister did not budge. On December 9, the state government issued a gazette notification creating seven new districts by bifurcating seven of the state's existing nine districts. All five hill districts—Ukhrul (70 per cent Nagas), Senapati (75 per cent Nagas), Tamenglong (65 per cent Nagas), Chandel (75 per cent Kukis) and Churachandpur (98 per cent Kukis)—have been bifurcated. “We have accomplished something that no previous government could do. The creation of the districts was purely for administrative convenience,” says Ibobi.

**T**HE UNC DOES NOT BUY Ibobi's logic. Of particular concern to them is the creation of two districts—Kangpokpi, carved out of the Sadar Hill subdivision of Senapati district, and Noney, carved out of Tamenglong. “The valley comes under the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, but the hills don't come under this law. The land here belongs to the people. The new entities have also been made revenue districts, taking away our rights over ancestral land,” says Joseph Adani, finance secretary of ANSAM. In fact, ownership of land has been at the root of several

ethnic conflicts in the state. While tribals can buy land in the valley, a non-tribal cannot own property in the hills.

The UNC even sees a greater political design in the Kukis' demand for a district in Sadar Hills. “Their objective goes beyond getting a district. They want an independent homeland,” says Milan. The chief minister dismisses the UNC's claim. “Different communities inhabit the districts and they are not the sole property of any community. It was a collective decision taken after serious consultations for a long time. Remember, my deputy CM is a Naga and there are other Naga representatives in the government,” says Ibobi.

For a change, the CM finds support for his action among civil society leaders. “The creation of new districts means development and administrative convenience,” says social scientist Dhanabir Laishram. “Earlier, in most districts, people had to travel for over six hours to reach the district HQ, even for routine jobs like getting a birth certificate. This blockade is engineered by the rebel group, the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah). It doesn't want development as it will reduce their hold in Naga villages.”

The UNC, however, dismisses such allegations. “We have absolutely nothing to do with the NSCN (I-M),” says Milan. “We want an end to this crisis and that is why we participated in two rounds of tripartite talks organised by New Delhi.”

As expected, the two new districts have pleased the Kuki leadership. “Of course, we are grateful to the CM. We have an equal number of MoUs with the government about declaring Sadar Hill area a district. Are the Naga MoUs more sacrosanct than ours?” asks Paotinhang Lupheng, president of



**SAFFRON ZONE** BJP leaders Pema Khandu, Rajnath Singh, Bhabananda Singh, Himanta Biswa Sarma and Ram Madhav at the release of the BJP's vision document for Manipur in Imphal, Feb 19

## “We accomplished something that no former government could do. The creation of the districts was purely for administrative convenience”

**Okram Ibobi Singh**, Manipur chief minister

the Kuki Students Organisation in Imphal.

CM Ibobi's decision has changed electoral equations in the state almost overnight. The Congress party, bogged down by anti-incumbency and dissidence among its own MLAs, suddenly has a spring in its step. By creating the districts, Ibobi has almost neutralised the edge the BJP had gained over the past one year.

After the success in Assam last year, the BJP was hoping to do the same in Manipur. National general secretary Ram Madhav and Assam finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, convenor of the North-East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), a political platform involving 11 regional parties formed by the BJP, have spent considerable time in the state. And the results were showing. The saffron party, which could not win a single seat in the 2012 assembly polls, won 10 seats in last year's civic polls. With its Hindutva plank, the BJP had hoped to enjoy a natural constituency among the Hindu Meiteis. The party's confidence can be gauged from the fact that it is contesting all 60 seats in the state, up from 19 in 2012.

**B**UT CM IBOBI'S LATE MOVE has not only seen him emerge as a hero, subtly championing Meitei pride, but also put the BJP in a Catch-22 situation. The chief minister has left no opportunity to fuel fears among the Meiteis and Kukis that the agreement between the BJP-led Union government and the NSCN (I-M) may infringe upon the territorial integrity of Manipur, that the Centre may give in to their long-standing demand for a 'greater Nagaland', carving out Naga-dominated areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. The discomfort in the BJP camp is palpable as both Union home minister Rajnath Singh and Sarma have had to reiterate that the territorial integrity of Manipur will not be compromised. The fact that the Naga People's Front (NPF) is a coalition partner of the BJP at the Centre (and in the ruling coalition in Nagaland), and is also contesting in Manipur is a cause for concern among valley voters. "Can the BJP categorically say they will not join hands with the NPF after the state elections?" asks Erendro Leichombam, convenor of the People's Resurgence and Justice Alliance (PRJA), a party founded by Irom Sharmila.

Ticket distribution may also impact the BJP's fortunes. The old cadre are unhappy as several turncoats from the Congress and other parties have got tickets. BJP sources say it is banking on the success of the NPF in the hills. If it wins 20 seats in the valley and NPF gets 10, together they can stake a claim to power. "We'll form the government. This new districts' gimmick has annoyed everyone," says Sarma.

A new player in electoral politics, Irom Sharmila, the face of a 16-year protest demanding the repeal of the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act, is hoping her PRJA will sow the seeds of change in the state. The PRJA campaign received a shot in the arm following Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's public support for it. His tweet saying he had donated Rs 50,000 to the party gave a huge fillip to the party's crowdsourcing efforts to raise funds. The PRJA has three candidates in the race, including Sharmila and Erendro. The latter, who has a masters degree in economic policy from Harvard University, is the driving force behind PRJA, organising public meetings, raising funds and running the social media campaign. "Our three demands are: appoint a Lokayukta, create jobs and employment opportunities and revoke AFSPA," Erendro says.

In the meantime, nobody in Manipur has a convincing answer to the basic question: how can an unarmed civil society organisation enforce an economic blockade for over three months, while the state and Centre look on helplessly? Both parties pass the buck on this. "I think there is a political conspiracy to divert attention from the failures of the Congress government. Why is the economic blockade continuing? We have given the state enough central forces, but it is not using them," says home minister Singh. The state says the Centre has sent only 29 companies of paramilitary forces as against the demand for 60.

According to a senior defence ministry official posted in Manipur, it's not possible for the armed forces to keep vigil on the roads 24x7 as the roads are a mess and the hill terrain is difficult. "There have been ambushes of supply convoys. It can happen at any stretch. It's next to impossible to guard the entire stretch of the highway. The problem needs a political solution," he says. A top cop claims that more trucks are entering the state during the blockade than during normal days. "The blockade helps political leaders. We do our job of escorting the trucks to the valley. Yet scarcity is created because it earns political and financial benefits," he says.

Amid all this and the controversies over the continued presence of the armed forces, Bharat Kumar, a 47-year-old CRPF jawan is waiting at a lonely checkpoint, around 15 km northwest of Imphal, for a truck bearing registration number AS 01 GC 1555. This will be the last truck of the day coming through NH-37 and his duty is not over till it passes through to Imphal. "It is likely to reach here by midnight, maybe later. I cannot leave this post till then," he says. It's only 5 pm now and Kumar has a long night ahead. It's the season of waiting in Manipur, waiting for food, petrol, votes, peace. Nobody knows when it will all end. ■



# MUCH ADO OVER VACCINES

*Why the controversy over India snapping off ties with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a partner in the prime minister's new vaccine strategy, can put us all at risk*

By **Damayanti Datta**

**O**sama bin Laden isn't dead. Global warming is a hoax. NASA faked the moon landings. Vaccines cause autism. And Bill Gates... On Wednesday, February 7, conspiracy theorists had a field day when a report emerged: 'Centre shuts health mission gate on Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation'. At the heart of it was a Big Money, Big Pharma, Big Corruption plot: how the biggest philanthropic organisation in the world was "influencing" India's vaccination strategy, to the advantage of global pharma giants. The government's decision to snap ties with BMGF was, apparently, informed by "arguments from senior medical professionals and outfits like the Swadeshi Jagran Manch".

Instantly, the news went viral,

resounding across domestic and international media. The 23 members of the country's highest advisory committee on immunisation—the National Immunisation Technical Advisory Group (NTAGI)—scratched their heads in bewilderment. And the Union ministry for health, with three of its seniormost bureaucrats co-chairing the NTAGI, kicked into overdrive: the vaccination strategy, after all, was one of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship projects. The very next day, on February 8, a press note was released: that the reports were "inaccurate and misleading"; that there was no financial link between NTAGI and BMGF; that the latter continued to "collaborate and support the ministry".

The news comes at a time when India is trying to take its basket of free vaccines for children towards the

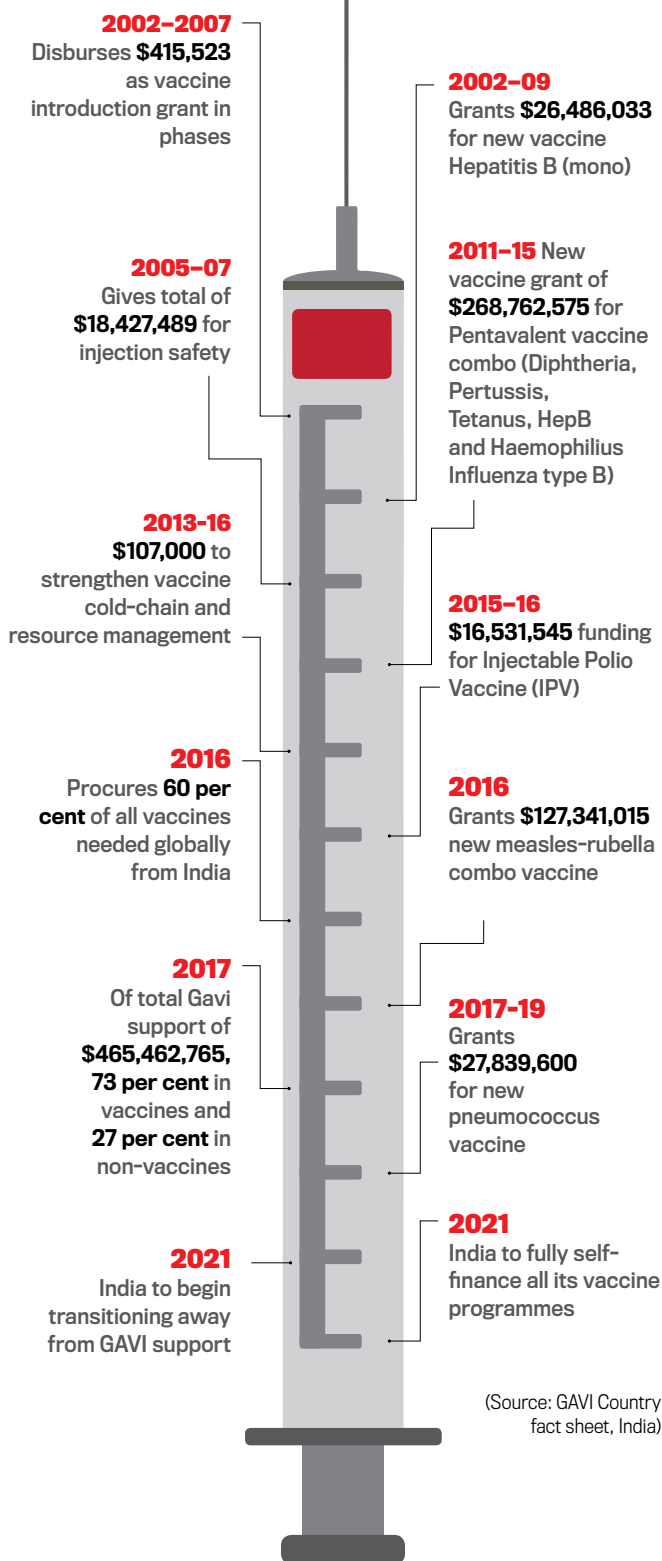




GETTY IMAGES

## SHOT IN THE ARM

Here's how Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, a partnership started by the Gates Foundation to get vaccines to the world's poorest children, supports India



(Source: GAVI Country fact sheet, India)



## IN FOCUS

Four areas and two states the Gates Foundation concentrates on

international standard, after years of remaining static. The prime minister himself has been seeking support from Bill Gates—technocrat, philanthropist and the world's wealthiest man—for his ambitious Universal Immunisation Programme. Four new vaccines have been rolled out across the country this year (see *Pipeline Perks Up*), recommended by the NTAGI and with product support of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI)—an international non-profit partnership, backed by Gates, that works to ensure affordable access to essential vaccines to 73 low- and middle-income countries of the world, backed by Gates.

“Conflict of interest generally refers to when someone participating in a decision-making process seeks to have a decision made that enhances their best interests in some way, usually a financial benefit,” says K. Vijayraghavan, scientist and secretary, Department of Biotechnology, health ministry. “At the NTAGI subcommittee, we ask all members to declare their conflicts of interest and this is done. The policy we follow is similar to that of WHO.”

**T**he Big Money, Big Pharma, Big Corruption plot just doesn't work, adds Dr Soumya Swaminathan, secretary, Department of Health Research, health ministry. To begin with, the NTAGI is not a 'body', but a committee of some of the best scientists, public health experts and civil servants in the country, who take decisions in their independent capacity. The BMGF may have “big money”, but it is not represented in the NTAGI. And as the largest vaccine manufacturers in the world, India itself is 'big pharma'. “If our strategy can be influenced, what does it say about our expertise, intelligence or integrity?” asks Dr Soumya.

And it raises the biggest question of all: the fate of India's under-immunised children, half a million of whom die of vaccine-preventable diseases every



HIV, polio, mother and child, nutrition, vaccines, family planning



Financial services for the poor through new digital banking tools



Increasing access to safe and sustainable sanitation in urban areas



Helping farmers with small holdings, particularly women, increase productivity and income



Bihar and UP, states with high burden of poverty and disease, is where BMGF makes its investments

tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio, India has been carrying on with pretty much the same basket. In 1985, with the measles vaccine added, it got a new name: Universal Immunisation Programme. Yet, 32 years later, of the 27 million babies born each year—more than in any other country—just 62 per cent are fully fortified with vaccines, the rest are at risk of at least 13 life-threatening infections because they are unimmunised or partially immunised. In contrast, 90 per cent of two-year-olds in India's much poorer neighbour, Bangladesh, are fully immunised.

“Vaccination has not been a really regulated thing in India,” says Dr Jayaprakash Muliyl, epidemiologist and former principal of the Christian Medical College in Vellore. Take rubella, for instance. “It causes the silliest disease in the world,” he says, similar to measles, but very mild and transient. “But if you get it in your reproductive age, and you happen to be pregnant, the baby comes out with abnormalities.” India had rubella outbreaks about every seven years, everybody got infected and immune. Things changed with the coming of the expensive measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR) in the private sector in the cities, he explains. The cycle of outbreaks got delayed and started affecting poorer women of child-bearing age in urban areas, who did not have the vaccine, leading to congenital defects. The vaccine, long resisted by the government, has now been made part of routine immunisation. “Vaccination can harm if not done well. And you need a body that can give you advice and direction,” says Muliyl. The NTAGI was streamlined to serve that purpose.

### LAYERS OF EXPERTS

It was only in 2013 that the NTAGI was reconstituted, under the then health secretary Keshav Desiraju. NTAGI is not a body, but a coming together of some of the best scientists, public health experts and civil servants in

year. “We have a long way to go to protect our children,” says Vijayraghavan. “India gives vaccines against eight diseases nationally, whereas the US offers vaccine against 16 diseases.” India needs to more than quadruple its spending on vaccines to protect children. And, Gates, as an international donor, is key in fulfilling that requirement. “Conspiracy theories, without any evidence, can greatly harm the immunisation programme,” adds Dr K. Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India in Delhi.

It's a familiar image: a mother holding a scared, bawling child, while a smiling health worker forces red polio drops down its throat. An essential rite of passage: routine immunisation. First adopted in 1978, with vaccines against

the country, in an advisory capacity, with no executive function. A technical subgroup was created within it. "To avoid criticism that decisions involving scientific matters were being taken by administrators, it was decided that all issues coming to the NTAGI for decision would be examined by the subcommittee," explains Desiraju. Even today, the subcommittee reviews immunisation progress, the evidence base for new vaccines, safety, effectiveness, cost benefit, burden of disease and provides inputs to the full NTAGI, which then sends its recommendations to the health ministry to take the final call.

Within the NTAGI, there is the Immunisation Technical Support Unit (ITSU), funded by the BMGF and located at the Public Health Foundation of India in Delhi. The location outside the ministry was considered correct, as the ITSU functions in a secretarial capacity to the NTAGI, but also handles data, especially related to adverse reactions in clinical trials, says Desiraju. The choice of PHFI was because of its reputation. ITSU was funded by the Gates Foundation, only in order to ensure higher standards and quality of work. "It meant, we could pay better, get more people and better people," says Desiraju. The ministry has been working toward the takeover of ITSU for quite some time. And this has been reported as the "snapping of ties".

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nachiket Mor, the CEO of BMGF in India, was surprised when the news item came out. "That BMGF is driving international pharma is complete nonsense," he says. "The new vaccines introduced successfully by the government are local vaccines, developed by and in India."

The vaccine industry has earned India the recognition of having the largest global capacity, supplying nearly 60 per cent of WHO prequalified vaccines across the world, according to GAVI data. "It was the Government of India that decided to introduce a number of new vaccines into the country, Mor explains. "The NTAGI is run by

**"We must remember some misplaced zealots throw around gratuitous and unfounded allegations"**

**K. VIJAYRAGHAVAN**

Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Government of India

**"India has the money, the vaccines, the supply chain. I am very optimistic that in 2-3 years, the government can do it on its own."**

**NACHIKET MOR**

Gates Foundation CEO & India Country Office Director

the government, owned by the government, financed by the government. It does not have relationship with anyone." What they needed was technical support—a group of people who would understand vaccines, their rollout, the supply chain, the adverse events, and assemble all the data. This is what the ITSU did, with BMGF support.

Ever since Bill and Melinda Gates established the lavishly funded charity in 2000, it has spent over \$36.7 billion on improving global health. In India, the BMGF has worked on vaccines in polio, childhood and maternal mortality, HIV, sanitation, in large projects in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The new rotavirus vaccine for diarrhoeal diseases in children was rolled out this year. It can save 70,000 lives a year, and has been developed in India by Bharat Biotech, with financial support from BMGF. "We don't see ourselves as

permanent players in India. Our role is that of time-bound support," says Mor. The money required to immunise every child in India is not large, he explains, about Rs 6-7 crore per year. "India has the money, the vaccines, the supply chain. It's just a matter of handholding. I am very optimistic that in 2-3 years, the government can do it on its own."

## SOLITARY SCEPTIC

In the meantime, the first phase of ITSU has come to an end. Discussions have started with BMGF for the second phase of the work. "PHFI is carrying out the mandate given to it by the Union ministry for health," says Dr Reddy, "which is providing technical assistance. It will continue to do so in support of the very important national programme, which is the painless saving of child life."

But the NTAGI is also looking within: for vaccine sceptics, conspiracy theorists, people who could have reached out to journalists and fed them with bogus reports and statistics. For the last two years, such stories have come up every six months, members now say: sometimes it's Bill Gates and his shares in MNCs, sometimes on MNCs pushing vaccines to the government, sometimes ineffectiveness of the decisions taken by the NTAGI. "We must keep in mind that gratuitous and unfounded allegations are thrown around by some misplaced zealots," Vijayraghavan points out. "We all have the right to hold our views and the right to a space to air them. Yet, if fear-mongering and baseless claims are not subjected to the same rigour of examination as rigorous science, we have a serious problem."

Vaccines save lives. Those who endlessly block decisions, even after rigorous evaluation at every stage, and do so with specious and untenable arguments must be held to rigorous standards as must be everyone else. Because, at the end of the day, endless delays cost lives. And it is not just a matter of journalistic debate. ■



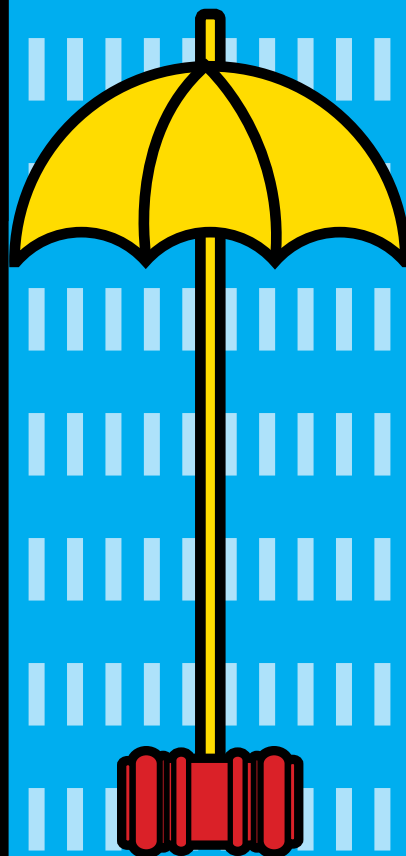
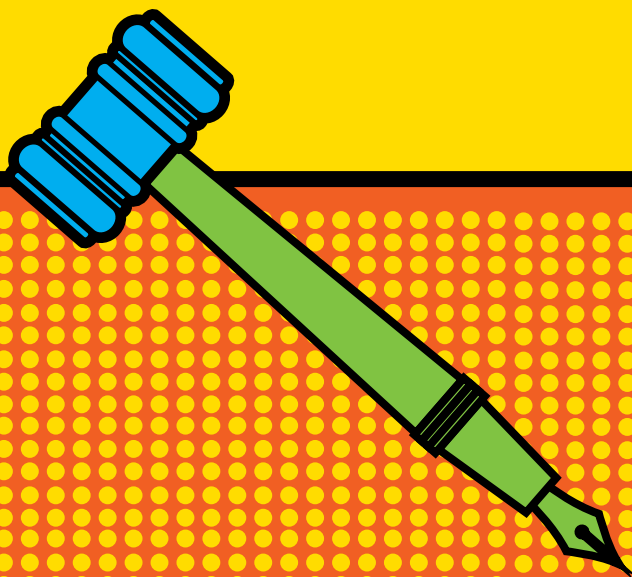
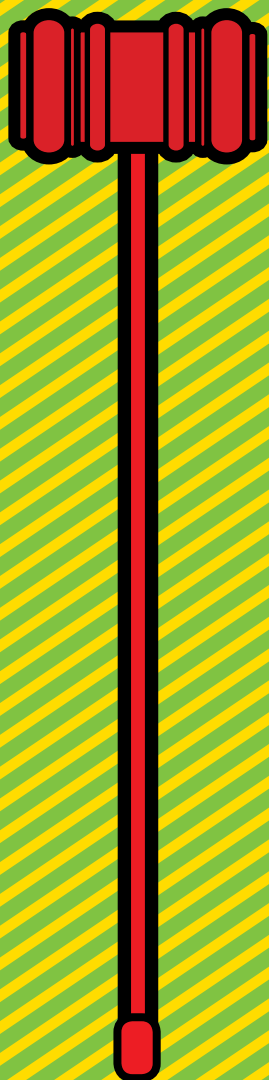
# SMART MONEY

Cover by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY



## WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

- THE LURE OF A FIRST HOME
- INSURANCE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS
- HOWS AND WHYS OF MAKING A WILL



# FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS HAVE IT GOOD

...but Budget 2017 has not been so kind to 'investors'



SHUTTERSTOCK

B

udget 2017 was a mixed bag for real estate investors.

It reduced the holding period for capital gains in sale of real estate to qualify as long-term capital gain to two years (from three earlier). It also changed the base year for calculation of said gains with indexation benefit from 1981 to 2001. While these two changes have brought cheer, the simultaneous move to cap how much loss from house property can be set off against any other income head will be a big damper.

## Property on rent

For property that has been let out, a home buyer can now set off losses only up to Rs 2 lakh a year. Earlier, in case of let-out property bought on a home loan, the owner was allowed to deduct the entire interest cost from income from house property. This generally translated to loss from house property

since the rent yield is low and the home loan interest payment high in the initial years, thereby reducing the tax liability.

For example, if the interest cost on a let-out property was Rs 5 lakh a year, the entire amount was deductible earlier—a tax saving of Rs 1.5 lakh (30 per cent of Rs 5 lakh) for those in the highest tax bracket. Now, the saving on tax will be limited to Rs 60,000 (30 per cent of Rs 2 lakh).

Earlier, owners of let-out property enjoyed a significant tax advantage compared to a self-occupied home. Now, the Rs 2 lakh cap will bring them on par with owners of self-occupied property. This is bound to

₹ **2 lakh**

losses that may be set off from house property against any other income head

## EXPERT VIEW



**Pankaj Kapoor**  
Managing director,  
Liasis Foras

“Since the tax incentive has been reduced substantially for let-out property, it doesn't make sense for retail investors to invest money in property with borrowed capital”



**Surabhi Arora**  
Senior associate  
director, research,  
Colliers International

“Real estate remains a good investment bet provided investors have realistic expectations and hold their investments for at least five to seven years”

impact those who used to buy a second home to save tax. If such investors leave the real estate market, it may hit prices.

## What should investors do?

The budget was expected to provide tax incentives to boost the real estate sector, which has been in the doldrums. But the government has made its priorities clear by introducing tax breaks for affordable housing—it wants to push affordable housing and the purchase of first homes.

Real estate is expected to recover at some point, but experts won't bet when. In any case, real estate prices are unlikely to rise at the pace they did in the past decade. Investors in real estate need to be more realistic about returns and should be willing to hold their investments for the long term.

Those investing with borrowed capital will get fewer tax incentives, and thus lower effective rental yield. So do a cost-benefit analysis before investing.

by Renu Yadav



# INSURANCE COVERS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Staying addicted to your phone is okay if you'll also stay fit

F

or insurers looking to strike a chord with consumers

and establish a relationship that goes beyond annual premiums, digital has become the way forward. As people stay hooked on to their smartphones, mobile apps have become a bankable way to attract consumers. Welcome to the world of new-age insurance policies.

## Health insurance

Health insurers are increasingly using mobile apps to engage with policyholders. Various mobile-based wellness apps have been launched of late. These offer discounts on premium to people who will stay healthy. For instance, Aditya Birla Health Insurance has launched 'Activ Health', a health insurance plan in which staying active and fit can earn policyholders up to 30 per cent discount on premiums. One gets reward points that can be exchanged for cash benefits while paying renewal premiums, inpatient expenses, and for daycare treatment or

outpatient bills.

The physical activity of the policyholder is tracked and points are rewarded accordingly. The policyholder can accumulate points by showing physical activity, such as completing a workout for a minimum of 30 minutes at a gym, recording 10,000 steps in a day, burning 300 calories in one exercise session per day or participating in a recognised marathon or a similar activity.

Similarly, under the Apollo Munich health insurance policy, you can earn up to 8 per cent discount on the renewal premium. Just clock a minimum 10,000 steps a day for this bonanza.

## Motor insurance

Now, driving skills can decide how low your motor insurance premium will be. Bajaj Allianz General Insurance has recently launched a value-added feature called 'Drive Smart' for its motor insurance policy. Based on how well you drive, it allows you to save as much as 30 per cent on your premium. The 'Drive Smart' vehicle tracking system also



SHUTTERSTOCK

## EXPERT VIEW



**Antony Jacob**  
CEO, Apollo Munich Health Insurance

“Mobile telephony will play a big role for health insurers. Features such as tracking fitness, heartbeat, etc. will help them reward customers who aim to get fit”



**Manik Nangia**  
Director and chief digital officer, Max Life Insurance

The industry has been talking about the wellness concept. Policyholders can earn discounts on premium by staying fit. Insurers, too, get to stay in touch with them”

provides features such as driving summary, update on the condition of the vehicle, such as engine and battery, safety alerts, such as overspeeding, and tracking mechanisms, such as the last noticed location or address of the vehicle.

Within two weeks of buying the policy, Bajaj Allianz delivers the Drive Smart device, which has to be placed in the vehicle. You then need to install the mobile app 'Insurance Wallet' on your Android or iOS smartphone. Once you synchronise the app with the Drive Smart device, the insurance company starts monitoring you.

A word of caution for those interested: be mindful of privacy issues. To earn the reward points, you will need to be tracked by the insurance company.

**by Teena Jain Kaushal**

# WHERE THERE IS A WILL...

There is clarity about who gets the estate. Here's how to make one



SHUTTERSTOCK

A

will brings order to the distribution of your wealth after

your time. It also helps family members get a list of your assets so that none of it goes waste. According to questions answered in the Lok Sabha and data released by regulatory bodies, about Rs 64,000 crore is lying unclaimed with banks, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation, insurance firms, corporate houses and post offices. As per a survey by online will-maker Willjini, less than 1 per cent individuals with means may have made a will.

## What a will can include

A will includes details of all assets, movable and immovable. It also includes

artefacts, intellectual properties, including patents and copyrights. A will is the legal expression of a desire to distribute one's personal assets. Even a decision like donating one's organs can be specified in a will.

## Traditional will or e-will?

A will can be handwritten by the testator, made by a legal professional, or can be drawn up online. Websites giving e-will services also offer offline assistance. Online will-makers charge between Rs 1,500 and Rs 15,000 (plus taxes), depending on how detailed you want the will to be. Traditional will-makers charge on the basis of time and effort.

## How it becomes legal

A will must be made by someone who is of sound mind and who is not under

any duress. A minor cannot make a will. It must be written clearly and unambiguously, and signed by the creator and two witnesses. A soldier, airman employed in actual warfare or mariner at sea can make an oral will in front of two witnesses. But such a will becomes null and void after a month if the creator is still alive.

## Registration of a will

It is not mandatory to register a will. However, registration of a will, whether created online or offline, becomes evidence of its genuineness. It adds to the authenticity of the will just in case someone challenges it. A will cannot be registered online. You need to visit the local sub-registrar's office along with two witnesses.

by Avneet Kaur

## EXPERT VIEW



**Jatin S. Popat**  
Founder, Willjini.com



As no one is aware of his/her 'date of expiry', it is important to make a will once an individual acquires some assets"



**Abhishake Mathur**  
Head, Investment Advisory Services, ICICI Securities

"For most financial products, it is not the nominee but the beneficiary named in the will who will become the owner of it



## Quick Facts

- A will supersedes all nominations made in bank accounts, insurance policies, post office accounts and other financial assets
- A will can be modified. Some online platforms allow a time window during which you may make changes. In order to make changes after the window closes, an additional document, called 'codicil', is attached to the original will, which then becomes part of the will
- In the absence of a will, your estate will be divided on the basis of applicable personal law or religion



# UNEXPECT THE EXPECTED

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# VR LIKE THIS ONLY

**VIRTUAL REALITY  
COMES TO TINSEL TOWN  
AND BOLLYWOOD IS  
QUICK TO HOP ON TO  
THE GRAVY TRAIN**

**By Suhani Singh**



**A** YOUNG WOMAN GETS LOCKED in a bathroom. She is not alone. You, the viewer, are with her. Suddenly, water starts flowing from the tap. Blood spills into the bathtub. The shower curtains snap shut. The lights flicker and the screams begin.

The scene's spooky enough. But the fear is magnified when viewed through the burgeoning new technology of virtual reality (VR). The only way out is to remove the head-mounted device.

Made by Meraki VR Studio, one of the few that specialise in VR content, the three-minute horror short demonstrates the appeal of VR. With a smartphone, a VR headset and earphones, not only does the viewer get a 360-degree perspective of an imagined space (a movie) or reality (live sport coverage)

but also control on what he or she wants to see. "A lot of people are picky about holding the audience's attention," says Sairam Sagiraju, one of the founders of Meraki Films. "There is a lot of unlearning needed from 2D. In VR, there is no blind spot. It is a lot about letting go."

### Illusion of Grandeur

VR has caught the imagination of the Indian film industry. Both the Mumbai Film Festival last October and the Film Bazaar in Goa the following month had a VR lounge. If cinephiles recoiled at a train coming straight at them at breakneck speed in Chris Milk's *Evolution of Verse*, they found themselves participating in a 12-year-old Syrian girl's life in a refugee camp in *Clouds over Sidra*. Filmmaker Shakun Batra (of *Kapoor & Sons*' fame), curator of the VR sidebar at the Mumbai film festival, says, "VR

^ Seen through virtual reality, Radhika Apte's *Phobia* becomes your own



# SHORT WORK

*A few compelling stories, in all their virtual reality detail*



## Pearl

**Where:** Google Spotlight Story

The animated short by Patrick Osborne, the first VR film to be nominated for an Oscar, is set in a hatchback



## Clouds Over Sidra

**Where:** Within

Gabo Arora & Chris Milk set out to document 12-year-old Sidra's life in a refugee camp in Za'atari, Jordan



## When Land Is Lost, Do We Eat Coal?

**Where:** UNVR and ElseVR

Faiza Ahmed Khan & Aruna Chandrashekar on how mining has disrupted the lives of Korba adivasis

is not a fad or a gimmick. It's not a substitute for movies but a new platform for storytelling where you can create immersive worlds and soundscapes impossible in 2D or 3D."

Bollywood is all set to ride the VR gravy train. The *Baahubali* series is among the first to hop on. "*Baahubali* has so much FX and digital assets that the idea of VR made perfect sense," says Raja Koduri, senior vice-president, Radeon Technologies Group, AMD, which collaborated with Arka Media Works and *Baahubali* director S.S. Rajamouli on two VR films: a set visit of the much-anticipated *Baahubali: The Conclusion* and the in-the-works *Sword of Baahubali*, which will be unveiled weeks before the epic's release in April. "VR going mainstream is a function of cost and time," says Koduri. "Just like high-end PC performance has come down in price over the years, so will accessibility to VR technologies."

Koduri was echoing a January 2016 Goldman-Sachs report on VR/AR (augmented reality) which said it would be a \$80 billion industry by 2025. "VR/AR has the potential to spawn a multibillion-dollar industry, and possibly be as game-changing as the advent of the PC," it said. From video games, live events and movies to healthcare, real estate, retail, education, engineering and military, the potential of VR is endless. "Watching an event in VR will make a user feel like they're physically attending the event with the best seat in the house," it said. In the United States, the CNN did VR streaming of the first US presidential Democratic debate.

## VR for everyone

Breaking the fourth wall, VR helps you become audience and participant simultaneously, living the experience playing out before you, such as the waiter in VR Mad Studio's short who is catering to an indecisive young couple out on a date. One of the many perks of VR, according to studio head Madhusudhan Balasubramanian, is that the viewer can access a realistic experience sitting at home on his phone.

Gautam Pandey of Riverbank Studios in Delhi is using the medium to capture India's scenic beauty. He developed his own camera rigs to document Ladakh on his bike and has now been commissioned to shoot the 100-acre forest land of the Jaberghet Nature Reserve in Uttarakhand. Even the real estate industry is taking to VR. Smart Vizx, a studio in Delhi, is making VR footage for builders who want to give buyers a virtual sense of the space. In April 2016, Tata Motors sent out two million DIY cardboard



## READY, HEADSET, GO

Have a smartphone with gyroscope sensors? Then get one of these VR headsets

- ❶ **Homido** Rs 5,000    ❷ **VR Box** Rs 500 onwards
- ❸ **Samsung GearVR** Rs 8,000    ❹ **DomoVR** Rs 1,000 onwards
- ❺ **Google Cardboard** Rs 300 onwards

## APPS TO SNAP

Five apps that give you a VR experience like no other



### Within

Access the extraordinary work of Chris Milk, one of the leading filmmakers in VR



### Jaunt VR

The US-based studio makes VR content on sports, travel etc, and has a section devoted just to Paul McCartney



### GoProVR

Engaging shorts shot using GoPro cameras



### DiscoveryVR

Discovery Channel lets you fly a helicopter on Mount Everest, take a Gondola ride in Venice and more



### ElseVR

The mixed reality magazine features VR and AR footage along with essays and photographs

VR headsets in three editions of a leading daily for readers to experience a virtual test drive of their car Tiago via an app.

Anand Gandhi, national award-winning filmmaker of *Ship of Theseus*, is also bitten by the VR bug. His Memesys Culture Lab produced its first VR documentary, *When Land is Lost, Do We Eat Coal?*, on the Korba mines in Jharkhand, bringing alive the visceral landscape and providing a first-hand experience of the devastating consequences of mining on the Kanwar adivasis who have lost their

houses and access to drinking water and electricity. The Lab recently launched ElseVR (pronounced Elsewhere), both a website and an app, which publishes essays and stories that incorporate VR/AR to enable readers to experience “the immediacy of film with the intimacy of VR”. So far, it has covered the women’s agitation for entry into the sanctum of the Trimbakeshwar temple in Nashik, the impact of the floods in Bihar and the lives of Dalits. The film *Caste is not a Rumour* leaves the viewers shaken as

they find themselves inside a manhole a Dalit man is cleaning, and again has them flinching at the lynching of four Dalit youth in Una. “It is forcing the way you look at things and changing the way you engage with stories,” says Shubhangi Swarup, executive editor, ElseVR. “It is a breakthrough not just in technology but also in storytelling. It is both an opportunity and a challenge for filmmakers.”

## A new perspective

“VR is essentially a new storytelling format that will require different writing and producing techniques than traditional movies and TV,” says the Goldman Sachs report. The director has to consider the very specific grammar of VR. “The frame is a sphere as opposed to a rectangle or square,” filmmaker Michel Reilhac said at the Film Bazaar in Goa. Reilhac, who headed the VR NEXT sidebar at Cannes 2016, recommends writing spatially, focusing on the design of the film and building audience interaction through the story. “VR filmmaking is closer to theatre than cinema,” he says.

Indian cinema has just begun flirting with the medium. However, Oscar-winning composer A.R. Rahman’s Live-in-VR Vande Mataram concert film, shown at the Film Bazaar in Goa, offered nothing more than a 360-degree view. Filmmakers need to concentrate on the design of the film—from the sets to the location. “The landscape is the primary protagonist,” says Khushboo Ranka of ElseVR. “The visual spectacle can’t be ignored. You have to think more visually and then ensure it translates well cinematically.” Also, since wearing a clunky headset with a phone placed so close to the eyes can cause dizziness, fatigue, even nausea, filmmakers are advised to keep to the 15-minute mark.

Next up on ElseVR is filmmaker and writer Sooni Taraporewala’s film on Amir and Manish, two ballet dancers from Mumbai, who overcame all odds to win scholarships to study at the Oregon Ballet Theater, US. “When she started, their US visas had been rejected twice,” says Shubhangi Swarup. “It’s an emotionally compelling narrative.” More such stories need to be told. We are game for VR. ■



Sometimes a lot can be said with very little. Tune into Big Shorts and Bigger Ideas, small films with huge impact, at the India Today Conclave, March 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

#InDefenceOfFreedom



#LifeSupport



#ThisBloodyLine



#Before&After



Also premiering excerpts from the films

#DearAmerica written by Waris Ahluwalia

#Azmaish directed by Sabiha Sumar featuring Kalki Koechlin

# #BIGSHORTS

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Premiering on March 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
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ON YOUTUBE  
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THE NAWABS  
PG 102

# LEISURE

BLUETOOTH  
YOUR LIFE  
PG 101

RANA DAGGUBATI  
TALKS MUSCLE  
PG 106



**GURINDER CHADHA**  
at the Berlinale  
with the stars of  
*Viceroy's House*

CINEMA

## Partition Saga

“In 2005, I went to Pakistan to find my grandfather’s home for the BBC programme *Who Do You Think You Are?*” said Gurinder Chadha, in an interview at the premiere of her latest film *Viceroy’s House* at the Berlin International Film Festival. “It was the house he was forced to abandon in Pakistan during Partition in 1947, and my father’s sister had starved to death during that time. The house had become home to several Muslim families, whose parents had all fled India during Partition. One woman welcomed me, saying, ‘My family came from India in 1947. I am Indian like you.’ Then an old Pakistani man said, ‘This is your



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home, please come back any time. We will be watching the road waiting for your return.' I burst into tears. I knew then that I had to make a film on my family's story."

A UK-India co-production, *Viceroy's House* stars **Hugh Bonneville** as Lord Mountbatten, **Gillian Anderson** as Edwina Mountbatten, Manish Dayal as Jeet Kumar, Huma Qureshi as Aalia and **Om Puri** as Noor, Aalia's blind father. The film is timely, as 2017 is the 70th anniversary of Partition.

The film, which played in the Out of Competition section here and opened to mixed reviews, is due for release in the UK on March 3. It is a grand, sweeping period film on the cusp of history, yet zeroes in on the intimate moments that make Partition unforgettable even for those who didn't experience it firsthand. Set in the Viceroy's

House, later Rashtrapati Bhavan, it looks at life upstairs, lived with pomp and pageantry, and downstairs, where 500 Hindu, Muslim and Sikh servants toil in their service. The central dilemma, of course, is Mountbatten's: whether to grant India independence as a single, secular nation dominated by 300 million Hindus, or whether to partition it into India and the Muslim-majority state of Pakistan.

We see the behind-the-scenes hard bargaining between the British, Mahatma Gandhi (Neeraj Kabi), Jawaharlal Nehru (Tanveer Ghani) and their rival Mohammed Ali Jinnah (Denzil Smith). As communal violence explodes across India, killing thousands, the Viceroy is forced to accelerate his independence plan by almost a year.

The story is underpinned by the romance between Jeet Kumar, who is on Mountbatten's staff, and his Muslim sweetheart Aalia, who is on Edwina's staff. Gillian Anderson steals the show as Edwina. Clearly a more astute politician than her husband, she demonstrates more empathy for the working class and helps in the refugee camps. But the film suffers somewhat by justifying all the villains of history and making them victims of circumstance, including Mountbatten (got the job too late, had no choice), Sir Cyril Radcliffe (implemented a fait accompli drawn by Churchill) and Jinnah (didn't get all he wanted, all the Muslim-majority areas of India). This takes the punch out of the central good versus bad conflict.

However, there are also poignant moments, as when the blind, ageing Om Puri (one of his last roles before he died in January) realises, too late, that his daughter Aalia, engaged since childhood to a Muslim boy, is in love with Jeet. Aalia was on a train to Pakistan, but everyone on it was killed, except her. The dramatic, last-reel reunion with Jeet in a refugee camp, while cathartic, is *trop* Bollywood.

Still, many from the younger generation know little about Partition, and the film is a welcome and timely reminder of how the British policy of divide and rule still rules our destiny. ■

—Meenakshi Shedde in Berlin



## WATCHLIST

## AABA



India had a good showing at the Berlinale. Amar Kaushik's short *Aaba* won a special jury prize for telling a story "of the circle of life... with beautiful cinematography", while Amit Masurkar's *Newton* walked away with the CICAIE Art Cinema Award in the Forum section.

## THE UNRESERVED



An hour-long documentary featuring a train ride across India, interspersed with poignant conversations and stunning scenery. Also destined for the festival circuit, it leaves viewers with a fascinating view of the complexities of India and its people. Available on YouTube.

## VELVET REVOLUTION



Premiering at the 13th IAWRT Asian Women's Film Festival in Delhi March 2-4, this film celebrates female journalists. It features **Malini Subramaniam**, for her work on tribals in Bastar, and journalists from *Mahila Navodayam*, a Telugu monthly challenging caste hierarchies.



## FOOD

# Back to the Roots

Thanks to wealthy Indians' obsession with the exotic, and the Green Revolution's emphasis on wheat and rice, today's farmers prefer to grow quinoa rather than indigenous crops. But now a handful of chefs, caterers and entrepreneurs are attempting to popularise India's little known and sometimes severely threatened grains and vegetables—taking inspiration from the knowledge that Latin America's quinoa, too, was on the brink of extinction before its high protein content made it a global fad.

Chefs such as Thomas Zakaria of **Bombay Canteen** and Prateek Sadhu of **Masque** are using these traditional alternatives to recreate old favourites. Chef Zakaria uses bamboo rice to make khichdi, while chef Sadhu makes wide use

of fiddlehead fern. There are others as well. For example, in a pre-emptive strike against the GMO eggplant, Aditya Raghavan and Anandita Kanmani's Mumbai-based **Danda Food Project** recently highlighted the use of three different types of eggplant at their first food pop-up event.

This shift toward **traditional crops** is evident in the business side of things as well: entrepreneurs like Reena Sathe of Happy Roots and Puneet Jhajharia and Ishira Mehta of Crop Connect are finding innovative ways to bridge the gap between the farmer and the consumer. Traditions might be waning among local communities, but all is not lost. Companies such as First Agro have been working on creating seed banks to protect India's genetic diversity. ■

—Moeena Halim

**QUINOA WAS ONCE ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION, UNTIL ITS HIGH PROTEIN CONTENT MADE IT A GLOBAL FAD**





# INDIE ROCKERS

A 'DREAM POP' DUO FROM KOLKATA IS MAKING INTERNATIONAL WAVES

SUBIR HALDER

Nischay Parekh and Jivraj Singh, indie rockers from Kolkata, have long been part of the city's music scene. Having inked a five-album deal with London's Peacefrog records last year, the duo is now working on their second album, and is set to embark on a tour of the UK in May. Better known as **Parekh and Singh**, their sound has been described as Death Cab for Cutie meets The Smiths, but Parekh says it could just as easily be Louis Armstrong meets Nina Simone. "We've grown up listening to nearly every kind of music. We don't mind wearing our influences on our sleeves," says Singh. They performed together in 2010—and opened for Norah Jones at an NH7 Weekender in 2013. Parekh, 24, studied guitar with Kolkata stalwart Tajdar Jun-

aid, while 30-year-old Singh is the son of musicians Gyan and Jayshree Singh (once of Skinny Alley).

Last year, Peacefrog re-released their 2013 album *Oceans*, with a video of their song *I Love You Baby, I Love You Doll*. The video—in which the duo wore now-famous pastel-coloured suits—has garnered more than 320,000 views. The Kolkata setting is the most recognisably Indian thing about it, but there are hints of home in their lyrics as well. In *Philosophise*, Parekh writes with an almost immigrant angst: *I've got a New York state of mind/ In Indian standard time*. It should be no surprise that the song was written at the Berklee School of Music, Boston, where Parekh was studying at the time. ■

—Malini Banerjee

## POP

# Justin Time for Bieber

Ankit Mishra, 18, a student from Indore, was one of the few Beliebers who believed Justin Bieber would bring his Purpose tour to India. When he tweeted his favourite artiste about performing here, Bieber—who follows Mishra on Twitter—replied: "I'll be your life line tonight", a line from his hit, *Cold Water*, which Mishra listens to every day. Instead of replying *What do you mean*, Mishra took it as a yes—and

when it was finally confirmed, Mishra started the #ThankYouJustinFromIndia hashtag, which trended on Twitter. (With over 44,000 followers of his own, Mishra also has a tutorial up on YouTube to help others get Bieber to follow them.) For his part, Mishra hopes to get a VIP ticket to the **concert on May 10** in Mumbai, and is praying that his exams don't get in the way. ■

—Suhani Singh

GETTY IMAGES





# “THE END OF FASHION, AS WE KNOW IT”

Q &amp; A

**Lidewij Edelkoort, often called Li, is one of the world's foremost trend forecasters. Born in the Netherlands, she advises fashion and consumer brands around the world. In 2003, Time magazine named her one of the 25 most influential people in fashion. She was director of Design Academy, Eindhoven, from 1998 to 2008, and helped found the School of Form in Poznan, Poland, in 2011. Since 2015, she has served as the dean of hybrid studies at The New School's Parsons School of Design, US.**

**Last year, you said it was “the end of fashion as we know it”. What did you mean?**

The system of fashion has become obsolete. It is not working any more.

**How do you rate Indian fashion?**

I was very happy with some of what I saw in Bengaluru and Delhi. There is real revival of ‘Indian-ness’—in the use of colours and crafts—but in a contemporary way. In this, India is ahead of China.

**What do you see as the role of**

**technology in fashion?**

Technology has not really touched fashion yet. I think it will do so when it comes to textiles. I see technological fibres being merged with natural fibres to create futuristic yarns. Sensors will be woven into clothes. We will no longer need ‘wearable gadgets’; technology is integrated into the textile. I am working on this at Parsons. We are looking to try and merge Silicon Valley [California] and Hudson Valley [New York, hub of fashion].

**How do you predict trends?**

My process is based on intuition and fed by observations. I observe continuously; I call it the archaeology of the future. There is so much information... in conversations, in meeting people, or visiting fairs and reading about art. Most people store such information without even realising it. Sometimes, you find key fragments. After you collect these fragments and put them together, you can project into the future the same way that an archaeologist who has dug up fragments of information can project into the past. ■

—with Nilanjan Das

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# THE AGE OF THE JACKASS



## JUNGLE BOYS

A still from a Fiverr Funny Guys video shows them prepping

## HOW DUNNIT?

They also post 'behind the scenes' videos to YouTube



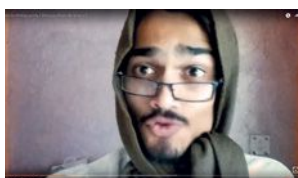
Until a week or so ago, Felix Kjellberg, aka **PewDiePie**, was the most famous person you'd never heard of, a pop cultural superstar with over 50 million fans, earning millions of dollars in endorsements, but still somehow under the radar. If, that is, the radar is mainstream culture as defined by mainstream media. Not that mainstream media has been entirely oblivious. According to *Forbes*, Kjellberg earned \$15 million in 2016. The next highest paid YouTube star made \$8 million. *Time* magazine even named him in its list of '100 Most Influential People'.

But Kjellberg's empire imploded when he posted a video of two Tamil-speaking boys holding a sign that read 'Death to All Jews'. *The Wall Street Journal* noticed, calling him anti-Semitic. Sponsors dropped him, and Google, which owns YouTube, has taken him off a list of 'preferred' content-providers. Kjellberg has apologised but also put the blame on mainstream media for trying to "destroy" him.

The two Indian boys—who call themselves **Fiverr Funny Guys**—have made their own apology video, titled, almost self-parodically, 'My Kind Apologies'. Kjellberg hired them to make the original, offensive video through Israeli-owned website Fiverr, which offers a plethora of services that can be bought at a starting price of \$5. They claim not to have known what 'Jews' meant. They did not

## TUBE TOPS

(Top to bottom) YouTube has birthed several new stars, like Crazy Sumit, Bhuvan Bam and Kanan Gill



respond to e-mail requests for comment.

While much of the controversy has been about **anti-Semitism**, few have commented on the tastelessness of exploiting the boys' services. Of course, the boys have put themselves online as willing to say or do more or less anything for \$5; it is, no doubt, a reasonable source of income for them. They are also savvy enough to know there is a market in the West for 'jungle boys' with strong accents who play the fool. A typical video shows them waist deep in river water singing 'Happy Birthday' while pretending to cry. This is contemporary minstrelsy. And the boys and their customers are either too stupid or too indifferent to care.

Popular Indian YouTube channels tend to be things like T-Series, which rivals and even surpasses PewDiePie in pageview numbers. **All India Bakchod** are immensely popular, though, and their American-inflected brand of 'shock' humour has resulted in FIRs being filed. Last month, Sumit Verma, **The Crazy Sumit**, was arrested in Delhi for posting a video on YouTube of him kissing unsuspecting women in Connaught Place before fleeing. The women were apparently in on the prank. Clearly, the next battle for 'freedom' is over the universal right to act like a fratboy moron. And PewDiePie, leader of a movement, will have plenty of Indian soldiers on the frontlines. ■

—Shougat Dasgupta

# Where fashion gets personal



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INDIA





STAND-UP COMEDY

## THE WONDERFUL IZZARD

A major force hit India in high heels, lipstick and mascara in February. Cross-dressing comedian **Eddie Izzard** performed three sold-out shows in **Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru** as part of his Force Majeure tour. Rated among the most original stand-up comics of his generation, Izzard has a special language ability; he has performed in French, in which he is fluent, as well as German, Russian, Spanish and Arabic, languages he doesn't actually know. He has an honorary doctorate for promoting internationalism.

No, he didn't use any Hindi or Marathi or Kannada. (He did compare the Welsh accent with the Indian accent. Conclusion: Welsh-on-cocaine sounds Indian, just as an Indian-on-marijuana sounds Welsh.) Sashaying in to David Bowie's *Fame*, he opened the Delhi gig with the nuances of human sacrifice. History, though, is what he was really after. Beginning with the beheading of Charles I (CharlieOne, puhleez), he went back to Richard the Lionheart and Julius Caesar, stringing together the bravery of many emperors in the overarching theme of chickens. Cluck cluck. (His skills are not limited to human language; or to comedy, for he will appear in the upcoming film, *Victoria and Abdul*.)

The audience was quite familiar with his older material, and there were frequent calls for particular jokes. At 55, Izzard is turning old and mellow. "I love how he moves on the stage, what he can do with his body," said Samia Singh, a young illustrator and singer, walking out after the show, her facial muscles stretched by laughter.

"The foreign stand-ups attract an older audience, who are familiar with international material and have the spending power. But Indian comics attract greater numbers, up to 10 times. There are newcomers, even. The tickets are cheaper," says Vijay Nair, CEO of event management company OML, which organised the show. OML has showcased comics like Russell Peters and Bill Burr. Two years ago, they almost brought **Jerry Seinfeld**, perhaps the most popular stand-up comic around, to India; the show was cancelled after Mumbai police refused parking permission. OML also handles several Indian comics, including AIB and Zakir Khan. Izzard, though, is the biggest name yet to perform in India. So who else is on the list? Nair refused to divulge any names. How about Louis C.K., Vijay? ■

—Sopan Joshi



Cross-dressing comedian Eddie Izzard sashays on to the stage



# Starry Starry Night

The clock is ticking on that one night of the year when stars shine their brightest. Some Oscars moments

WOW

Films that won the most awards: *Ben-Hur* (1960), *Titanic* (1999), *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2004)—11 each



Who can forget Audrey Hepburn singing *Moon River* on the balcony of her apartment in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 1961?



All-time Best Actress champ, Katharine Hepburn won 4 Oscars, but never came to the ceremony to receive any

"Al otro lado del río (On the other side of the river)," an acoustic guitar-driven ballad in *The Motorcycle Diaries*, 2004



Most wins in Oscar history: Walt Disney, with 29 awards

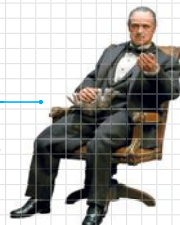
Meryl Streep has been nominated an astonishing 20 times and won 3 Oscars



Legendary director Martin Scorsese won his first Oscar in 2007. "Could you double-check the envelope?" he joked



Marlon Brando declined the award for Best Actor for *The Godfather* in 1973, to protest treatment of American Indians in Hollywood



The surprise appearance of Christopher 'Superman' Reeves at the 1996 Oscars, a year after he became wheelchair-bound, sparked endless applause



Summer of '42: Michel Legrand got his first Oscar in 1972 with this score for the coming-of-age drama



Jennifer Lawrence took a tumble in 2013, and again in 2014, but got up and laughed it off

Halle Berry became the first and only African-American so far to win Best Actress (*Monster's Ball*, 2002)

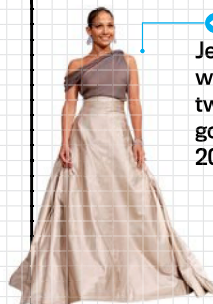


80-year-old Jessica Tandy made history in 1990 as the oldest Best Actress, for *Driving Miss Daisy*

Cher's outlandish Mohawk outfit in 1986. Rumour: didn't get a nomination for *Mask* because of it



Angelina Jolie's brotherly love in 2000, an open-mouthed kiss in front of the cameras



Jennifer Lopez, for wearing not one but two very revealing gowns—at the Oscars in 2001 and 2012



When a naked man suddenly streaked past presenter David Niven, flashing the peace sign for gay rights, in 1974

OOPS

SIGHS

CHEERS



# (RE)KINDLING NASTALIQ

While the third edition of the annual Urdu festival—Jashn-e-Rekhta—was met with considerable excitement and large crowds in Delhi last week, the legacy of this language is under threat. Government support is waning. Last year, the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Literature changed its rules, saying those seeking funds for research would have to sign a declaration that no ‘anti-national’ writing would be promoted. Even the NEET—a national entrance test for undergraduate studies in Medicine—recently dropped a provision allowing for the exam to be taken in Urdu. Fortunately for Urdu lovers, the **Rekhta Foundation**, which organised the Delhi festival, has also taken on the task of **digitising Urdu manuscripts** and making them available online—for free.

So far, the foundation has uploaded **25,000 e-books**, in collaboration with 13 major collections across the country. These include public libraries in Lucknow, Delhi, Rampur, Allahabad, Hyderabad and Patna as well as private collections like the Naval Kishore Press. The publications span over two centuries, and include poetry, fiction, science texts and law books; there is even a section on textbooks for students from deprived backgrounds.

“We did face some hurdles such as worries over copyright issues,” says Rekhta founder Sanjiv Saraf. “But as people started benefitting from easy access to the material, institutions started coming forward themselves.” There are even instances of scholars requesting specific documents from the organisation—which then tries to locate copies. The foundation’s team also boasts several retired academics and writers. Dr Anisur Rahman, retired from Jamia Millia Islamia, says, “It’s important to recognise that the technology of knowledge dissemination has changed and to turn to electronic modes of preservation.” ■

—Kamayani Sharma

**REKHTA FOUNDATION HAS TAKEN ON THE TASK OF DIGITISING URDU MANUSCRIPTS AND MAKING THEM AVAILABLE**

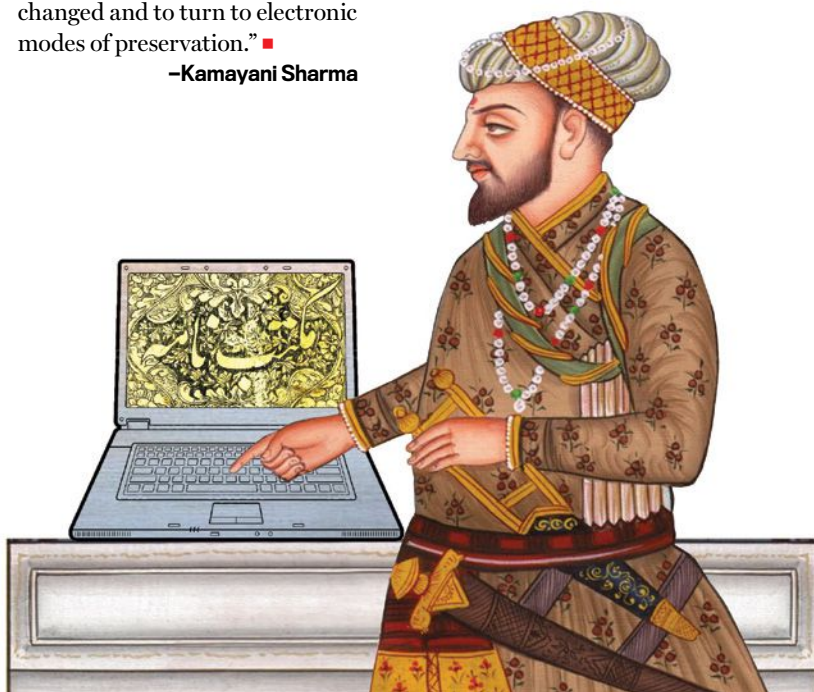


Illustration by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

## LEISURE



LANGUAGE

## The Lilt Is Back

Our age sits atop a graveyard of languages. The state of Urdu isn’t anything like Bo, a Great Andamanese language (its last speaker died in 2010), but its decline is bemoaned, in the active voice. Not just in the radio programmes that play old Urdu-Hindustani film songs, but in literary circles too.

The Jashn-e-Rekhta—its third annual edition was held with great success in Delhi last week—is a lot more than a literary event. It is truly a festival. Varied cuisines, items of clothing, books, knick-knacks, qawwali and ghazal, storytelling... and a jam-packed fairground. “Who’d have thought an entrepreneur like **Sanjiv Saraf** will achieve in three years what several state bodies couldn’t in decades?” says a scholar come from Lucknow.

Should we ready ourselves for an Urdu revival, then? Will corporate munificence do what state patronage could not? Difficult to answer, that. There are no signs yet of a poet of Sahir Ludhianvi’s cross-cutting appeal. Besides, the crowd was thin on one social segment: people from the bylanes of old Delhi, where Mir and Ghalib once walked. Linguist G.N. Devy holds that languages go into cold storage when they get limited to society’s upper strata. ■

—Sopan Joshi

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—Nidhi Singal

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## HERITAGE

NEW  
BEGINNING

Madhya Pradesh has moved to capitalise on its rich cultural heritage. The state has lifted the restrictions on several iconic 17th, 18th and 19th century forts and palaces that were formerly classified as protected monuments, allowing them to be developed as commercial properties.

After a winning bid of Rs 5.11 crore for a 99-year lease, Indore-based Goldman Resources has five years to develop the **Raj Mahal in Bhopal** into a heritage hotel. Completed in 1884, the former royal residence boasts 120 rooms and a *sheesh mahal* (glass house), but is in serious disrepair. Elsewhere in the state, the celebrated **Jehangir Mahal in Orchha** is being developed as a wedding destination by the MP tourism department and



RAJWANT RAWAT

the state archaeology department. Bir Singh Ju Deo, the slayer of Abul Fazl, built the palace as a tribute to the Mughal ruler Jehangir. Now, families will pay Rs 50,000 a day to rent it as a wedding venue—with the first slated for February 22. Provisions have also been made to protect the monuments—organisers of such weddings will have to deposit Rs 1 lakh with the MP heritage development trust. ■

—Rahul Noronha



## FOOD

DINING WITH  
THE NAWABS

The opulence of author Meera Ali and photographer Karam Puri's *Dining with the Nawabs* matches its subject. Clothed in royal blue velvet, it is a beautiful and stunningly rich book. From a vivid close-up of the golden hilt of a ceremonial sword to a sweeping, wide-angle shot of the Taj ul Masjid—the most famous of Nawab Sultan Shah Jahan Begum's architectural works—Puri's photographs capture the glory and faded grandeur of the erstwhile royals. Ali's text provides an admirable overview of ten principalities across India and Pakistan, from Arcot to Zainabad. But the food, and the associated food porn, is the real star here—which is why the luxurious coffee table book comes with a magazine-sized "kitchen copy" that includes only its mouth-watering recipes for royal favourites like bhuna gosht, karela dal and, of course, shaami kebab.





🕌 The velvet cover is embossed with a title plaque evoking the ornate lattice-screens of medieval Indian architecture



🕌 In Khairpur, the cooking staff no longer use a wood-fired stove, but still use the same ingredients and recipes



🕌 Kotwara House remains the residence of Raja Muzaffar Ali and Rani Meera Ali. But the palace hosts visitors for meals, provided they make an appointment



🕌 The Nawab of Chhatari and his family still host important dignitaries visiting Aligarh in the elegant main dining room at Rahat Manzil



🕌 The delectable Tar Gosht remains a favourite recipe of the Rampur family



🕌 The Nawab of Bahawalpur, Salahuddin Abbasi, today relies on his son's assistance in looking after the impressive Sadiqgarh Palace, an interesting blend of Baroque and Mughal architecture





## Q+A

### Still Massive

**Rana Daggubati**, actor, on abs, delts and pecs

**Q:** You were massive in *Baahubali*. How did you slim down for *The Ghazi Attack*?

**A:** I started dropping muscle size and shed about 14 kilos in the first eight weeks. I completely reset my diet to vegetarian.

**Q:** What's the most intriguing movie you've watched in the last one year?

**A:** That would have to be *Dangal*. What an exceptional film!

**Q:** Whose physique in Hollywood are you envious of?

**A:** I'm not envious of them, but I look up to Dwayne Johnson, post the era of [Sylvester] Stallone and [Arnold] Schwarzenegger.

**Q:** When was the last time you had an argument and who won?

**A:** I can't remember. But I usually end up winning all my arguments. I don't know why. (Laughs)

—with Mona Ramavat

72 | Volume XLII Number 10; For the week Feb 28-March 6, 2017, published on every Friday Total number of pages 108 (including cover pages)



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# Tourism Awards

Welcome to the myriad facets of Indian traditions, culture and vibrant geographies. With Indian tourism branched into several forms, India has a chunk for every kind of traveler. INDIA TODAY TOURISM AWARDS asks India To vote for the 'Best Tourism Destinations'.

## ADVENTURE DESTINATIONS

India has emerged as one of the world's most popular places for adventure travel. Here are India's top adventure travel destinations to get your adrenaline pumping.

VOTE



### ◀ HAVELOCK BEACH, ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Havelock Island is a picturesque natural paradise with white sandy beaches, rich coral reefs and lush green forests. All of which make it a hub for adventure and water sports like scuba diving, skiing, sailing, para sailing, wind surfing and snorkelling.

VOTE



### ▲ GORI CHEN PEAK, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Gori Chen peak in Tawang district is the highest peak of Arunachal Pradesh. At 22,500 feet it offers a challenge even to hardened mountaineers. The base camp trail is an exciting route for trekkers.

### ◀ WHITE WATER RAFTING, RISHIKESH, UTTARAKHAND

Rishikesh, the gateway to the Garhwal Himalayas offers great opportunities for white water rafting on the rapids of the Ganges.

VOTE





VOTE



### ◀ RANN UTSAV, THE GREAT RANN OF KUTCH, GUJARAT

The Rann Utsav held in one of the world's largest salt deserts gives a glimpse into ethnic arts, crafts, music and dance – a carnival that is more of an adventure experience, to be cherished for a lifetime.

VOTE



### RIVER RAFTING AND CAVING, MEGHALAYA ▶

Exploring the limestone caves in the Jaintia, Garo Hills and Khasi Hills districts of Meghalaya offers an otherworldly experience of stalactites, stalagmites to the adventure lover. Meghalaya also offers travellers a range of water sports including the popular river rafting route on the Dawki and river canyoning at Sohra.

VOTE

### ◀ KHANGCHENDZONGA NATIONAL PARK SIKKIM

The Khangchendzonga (High Altitude) National Park, Sikkim is a UNESCO World Heritage site. A spectacular wilderness with Mt. Khangchendzonga towering over it and a popular destination for mountaineering, trekking and skiing in the eastern Himalayas.

### ▼ RAFTING ON RIVER SIANG ARUNACHAL PRADESH

For committed river sports enthusiasts the thrill of rafting on the Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh is always high on the bucket list

VOTE



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# HERITAGE DESTINATIONS

The following Heritage destinations are the bedrock of Indian Culture & Traditions and more than often they are ignored in lieu of glamorous alternatives. Take this chance to reminisce about the beacons of Indian Heritage & Culture.

## TAWANG MONASTERY, TAWANG, ARUNACHAL PRADESH ▶

The Gaden Namgyal Lhatse, popularly known as Tawang Monastery is one of the largest Lamaseries of the Mahayana Sect. It houses elaborate Thankas of Goddess Dri Devi (Palden Lhamo), the principle deity of the monastery. The monastery stands on the spur of a hill 10,000 feet above sea level.



## ▲ NEERMAHAL, MELAGHAR, TRIPURA

Neermahal is a former royal palace built by king Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman of the erstwhile kingdom of Tripura. The palace is situated in the middle of Rudrasagar lake at Melaghar near Agartala

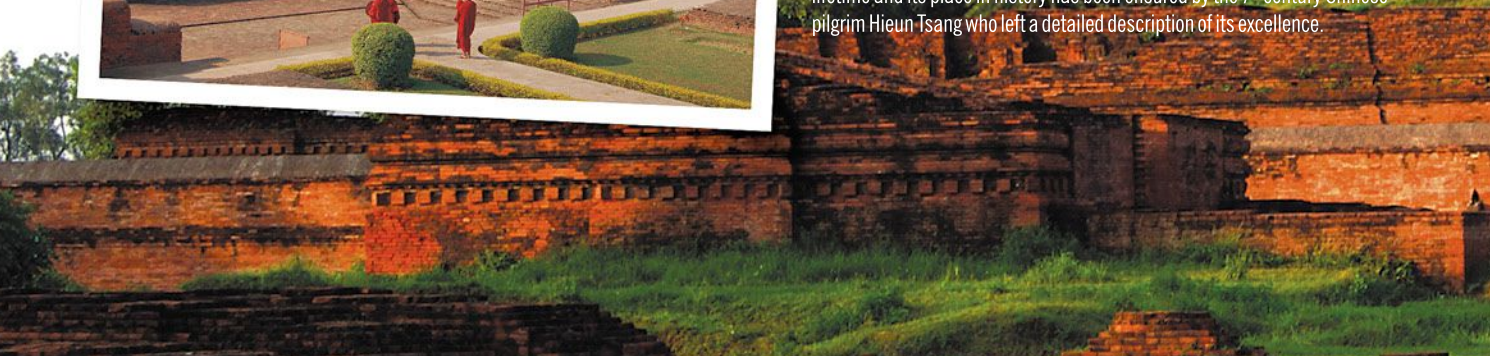


## ▲ KAMAKHYA TEMPLE, GUWAHATI, ASSAM

The Kamakhya Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to the mother goddess Kamakhya. Situated on the Nilachal Hill near Guwahati city in Assam, it is an important pilgrimage destination for Hindus and especially for Tantric worshippers.

## ◀ NALANDA VISHWAVIDYALAY, NALANDA, BIHAR

Nalanda, founded in the 5th century AD, is the ruins of the world's most ancient university. The Buddha visited Nalanda several times during his lifetime and its place in history has been ensured by the 7<sup>th</sup> century Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang who left a detailed description of its excellence.





**VOTE**



### ▼ PARASNATH TEMPLE, GIRIDIH, JHARKHAND

Situated on the highest hill in Jharkhand at an elevation of 4480 feet, the Parasnath Temple and the surrounding circuit of temples of Shikharji is extremely sacred to the Jain community.

### ◀ TAKHT SHRI HARMANDIR SAHIB JI, PATNA, BIHAR

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, was born in 1666 in Patna. Takht Shri Harmandir Sahib Ji, one of the five sacred shrines of the Sikhs, stands at this holy site.

### KOHIMA, NAGALAND ▼

Situated in the foothills of the Japfu range, Kohima is the land of the Angami Naga tribe. During World War II in the Battle of Kohima the Allies were able to defeat the Japanese and stop their attempted invasion of India. The War Cemetery here is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

**VOTE**



**VOTE**

### ▼ CHARDHAM, NAMCHI, SIKKIM

Char Dham is a pilgrimage and cultural complex developed by the Sikkim Government to promote religious, eco and village tourism in the state. It features an 87-ft statue of Lord Shiva and replicas of the four Dhaams of the country on the Solophok hilltop.

**VOTE**



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# HILL STATIONS

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**VOTE**

## SHIRUI PEAK, UKHRUL, MANIPUR ▶

The main peak of Shirui in Manipur abounds with blooms of Shirui Lily that flowers during monsoon. The exotic flower draws hundreds of scientists and tourists to this botanical paradise.



**VOTE**



## ◀ WAYANAD, KERALA

Wayanad, a little paradise on earth, set amidst lush green vegetation and mist capped hills. It is surrounded by sprawling tea and spice plantations.

## ▼ GULMARG, JAMMU & KASHMIR

Gulmarg hill station is a popular skiing destination located in the Pirpanjal range of the Western Himalayas.

**VOTE**







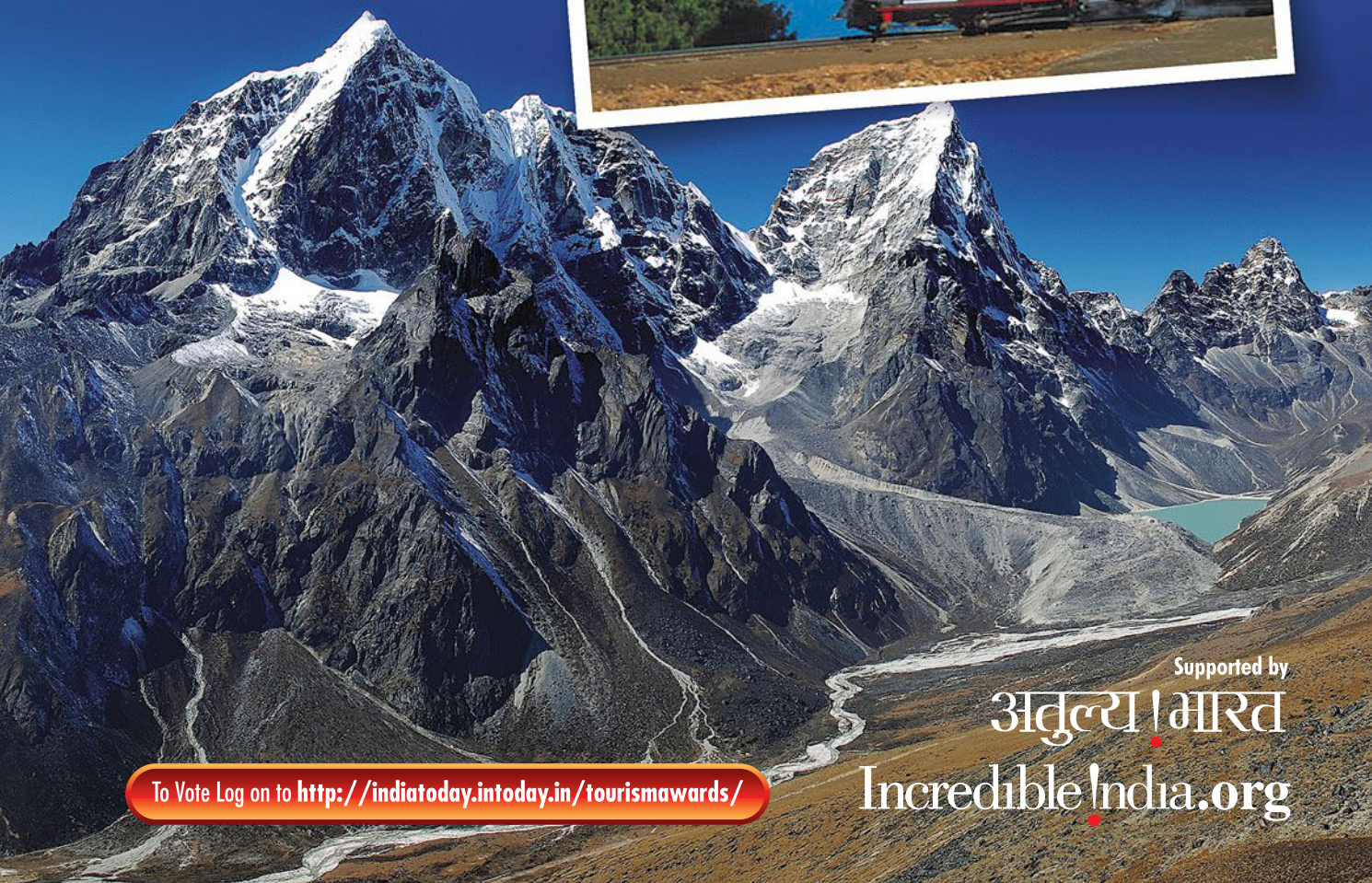
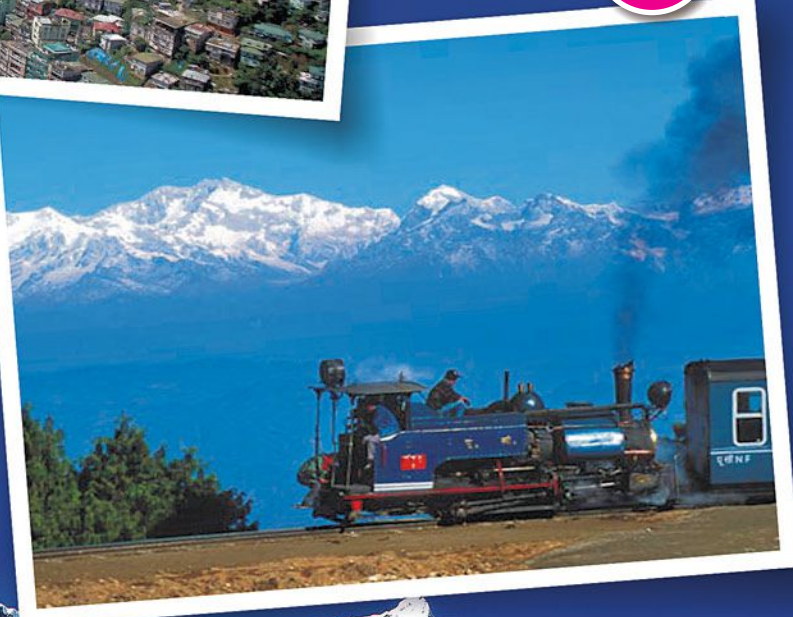
#### ◀ AIZWAL, MIZORAM

Aizwal, the capital of Mizoram, is a bustling city set on the ridges of steep hills. Flanked on the north by craggy peaks of Durtlang it overlooks the valley of river Tlwang.



#### DARJEELING, WEST BENGAL ▶

Darjeeling in the foothills of the Himalayas has the magnificent Mt. Kanchenjunga as its backdrop and undulating hillsides covered with the emerald green tea bushes below.



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# WILDLIFE DESTINATIONS

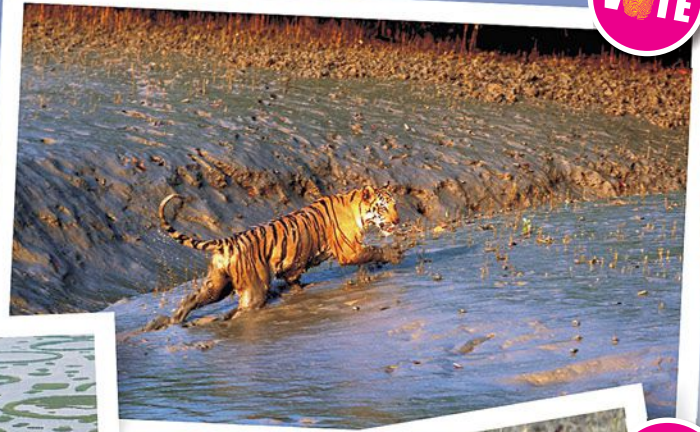
Numerous Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks have been established all over India. We bring to you national parks from different parts of the country offering an enormous range of habitats.

## **SUNDERBANS, WEST BENGAL ▶**

The Sunderbans is part of the world's largest riverine delta formed by the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna. The largest mangrove forest in the world, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and contains India's largest Tiger Reserve.

## **▼ LOK TAK LAKE, MOIRANG, MANIPUR**

Loktak lake is the largest fresh water lake in Northeast India and famous for its phumdis or floating vegetation. It is part of the Keibul Lamjao National Park, the world's only floating national park that is also home to the endangered Sangai, brown antlered deer.



## **BETLA FOREST, JHARKHAND ▶**

Betla is a forest of luxuriant sal and bamboo groves, rich in plant and animal life. This national park boasts of a wide array of wild animals including tigers, leopards, elephants and Indian Gaur.





# BEACHES

Scattered all over India's 7500 kilometer long coastline, it's amazing how beaches in India bring along some romance, good adventure and family fun, all in a package, at all times. Here are the beaches that will leave you surprised and satisfied with India's Coastal Beauty.

## MANDREM, NORTH GOA, GOA ▶

Mandrem is a white sand beach fringed with clear waters. Its most beautiful at high tide when the water rushes into the Mandrem Creek that runs parallel to the coastline.



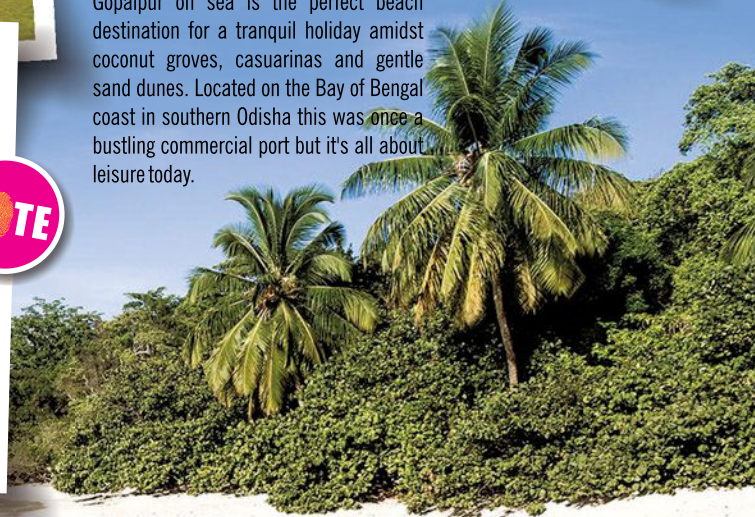
## ◀ GOPALPUR-ON-SEA, ODISHA

Gopalpur on sea is the perfect beach destination for a tranquil holiday amidst coconut groves, casuarinas and gentle sand dunes. Located on the Bay of Bengal coast in southern Odisha this was once a bustling commercial port but it's all about leisure today.



## ▲ RUSHIKONDA BEACH, ANDHRA PRADESH

Known as the Jewel of the East Coast, the beautiful greenery, golden sands and azure waters of Rushikonda Beach make for a wonderful getaway from nearby Visakhapatnam. It is also a haven for water sports lovers.



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## THE *SHAPE* CHANGERS

FUN WAYS TO STAY  
FIT IN THE CITY



RIDDHI GUPTA,  
MASALA BHANGRA  
INSTRUCTOR,  
HOUSE OF WOW



Photograph by MANDAR DEODHAR; Location courtesy STUDIO 23



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**COVER STORY**

**High on Health s-4**  
Nine different workouts you can try this year, starting today.

**PHOTO ESSAY**

**Galloping into 75 s-11**  
A peek into Amateur Rider's Club, which is celebrating 75 years this March

**CITY BUZZ**

**Into the City s-14**  
Three things to look forward to.

Cover photograph by  
**DANESH JASSAWALA**

## OUR PICK of the month

### Feast for the Senses

**March 5**

Anandita Kamani and Aditya Raghavan are hosting their second Danda Food Project meal. This time it's a seafood and craft beer special, paying ode to local recipes from around the country through a six to seven course meal. Their first pop-up in January, was a 10-course dinner that included an ode to locally grown eggplants. This time, the seafood they will serve will be completely local and seasonal.

At Carter Road, Bandra West  
Details [instamojo.com/BigAddie](http://instamojo.com/BigAddie)  
Prices Rs 3,200



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# HIGH ON HEALTH

GET SET FOR A FIT FEBRUARY.  
HERE ARE NINE DIFFERENT  
WORKOUTS YOU CAN TRY THIS  
YEAR, STARTING TODAY

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Altitude therapy  
at Alchemy

By MOEENA HALIM

**THE YEAR 2017**'s first month has already gone by. How good have you been about keeping your fitness resolution? If you've found yourself struggling, maybe it's time for some inspiration.

## BREATHE EASY ■ WHAT Altitude Training

**GOOD FOR** Increase in energy, less wear and tear on system

**WHERE** The Pilates and Altitude Training Studio, Santacruz or Alchemy, Marine Drive

It isn't a coincidence that people who live at high altitudes live longer and healthier lives, Neville Wadia tells me when I meet him at his Marine Drive fitness studio Alchemy. Wadia is explaining the use of altitude therapy, which at Alchemy involves being strapped onto a machine that creates the low oxygen levels you would find at high altitudes. In such conditions, the body adapts by increasing the number of red blood cells or altering muscle metabolism. This improves the efficiency of the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. The Pilates and Altitude Training Studio in Santacruz has an entire room dedicated to altitude training. Their hypoxic machine filters oxygen out of the air which is then delivered to you within an altitude (hypoxic) room with no change in pressure. "A 30-minute altitude training workout equals about an hour of high intensity gym cardio workout," reveals Samir Purohit, founder, Pilates and Altitude Training Studio.



Photograph by DANESH JASSAWALA

Flexibar workout  
at V's Fitness

## EASY DOES IT ■

### WHAT Flexibar

**GOOD FOR** Strengthening a weak core and back muscles

**WHERE** V's Fitness, Khar

Venancio D'Souza is a name to reckon with in Mumbai's fitness scene. The first to introduce Flexibar to the city, D'Souza has been using the German products and teaching the technique for close to a decade, but it is only now that he notes a growing interest among people. "Based on physiotherapy, Flexibar is the safest way to get back to training, especially for mothers who've recently given birth. It would be ridiculous for her to dive into a full training session and Flexibar is a good option," notes D'Souza. At the 'Pit' at his Khar studio, D'Souza will help you target your intrinsic muscles with the help of Flexibar.

## A WINNING COMBO ■

### WHAT Piloxing

**GOOD FOR** Better posture, balance, flexibility, increased stamina and toning

**WHERE** Contact 9916927290 (Antara Guha Choudhary)

Piloxing is a high energy, fast paced cardio programme that combines boxing with standing pilates and dance choreography. Creator Viveca Jensen has been promoting the workout as a women's empowerment programme to help them attain a sleek, sexy and powerful self image. "You can also incorporate Barefoot training in your workout over wearing conventional footwear as it is important to strengthen your feet as a necessary foundation and support for the skeletal structure, muscle function and quality of movement," reveals Antara Guha Choudhary, Piloxing Master Trainer for India. One wears specially designed gloves weighing 0.5lb or 250 grams while Piloxing. These are used during the main body workout to increase intensity and the toning component.





Doga in the outdoors

## NOT WITHOUT YOUR POOCH ■

**WHAT** Doga

**GOOD FOR** Stress relief

**WHERE** Look up [delotus.in](http://delotus.in) for further information

**D**oga is quite literally doing yoga with your dog. The idea isn't to get your dog in shape, but to enable your own peace of mind. "How can we cultivate within ourselves a positive feeling and bring a change in our mental disposition? Dogs will help," says Yoga Master Acharya Neeraj, who believes the uplifting company of pets can help during any form of exercise. Although based in Lucknow, Neeraj conducts sessions regularly

in Mumbai. Apart from the Adho Mukha Svanasana or the downward facing dog pose, Neeraj believes the Chaturanga asana is ideal when doing yoga with your dog. "When you do asanas in a normal environment, the difference is that you might not be completely unified with yourself. The dog will help create the right atmosphere," he says.

## PRIMAL INSTINCT ■

**WHAT** Bear crawling

**GOOD FOR** Training endurance, strength, losing weight and improving flexibility

**WHERE** Anytime, anywhere

**C**rawling is a huge fitness trend—from imitating a baby to a gorilla, the workouts began in China and are a great option for strength training. Bear crawling, moving on your hands and legs in imitation of the furry mammal, is often a part of military boot camp exercises. This is a great warm-up exercise; the best part is you need no equipment and can even do this in the comfort of your home. While you begin with your hands and knees touching the ground, the next step is to get your knees off the floor. Your balance must be on your toes and your hips low. Move forward by lifting one hand and the opposite knee and repeat.



## In the Genes

If you feel you've tried everything you possibly can but have failed to reach your desired fitness levels, perhaps it's time to test your genetic predisposition. Mumbai-based Pranav Anam and Shiraz Siddique founded The Gene Box while they were working on creating a recommendation engine for Nutrition and Fitness. "Being from a genetics background, I have always thought that genetics can be an immense help in reaching the accuracy we are aiming for our recommendation engine," reveals Anam. Genetic testing for a body's predisposition for fitness and nutrition has become hugely popular. Since their launch a little over a year ago, TGB has conducted 600 individual tests. Here Anam tells Simply Mumbai about the procedure and why the test is of significance.

### Q. Why is it important that one take this genetic test?

It is important, rather I'll say it is a very intelligent decision that everyone should make. Let me take the example of Taher, my best friend and our operations head. He was one of the first few to take The Gene Box test. Knowing about his intolerances and sensitivities helped him lose weight at a quicker rate. His lactose and gluten tolerance were the core reason for him not losing weight regardless of a proper fitness regime. With The Gene Box, we excluded these from his diet, opted for alternatives and results were extraordinary.

### Q. Is the test for a specific body type or would you encourage everyone to get it?

We encourage TGB for everyone.

### Q. What does the procedure involve?

We send a saliva sample for genotyping to our labs at Chennai. We sequence and analyse the genetic profile of an individual. Once we get the unique profile of an individual, we process it and it is analysed to determine the likelihood of

important lifestyle traits and thereafter an action plan is made accordingly.

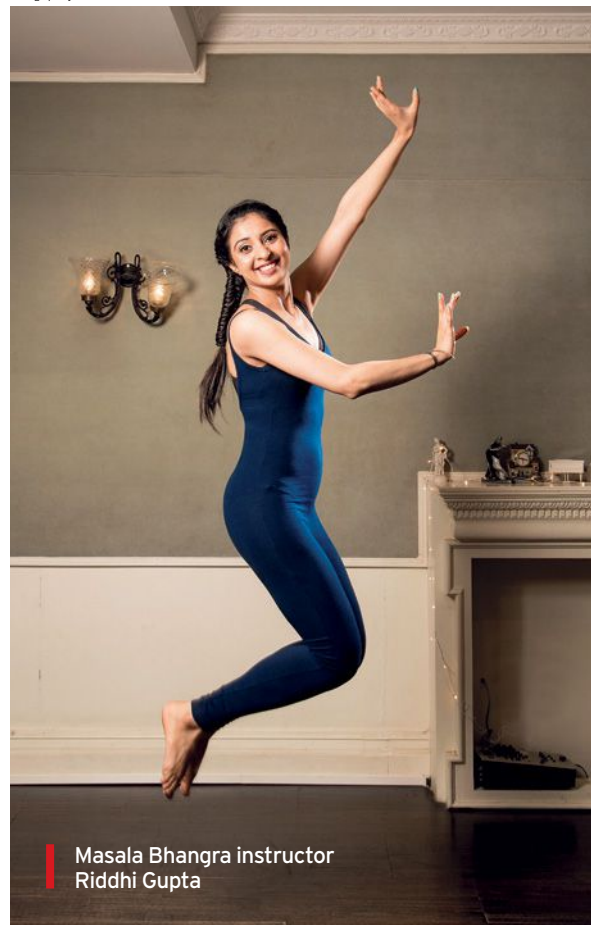
### Q. Does your report include recommendations?

Yes, we also create an action plan that includes recommendations along with the report. We provide the same as per the need of the users. Our offerings and value propositions are quite unique. We start with the Genetic Test. The Gene Box didn't stop just there, we went ahead to develop an ecosystem for every individual's wellness—using genetic testing, qualified Geneticists and Health Counsellors for consultation, tailor-made plans, fast-evolving recommendation engines, ambient devices for tracking, state of the art AI and in addition to that, customised subscription plans for everyone. A wellness ecosystem to ensure a healthier and happier you.

### Q. How much does it cost?

We have three panels: Nutrition, Fitness and Health. Each of them alone is MRPeD at Rs 13,000, any two of them is at Rs 23,400 and all of them together is Rs 30,000.

Photograph by DANESH JASSAWALA



Masala Bhangra instructor  
Riddhi Gupta

## TO THE BEAT ■

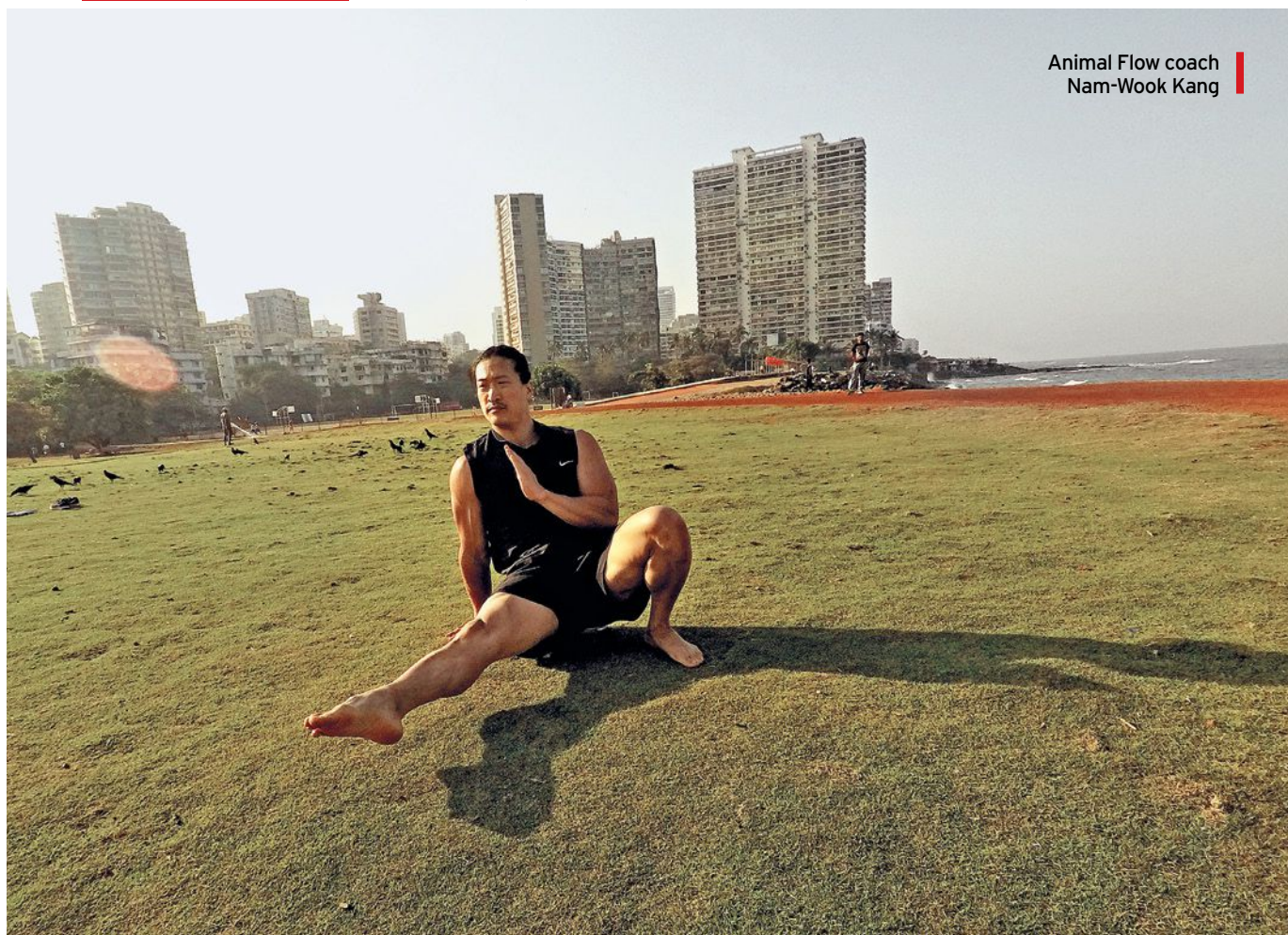
**WHAT** Masala Bhangra

**GOOD FOR** Overall toning, body conditioning and can build endurance, stamina and balance

**WHERE** House of Wow, Bandra

**M**asala Bhangra, created by Sarina Jain in her garage in the US, is a workout consisting of traditional Punjabi and Bollywood dance moves set to energetic music with drum beats. The high intensity full body cardio workout is said to get rid of up to 500 calories per workout. Especially for this season, certified Masala Bhangra instructor Riddhi Gupta has customised Masala Bhangra for couples in Mumbai. The innovative moves include 'Bhangra love', inspired by Amitabh Bachchan, the King of Bollywood romance, which involves placing your right foot forward with your left arm forward and alternating the movement between the legs and

Animal Flow coach  
Nam-Wook Kang



hands. Masala Bhangra has a total of 350 different moves. It is designed for anybody irrespective of age and fitness level. "It allows you to channel your masculine side with Bhangra and your feminine grace with Bollywood," says Gupta.

## NATURAL INSPIRATION ■

**WHAT** Animal Flow

**GOOD FOR** Specifically targeting and increasing muscle tone, mobility, flexibility, stability, power and endurance and building a strong core

**WHERE** Tangerine Arts Studio, Bandra and The Space, Juhu

**W**e are no strangers to seeking inspiration from nature and in the

movements of animals when it comes to exercise. But Animal Flow is renowned trainer Mike Fitch's new take on the age-old practice. "Martial artists, gymnasts, yogis, b-boys will all see similarities in Animal Flow and their individual disciplines. It draws on multiple bodyweight training disciplines, utilising the movements of various animals (crab, scorpion, crocodile, etc) to target different areas of the body," says coach Nam-Wook Kang, who was teaching in Paris before he began taking classes in Mumbai. Animal Flow is fun yet challenging. "It is an intense workout that will get you in a sweat. It's effective for extreme athletes as well as beginners because you can mix and match components to control intensity," he adds.

## TRAIN FAST, TRAIN HARD ■

**WHAT** High intensity workouts

**GOOD FOR** Building muscle, losing fat

**WHERE** Anytime, anywhere ([freeletics.com](http://freeletics.com))

**H**igh intensity interval training, CrossFit and Tabata have been popular for years, and now it seems that Freeletics' high intensity workouts are likely to become a popular training style. Freeletics, a Germany-based company, offers detailed workout plans based on the training data of thousands of athletes. Their Coach app is extremely motivating; but be warned, the workout is extremely rigorous.



## Cheers to a healthy 2017

If you've kept track of global trends, you've probably heard of Beer Yoga. It is a German phenomenon that actually encourages yogis to exercise with their bottles of ice cold beer and take glugs mid-workout. They take the philosophies of Yoga and pair it with beer-drinking to help you "reach your highest levels of consciousness." While the fitness trend hasn't hit Indian shores yet, there is a way that you can enjoy your beer and keep fit too. Navin Mittal, who refers to himself as the Indian Beer Geek and is the co-founder of Gateway Brewing Co, seems to have mastered the art. "Back in 2011-12, I weighed a good 103 kilos and my health was at an all time low. I decided to give up alcohol, but that didn't last long. On my 40th birthday, all of 10 days later, I said screw it and enjoyed my glass of beer," recalls Mittal. When a friend introduced him to the website Mark's Daily Apple, he realised making just a few changes could help him maintain a healthy and balanced diet and lose weight quite easily. "Beer is something I really like. In moderation it is healthy, it lightens you up. I drink two to three glasses at least three to four times a week," he says. "I figured out what works for my own body. Besides, I drink only craft beer, so it is non-processed and contains no preservatives."

### Some tips from Mittal

■ Increase your protein intake and cut down carbs. More fat is alright, but reduce simple sugars and processed food.

■ If a strenuous workout worries you, just start walking an hour a day. You don't have to walk at 10 km an hour, but just get going.

■ Get focused; only then can you achieve something. Remember, it takes time to put on weight, so losing it will also take time.

■ Sound advice matters. Try certain methods and give it a good shot as long as they're not extreme. Whatever the method, it must become a part of your lifestyle.

■ A couple of drinks aren't likely to impact your workout, but remember going overboard could mean a disaster the next day. A hangover is never productive.

Photograph by MANDAR DEODHAR



Aashna  
Mansharamani at  
Studio 23

## UP IN THE AIR ■

**WHAT** Aerial Hoop

**GOOD FOR** Overall body conditioning and strengthening

**WHERE** Studio 23, Nariman Point

Aerial silk or anti-gravity yoga has been quite a thing for a while now, but this year you might want to try another exercise that has you suspended in the air. Aashna Mansharamani, a former cheerleader and a member of the Brown Aerial Arts Society, performs splits, twists and balletic moves with a hoop suspended from the ceiling at about six feet off the floor. But at her Aerial Hoop workshops, she has beginners exercising with the hoop only three or four feet off the ground. The hoop is no plastic hula hoop, but a heavy metal ring that helps you target your arms, back and core. "Considering it requires overall body strength, it works out all muscles, but the upper body in particular," says Mansharamani. "This art requires a skilful balance of strength, stamina and flexibility, something which you will progressively work on during the class," reveals Mansharamani.

# Galloping into 75

With the Amateur Rider's Club getting set for the Polo season in March, we take a walk down memory lane celebrating 75 years of one of India's oldest and largest private riding clubs



**KICK START** A bit of a dark horse in comparison to the Royal Western India Turf Club (RWITC), the Amateur Rider's Club (ARC) makes up about 15 to 25 percent of the 220-acre Mahalaxmi Race Course. Apart from three riding schools, a show jumping area, the ARC has an arena polo ground as well as a polo ground the size of 11 football fields. March 6 beckons the start of the season of polo tournaments; matches will be held four to five days a week till March 31.





**IN SYNC** An aerial view of the musical ride, a choreographed ride set to classical and sometimes upbeat music, which has been a beloved event at the ARC.

#### SCALING HEIGHTS

Jimmy Bharucha, who was secretary of the club for 25 years since 1963, with his famed horse Attaturk. The duo was famous for being allowed into the Taj Mahal Palace in Colaba to perform their tricks.

**PIT STOP** Mounted sports like tent pegging and races where riders get off their horses to glug down a bottle of soda are still just as popular, but Gymkhana races are no longer held.





# Bombay Blues

Performing at the seventh edition of the Mahindra Blues Festival, which is playing host to some of the industry's biggest names, is Delhi band BLU's dream come true

**T**he seventh edition of the Mahindra Blues Festival, considered to be Asia's largest Blues festival, is playing host to some of the biggest names in the industry including Irish singer-song-writer Graine Duffy, Janiva Magness, Warren Mendonsa's Blues band Blackstratblues, Quinn Sullivan, Janiva Magness, Shemekia Copeland and SuperSonic Blues Machine. The four-member Delhi-based BLU, who have been playing together for about two years, are getting the chance to share the stage with these stalwarts. "Mahindra Blues Festival is one of the best known blues festival in the world, so it's a great opportunity for us to put our music to the people," says the band, who won the Blues Band Hunt 2017

title after beating Bangalore band Polly Wants a Cracker with their originals "Fifteen Years" and "Delta Dreaming" and their rendition of old folk blues tune "Make me a pallet on your floor."

## » Music for the soul

Kapil Chetri, originally from Kohima, Nagaland, has been playing the blues for as long as he can remember. "I never tried playing anything other than blues. Nothing satisfies my soul like blues music does," says the vocalist and acoustic guitarist.

## » How I met my drummer

When guitarist Pranai Gurung caught Chetri's solo performance on Balcony TV, a daily online music show, he reached out to the musician and invited him for

a jam. "I was interested with his raw Mississippi delta sound. I have always had an urge to try the blues and it seemed natural to move in that direction," reveals Gurung. Rahul Rai, bassist, and Chewang Lama, drummer, were brought on board and BLU was born.

## » What dreams are made of

The quartet is now working on getting their EP out this year and with it a tour in India. They are also working on some dates for festivals abroad. Getting to play a gig at the BB King Blues Club, Memphis Tennessee or Buddy Guy Legends, Chicago would be a dream come true. "Also, I have always dreamed of getting to play or jam with other local working class blues musicians in juke joints in Mississippi," says Chetri, who finds inspiration in Rory Block, Keb Mo, Taj Mahal and Kelly Joe Phelps.

■ By Moeena Halim

  
**'Nothing satisfies my soul like blues music does.'**

Kapil Chetri,  
Vocalist, BLU





## THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

1

### In Tune

**February 25 and 26**

Whistling Melodies, a six-member whistling band, will perform at Powai Pulse at the Renaissance Hotel in Powai. The group, which performs a varied mix of Bhakti, Bhajans and Bollywood songs, has a line-up of a combination of the old and the new. Their interactive performance will include contests as well as tips on whistling.

**AT** The Terrace at the Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet

**TIME** 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

**TEL** 22041727



2

### Art with a Cause

**February 27 to March 5**

The fifth Art From Behind Bars exhibition will showcase 63 canvases painted by undertrials and convicts from Byculla Jail, Arthur Road Jail, Yerwada Central Prison and Nashik Jail. Kavita Shivdasani began working with inmates 10 years ago, when she introduced art as therapy for those behind bars. Through their art, the incarcerated seek "Ubuntu" or forgiveness. The belief is that unity and affirmation have more power to change behaviour than shame and punishment. This exhibition is titled 'Leap of Faith.'

**AT** Kamalnayan Bajaj Art Gallery, Bajaj Bhavan, Nariman Point  
**TEL** 9821005424 (Kavita Shivdasani)

3

### Tagore's Tale

**February 26**

Sharmistha Saha, theatre practitioner and researcher, presents *Her Letters*, based on Rabindranath Tagore's short story *Streer Patra*. Written over a hundred years ago in

1914, the beauty lies in the contemporariness of the tale. Bindu's tragic story is relevant even today in our times and it reveals how little has changed in the treatment of women even 100 years later.

**AT** Harkat Studios, Bungalow No. 75, JP Road, Aram Nagar Part 2, Machlimar, Versova, Andheri West



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**COVER STORY****Fit and Fab****s-4**

Pune offers a variety of activities to keep you fit and healthy.

**BUZZ****Into the City****s-10**

What to eat, shop and see in the city.

Cover photo ABHIJIT PATIL

# OUR PICK of the month

## South Indian Platter

**February 24**

Dig into Malayali delicacies like loon olathiathu, kadala olarthiyathu and fish coated in spice paste and shallow fried, at Poppaddum, a pop up kitchen at Lost the Plot, Pune's first open air cinema studio. Sneha Nair, an economic researcher-turned-home chef brings traditional delicacies from Kerala to this pop-up. At 128/8, Laxmi Road, Aundh  
**Time** 7.30 p.m. onwards  
**Tel** 830817441



**Want to tell us about an event? A new store? A restaurant? People doing interesting things? Anything newsworthy? Please email us at: [simplypune@intoday.com](mailto:simplypune@intoday.com)**

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Last date for online payment for SSLA: **20<sup>th</sup> May, 2017**

**To know more, visit: [www.ssla.edu.in](http://www.ssla.edu.in)**

Anita Patankar, Director, SSLA



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# Fit & FAB



FROM UNDERWATER GAMES AND SCALING INDOOR WALLS TO MATCHING DANCE STEPS, PUNE OFFERS A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES TO KEEP YOU FIT AND HEALTHY.

■ By ADITI PAI

## WATER GAMES

Finkick

**T**AKE TO THE WATERS TO PLAY A GAME and tone up your muscles. Octopush is a non-contact sport played in the swimming pool by six members on each side in which each player dons a fin, mask and snorkel to help them move in the water and push a 'puck' at the bottom of the pool. Besides being fun, the game is a good water exercise that tones up the muscles and increases stamina. Finkick Adventures also has professional scuba



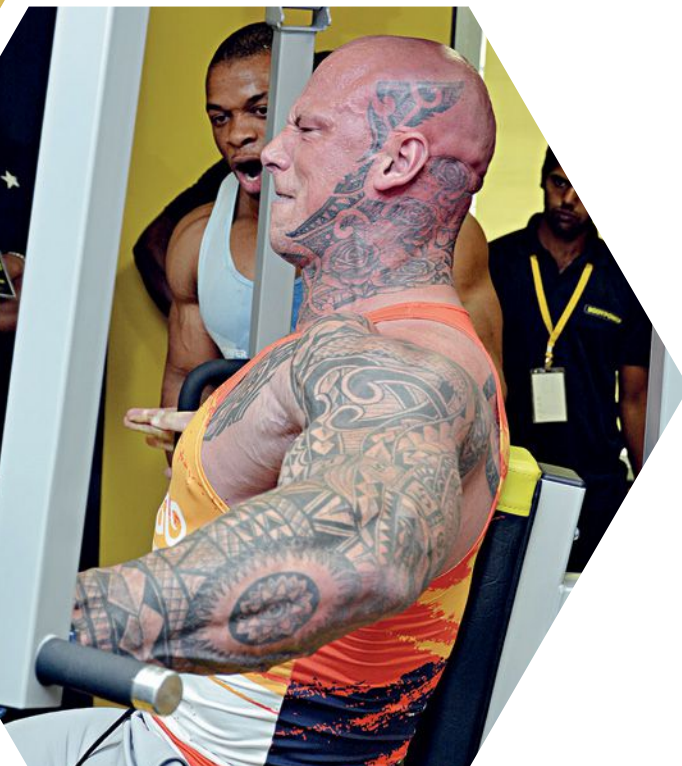




Photograph by BHASKAR PAUL



Photograph by ABHIJIT PATIL



(clockwise left below left)  
Underwater sports; An ayurvedic  
massage; Zumba class at Smiths  
Breathe Fitness; The Man Company  
grooming products;  
Body Power Gym  
Nital Raval doing Anti gravity yoga  
at Biorhythm studio

diving classes right in the middle of the city..

**PRICE** Rs 2,500 for an eight session package of Octopush

**DETAILS** [finkick.com](http://finkick.com)

## UPSIDE DOWN

Anti Gravity Yoga

A new take on traditional yoga, anti-gravity yoga is all about working out while suspended

from the ceiling in a hammock-like apparatus. So, the workout, which was designed by former gymnast and Broadway choreographer Christopher Harrison, combines exercises like yoga, pilates, calisthenics and aerial acrobatics that offers a total-body workout. Nital Raval, founder and CEO of Biorhythm studio, says, "It is the ultimate cross training for athletic and artistic

endeavours.. There are seven anti-gravity techniques that cater to yogis, athletes, dancers, children, and people who are suffering from back pain." The technique is suitable for those who want to practice advanced yoga postures.

**AT** 5th Floor, Ozone Mall, Plot No 92, Anand Park, Aundh

**DETAILS** [biorhythmindia.co.in](http://biorhythmindia.co.in)



(below) Dr Umesh and Anuradha Dwivedi of Soham Yoga Studio; (right) Jay Shinde at Rock Aliens Rock Climbing



Photographs by MANDAR DEODHAR



## SCALING UP

Rock Aliens Rock Climbing Gym

It was once the forte of mountaineers and adventure enthusiasts but rock climbing is now fast becoming a popular fitness activity among youngsters who don't want to be holed up in a gymnasium. At Rock Aliens Sports Climbing Gym, the city's private indoor bouldering gym, people ranging from seven to 45 years of age, troupe in every evening for sessions of scaling up walls to build endurance, muscle strength and develop a skill. Started by rock climbing enthusiasts Jay Shinde, 21 and Dhawal Sharma, 32, the gym has 1,300 square feet of climbing surface and walls that go up to 14 feet in height where people climb walls, scale the ceiling and draw up newer routes that prepare them for outdoor rock climbing. Rock climbing, says Shinde, teaches technical skills, spatial awareness, and interpersonal communication besides being a fun fitness form.

**PRICE** Rs 1,000 a month

**AT** Aun society No.2, 413, Shivaji Nagar

**DETAILS** [rockaliens.co.in](http://rockaliens.co.in)



## BOYS ONLY

The Man Company

For men who complain that there aren't ample boys-only grooming products in the market, The Man Company has launched a series of hair and skin care products made of natural ingredients and essential oils like argan, patchouli, almond, cedarwood and even charcoal. Take a look at the beard conditioning oils or the interestingly named Growth Mafia that comes with shampoo, hair oils.

**PRICE** Starts at Rs 250

**DETAILS** [themancompany.com](http://themancompany.com)

## HAPPY FEET

Zumba

Ever since it caught the attention of the city's fitness seekers a few years ago, Zumba continues to be a popular workout regime for those who want to learn a few moves while shedding getting into shape. The fast paced steps are matched with foot tapping music, often a mix of Merengue, Cumbia, Salsa and Reggaeton rhythms, making the cardio workout, fun. Smeeta Shirole, the first licensed instructor to have the Zumba Gold license in Pune and founder of Smithes Breathe Fitness, adds a dose of innovation to the workout with the latest Bollywood dance number steps or lavani moves.

**PRICE** Rs 1,500 for eight sessions

**AT** Sukwani Prestige, Pashan Road, Bavdhan

## MIND, BODY, WELLNESS

Soham Yoga Studio

Be it a remedy for back pain or hormonal imbalances or sessions that aid overall well being and fitness, yoga is being increasingly recognised as the go-to wellness option. At Soham Yoga Studio, Dr Umesh Trivedi and



Photograph by MANDAR DEODHAR

his wife Anuradha teach yoga asanas, breathing techniques and positive thinking to people coming for different reasons. "It is a myth that you cannot shed weight with yoga. Besides, the biggest benefit is psychological change that helps your hormones, sleep and mental make-up," says Trivedi, who healed his severe slipped disc condition with yoga and then took to teaching others who had similar ailments. He stresses on the importance of a healthy diet to treat any disorder and draws up diet plans for every student after studying their medical history. In his six research papers, Trivedi has focussed on treating Poly Cystic Ovarian Disorder (PCOD) "a fast growing condition among young women", hormonal disorders and behavioural patterns through yoga. "In India, we focus on cure rather than prevention. But regular yoga helps prevent a lot of disorders because it brings your body into the state it should normally be in," says Trivedi. His holistic teachings have got him students from around the world who learn asanas from him over Skype.

**PRICE** Rs 1000 for a group class

**AT** Magarpatta City

**DETAILS** [Sohamyogastudio.org](http://Sohamyogastudio.org)

## FARM FRESH

VTP Earth Food

Farm to table is a movement that's taking over the kitchens of the health conscious who want to avoid pesticide-laden vegetables. But if growing your very own kitchen garden isn't an option, check out the shelves at supermarkets that stock organically-grown, pesticide-free produce. A new brand that's made an appearance in the city is VTP Earth Food that grows residue-free vegetables and fruits at its Malthan farm. Vegetables like the iceberg lettuce, zucchini, beans and broccoli are packaged

(left) Nupur Gandhekar and Sagar Girme of On 8 Inc; (below) Farm of VTP Earth Food



without any human intervention which, they say, reduces chance of contamination until it reaches the consumer's kitchen. The packaged produce doesn't have any preservatives or synthetic food enhancers to increase its shelf life, thereby cutting down on the chemicals on your plate. It's available at stores like Dorabjee and Food Plus.

**DETAILS** [theearthfood.com](http://theearthfood.com)

## VEGAN WAYS

The Real Green Cafe

Wouldn't it be perfect if you could eat cheese-laden pizzas without piling on the calories? At The Real Green Café, Pune's foremost vegan café, founder Aishwarya Vishwanath serves burgers in whole wheat buns and air-fried patties, frankies are rolled in healthy gluten-free wholemeal rotis and cheese made of plant-based milks. "Plant based sources of food have zero cholesterol; we want to make people aware of the benefits of a vegan lifestyle," she says. So, she uses flax seeds as a replacer for eggs in her baked desserts which "help in binding and bringing puffiness to cakes" and make healthy milkshakes and coffees from almond milk. The cheeses on the pizzas and sandwiches are dairy-free and made of cashews and plant based milks.

**PRICE** Rs 120 upwards



(below) Aishwarya Vishwanath at the Real Green Cafe; (right) Dr Pradeep Waghmare at Salt Cave Asia



Photographs by MANDAR DEODHAR

**AT** The Hub, Above Subway, Lane No. 6, North Main Road, Koregaon Park

## A PINCH OF SALT

Salt Cave Asia

Remember your grandmother's remedy of salt water soaks to alleviate pain? Using research that salt is an effective anti-inflammatory healing substance, Dr Pradeep Waghmare, 30, has set up the first medical salt therapy centre in Pune. All you do is sit in a room made of purified salt sourced from Germany and breathe in salt-laden oxygenated air that is closely regulated to ensure the right dose. While experts say that it is an effective non-invasive treatment to cure persistent respiratory troubles like rhinitis, sinusitis and bronchitis and skin disorders, halotherapy, or salt treatment, is used even to boost immunity and general wellness.

An hour in the salt room dimmed with a soothing blue light leaves you feeling refreshed thanks to the generous dose of pure oxygen in the room. The therapy, first developed in the UK, is believed to boost general well-being because of the anti microbial properties of pure salt. "Allopathy is most effective in emergencies but this works for a long term sustainable treatment for ENT, skin and respiratory troubles. A few sessions have made people get off the asthma inhaler; general visitors come for glowing clear skin," says Waghmare. The therapy may take from five to up to 60 sessions.

**PRICE** Rs 1,500 for a single session

**AT** Opposite Lane 5, Koregaon Park.



## FITNESS FIRST

Body Power

BodyPower, the popular United Kingdom-based fitness brand that's known for its spectacular expos that talk about everything to do with fitness and nutrition, came to Pune last month with a swanky new gym in Salunke Vihar. While the opening saw international fitness faces such as Hollywood actor and body builder Martyn Ford, calisthenics expert Jase Robinson and Matty Alwell, a world champion in body building, instructors at the BodyPower gym are trained to draw up individualised workout sessions to suit your needs. Every workout, they claim, is evidence-based. So, be it for body building, shedding calories or simply toning up, the trainers will give you a personalised routine.

**AT** 103/104, Girm Heights, Opp Green Acres, Salunke Vihar

**DETAILS** [bodypower.com](http://bodypower.com)

## WORK AND PLAY

Fitonaotics at On 8 Inc

Staying Have fun as you shed extra calories with dance workouts that help increase your cardiovascular functioning and tone muscles. "The first thing that dance does is that it pumps happy hormones called endorphins that make you feel good and entirely relaxed after a class," says Nupur Gandhekar, 27, a former journalist who partnered with software engineer Sagar Girm, 31, to start On 8 Inc, a dance and fitness studio in 2014. While all dance forms, from bachata to zumba, are effective workouts, On 8 Inc has a special programme called Fitonaotics, designed to incorporate the workout regimes of professional dancers that ensure strength, flexibility, weight management and muscle conditioning.

**PRICE** Starts at 1,600

**AT** 2A, 2nd floor, Sunshree Woods Commercial Complex, Next To RIMS School, NIBM Post Office Road

**DETAILS** [on8.in](http://on8.in)

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# 5 THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO



**RESTAURANT REVIEW**/SAVYA RASA

## 1 SLICE OF SOUTH

A visit to Savya Rasa goes beyond relishing the delicacies on the menu. The sprawling restaurant is done up with such minute attention to every aspect of the experience that you are immediately transported on a gastronomic journey across the regions south of the Vindhyas. An incense of dhoo and camphor wafts through the air, reminding you of a traditional home or a shrine in the South. Large chests, carved doorways and pillars sourced from dilapidated homes in the South welcome you into the restaurant that's tucked away in a leafy lane of Koregaon Park. Within minutes you forget the buzzing neighbourhood and focus on the sights and smells that prepare you for the flavours of the food. The owner, Coimbatore-based Vikram Mohan

has carefully brought in antique brassware, heirlooms in the form of a 280 year-old Tanjore painting, Mysuru ganjifa cards and Madras tiles for the roof. Savya Rasa, has a menu that draws from the authentic flavours of seven regions from Mysuru to the Malabar Coast. There are ample options in vegetarian, seafood and meat. While the names of the dishes might be a tad daunting to those unfamiliar with the Southern languages, the waiting staff helpfully offers suggestions. If you're going there for lunch, opt for the just-launched corporate express menus that come in three sizes—Poornam for a light bite, Bhojanam for a leisurely lunch and Sampooranam for a feast..

**MEAL FOR TWO** Rs 2,000

**AT** Gera Serenity Building, Koregaon Park

■ **By Aditi Pai**





2

## LAUGH OUT LOUD

→ MARCH 4 TO 5

Dress up as your favourite cartoon character to win the prize for Cosplay or simply meet the best of comics, check out cartoon-inspired merchandise and toys and join the fan meet-ups, as the Alto Comic Con 2017 comes to the city. They also have experiential zones, particularly AXN's R.E.D zone that will have activities that highlight its iconic shows like *Billions*, *The Voice* and *Dexter* and *Sherlock*.

**AT** Deccan College Convention Hall

**PRICE** Tickets start at Rs 299

**TICKETS** 11 am to 8 pm

**DETAILS** [punecomicon.com](http://punecomicon.com)

3

## LEISURE LUNCHEON

If you're a fan of Farzi Café creations, there's more in store in the new year—their four-course chef's lunch menu that starts off with salads, innovative tapas, goes on to mains and then wraps up with a dessert. On the menu are dishes like crispy okra, masala asparagus, grainy mustard fish, prawn chettinad, and warm suji halwa in banana cake.

**AT** Farzi Café, Kalyaninagar

**PRICE** Rs 800 for a person



4

## DIY MEALS

→ TILL FEBRUARY 28

Shabu-Shabu fans have just a few days more to dig into these Japanese delicacies that are cooked at your table. Chef Sunil Joshi will showcase his specials like the lobster, mushroom and tenderloin Shabu-Shabu and even assist you as you try your hand at this Japanese cooking method in which thin slices of meat and vegetables in hot seaweed broth are eaten with spices of your choice.

**AT** Baan Tao, Hyatt Pune, Kalyani Nagar.

**TEL** 7798889653





Think global, eat local continues to be the food philosophy here, with creative twists to comfort food.



PROPERTY REVIEW / INDIGO DELI

## The World on your Plate

**G**iving homegrown cafes tough competition, one of Mumbai's favourite cafes, Indigo Deli, has arrived in Pune, bringing its smart decor and delectable food to the city. Spread across 3200 sq feet, the cafe has a show kitchen which is understandably the focus of the space, along with the bar section and the dining area that blend in seamlessly. There are different seating sections—open seating for larger groups and horse-shoe shaped booths for cosy dinners.

**On the Menu** Think global, eat local continues to be the food philosophy here, with creative twists to comfort food and nouvelle cuisine that stresses on light cooking that preserves the identity of local ingredients. Go for the specials—the rueben sandwich in which the pastrami is made in-house and the meat is cured over 21 days. If you prefer to stick to the bestsellers, order

the popular smoky, spicy and sweet BBQ pork ribs and the homemade ice-creams. Other all-time favourites are the deli roast chicken, eggs benedict, and the signature citrus salad or the corn crusted potato and jalapeno burger. There's no room for boredom as the chef puts up daily specials every day.

**Shaken and Stirred** Match the food with innovatively flavoured cocktails like the coastal ride martini, guava and sriracha margarita and the musk melon and kiwi mojito. With live gigs adding to the celebratory ambience, Indigo Deli has come to town at just the right time—when Pune is all set to party.

**PRICE** Rs 2,000 for two

**AT** Phoenix Market city, Viman Nagar

**TEL** 49300200

■ By Aditi Pai

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