



# INDIA TODAY



LOK SABHA MPs

## MEET THE DEBUTANTS

(From Left)  
Rajkumar Roat,  
Yaduveer Wadiyar,  
Shambhavi,  
Yusuf Pathan,  
Chandra Shekhar,  
Iqra Choudhary,  
Sayani Ghosh

FROM GEN Z TO GENDER WARRIORS, ROYALS TO ENTERTAINERS  
FARMERS TO PHYSICIANS, THE 18TH LOK SABHA HAS A FASCINATING  
MIX OF 280 FIRST-TIMERS FULL OF AMBITION AND HOPE

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**A**t one end, take a Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani. He is 48, US-returned, and a physician-turned-educpreneur-turned-politician with Rs 5,705 crore in declared assets. The wealthiest contestant in the 2024 election, he now enters the sanctum of Indian democracy as a member of Parliament from Andhra Pradesh's chilli capital Guntur. Manoj Tigga and Bhaskar Bhagare, 52 and 53, respectively, are not much older. They have a link with education too, and are fellow debutant MPs. But there the resemblance ends. Tigga was a primary school teacher in Alipurduar, in the foothills of north Bengal, where his parents were tea plantation labourers from the Oraon tribe. And Bhagare 'Guruji', who taught History and Marathi to schoolkids in Nashik district for 33 years, had to crowdfund his fight for the Dindori seat. The contingent of first-time MPs in 2024 are a bundle of such fascinating contrasts. For instance, there are names from royal dynastic lineages extending centuries. But there's also Sanjna Jatav, a young Dalit from a Bharatpur village, whose Rajasthani-style dance after victory became a celebration of democracy itself. Or take the contrast in experience. Mitali Bag, a former anganwadi worker and also the poorest debutant MP, had not seen anything higher than a zilla parishad in her West Bengal constituency, Arambag. But among the debutants are also eight former chief ministers. Along with the ilk of Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who returns for a sixth term after his last bout in 2005, there are first-timers like Basavaraj Bommai, Charanjit Singh Channi and Manohar Lal Khattar.

The inaugural session of the 18th Lok Sabha from June 24 to July 2, though largely ceremonial in function, contained enough drama to pique everyone's curiosity. Many familiar faces were among the dramatis personae. But there is also a large batch of 280 debutant MPs in the new Lok Sabha, if you count those who have been parliamentarians before but in the Upper House. This may be 34 short of the figure of 314 notched up by the 2014 Lok Sabha, a high tide mark not matched since 1984. But it's over a dozen more than the 267 first-timers of 2019. More to the point, they constitute a *majority* of the House—over 50 per cent of the total.

A fresher's harvest so wide-ranging, from so many diverse social/cultural/political backgrounds, that not even political experts can claim to know them all. So before the Budget session, we introduce you to the full cast of newcomers in this special issue. Think of it as a Who's Who among the New, a ready reckoner on the Class of 2024. It's much more than just a directory. What you will find unfolding across these pages is a mini-epic made up of short political biographies. Each first-time MP's appearance in the new Parliament is related to something novel in the political field. It is a mark of change. Think of it therefore as a guidebook to India's democracy, a collector's edition that will far outlive its immediate purpose. What you get, in totality, is a grand canvas that tells you how politics in India is evolving.

A statistical breakdown yields fascinating insights into how change is occurring. There are 52 young MPs in all—if you take 40 as the upper-age limit—and their ratio of distribution is broadly proportionate to individual party strengths. But 38 of them are debutants. And here, you find the Telugu Desam Party

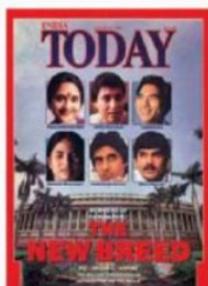
and the Samajwadi Party scoring the highest, with 75 per cent and 73 per cent of their MPs being first-timers, respectively—so the spectacular comebacks the two parties registered in their respective states of Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh has been on the back of a near-total renovation of personnel. The Congress, too, has its contingent of freshers, constituting 61 per cent of its overall strength; the ruling BJP comes in only at 45 per cent. At the same time, Karnataka, a state that held firm for the BJP, tops the states with 71 per cent. So, the presence of fresh blood has been decisive to overall outcomes. Those in the age band of 51-60 account for the highest number of debutant MPs: 89. Not spring chicken, but relatively young in politics, seeing as how even Rahul Gandhi, at 54, has not quite shed his 'youth icon' image. A healthy 44 of the 74 women MPs are first-timers too.

**O**ur data package gives you the overall patterns too: how educated our MPs are, how rich or poor, how many have criminal cases, who has how many children. None of this is trivial, since we are talking about policymakers. But there's nothing like putting faces on facts to bring them alive. It's one thing to say a reassuring 201 of the 280 first-timers are graduates and above, quite another to know that Rabindra Narayan Behera,

BJP MP from Jajpur, Odisha, is a professor of computer science engineering, with a PhD in Artificial Intelligence. Or that Angomcha Bimol Akoijam, the Congress MP from Inner Manipur, is a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University who majors in social/political psychology, with minor credits in filmmaking, but who could also have been a rock star. The House is not devoid of film stars, of course. The fresh releases include contemporaries like Kangna Ranaut, Sayani Ghosh and June Maliah as well as veterans like Suresh Gopi and Arun Govil. We have organised the 280 newbies into a total of 25 categories. By age profile: from Gen-Zers like

Sanjana Jatav (26) or Priya Saroj (25) to the Septuagenarians like Jitan Ram Manjhi (79). There are those who have come from the Rajya Sabha, like Union minister Piyush Goyal. And the novices: those who have never even been in a state legislative council before. There's the Dalit icon Chandrashekhar, who won against four big parties. Like him, a whole series of Giant-Slayers have arrived against the punter's odds. Find here Tycoons, Doctors and Bureaucrats rubbing shoulders with Godmen and Preachers, comrades from the far left—and yes, also the Radicals like Amritpal Singh and Engineer Rashid. Each one is a window to reality.

The House of the People reflects the popular will. We honour that with this special issue. Stitching together the stories of 280 MPs spread across the country, getting them photographed, all of this required a gargantuan effort. Sorting them into categories too was a challenge, because many of them fit several boxes at once. We went with the most standout traits. That may or may not be the reason why you hear from them in the future. But it's most probable that you will be hearing from them.



August 31, 1985

(Aroon Purie)

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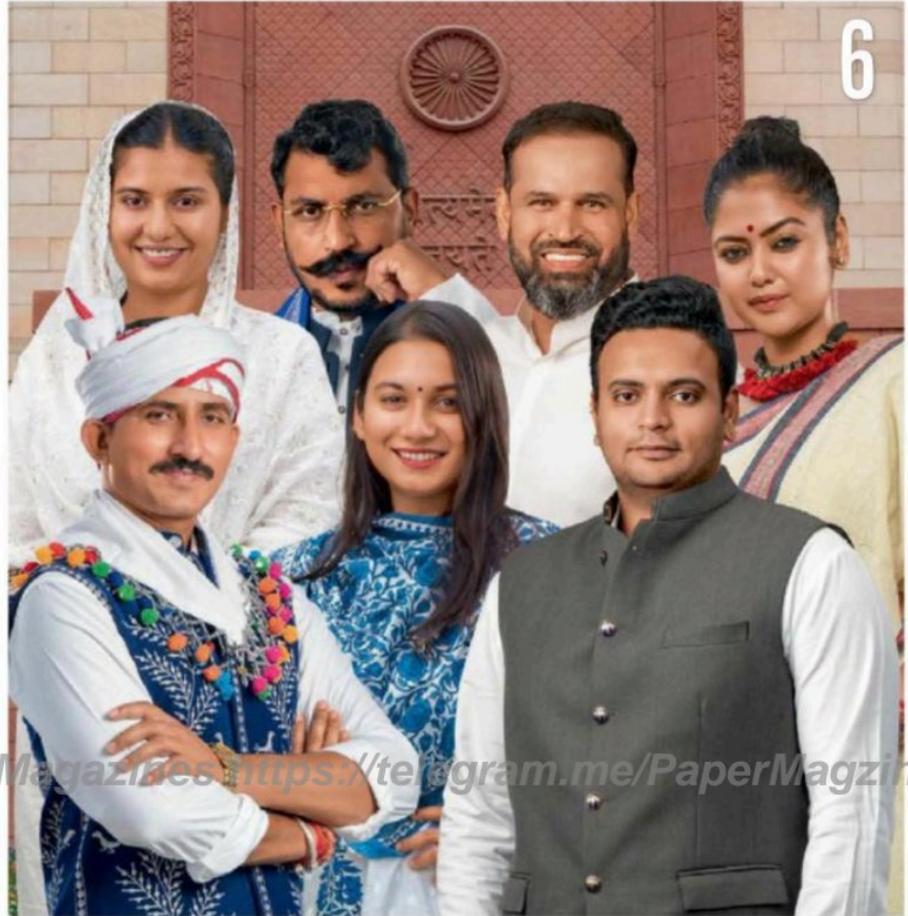
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# INSIDE

6



COVER STORY

## MEET THE DEBUTANTS

From Gen-Z to gender warriors, royals to entertainers, farmers to physicians, the 18th Lok Sabha has a fascinating mix of first-timers

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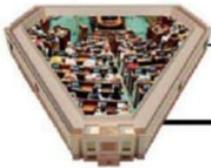
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## THE DEBUTANTS

1	GEN Z	8
2	ENTERTAINERS/SPORTSPERSON	12
3	EX-CHIEF MINISTERS	17
4	TRIBALS	20
5	BUSINESSMEN	22
6	ROYALS	28
7	DALITS	30
8	WOMEN ACTIVISTS	32
9	INHERITORS	34
10	GIANT-SLAYERS	40
11	WILDCARDS	43
12	PREACHERS	46
13	SEPTUAGENARIANS	48
14	EX-RAJYA SABHA MPs	50
15	EX-LEGISLATORS	52
16	EX-ADMINISTRATORS	56
17	LEGAL EAGLES	58
18	DOCTORS	60
19	EDUCATIONISTS	64
20	DEFECTORS	66
21	FARMER LEADERS	70
22	GRASSROOTS WORKERS	72
23	RADICALS	75
24	EX-LOCAL BODY HEADS	76
25	MEDIAPERSONS	79
DEBUTANTS IN NUMBERS		80

## SMART MONY



Illustration by SIDDHANT JUMDE

### COVER STORY

**84 PLAN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE**  
Change your mindset to fit your shifting financial needs

### HEALTH INSURANCE

**92 BEING BUYER-FRIENDLY**  
The new master circular on health insurance aims to make it more transparent

### INVESTING

**96 CONSCIOUS LIVING**  
Mixing social responsibility and investing is an ethical way of making investment choices

### LEARNING CENTRE

**100 ADVANCED MEDICAL DIRECTIVES**  
All about recording medical care preferences of an adult in case they are incapacitated

### QUIZ

**101 HOW SMART ARE YOU?**  
Find out how much you know about the basics of personal finance

### Q&A

**102 BRIDGING THE GAP**  
Esther Duflo's *Poor Economics for Kids* is a children's version of the economics text she co-wrote with Abhijit V. Banerjee



**COVER STORY**

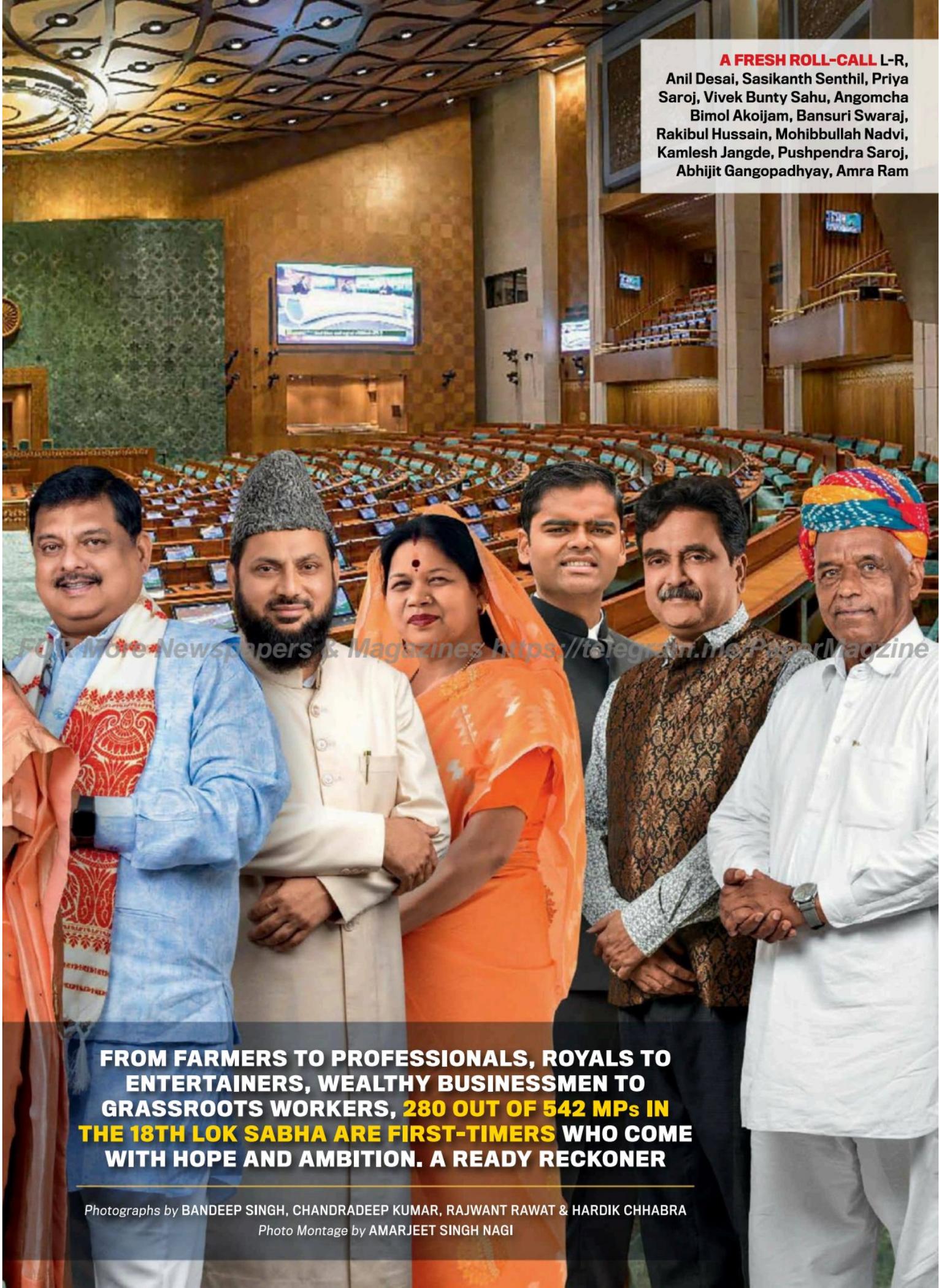
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# MEET THE — DEBUTANTS

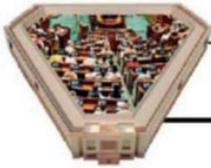
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**FROM FARMERS TO PROFESSIONALS, ROYALS TO ENTERTAINERS, WEALTHY BUSINESSMEN TO GRASSROOTS WORKERS, 280 OUT OF 542 MPs IN THE 18TH LOK SABHA ARE FIRST-TIMERS WHO COME WITH HOPE AND AMBITION. A READY RECKONER**

Photographs by BANDEEP SINGH, CHANDRADEEP KUMAR, RAJWANT RAWAT & HARDIK CHHABRA  
Photo Montage by AMARJEET SINGH NAGI



# THE YOUNG BRIGADE

The seven stars of the 18th Lok Sabha for whom age is not a barrier to their ambition

## IQRA CHOUDHARY, 29 ▶

| SAMAJWADI PARTY | Kairana, UP

**B**lessed with political pedigree as well as educational degrees, Iqra is exactly the kind of young parliamentarian a modern democracy needs. Her grandfather Akhtar Hasan, father Munawwar Hasan and mother Tabassum have all been parliamentarians, and Kairana has been something of a stronghold for the Muslim Gujjar family. After completing graduation from Lady Shriram College in Delhi, acquiring a law degree from Delhi University, Iqra went on to study International Politics and Law at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Her first political success came when her campaigning for her brother Nahid Hasan, who was in jail, saw him win the election. This time, she has won the election herself, defeating sitting MP and Jat leader Pradip Choud-

hary as well as the BJP's politics of polarisation that had reaped the party political dividend after the Hindu-Muslim riots of 2013. Iqra now hopes to begin a new chapter, enthused by the fact that all communities—Sainis, Gujjars, Jats, Rajputs, Dalits—voted for her, despite her being a Muslim, one of the 24 MPs from the community who will sit in the 18th Lok Sabha. Her list of priorities is long. “Kairana is near Delhi-NCR,” she said in a media interview. “But we still do not have industries, medical colleges or PSUs here. I want these essential things to be here.” She also wants to do something for women's empowerment, a tough ask given the patriarchal set-up that is typical of her very own constituency. Finally, there is the battle to rescue Kairana from the ignominy it was thrust into in 2013.

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## ▶ SANJNA JATAV, 26

| CONGRESS | Bharatpur (SC), Rajasthan

**H**er impromptu jig after winning the Bharatpur constituency has gone on to become an enduring symbol of the celebration of democracy. And though young in years, Sanjna has already achieved plenty in life. She was only 17 when she got married to police constable Kaptan Singh. Her in-laws encouraged her to

finish her graduation and a law degree thereafter. And then her husband's elder uncle, who is the village sarpanch, and encouraged her to contest, and she did, becoming a zila parishad member in Kathumar village in 2021. A foray into the 2023 assembly election ended in disappointment, especially as Sanjna lost by a mere 400-odd





Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

## ▶ SAGAR ESHWAR KHANDRE, 26

| CONGRESS | Bidar, Karnataka

**G**randson of the centenarian Bheemanna Khandre and son of current state environment minister Eshwar Khandre, Sagar comes armed with strong political genes. The law and BBA graduate found himself getting actively involved in social work in his father's assembly constituency Bhalki, when Khandre Sr was in hospital with Covid. This year, he locked horns with the BJP's Bhagwanth Khuba, who had held the Bidar Lok Sabha seat for the past 10 years. Khuba had, in fact, defeated Sagar's father in 2019 from Bidar. The victory is therefore that much sweeter for Sagar, who wrested the seat that had eluded his father in his maiden electoral outing.



## ▶ PRIYANKA SATISH JARKIHOI, 27

| CONGRESS | Chikkodi, Karnataka

**P**riyanka is not only among the youngest parliamentarians this time, she is also the first tribal woman to win from an unreserved Lok Sabha seat. An MBA grad from the Visvesvaraya Technological University,

she is a scion of Belagavi's powerful Jarkiholi family, which owns sugar mills and other businesses in the district and belongs to the Valmiki Nayak Scheduled Tribe community. Politics is a natural career for her given that her father, Satish Jarkiholi, is the PWD minister in the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government in the state, and two of her uncles—Ramesh and Balachandra Jarkiholi—are BJP legislators. Priyanka was the only Congress nominee to have won against a BJP candidate in the saffron-leaning Kittur Karnataka region, defeating the incumbent MP Anansaheb Jolle by a margin of 90,834 votes.



votes. By this time, however, she had come to the high command's notice, given her involvement in Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra and Priyanka Gandhi's 'Ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon' campaign. She did not belie her party's hope, defeating BJP heavyweight Ram Swarup Kohli. Her priority now is to take up the demand for OBC status for the Jats of Bharatpur-Dholpur who have been denied the same due to the community's royal roots.

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Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

## ◀ PRIYA SAROJ, 25

| SP | Machhlishahr (SC), UP

**A** law graduate, Priya was content practising in the Supreme Court till the Samajwadi Party invested its hope in young talent like her to overturn the BJP's hold on the state. Daughter of three-time MP Toofani Saroj, who represented Saidpur twice and Machhlishahr after the former constituency was abolished, Priya had assisted her father in the 2022 assembly election campaign. Familiar with the heat and dust of electoral politics, Priya delivered on her party's expectations by defeating BJP heavyweight B.P. Saroj. Now, she says, she will work towards women's empowerment and creating employment opportunities for the youth.

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

## SHAMBHAVI, 26 ▶

| LOK JANSHAKTI PARTY  
(Ram Vilas) |  
Samastipur (SC), Bihar

**H**er grandfather, Mahavir Choudhary, was a nine-time Congress MLA. Her father Ashok Choudhary is in the Janata Dal (United) minister in the Nitish Kumar government. Shambhavi, though, chose to go with Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), the party her father-in-law, the former IPS officer, philanthropist and scholar Acharya Kishore Kunal, is close to. A graduate from LSR College, Shambhavi studied Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics and pursued a doctorate on the "Intersectionality of Gender and Caste in Bihar Politics". Having now won the SC seat, Shambhavi will have a chance to put that education to good use. She has already drawn up a roadmap for what she wants to do to better her state—infrastructure and roads, to begin with.



## PUSHPENDRA SAROJ, 25 ▼

| SP | Kaushambi (SC), UP

**T**hree months and three days over the minimum qualifying age of 25 for a Lok Sabha election on June 4, to him belongs the honour of being the youngest MP in the 18th Lok Sabha. Part of Akhilesh's young brigade, Saroj is among those who've helped the party emerge as the third-largest in the lower house. An accounts and management graduate from the Queen Mary University of London, he defeated sitting BJP MP Vinod Kumar Sonkar by a lakh-plus votes, avenging the loss his father, senior SP leader Indrajeet Saroj, suffered here in 2019.





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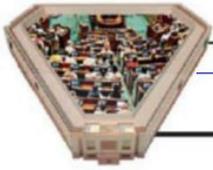


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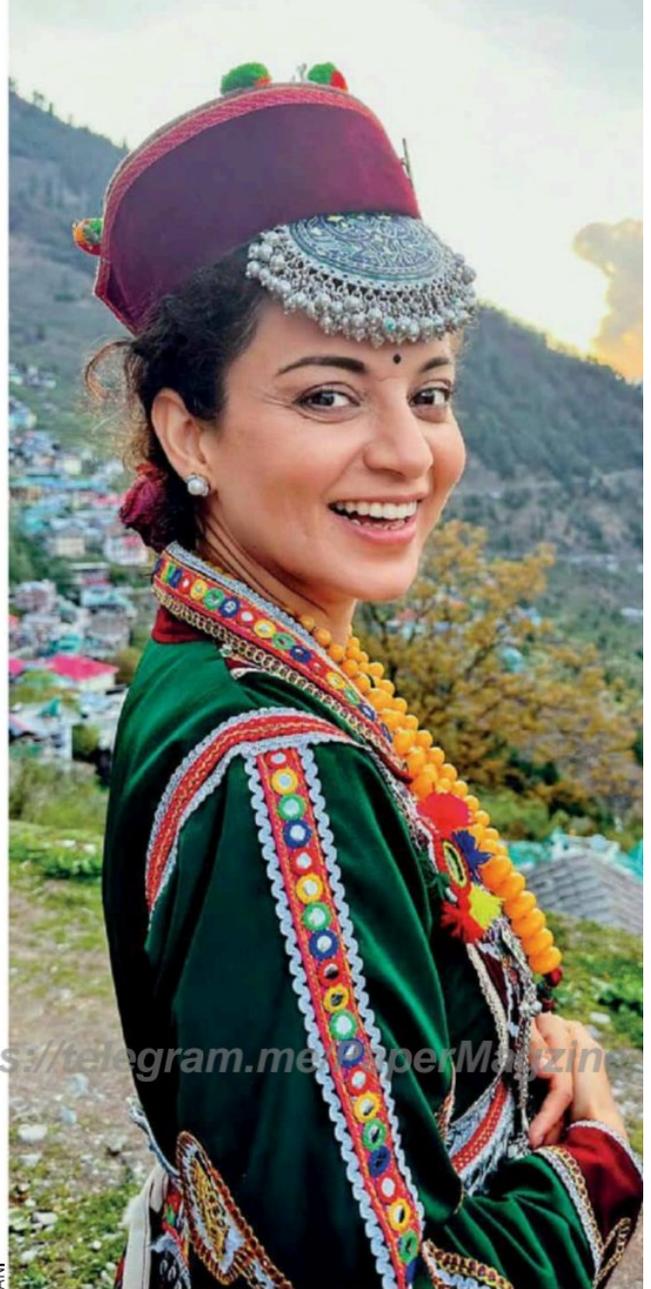
A firebrand Bollywood actress, regional thespians and a Kolkata *Knight Rider*, this contingent is familiar with how to mark their presence

## ▼ SURESH GOPI, 66

| BJP | Thrissur, Kerala

His early turn was as an Angry Young Man, not just bristling with anarchist rage against the system, but willing and able to act on that with booming fists, fast bullets and a tongue that was itself arson. His overall comportment—6'2" and a high GDP on girth—meant he had to soon transition to a niche within the system. But again, mostly as a tough cop, the kind of IPS officer who, when called in for a

dressing down by a corrupt minister, would bolt the door behind him and alchemise said minister into pounded meat. Such is the filmic image of the man—notwithstanding the touch of grey eminence he tried in recent films, including as host of Malayalam version of *KBC*—on whose superstardom the BJP finally breached the gap between desire and reality in Kerala. His actual shift to the system—as Union MoS (Tourism, Petroleum)—was enabled by a perception of being a 'nice guy, after all' in real life, even a disarming ingénue. Family man, father of five children, no tinsel town excesses, solidly conservative in short. Even the Syrian Catholics of Thrissur were impressed enough to hand out their benedictions to Saffron rather than Red.



ANI

## ARUN GOVIL, 72 ▶

| BJP | Meerut, Uttar Pradesh

Shocking the faithful and the credulous, the BJP lost Ayodhya. Or rather, Faizabad, the constituency that hosts the lavish new Ram mandir. In Meerut, though, the electorate reposed their trust in the Lord's doppelganger—Arun Govil, whose beatific visage lent calendar-art perfection to the 1987 DD serial *Ramayan*. He also played the PM recently—in political drama *Article 370*. But life asks him to play only an MP. Hints of betrayal infused that story too with drama and politics but the ending was divine.

## ◀ KANGNA RANAUT, 38

| BJP | Mandi, Himachal Pradesh

Plenty of cherubs with apple cheeks float around in Himachal's Edenic orchards. None has been bequeathed with such a devastating Avenging Angel equipage as to constitute a one-woman army: a sharp-bladed, undulating tongue, a wasp-like sting and the will to vanquish foes with vials of venom. Kangna Ranaut had always exhibited signs of being as outspoken, self-governed and resolute a person in real life as her characters were in her breakout films *Queen* (2014) and *Tanu Weds Manu* (2015). That success had come after the gritty passage that awaits every newcomer to Bollywood, and its core of feminist autonomy and anti-establishment rage could just as well have yielded a different kind of politics—before she chose to morph into a Joan of Arc for the Hindu right, with even films being conceived of as custom-built vehicles for that cause. Not that she needed it. She could raise heat and dust all on her own—as demonstrated by eight legal cases, including those for “outraging religious feelings” and “promoting enmity between different groups of religion”. Nor did the poll campaign soften her: “Mandi's *beti*” rode on personal attacks on rivals, besides enthusiastic cheerleading for Modidom.

MANEESH AGNIHOTRI

If you're the sort whose attentions are drawn to the bevy of entertainers coming in to lighten the gloom of politics, no contest could've been more compelling than the Double Bill of Hooghly: Rachna Banerjee, a former Miss Kolkata who shared screenspace with Amitabh Bachchan in *Sooryavansham*, versus actress Locket Chatterjee. Banerjee and Chatterjee have co-starred before: in films like *Chaoya Paoya*, *Paribar* and *Tyag*. They're well-matched in height—around 163-164 cm—but Banerjee stood taller in this round. Thanks to the other Banerjee who once



## ▲ RACHNA BANERJEE, 51

| TMC | Hooghly, West Bengal

guested on *Didi No.1*, the TV show she hosts. Need we spell out the name?



## ◀ JUNE MALIAH, 54

| TMC | Medinipur, West Bengal

The name almost invites the playful punster, and even her long-time friend couldn't quite resist the temptation. “They will say bye to June in June,” said Agnimitra Paul, fashion designer and fellow traveller from the world of glitz to the gut-busting inferno that Bengal politics can often be—where, as it happened, she was her pal's BJP rival for an LS seat. But Medinipur chose to say a bigger hello to the Trinamool actress-politician with a winning smile and wise eyes. The eponymous assembly seat had already sanctified her with a debut win in 2021. Her cinematic debut had been equally worthy—the critically acclaimed *Lathi* (1996). A decade later came *The Bong Connection*. In Bollywood hit *Meri Pyari Bindu*, she played Parineeti Chopra's mother. In life, she was a single mother to a son and daughter for years (before a second marriage in 2019) and kept her filmography ticking through politics.



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

◀ **SAYANI GHOSH, 31**

| TMC | **Jadavpur, West Bengal**

**A**mong her films, you find the anthemic title *Ekla Chalo*—reprising Tagore’s stirring fiat to the broken and the deserted to strike out alone. But that 2015 release was no essay in solitary splendour: it co-starred fellow debutant MP June Maliah. Today, the Trinamool benches in the Lok Sabha—in the vicinity of

the fire-breathing Mahua Moitra—again stars Sayani in that smouldering platoon, watching, listening, smiling at the witticisms, rebutting the foolhardy interjecter, thoroughly engaged. Jadavpur, which gave Sayani her debut win in a three-year political career, would approve. It has a reputation to keep—and she’s aware of it. “I wish to keep an 80 per cent attendance in Parliament and ask researched, relevant questions,” she told INDIA TODAY.



▲ **PARTHA BHOWMICK, 60**

| TMC | **Barrackpur, West Bengal**

**A**mateur theatre was his stage for years, before thespian Bratya Basu blooded him in the professional circuit in 2010. That was a time when West Bengal politics was about to turn an epoch. He too graduated to Trinamool politics along with his mentor, becoming an MLA in 2011 and a state minister in 2022. His prolific acting career continued, including with 2023 web series *Abar Proloy*. The deluge now moves to Parliament Street.

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**YUSUF PATHAN, 41** ▶

| TMC | **Baharampur, West Bengal**

**I**n a time of innocence, with no reference to spatial context, if someone had opened bets on which of the two Pathan brothers was a likely candidate for politics, most punters may have picked the younger Irfan. Always smiling, more personable, as much of a natural before the camera as he was with the swinging ball, readymade material for a public life. The elder Yusuf, by contrast, seemed to be built of stern granite—one who preferred inarticulacy till it came to the point where the ball had to be cannoned out of

the ground. But Baharampur was not a place you could win with light conversation. For a quarter-century, it had been the lair of Congress strongman Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, the man who thought nothing of taking on Mamata Banerjee herself. If such a Goliath had to be felled, the David needed to be military grade. Yusuf, who admitted to having no clue where Baharampur was when he became Mamata’s surprise pick, mined his past association with Kolkata Knight Riders to dilute the outsider tag—and heaved Adhir over long on.



Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

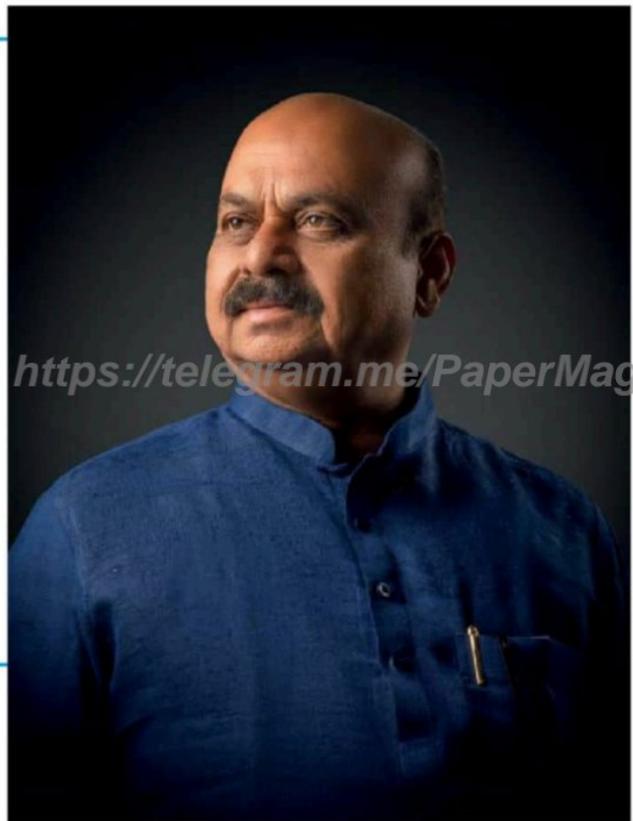
# STATE CAPTAINS TO DILLI DURBAR

For some, it's a second coming, for others, it came as a reward for persistence and longevity. They have led the state, now they will be looking to make a mark at the Centre

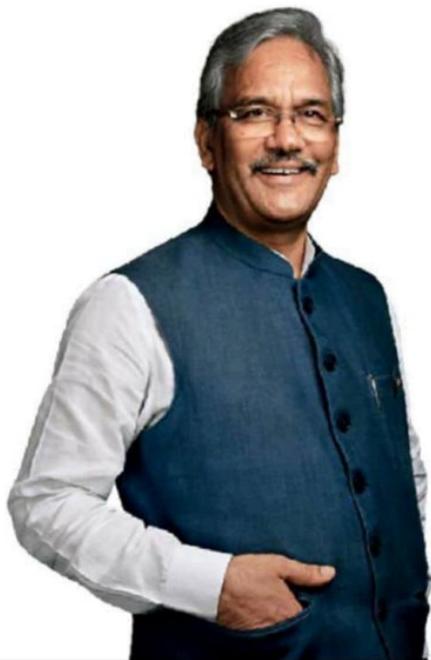
## BASAVARAJ BOMMAI, 64 ▶

| BJP | Haveri, Karnataka

**H**is father S.R. Bommai's name has become a keyword in Centre-State relations since the eponymous—and landmark—Supreme Court judgment of 1994. Thirty years later, India's federal architecture is still shaken by the periodic tremor, even if not via President's Rule. But the son will now observe the landscape from the other side as he travels from state to Centre. Basavaraj had a stormy passage as Karnataka CM but proved to be a nightwatchman who stuck around and scored a bit. Also, as a needy migrant from socialism to the Hindu right wing, more loyal than the pope.



Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

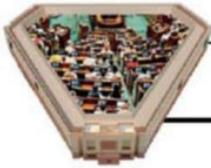


## ◀ TRIVENDRA SINGH RAWAT, 63

| BJP | Haridwar, Uttarakhand

**I**t's a rebirth of sorts. In his four years as CM, the *pracharak* from Pauri came across as a strict administrator who didn't mind losing friends. But he proved too good at that, alienating even the

*teerth purohits* with his Char Dham Devasthanam Board taking over the prestigious holy sites. The RSS, too, went cold on him, as dissent grew. And admirers were hard to come by in the grim aftermath of the Chamoli flash floods of February 2021. Unseated that March, he didn't even figure as a candidate in the 2022 assembly polls. But then lady luck smiled on him with a call-up for the Haridwar seat.



Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

**▲ CHARANJIT SINGH CHANNI, 61**

**| CONGRESS | Jalandhar (SC), Punjab**

**H**e came as a surprise choice when the Congress thought it fit to dethrone Amarinder Singh in 2021—and was much feted as Punjab’s first Dalit CM, one who replaced erstwhile royalty at that. Later, lamented as one who perhaps didn’t get much time to turn things around, before the AAP storm hit in the 2022 assembly poll. Losing from two constituencies, Channi was briefly threatened by oblivion. But he has renewed his claim on relevance by winning from the Doaba belt, the epicentre of Punjab’s Dalit politics, and will be in sync with the Congress’s larger national quest now.

**JAGADISH SHETtar, 68 ▶**

**| BJP | Belagavi, Karnataka**



ANI

**H**is uncle Sadashiv Shettar was the Jana Sangh’s first legislator in the South, elected to the Karnataka Legislative Council in 1967; his dad wore saffron too, as a five-time corporator and mayor. So it was against deep filial bonds, and with a heavy heart, that ex-CM Jagadish Shettar moved to the Congress in 2023 ahead of the assembly polls. Though electoral luck eluded him then, it was seen as a high-profile sign of Lingayat disaffection. Order was restored with a *ghar wapsi* for the mild-mannered former lawyer in January. Repairs to electoral honour followed.

**NARAYAN RANE, 72 ▼**

**| BJP | Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg, Maharashtra**

**T**he former Shiv Sainik from Chembur earned his spurs as a street fighter in a party known for its rough-and-ready politics. In 1990, he graduated from Mumbai local body lordship to state politics with a victory from Sindhudurg. There, on the Konkan coast, he developed a political fief good enough to pitchfork him to the CM’s post, albeit briefly, in 1999. In 2005, he quit the Shiv Sena after a protracted power

struggle with Uddhav Thackeray. Thwarted ambition dogged him through a stint with the Congress and his own political start-up. The BJP awaited as the last refuge.

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HINDUSTAN TIMES

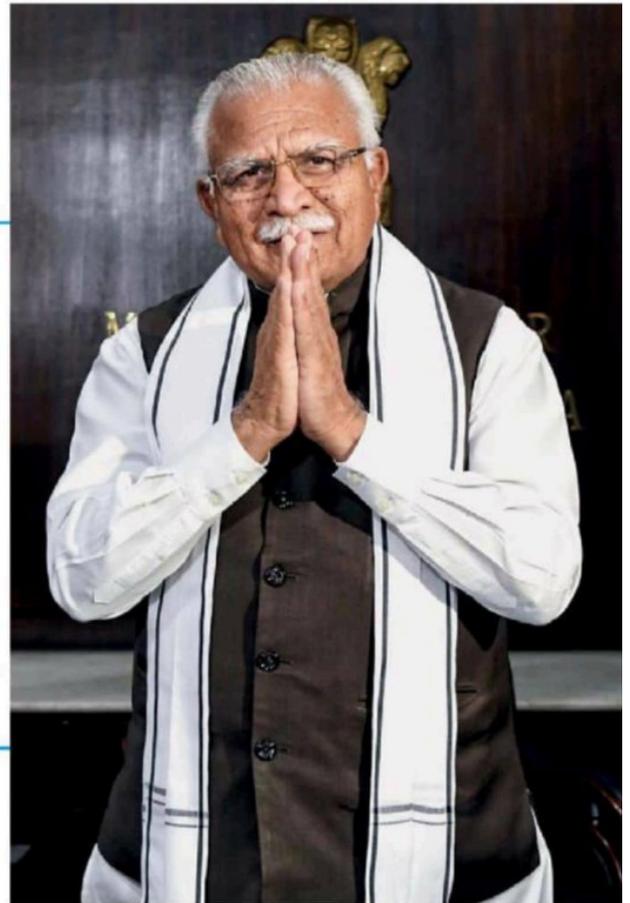
▶ **MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR, 70**

| **BJP** | Karnal, Haryana

**H**e is the one on whose motorcycle Narendra Modi used to ride pillion back in the day. Since 2014, the favour has been returned. Crafting a non-Jat caste coalition in Haryana and holding it up for nearly a decade was no mean achieve-

ment, but in the end, it also proved to be his Achilles heel. His own innovative farm policies became footnotes as agitating farmers took to the highways in protest. That may make the BJP's task in the upcoming assembly polls tougher. But Khattar's wattage hasn't waned. Instead, the former Haryana CM has been jack-plugged into the Union power ministry, with additional charge of urban development.

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ANI

◀ **JITAN RAM MANJHI, 79** | **HAM(S)** | Gaya (SC), Bihar

**O**nce a clerk in the Posts and Telegraph department, Jitan Ram Manjhi couriered himself from party to party—Congress, Janata Dal, RJD, JD(U)—before floating his own in 2015. That was right after Nitish Kumar used him as a stopgap CM for nine months. But, as a Mahadalit,

he carved his own viable niche. His Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular)—it supports the BJP, never mind the brackets—proved the efficacy of small parties in Bihar's complex polity. The first Musahar to be CM is now the first Musahar to be a Union minister.

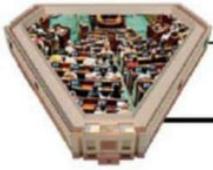
**I**n 2013, the Left had won 50 out of Tripura's 60 seats—continuing its four-decade imperium. The BJP had 0 seats and 1.54 per cent of the votes. The man who turned that around in 2018, joining a historic turn in North-east politics, is now in New Delhi. But his mind is still set on the throne back home. "A chief minister is the head of a state while a Union minister works under the prime minister. I prefer to return to state politics"—Biplab Deb was heard

**BIPLAB KUMAR DEB, 52** ▶

| **BJP** | Tripura West

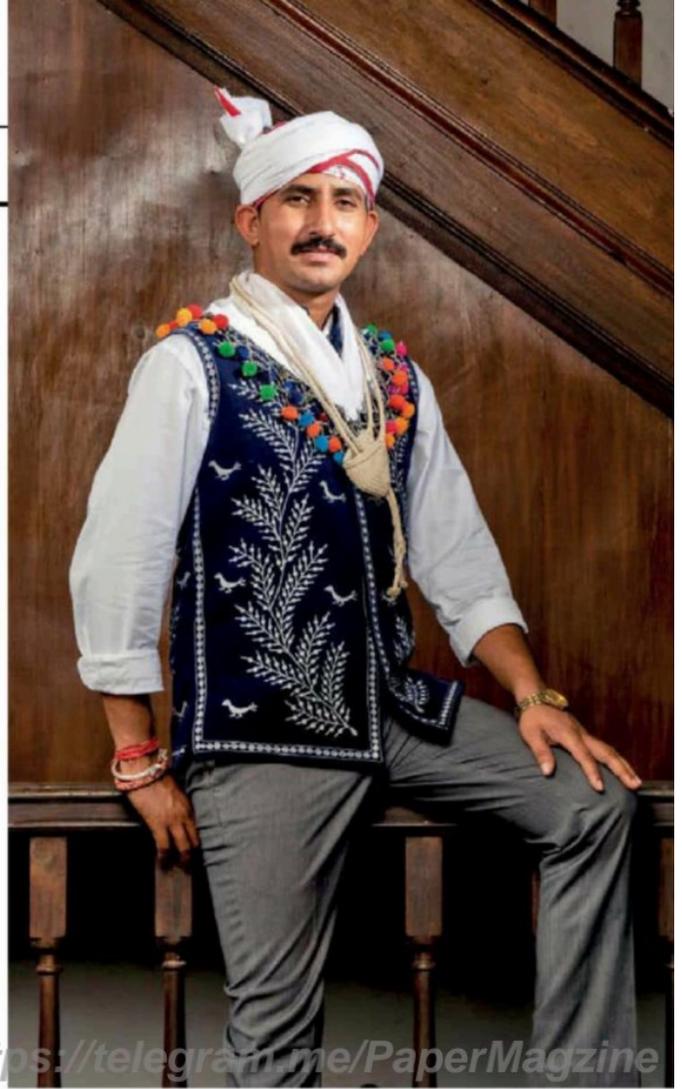
saying, just two days after he became an MP. Perhaps a Mahabharata awaits him, and this time certainly one that has the internet. But Parliament will be the stage for his verbal magniloquence for now.





# A TRIBE OF THEIR OWN

The voice of marginalised tribal groups, these new representatives now aim to amplify their concerns in Parliament



◀ **KALIPADA SAREN KHERWAL, 66**

| **TMC** | Jhargram (ST), West Bengal

His literary credentials are perhaps better than his political ones. A Santhali playwright, the retired bank employee is a two-time Sahitya Akademi Award winner, a Padma Shri awardee (2022) and also the recipient of West Bengal's Banga Bibhushan Samman (2024). An alumnus of Rabindra Bharati University, he used to run a theatre group popular in Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha. Having had close ties with TMC leaders, he was a surprise pick from Jhargram. Now that he's won, Kherwal wants to be a "strong voice for my people" in Parliament.



◀ **JASHUBHAI RATHVA, 54**  
| **BJP** | Chhota Udaipur (ST), Gujarat



◀ **AMARSING TISSO, 56**  
| **BJP** | Diphu (ST), Assam



◀ **NABA CHARAN MAJHI, 63** | **BJP** | Mayurbhanj (ST), Odisha

His proximity to President Droupadi Murmu, with whom he had worked when she was a councillor in Rairangpur, is believed to have got this one-term MLA the ticket to the Lok Sabha. Earlier a member of the Jharkhand Mukti

Morcha (JMM), Majhi joined the BJP in 2019 and got elected to the Odisha assembly from Rairangpur. Now, he has defeated former MP Sudam Marndi of the Biju Janata Dal and JMM patriarch Shibu Soren's daughter Anjani to win the tribal seat.

## ◀ **RAJKUMAR ROAT, 32**

**| BAP | Banswara (ST), Rajasthan**

**T**his is one man who knows how to cut a dashing figure, whether attired in stylish tribal gear, or arriving in Parliament atop a camel to take oath as a new MP. He left the Bhartiya Tribal Party to float the Bharat Adivasi Party (BAP) in September 2023, only to have the party win three seats three months later in the Rajasthan assembly (he himself won from Chorasi, his second stint as legislator) and one in Madhya Pradesh. This year, he set his sights on the Lok Sabha, and here he is—the MP from Banswara. He has often called for an independent Bhil Pradesh, comprising the tribal belts of central India. Expect him to make a pitch in Parliament too.

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH



## ▲ **MURARILAL MEENA, 65**

**| CONGRESS | Dausa (ST), Rajasthan**

Holding a civil engineering diploma, this seasoned tribal leader is a four-term MLA—twice as a BSP candidate and thereafter as the Congress's. Although his wife Savita failed to win the Dausa parliamentary seat in 2019, he avenged her defeat by wresting it from the BJP.



## ▲ **S. SUPONGMEREN JAMIR, 61**

**| CONGRESS | Nagaland**

There cannot be a greater feat than securing a win for a party that doesn't have a single MLA in the 60-member assembly. That too after 25 years, and in the sole LS seat the state has. The kudos are well deserved for the state Congress chief.

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**H**is has been a slow and steady climb to the top. That includes being sarpanch, BJP's Chhotaudepur district president and vice-president of the party's Scheduled Tribe Morcha. The Lok Sabha election is a well-deserved culmination of his political innings, a satisfying one too with a winning margin of nearly 400,000 votes.

An executive member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council—constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution for development and protection of the tribal region—Tisso has studied till Class 12. His wife is an Assam state service officer.

## ▶ **DHAVAL LAXMANBHAI PATEL, 38**

**| BJP | Valsad (ST), Gujarat**

**A**BTech in computer engineering, an MBA in marketing and stints with several top-notch MNCs—IBM, Capgemini,

Accenture—across the US, Europe, Asia. But his calling, it seems, lay elsewhere. Ergo, a pivot to the BJP in 2021, and becoming the national social media in-charge of its Scheduled Tribe Morcha and also a popular right-wing voice in cyberspace. A book has followed too, on a favourite subject, *Bharat Ke Janjatiya Krantiveer*.

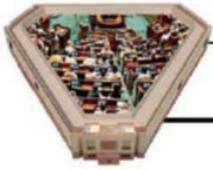


## ◀ **JOBA MAJHI, 60 | JMM | Singhbhum (ST), Jharkhand**

**W**ife of the late Devendra Manjhi, a leading tribal leader, Joba stepped into politics after he was murdered in 1994. Since 1995, this matriculate has represented Manoharpur in the Jharkhand assembly for five terms. A

minister in the Hemant Soren government, she was dropped when Champai Soren took charge in February this year. But she was soon back in the reckoning and went on to defeat Geeta Kora, the sitting Congress MP who had switched to the BJP.





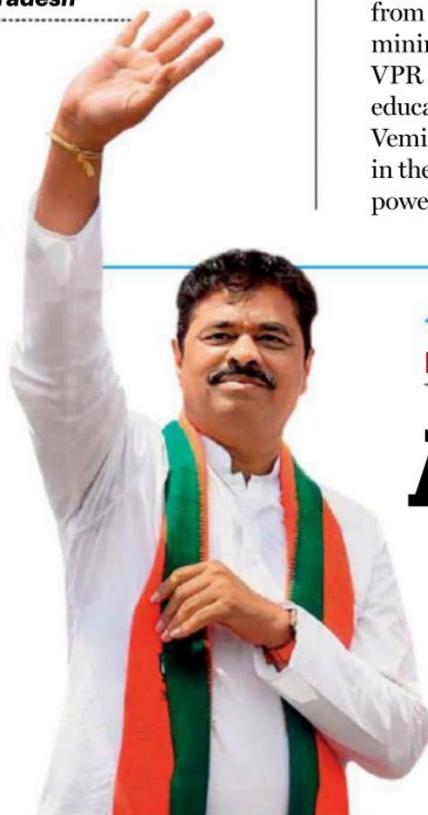
# IN AUGUST COMPANY

The entrepreneur-politicians who will now help steer national policy



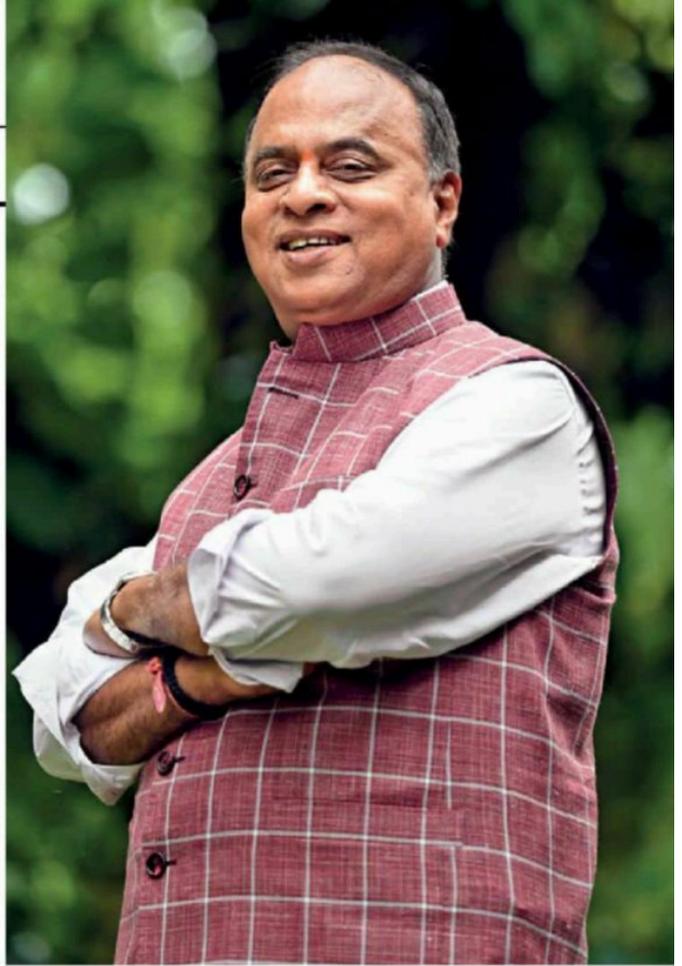
▲ **SRIBHARAT MATHUKUMILLI, 35**  
| TDP | Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

As the grandson of the late M.V.V.S. Murthi—a two-time MP from Visakhapatnam—Sri Bharat has inherited more than just a name. He presides over GITAM, a deemed-to-be university founded by his grandfather in 1980 which now boasts a network of four campuses. Sri Bharat's own academic pedigree is equally noteworthy. An alumnus of Stanford University, US, he holds a joint MBA/ MA degree and has founded the Kautilya School of Public Policy in Hyderabad. With declared assets of Rs 232.5 crore, the young tycoon has also strategically invested in several start-ups.



◀ **C.M. RAMESH, 59**  
| BJP | Anakapalle, Andhra Pradesh

A two-term Rajya Sabha member, the industrialist had switched to the BJP from the TDP in 2019. He dropped out of college but went on to establish Rithwik Projects in 1999—an integrated construction, infrastructure development and management company. In all these years, along with his political clout, Ramesh's assets have also grown substantially, and now stand at Rs 497 crore.



HARDIK CHHABRA

▲ **PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY, 68**  
| TDP | Nellore, Andhra Pradesh

Elected to the Rajya Sabha on a YSRCP ticket in 2018, Vemireddy quit to join the TDP ahead of the general election. A graduate from Chennai's Loyola College, his business operations have evolved from a small contracting firm in the 1990s to a major mining and irrigation firm—VPR Mining Infra. The VPR Foundation, launched in 2015, is involved in education, health and development works in Nellore. Vemireddy's wife, Prashanthi, was elected from Kovur in the simultaneous assembly election. Together, the power couple has declared assets worth Rs 716 crore.

▼ **CHANDRA SEK HAR PEMMASANI, 48**

| **TDP** | Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

**W**ith Rs 5,705 crore in declared assets, Pemmasani was the wealthiest contestant this Lok Sabha election. Son of a hotelier, he studied at Osmania Medical College, Hyderabad, before going to Pennsylvania for his MD. The medico-turned-politician has now returned from the US to look after the interests of Guntur. Incidentally, Pemmasani is also the founder-CEO of UWorld, an online platform that helps students prepare for competitive exams, which he had launched at the tender age of 25.



HINDUSTAN TIMES

▲ **RAVINDRA DATTARAM WAIKAR, 65**

| **SHIV SENA** | Mumbai North West, Maharashtra

**B**alya Mama, as the construction magnate is popularly known, is a serial defector whose political journey began as a Shiv Sainik in the mid-1990s. Belonging to the Aagri community, which has a strong presence in the region, he made an unsuccessful bid for the Bhiwandi seat as a Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) candidate in 2014. Later, returning to the Shiv Sena, he was elected to the Thane zilla parishad. He then joined the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and, after the split, sided with patriarch Sharad Pawar.

**A** close aide of Uddhav Thackeray who rose through the ranks of the undivided Shiv Sena, Waikar switched loyalties to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde just ahead of the Lok Sabha election. But the former state minister with stakes in the hospitality sector—the plush Matoshree Club in Mumbai among them—had a candid admission to make. Having been in the ED’s crosshairs, Waikar, who has declared assets worth Rs 54.5 crore, alleged he was given two options—switch sides or go to jail. He opted for the first and went on to defeat Shiv Sena (UBT)’s Amol Kirtikar—touted to be the stronger candidate—by just 48 votes.



▲ **SURESH GOPINATH MHATRE, 54**

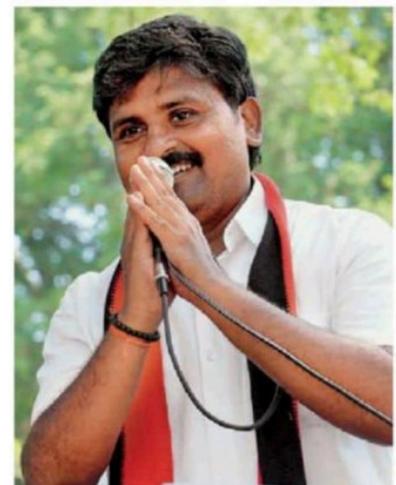
| **NCP (SP)** | Bhiwandi, Maharashtra

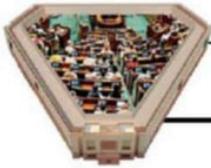
With assets of over Rs 107 crore, Mhatre is now in the Lok Sabha after defeating the BJP’s Kapil Patil, a Union minister of state in Modi 2.0.

▶ **ARUN NEHRU, 40**

| **DMK** | Perambalur, Tamil Nadu

**S**on of DMK strongman and state cabinet minister K.N. Nehru, Arun has investments in real estate and the rice business and has declared assets of Rs 81.6 crore. He also has an MS degree in civil engineering from Bradley University, Illinois, and has announced that creating more jobs for Perambalur will be his top priority.





## THE DEBUTANTS | BUSINESSMEN

### VAMSI KRISHNA GADDAM, 35 ▶

**| CONGRESS | Peddapalle (SC), Telangana**

**A**rmed with a BS degree in management from Purdue University, US, Vamsi Krishna is now shepherding his family's Visaka Industries—which has interests in cement sheets, rooftop solar and much else—along with their media concerns. Theirs is a political family, grandfather G. Venkatswamy is a former Union minister and MLA father G. Vivek was the richest candidate in the 2023 state election. Vamsi, who has declared Rs 24 crore assets, is also a social entrepreneur and has set up an electric bike firm, Atumobile.



### ▲ PUTTA MAHESH KUMAR, 36

**| TDP | Eluru, Andhra Pradesh**

**S**on of an influential political family, the civil engineer now also steers the family's construction business. Father Putta Sudhakar is a former chairman of the board of trustees of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams and was elected as Mydukur MLA in the simultaneous state election. Mahesh's political connections do not end there. His father-in-law, Yanamala Ramakrishnudu, is a former assembly speaker who was also a minister in TDP founder N.T. Rama Rao's cabinet.



### ▲ DHAIRYASHEEL MOHITE-PATIL, 47

**| NCP (SP) | Madha, Maharashtra**

**D**hairyasheel is the nephew of former deputy CM and Solapur satrap Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil a.k.a. Baldada and helps his uncle manage the family's massive empire that spans from local politics to cooperatives. His father, Rajsinh a.k.a. Rajabhau, was also well-known for his work in the farming and dairy sector. The Mohite-Patils claim to be the descendants of Hambirrao Mohite, a general in Shivaji's army, and have kinship and marriage ties with politicians across party lines. The first-time MP declared assets worth Rs 48.9 crore.



### ▲ RAMASAHAYAM RAGHURAM REDDY, 63

**| CONGRESS | Khammam, Telangana**

**K**nown as RRR in close circles, he is the son of former MP and Gandhi family acolyte Ramasahayam Surender Reddy. Apart from steering the family business in construction and infrastructure development, Reddy is associated with the Hyderabad Public School (as vice-chairman of its board) and Hyderabad Club (as a director) and has declared assets worth Rs 58 crore. Despite being new to politics—he was a last-minute choice for the seat—RRR won by a record margin of 467,000-plus votes.

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**RAJEEV RAI, 54** ▶

| **SP** | Ghosi, Uttar Pradesh

Considered close to Samajwadi Party supremo Akhilesh Yadav, Rai bested UP minister and SBSP chief O.P. Rajbhar's son in the election. The founder-chairman of the Bengaluru-based AVK Group of institutions, he has declared assets worth Rs 49 crore. A national spokesperson of the party, Rai has had the income tax department come knocking at his door several times in recent years.



▶ **RADHAKRISHNA DODDAMANI, 63**

| **CONGRESS** | Gulbarga (SC), Karnataka

Debutant in electoral politics, Doddamani is the son-in-law of Mallikarjun Kharge, the AICC president who had earned the Kannada sobriquet *Solillada Sardara*—the chief who hasn't seen defeat. But that changed in 2019 when Kharge lost his Gulbarga seat to the BJP's Umesh Jadhav. As it played out, Doddamani—a businessman-turned-politician who, with his doctor-wife Jayashree, has declared assets worth Rs 53.4 crore—defeated Jadhav to win back his father-in-law's bastion.



**SHREYAS PATEL, 33** ▼

| **CONGRESS** | Hassan, Karnataka

BBM graduate, Shreyas defeated sitting Hassan MP and sex scandal accused Prajwal Revanna. A year ago, the rice mill owner with declared assets of Rs 42.7 crore had lost the state election to Prajwal's father H.D. Revanna after two similar bids made by his mother, Anupama Mahesh. It's an old political rivalry between the two families in Hassan. In 1999, Shreyas's grandfather, G. Puttaswamy Gowda, had wrested the bastion from Prajwal's grandfather and former prime minister H.D. Deve Gowda, albeit for a single term.



◀ **SHIV PAL SINGH PATEL, 68**

| **SP** | Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh

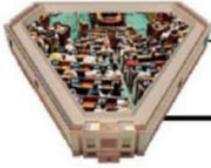
Kurmi leader Shiv Pal is the founder-chairman of Lucknow Public Schools and Colleges, a chain of premium educational institutions in north India. Once a functionary in the party's teachers' wing, he is also a former member of the UP legislative council (2002-14) and has declared Rs 46.6 crore in assets, which include buildings and land parcels worth over Rs 30 crore.



◀ **PRAVEEN KHANDELWAL, 63**

| **BJP** | Chandni Chowk, Delhi

Khandelwal founded the association, Confederation of All India Traders, and has been a vocal opponent of the 'unfair practices' adopted by e-commerce firms. He's also been a member of the NDA government's GST panel and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC). Khandelwal runs a hardware business and has assets worth Rs 11.7 crore.



▶ **RAJESH VERMA, 31**

| **LJP (RV)** | *Khagaria, Bihar*

**V**erma is a qualified engineer who began his political career as Bhagalpur city's deputy mayor in 2017. In July 2020, he joined the Lok Janshakti Party and contested the state election from Bhagalpur. Though he came in third, the split in votes led to the BJP candidate's narrow defeat. After the LJP split the following year, he stayed loyal to Chirag Paswan and was rewarded for it with a ticket from Khagaria—he won by 160,000-plus votes. Verma comes from a reputed business family in Bhagalpur, runs a real estate firm and has assets worth Rs 5.4 crore.



**DAMODAR AGARWAL, 68** ▶

| **BJP** | *Bhilwara, Rajasthan*

**A** well-known textiles trader in Bhilwara, he emerged as a giant-killer, defeating former Union minister and assembly speaker C.P. Joshi. Agarwal has been long associated with the RSS in this industrial town that has emerged as India's largest manufacturer of fabrics, and was even imprisoned for three months during the Emergency. Recently made the state BJP's general secretary, the seasoned leader has declared assets worth Rs 7.1 crore.



▶ **CHAMALA KIRAN KUMAR REDDY, 49**

| **CONGRESS** | *Bhongir, Telangana*

**A** farmer's son, Reddy has a diploma in hotel management from Cyprus and rose through the party ranks—first as an NSUI and Youth Congress activist and then as the latter's national general secretary. An articulate spokesperson with impeccable organisational skills, he founded an education consultancy before switching to real estate, and has declared assets worth Rs 28.7 crore.



**ESWARASAMY K., 47** | **DMK** | *Pollachi, Tamil Nadu*

A staunch party loyalist, he is the DMK's Madathukulam (West) vice-president. With stakes in real estate and blue metals, he has declared assets of Rs 34.5 crore.

**AMBICA G. LAKSHMINARAYANA VALMIKI, 60**

| **TDP** | *Ananthapur, Andhra Pradesh*

Ambica is from the backward Boya community and is a mover, of sorts. He's done time in the Congress and YSRCP, is into real estate and has assets worth Rs 4.7 crore.



**KARTICK CHANDRA PAUL, 49**

| **BJP** | *Raiganj, West Bengal*

The brick kilns and trading in pulses are his calling, besides social work. He has declared Rs 5 crore assets.

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▼ **TANGELLA UDAY SRINIVAS, 39**

| JSP | Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh

**F**ounder of Tea Time, a popular cafe chain, Srinivas is a close aide of Jana Sena Party chief and 'power star' Pawan Kalyan. The son of a government civil contractor, he discontinued his engineering studies in Hyderabad to move to the UAE before returning and launching the first Tea Time outlet in Rajahmundry in 2016. Now, it has grown into 3,000-plus outlets in more than 15 states. The entrepreneur-turned-neta has declared assets worth over Rs 31 crore.



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▼ **ARUP CHAKRABORTY, 68**

| TMC | Bankura, West Bengal

**A** former lawyer who now runs an amusement park, Chakraborty is the district head of the TMC's Bankura unit. After winning the Tal-dangra assembly seat in 2021, he has now trumped veteran BJP leader Subhash Sarkar to enter the Lok Sabha. Otherwise known for his controversial statements, Chakraborty recently took everyone by surprise when he appealed to followers to ensure that no one from the Opposition camp faces persecution for not supporting the TMC. He has declared assets worth Rs 17 crore.



**MANISH JAISWAL, 58**

| BJP | Hazaribagh, Jharkhand

A two-term MLA and a director in several firms, he is the son of renowned Hazaribagh businessman Braj Kishore. He declared Rs 36 crore in assets.



**BAJRANG SONWANE, 54**

| NCP (SP) | Beed, Maharashtra

Known as Bajrang Bappa, he owns two sugar mills and has assets worth Rs 28.9 crore. He beat former BJP state minister Pan-kaja Munde by just 6,553 votes.



**K. RAJASHEKAR BASAVARAJ HITNAL, 45**

| CONGRESS | Koppal, Karnataka

Rajashekar's studies were cut short at Class 12 but that didn't stop the businessman who now has assets worth Rs 29 crore. Brother Raghavendra is a three-term MLA.



**KESINENI SIVANATH, 54**

| TDP | Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

A realtor with assets worth Rs 29.2 crore, he beat elder brother and previous MP Kesineni Srinivas of the YSRCP.



**MUKESH DALAL, 63**

| BJP | Surat, Gujarat

Declared winner after his Congress rival's nomination was cancelled, he runs a textile business and has Rs 17.8 crore in assets.



**BASTIPATI NAGARAJU, 45**

| TDP | Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh

A college lecturer who gave up academics to enter the realty sector and now politics, he has assets worth Rs 9 crore.



**HARSH MALHOTRA, 60**

| BJP | East Delhi

A former mayor of East Delhi, Malhotra runs a printing press and is also an organ donation activist. An organisation man, he has Rs 4 crore in assets.



**M. MALLESH BABU, 50**

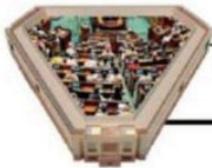
| JD(S) | Kolar (SC), Karnataka

An MBA degree holder from Bangalore University, Babu owns a petrol pump and has declared assets worth Rs 23 crore.



**K.E. PRAKASH, 48** | DMK | Erode, Tamil Nadu

Deputy secretary of the DMK's youth wing, he owns a dye and chemicals business besides a drinking water dealership. He has declared assets worth Rs 10 crore.



# REGAL REPRESENTATIVES

Blue-blooded men and women who will bring royal flair to the House of the People



▲ **CHHATRAPATI SHAHU SHAHAJI, 76**

| **CONGRESS** | Kolhapur, Maharashtra

Assets worth Rs 342 crore, a 1936 Maybach and a 1962 Merc in his fleet of vintage cars, and yet a “commoner among royals”! That is indeed the moniker his connect with the masses has fetched this Kolhapur royal and 12th descendant of the Maratha warrior Shivaji Maharaj. ‘Mothe Maharaj’, as he is also called, had joined the Shiv Sena in the 1990s, but refrained from dipping his toes in electoral waters. He was content instead to let his sons dabble in politics while he devoted himself to numerous educational institutes and charitable trusts. Till the Congress persuaded him to contest the Kolhapur seat, he obliged, and tasted success in his maiden parliamentary foray. Now in the lower house, the upper crust royal should bring some welcome gravitas to parliamentary proceedings.

▶ **YADUVEER KRISHNADATTA CHAMARAJA WADIYAR, 32**

| **BJP** | Mysore, Karnataka

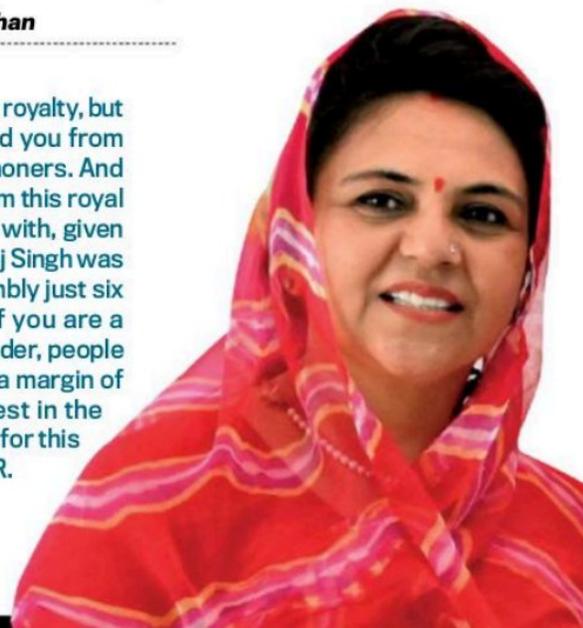
A guitar-playing, rock, blues, jazz-loving Maharaja? See him in royal regalia, presiding solemnly over the Mysore Dasara, and you may find it hard to reconcile the two avatars. But then that’s the 27th custodian of the 600-year-old Wadiyar dynasty, adopted by the childless widow of Srikantadatta Wadiyar, who died without naming an heir. Yaduveer was anointed Maharaja of Mysuru in May 2015 amid much fanfare

and some controversy. Royal duties apart, he is now also tracing his predecessor’s political footsteps—Srikantadatta was a four-term Congress MP from Mysore—though this royalty’s loyalties lean more rightwards. A graduate of the University of Massachusetts, Yaduveer is married to fellow royal Trishika of Rajasthan’s Dungarpur family. Strange fact? The maharaja has assets worth Rs 9.47 crore, but does not own a car.

▶ **MAHIMA KUMARI MEWAR, 52**

| **BJP** | Rajsamand, Rajasthan

You may be born into royalty, but that may not shield you from the barbs of commoners. And it was charges of nepotism this royal of Mewar had to contend with, given that her husband Vishvaraj Singh was elected to the state assembly just six months back. But then if you are a humble, approachable leader, people reward you—in her case, a margin of 392,223 votes, the highest in the state. Vindication enough for this Psychology grad from LSR.

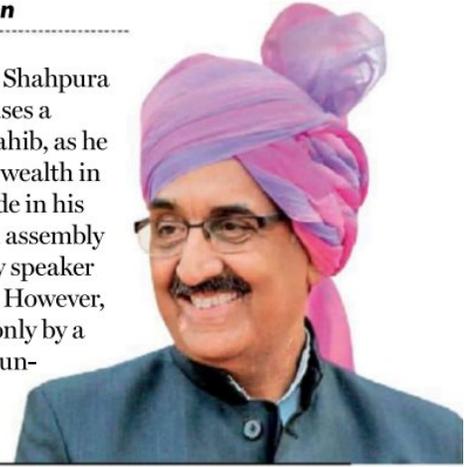




**RAO RAJENDRA SINGH, 66** ▼

**| BJP | Jaipur Rural, Rajasthan**

**T**he Bishangarh Fort this Shahpura royal inherited now houses a luxury hotel. But Rao Sahib, as he is popularly known, takes his wealth in his stride, and takes more pride in his speeches and interventions in assembly debates. He has been a deputy speaker there and a three-term MLA. However, his parliamentary win came only by a whisker—a slim 1,615 votes—unlike the lush royal moustache Rao Sahib sports.



**▲ MALVIKA DEVI, 44**

**| BJP | Kalahandi, Odisha**

**W**hat does it mean to be queen in a place that was once called the 'land of hunger'? It strengthens your zeal to do better for your people, as Rani Maa strives to do. A Himachal royal married into the Kalahandi royal family, this psychology graduate from Jesus & Mary College in Delhi joined the BJP in 2023 along with her husband Arka Keshari Deo. Deo was earlier with the BJD and represented Kalahandi from 2014 to 2019. As Rani Maa takes forward the family legacy, she hopes to bring education and jobs to Kalahandi.

**KRITI DEVI DEBBARMAN, 53** ►

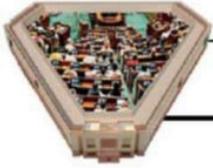
**| BJP | Tripura East (ST), Tripura**

**A** member of the Manikya dynasty, she is the sister of Pradyot Manikya Debbarma, the current titular king of Tripura. Though her brother is the founding head of the Tipra Motha Party, an ally of the ruling BJP in the state, she contested the election as a joint candidate on the saffron party's lotus symbol. Married

to Yogeshwar Raj Singh of Chhattisgarh's Kawardha royal family, Kriti has a diploma in rural management from the Institute of Rural Management, Anand, and has been involved in environmental conservation and sustainable development in the Northeast, focusing on water management and rural projects.



-Ajay Sukumaran, Dhaval S. Kulkarni, Rohit Parihar, Kaushik Deka and Arkamoy Datta Majumdar



# VOICES FROM THE MARGINS

Some are political veterans, others relative newcomers. Together, they will represent the new face of their community in Parliament

## ▼ MANOJ KUMAR, 41

| CONGRESS | Sasaram (SC), Bihar

A casual labourer's son come to reside in Babu Jagjivan Ram's long-time abode—that was a virtuous turn for the Grand Old Party. The seat had been with the BJP for a decade—under Chhedi Paswan, who'd first succeeded Jagjivan in 1989. And two defeats, in 2014 and 2019, had pushed his legatee Meira Kumar into retirement. Having opted to field her Cambridge PhD son Anshul Avijit from Patna Sahib, the Congress needed a new face for hilly, backward Sasaram. In came Manoj, with only a failed 2019 bid on his resume, but the times on his side. He recalls how his father would string him along while seeking an Indira Awas grant. "He thought the officials would take pity on me. They didn't." He has an awas now, the lower house of Parliament..



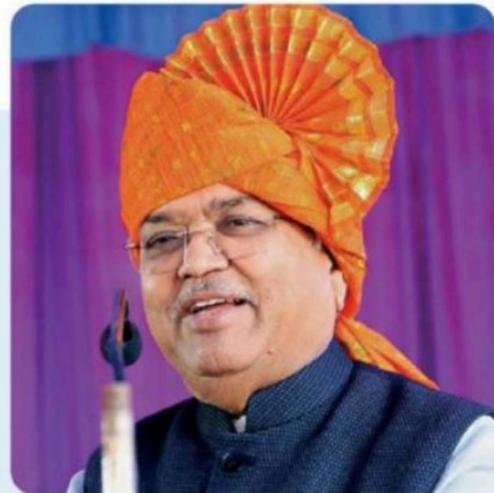
Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH



## GOVIND KARJOL, 73 ▶

| **BJP** | Chitradurga (SC), Karnataka

**T**he BJP in Karnataka has cultivated a catchment area extending well beyond the caste elite. A refugee from the old Janata Dal, Karjol exemplifies that social range. His 2004 shift to saffron renewed what finally became a five-term run as MLA from his native northern Karnataka seat of Mudhol. Deputy CM from 2019-2021, his shift to this reserved seat brought redemptive salve after a 2023 rebuff from Dalits.



## ◀ CHANDRASHEKHAR AZAD, 37

| **AZAD SAMAJ PARTY (KANSHIRAM)** | Nagina (SC), UP

**P**olitics, like everything else, lends itself to categories. Here, the man who dared to suffix 'Ravan' to his name rose from the badlands of western UP like a shining knight of emancipatory Dalit politics. His moustachioed, muscular bearing spoke power to the disempowered; a riposte in their own language for the old patricians. Ever since his newborn party made a singlehanded conquest of Nagina—against a quartet of big parties (BJP, SP-Congress, BSP)—he has rightly refused to be boxed into an exclusive 'Dalit' slot, though. Yes, Mayawati's eclipse left a void for him, but he wouldn't have a 51 per cent vote share if the elite castes hadn't preferred him too, he says. Also, that the constitutional rights and values embodied by Ambedkar are meant for all. He exhibited his devotion to those by putting his neck on the line during the anti-CAA days. Shunned by the BSP once, and by the SP now, he bids fair to expand—and not just in UP. His Bhim Army counts 10 million members across India.



## ▶ AWADHESH PRASAD PASI, 78

| **SP** | Faizabad, UP

**T**his is where the script encountered its most heartless twist for the BJP. The new temple in Ayodhya stood, resplendent in its revanchism, right in the heart of this constituency—Hindutva's chief votive offering to its devouts. But for those watching more closely, it wasn't surprising that an old socialist won the kingdom, one who as a young man had thrown himself into the anti-Emergency tumult of the 1970s and been a solid piece of political earth ever since: MLA nine times, state minister six times. Known as the SP's Dalit face, he prefers a more universalist tag. That spirit took him to INDIA's front benches.



## R.K. CHAUDHARY, 65

| **SP** | Mohanlalganj (SC), UP

A founding member of the BSP who ended up in the SP before the 2022 assembly polls—after a three-year trial period in the Congress—R.K. Chaudhary's win against the BJP's Kaushal Kishore was part of a larger statement Dalits made in UP.

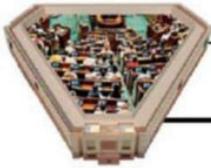


## YOGENDRA CHANDOLIA, 62

| **BJP** | North West Delhi (SC)

A BJP general secretary for Delhi, Chandolia is the party's local Dalit face. A municipal councillor from Dev Nagar in Karol Bagh, he has also served as the mayor of North Delhi Municipal Corporation.

—Amitabh Srivastava, Prashant Srivastava, Ajay Sukumaran and Avishek G. Dastidar



# BEATING ALL ODDS

Women representatives who have risen from the grassroots to get a seat at the national table

## GENIBEN THAKOR, 48 ▶

| CONGRESS | Banaskantha, Gujarat

She may not be a giant-killer in terms of votes, but Geniben has single-handedly denied the BJP a hat-trick sweep in Gujarat. The only Congress candidate to have won here, she is said to have crowdfunded her campaign (raising Rs 50 lakh) while also putting in 18-hour workdays addressing bike rallies, *khatla parishads* (door-to-door campaigns) and the smallest of gatherings. She reportedly also manned all the booths in her constituency on polling day. The effort

paid off, as she defeated her BJP opponent Rekha Chaudhri, drawing support across her OBC cohort and some from even among the forward Chaudhris, the powerful dairy community. A grassroots worker, her first assembly poll run from Vav in 2012 ended in failure, but the never-say-die Thakor contested again in 2017 and this time defeated the BJP's dairy strongman Shankar Chaudhary. She replicated that success in 2022, and has moved from strength to strength since.



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

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## D.K. ARUNA, 64 ▶

| BJP | Mahabubnagar, Telangana



Her father and brother, both Congress leaders, were assassinated by Maoists in 2005. Aruna's husband and two of her in-laws have also been MLAs. Her own political journey began in 1996 when she contested from the Mahabubnagar LS seat, but she lost then. After some initial setbacks, she went on to become a two-term Congress MLA and a minister, before joining the saffron side in 2019. A veteran of *padayatras* and hunger strikes, she's been especially vocal about the irrigation water problems of the farmers in Mahabubnagar. Now she has become the first woman to be elected from here since 1952. Her defeat of Vamshi C. Reddy is even more laudatory as all the assembly segments in the constituency are with the Congress.

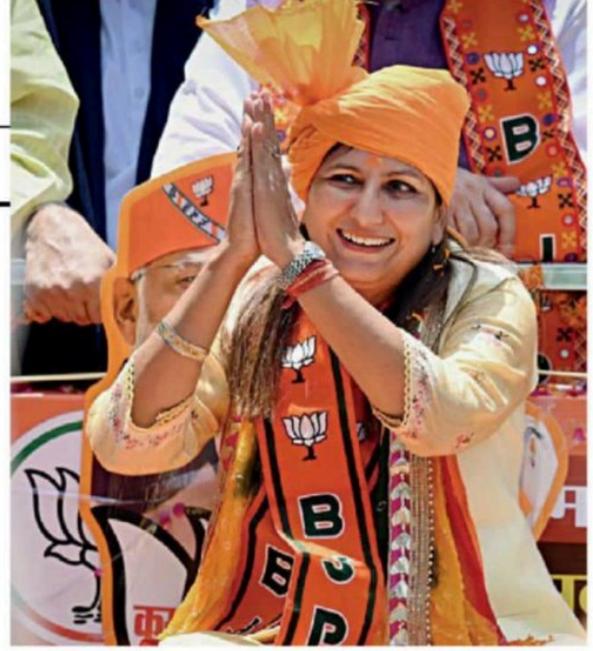
## LATA WANKHEDE, 54 ▼

| BJP | Sagar, MP

Originally from Chhindwara, Lata came to Sagar after her marriage to local BJP leader and contractor Nandkishor Wankhede. Her first foray into politics was as a *panch* of Makroniya village in 1995, after which she was elected *sarpanch* (2010-15). Now she has travelled a lot further, trouncing the Congress's Chandra Bhusan Bundela by a big margin. Wankhede is from the Kurmi community, has been the president of the state BJP *mahila morcha* in the past and led several agitations on women's issues.



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR



**KAMALJEET SEHRAWAT, 51** ▶

**| BJP | West Delhi**

**M**odi hai toh mumkin hai," Sehrawat had told reporters then, adding that she had learnt about her nomination on television. The first woman to head the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (2017-19) and a fervent women's rights campaigner, she was replacing local bigwig Parvesh Verma, sitting MP and son of the late CM Sahib Singh Verma. She repaid the faith in spades, defeating veteran ex-Congressman and AAP candidate Mahabal Mishra by nearly 200,000 votes.

▶ **KAMLESH JANGDE, 46**

**| BJP | Janjgir-Champa (SC), Chhattisgarh**

**D**enied a ticket in 2019, Kamlesh replaced sitting MP Gujharam Ajgalley and went on to win the seat by 60,000 votes. Hailing from the state's biggest Dalit community, the Satnamis, Kamlesh is a postgraduate in Hindi Literature. She cut her teeth in politics with the ABVP in 2002, and was sarpanch of her village Masaniya Kalan twice between 2005 and 2015. She also served as president of the BJP Mahila Morcha in her native Sakti district.



RAJWANT RAWAT

▼ **PRATIBHA DHANORKAR, 38**

**| CONGRESS | Chandrapur, Maharashtra**

**A**mong the Congress ruins in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, a lone candidate kept the party flag flying in the state. That was Pratibha's husband Suresh Dhanorkar, who won from the coal and forest belt of Chandrapur. Unfortunately, the ex-Shiv Sainik passed away in 2023 and it fell on his widow and Warora MLA to keep the family legacy going. The Dhanorkars are quite an influential family in the region, and said to have a stake in the liquor trade in Chandrapur. The polarisation among the Kunbis (peasant community) also worked in Pratibha's favour, helping her trounce a BJP biggie: forest minister Sudhir Mungantiwar.



**SMITA WAGH, 56** ▶

**| BJP | Jalgaon, Maharashtra**

**A** resident of Amalner, Smita has risen through the ranks, starting with the RSS student body ABVP, where she played an active role in the protests for the North Maharashtra University. Her father was chairman of the panchayat samiti, and she started working for the BJP in the 1990s. Wagh had a term in the Maharashtra legislative council and was also the state



general secretary. A contender for the Jalgaon seat in 2019 too, she was dropped in favour of Unmesh Patil. However, this time, the BJP chose Wagh over Patil, who sulked and joined the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray). Patil's associate Karan Pawar contested against Wagh as an SS(UBT) nominee, but lost by nearly 250,000 votes.

- Jumana Shah, Rahul Noronha, Amarnath K. Menon, Avishek G. Dastidar and Dhaval S. Kulkarni



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# NEXT-GEN NETAS

Politics runs in their genes, as scions of political families carry forward their legacies



◀ **MISHA BHARTI, 48**

| **RJD** |  
Pataliputra, Bihar

It was third-time lucky for Lalu's first-born, named after the draconian Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), the Emergency-era legislation that had Lalu in jail when she was born in 1976. Having lost Patliputra both in 2014 and 2019, Misha finally defeated her nemesis, the BJP's Ram Kirpal Yadav, by 85,174 votes to deliver the Lok Sabha seat to the Rashtriya Janata Dal. Something even her father couldn't do in 2009. Misha was the first of Lalu's children to step into politics in 2014 but, in the absence of electoral success, took the Rajya Sabha route to politics in 2016, leaving the state and party in charge of younger brother Tejaswi. 2024 is her first win at the hustings.

**BANSURI SWARAJ, 40** ▶

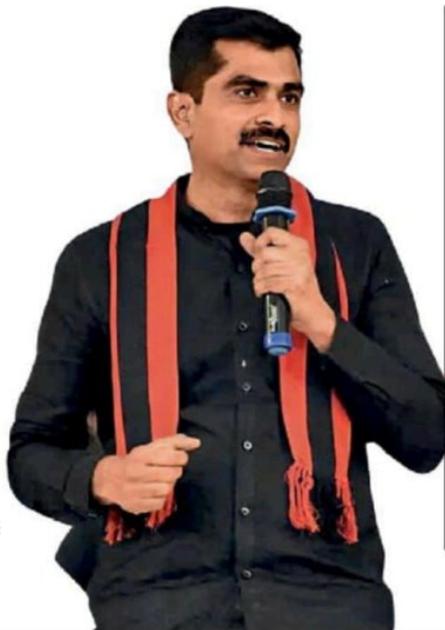
| **BJP** | New Delhi

It cannot be easy living up to your mother's legacy if her name happened to be Sushma Swaraj. But then again there is a good chance that you have inherited her feisty spirit. It also helps that you are fortified by all manner of educational qualifications—a bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Warwick, a law degree from the BPP Law School in London, barristership from Inner Temple, London, a Masters of Studies degree from St Catherine's College, University of Oxford. Bansuri was appointed Additional Advocate General to represent Haryana in the Supreme Court. Starting off as a co-convenor of the Delhi BJP's legal cell last year, she was soon made secretary of the state unit, where she routinely took on the Arvind Kejriwal-led government. And it is the Aam Aadmi Party's Somnath Bharti she had defeated by 78,000 votes, staking her claim to represent the New Delhi constituency in the Lok Sabha.

▶ **DURAI VAIKO, 52**

| **MDMK** | Tiruchirapalli, TN

The soft-hearted son of a fire-brand father, MDMK founder Vaiko, Durai did his bit by driving frontline health workers around during the pandemic. His formal initiation into politics came when he was appointed MDMK principal secretary in 2021. He has been fighting to revive the party's 'top' symbol and turned emotional when asked to fight under the DMK's 'rising sun' symbol. The EC finally granted MDMK the 'match-box' symbol. Having won, expect the battle for the 'top' to continue.



◀ **ALFRED KANNGAM S. ARTHUR, 47**

| **CONGRESS** |  
Outer Manipur (ST)

Alfred Kanngam S. Arthur, son of Manipur's former minister A.S. Arthur, began his professional journey on a different note as a vocalist in a rock band. He forayed into politics in 2012, though he lost his first assembly poll by a margin of just 56 votes. One of the most vocal legislators in the Manipur



RAJNAT RAWAT

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assembly, Alfred was instrumental in improving the infrastructure and quality of government-run educational institutes and hospitals in Ukhrul, the constituency he represented between 2017 and 2022. Now, as the MP of the Outer Manipur constituency, this young Naga politician aspires to make a mark in national politics.

▼ **PRANITI SHINDE, 43**

| CONGRESS | Solapur (SC), Maharashtra

**P**raniti inherits the mantle of this SC reserved constituency from her father, the veteran Congressman Sushilkumar Shinde, a former Maharashtra CM, the Union power and home minister and the governor of Andhra Pradesh. Having lost the seat twice, once in a shock defeat to little-known BJP nominee Sharad Sonawane in



2014, and to Lingayat seer Jaisiddheshwar Mahaswami in 2019, Shinde handed it to Praniti this time, who avenged his humiliation by defeating Ram Satpute of the BJP.



▲ **ISHA KHAN CHAUDHURY, 53**

| CONGRESS | Maldaha Dakshin, West Bengal

**I**f your uncle was the venerable A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury and your father former Union minister Abu Hasem Khan Choudhury, the weight of legacy might sit heavy on your shoulders. But not on Isha Khan Choudhury, a graduate from York University. He was the MLA of Baisnabnagar between 2011 and 2016 and of Sujapur between 2016 and 2021. Now, as the only Congress MP from Bengal, it is his responsibility to keep his party's toehold intact.



▲ **ANITA SUBHADARSHINI, 51**

| BJP | Aska, Odisha

**B**e it degree or pedigree, Anita Subhadarshini has it all. An advocate and a tutor, she has an MA in Political Science and an LLB from the Kalinga Law College. She is the daughter of veteran leader and ex-minister Ram Krushna Patnaik, who was a close associate of both Biju and Naveen Patnaik, but joined the BJP in 2014. And it is on a saffron ticket that Anita won, her second attempt from Aska.



## THE DEBUTANTS | INHERITORS

### ▶ ADITYA YADAV, 36

| SP | Badaun, UP

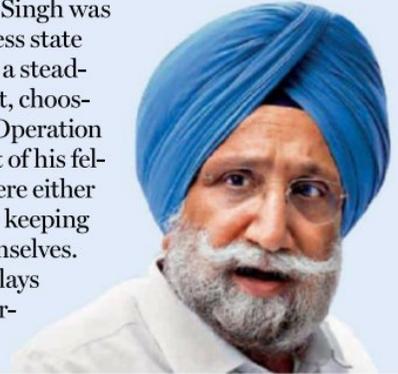


Things may not be exactly smooth between his father Shivpal Yadav and cousin Akhilesh, but Aditya defeated the BJP's Durvijay Shakya to reclaim the seat for SP. An alumnus of La Martinière College, Lucknow, a BBA graduate from the University of Lucknow, and with a master's in Tourism Administration, Aditya is married to Rajlakshmi, who is from the Maihar royal family. He may not have held a political post before, but helping his father in political campaigns are rubbed off.

### ▼ SUKHJINDER RANDHAWA, 65

| CONGRESS | Gurdaspur, Punjab

Father Santokh Singh was chief of Congress state unit twice and a steadfast Congress loyalist, choosing even to support Operation Blue Star when most of his fellow Congressmen were either quitting the party or keeping their opinion to themselves. Son Sukhjinder displays the same fearless spir-



### SOUMENDU ADHIKARI, 41

| BJP |

Kanhi, West Bengal

His father is the former MP and MLA Sisir Adhikari, his brother Suwendu Adhikari the current Nandigram MLA and leader of the Opposition. The family's loyalties shift en masse. They began as Congressmen before switching allegiance to the TMC. Then, when Suwendu defected to the BJP in December 2020, his brothers followed suit. Having held Kanhi from 2009 to 2024, the 82-year-old Sisir decided to pass the baton to his youngest son.



### SUDHAKAR SINGH, 48

| RJD | Buxar, Bihar

Son of RJD state president and Lalu confidant Jagadanand Singh, Sudhakar had scored a political and moral victory when he resigned as agriculture minister in the Nitish government in Oct. 2022. The corruption in that department, the then Ramgarh MLA had said, made him feel like a "choron ka sardar" (king of crooks). This election, he added another feather to his cap as he defeated Mithilesh Tiwari to wrest Buxar, christened 'mini Kashi' given its proximity to PM Modi's seat Varanasi, and which had remained a saffron stronghold since 1996 barring 2009 when Jagadanand won.



### VARUN CHAUDHRY, 44

| CONGRESS |

Ambala (SC), Haryana

Son of four-time MLA and former minister Phool Chand Mullana, Varun was handpicked by Bhupinder Singh Hooda to challenge the BJP's Banto Kataria, widow of former Union minister Rattan Lal Kataria. Hooda managed to get Kumari Selja shifted from this seat, and bet on the Mullana family's influence among rural folk to win the seat. A lawyer by profession, Varun had won the Mullana seat in the 2019 assembly poll, a role that won him the Best Legislator award. He has shown his mettle again, and done Hooda proud.



### UJJWAL RAMAN SINGH, 51

| CONGRESS |

Allahabad, UP

Son of senior SP leader Revati Raman Singh, Ujjwal too started in Mulayam's party, even serving as the state environment minister in his government, launching CNG in Agra, Lucknow and Kanpur and acting as chairman of the 'Beej Vikas Nigam'. However, a month and a half before the election, Ujjwal joined the Congress, winning the seat 40 years after Amitabh Bachchan defeated Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna here in 1984. All hail the new Prayag Raja!

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it, being among the 42 MLAs who resigned in 2016 to protest the Supreme Court ruling in favour of Haryana in the Sutlej-Yamuna Link case and being the first to rebel against Amarinder Singh in 2021-22. A four-time MLA, former deputy CM, and now Congress general secretary overseeing party affairs in neighbouring Rajasthan, Sukhjinder marks his parliamentary debut from Gurdaspur by defeating the BJP's Dinesh Singh Babbu.



▲ **G.M. HARISH BALAYOGI, 33**

| **TDP** | Amalapuram (SC), Andhra Pradesh

**S**on of G.M.C. Balayogi, the first Dalit Speaker of the Lok Sabha and its youngest, whose life was tragically cut short when he died in a chopper crash in 2002, Harish wants to fulfil his father's dream—of getting the rail ministry to commission the 57-km Kotipalli-Narasapuram railway. His mother had occupied the LS seat in the bypoll after his father's death. Harish too had contested for it in 2019, but lost. Now that this MBA grad has won, defeating the YSRCP's R. Varaprasad Rao by 300,000 votes, he also intends to push for access to safe drinking water that eludes a fourth of his constituents.

▶ **ANUP DHOTRE, 40**

| **BJP** | Akola, Maharashtra

**D**espite crafting an Akola pattern of social engineering—whereby members of different marginalised groups were given representation on rotation—Prakash Ambedkar, grandson of Babasaheb Ambedkar, could reap political dividend only on two occasions, when he won the Congress seat in 1998, and in alliance with the Congress in 1999. Bringing that run to a halt was none other than Anup's father, Sanjay, who first wrested the seat in 2004 and maintained a stranglehold on it until ill health forced him to nominate son Anup this time. Anup did not disappoint, yet again defeating Ambedkar of the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi, and Dr Abhay Patil of the Congress to preserve the family legacy.



▶ **DR HEMANT SAVARA, 47**

| **BJP** | Palghar (ST), Maharashtra



Son of Vishnu Savara, a five-term MLA and former tribal development minister, Hemant had contested the 2019 state election from Vikramgad when his father took ill, but lost. He, however, kept up his public outreach and was nominated the BJP candidate for the tribal reserved seat. Hemant managed to win despite Bharti Kamdi of the Shiv Sena (UBT) securing the support of the CPI(M), which has a base in areas like Dahanu and Talasari in the district.



▲ **ARUN BHARTI, 48**

| **LJP(RV)** | Jamui (SC), Bihar

**M**arried to Chirag Paswan's sister Nisha, 'jawan babu' Bharti was parachuted into Jamui after Chirag, who represented the SC-reserved constituency in 2014 and 2019, shifted to Hajipur. Arun, who has a degree in finance from the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, was by Chirag's side in the battle to claim Paswan Sr's legacy after his death in 2020 against uncle Pashupati Paras. When Jamui fell vacant, he became a natural choice.



◀ **ANAND KUMAR GOND, 49**

| **BJP** | Bahraich (SC), UP

Anand takes over from father Akshayabar Lal Gond, the Bahraich MP before him. A PhD and an MBA and owner of several businesses, Anand did not disappoint and helped the BJP attain a hat trick of wins from this Lok Sabha seat.

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**ZIA UR REHMAN  
BARQ, 36**

**| SP | Sambhal, UP**

Grandson of former Sambhal MP Shafiqur Rahman Barq who died this February, Zia's political initiation began at the Aligarh Muslim University Student's Union. He contested the 2017 assembly poll on an AIMIM ticket but won from Kundarki in the 2022 assembly poll on an SP ticket. A vocal politician, he advocated that BHU start Islamic Studies as a counter to the suggestion that Sanatan Dharma be taught at AMU. Victory was sweet, as he defeated the BJP's Parameshvar Lal Saini by more than 170,000 votes.



**TANUJ PUNIA 39**

**| CONGRESS |  
Barabanki (SC), UP**

His father P.L. Punia was the Dalit face of the Congress and represented the seat in 2009. Tanuj, an engineer from IIT Roorkee and general secretary and spokesperson, UPCC, made several electoral forays—the 2017 and 2022 state polls, the 2019 Lok Sabha election—without success. But the Congress retained faith in him, and fielded him yet again. This time, Tanuj delivered, defeating the BJP candidate, Rajrani Rawat.



**AMAR  
KALE, 50**

**| NCP (SP) |  
Wardha,  
Maharashtra**

The Congress had been forced to concede this stronghold to NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar), but when it was time to field a candidate, the latter had no option but to fall back on a legacy Congressman—former MLA Amar Kale. Son of four-time ex-MLA Sharadrao Kale, Amar is also former home minister Anil Deshmukh's nephew. He defeated two-term BJP MP Ramdas Tadas this time, aided by anti-incumbency among farmers and rural youth, and his Kunbi community.



**VISHAL PATIL, 43**

**| IND. | Sangli,  
Maharashtra**

Grandson of veteran Congressman Vasantdada Patil, Sangli had been a Congress stronghold till former Congressman Sanjaykaka Patil put a halt to its streak. It was Vishal who lost to him in 2019, and eager to avenge the humiliation. Except that the Congress ceded the seat to Shiv Sena (UBT). A miffed Vishal chose to contest independently, and won. Point made, he decided to support the Congress anyway.



**CHANDAN  
CHAUHAN, 35**

**| RLD | Bijnor, UP**

Grandfather Chaudhary Narayan Singh was the first deputy CM of UP and father Sanjay Singh has been Bijnor MP. Chandan himself has been an RLD MLA from Meerapur. The family's strong hold among the Gurjars here is what saw Chandan emerge on top in the three-cornered contest against local Jat leader, Chaudhary Vijendra Singh of the BSP, and OBC leader Deepak Singh, fielded by Team INDIA.



**KARAN BHUSHAN  
SINGH, 33**

**| BJP | Kaiserganj, UP**

Looks like the sins of the father did not visit upon son Karan as he won the constituency that his father, the six-time MP Brij Bhushan Singh, was denied a ticket for, after India's top women wrestlers accused the former Wrestling Federation president of sexual harassment. A political greenhorn, Karan managed to defeat SP's Bhagat Ram by 148,000 votes.



**RAJABHAU WAJE, 59**

**| SS (UBT) | Nashik,  
Maharashtra**

The Wajes, who hail from Sinnar in Nashik district, are a political dynasty of sorts. Rajabhau's parents were both MLAs from here; he, too, won from Sinnar in 2014 (but lost in 2019). After the Shiv Sena split, the Wajes stayed loyal to the Thackerays and were rewarded with the LS nomination. A first-mover advantage and the Mahayuti alliance denying the seat to NCP's Chhagan Bhujbal worked to Rajabhau's advantage.



**SUNIL BOSE, 42**

**| CONGRESS |  
Chamarajanagar (SC),  
Karnataka**

The son of state social welfare minister H.C. Mahadevappa, Bose lists his occupation as social service, agriculture and business. The Chamarajanagar SC reserved seat was a keenly-watched electoral contest as part of the constituency stretches into the neighbouring Mysuru district—CM Siddaramaiah's home base—making it a high-stakes battle for the latter.



**AVIMANYU  
SETHI, 33**

**| BJP | Bhadrak (SC),  
Odisha**

Sethi, a businessman, had tried his luck in the 2019 general polls but was defeated. This time he got the better of sitting MP Manjulata Mandal of the BJD. Avimanyu is also the son of Arjun Charan Sethi, a former BJD leader and Union minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee cabinet when the two parties were in alliance. The Sethis took to the BJP in 2019.



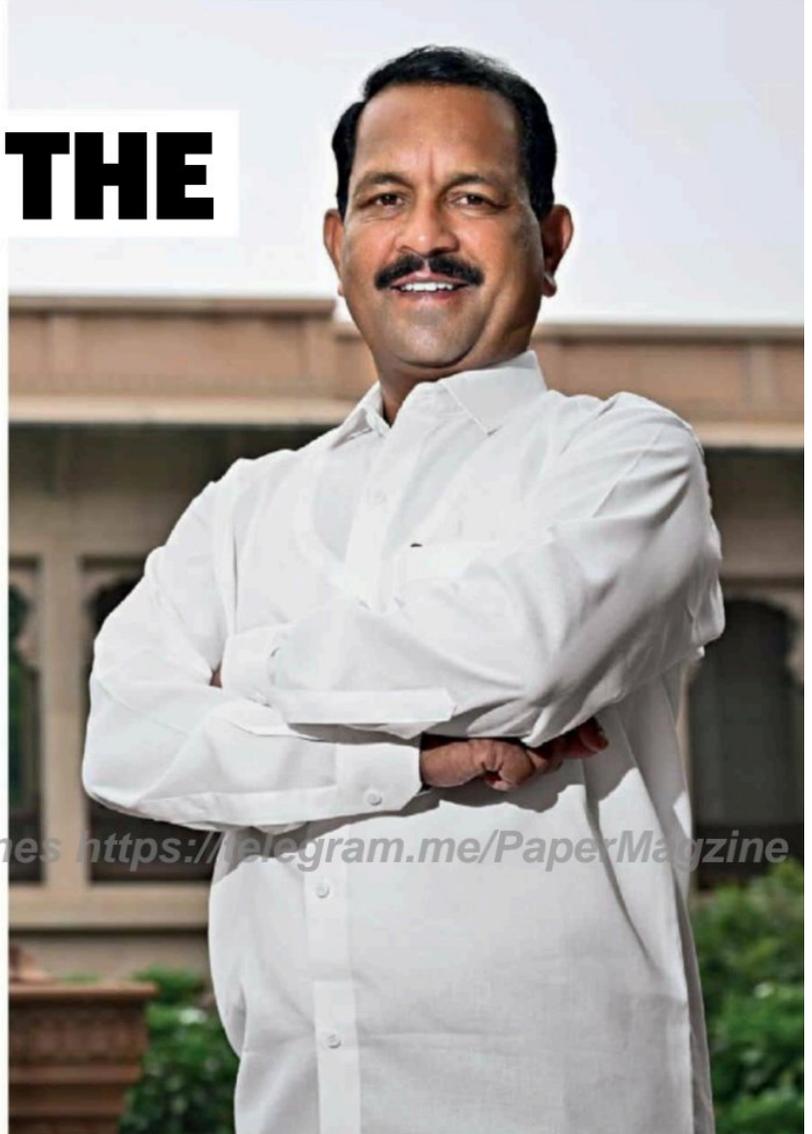
# HUMBLING THE GOLIATHS

**Minnows, no-hopers, underdogs? Not any more. These new MPs are all claimants to the description that they have felled some of the mightiest political grandees of the realm**

## **BHASKAR BHAGARE, 53** ▶

**| NCP(S-P) | Dindori (ST), Maharashtra**

It was billed as a David versus Goliath fight—a Union MoS, a legacy politician to boot, against an ordinary school teacher who had spent 33 years awakening kids at Pimpalgaon Baswant to the finer points of history and Marathi. As it happened, Bhagare ‘Guruji’ dispensed a few lessons even to Dr Bharati Pawar. Associated with the NCP since its 1999 launch, the tribal leader’s ambit had hitherto not gone beyond the panchayat samiti and zilla parishad. But the willingness he encountered while raising funds from villagers for the campaign already showed a potent anger was simmering on low flame among onion cultivators.



RAJWANT RAWAT



## ◀ **RAKIBUL HUSSAIN, 59**

**| CONGRESS | Dhubri, Assam**

The five-time Samaguri MLA has never suffered from a deficit of electoral taurine, aptly enough for a more pugnacious moniker he has stopped using. In 2011, the Congress *toro bravo* from Nagaon district had thrown even ex-CM Prafulla Kumar Mahanta in an assembly poll bullring. This time, he created history with the highest Lok Sabha victory margin ever: 1,012,476 votes. The matador who lay gored was multi-millionaire perfume baron

and AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, who had won Dhubri since 2009. Not many fancied Hussain’s chances: an Assamese speaker in a predominantly Bangla-flavoured immigrant zone, he was a ‘non-non-native’ in this 85 per cent Muslim seat. The surge of support for him against the self-attested proprietor of local Muslim affections, thus, also became a sign of mainstreaming. Now he’s targeting another giant. His demand that six communities be given tribal status, if fulfilled, would make of Assam a tribal majority state. That would disqualify former close ally Himanta Biswa Sarma from CM-ship.

HARDIK CHHABRA

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**▲ GURMEET SINGH  
MEETHAYER, 35**

**| AAP | Sangrur, Punjab**

**W**ith no family background in politics, 'Meeth', as his friends call him, met his métier in the inner circle of CM Bhagwant Mann—entrusted with five ministries. As it happened, he was the only one among five ministers who contested and won. That too against the tide, wresting Sangrur back for AAP—Mann had won it twice before grizzled radical icon Simranjit Singh Mann's 2022 bypoll victory presaged a turn in Punjab politics. This son of a sub-divisional officer, who had joined India Against Corruption and become an AAP founder-member, exemplifies the party's promise of bringing a common touch to high office.



**▲ KISHORI LAL SHARMA, 63**

**| CONGRESS | Amethi, UP**

**T**he prodigal son never returned. Instead, the electorate got Option B—the unpretentious point person in Rae Bareilly and Amethi for all matters linked to the Gandhi family. The challenge was met with more derision than anticipation. In the end, Sharma, whose two daughters also went around on the campaign trail saying how they had grown up seeing their father devote his life to Amethi, managed to trim the aggrandised stature of Modi cabinet fixture Smriti Irani, who till then had been claiming Rahul Gandhi had fled a contest.

**SHAFI PARAMBIL, 41**

**| CONGRESS | Vadakara, Kerala**



**T**he state Youth Congress chief whose winsome smile and oratory have won him a huge fan base is turning out to be another habitual giant-slayer. Palakkad MLA thrice in a row, the third stint was won—in 2021—by cocking a snook at the BJP's 'alter-native chief minister', Metro Man E. Sreedharan, who was so sure of winning that he had opened an office in town and taken a house on rent. This time, he's gone up a notch, pulling one over none other than K.K. Shailaja Teacher, Kerala's talismanic Covid warrior and, in some eyes, future CM material, in a superheated contest.

**▲ LUMBA RAM  
CHOUHARY, 59**

**| BJP | Jalore-Sirohi, Rajasthan**



**O**n one side was a 44-year-old dynast, Vaibhav Gehlot, who hadn't yet shown much signs of being a wunderkind in politics, having already lost a Lok Sabha election. But Papa Gehlot, having lost his CM's chair, was treating the rest of the 2024 election as background noise—only Jalore mattered. But a Class 10-pass farmer, risen from the Sirohi panchayat to be the BJP's district chief, proved his party was right to see winnability in him. His years of grassroots work paid off in a constituency whose cumin fields, in the shadow of Mt Abu, are watered by the Narmada canal.

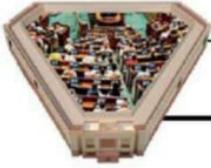


**▲ SUDAMA  
PRASAD, 63**

**| CPI(ML) | Arrah, Bihar**

**T**he man with an apt name for proletarian blessings was almost written off before the first vote was cast. In the end, no one would grudge him a visit to his family small sweet shop: he had stopped the rath of Union minister and ex-home secretary R.K. Singh. And regained Arrah for his 'left-of-left' cohort after 35 years. In his debut contest in 1990, he had failed to replicate what his comrades had pulled off a year before. He made amends twice, first in 2015—right after he led a farmer's movement in Bhojpur—and then in 2020. Now the Sudamas of Arrah have made amends.

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◀ **RAMBHUAL NISHAD, 64**

| **SP** | **Sultanpur, UP**

**M**aneka Gandhi's candidacy emerged unscathed from the fog of suspense swirling out from son Varun's status but the eight-time MP still ended up registering her first electoral loss since 1991. Her nemesis? A hardcase choppered in from Gorakhpur, a two-term MLA/ex-minister with both BJP and BSP on his resume, besides some prize Wild East action.



◀ **KALICHARAN MUNDA, 62**

| **CONGRESS** | **Khunti (ST), Jharkhand**

**I**t was one Munda against another, but remarkably, the victorious one was coming back after a 24-year hiatus, like an old gunslinger returning to prove he was still the quickest draw. Kalicharan Munda has been MLA twice but between 1992-2000—the prehistory of Jharkhand, so to speak, because it was spun off as a separate state only in November 2000. The man he defeated, Arjun Munda, had in the meantime gone on to be the new state's second CM, serving 70 months over three stints, as well as Union minister twice.

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**ROOP KUMARI CHAUDHRY, 47** ▶

| **BJP** | **Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh**

**A** member of the Aghariya Patel community, the former MLA and parliamentary secretary to the Chhattisgarh government redeemed the trust the party reposed in her by fielding her against former state home minister Tamradhwaj Sahu—that too in a seat with a substantial Sahu vote.



▶ **UTKARSH VERMA 'MADHUR', 38**

| **SP** | **Kheri, UP**

**T**he BJP could not find it expedient to defrock Ajay Mishra Teni, Union MoS Home, despite a case that made angry farmers much angrier. So it fell upon this young Kurmi leader, a Lakhimpur Kheri native who showed early promise by winning his debut MLA election at age 25, to do the honours.

**JOYANTA BASUMATARY, 48**

| **UNITED PEOPLES PARTY LIBERAL** | **Kokrajhar (ST), Assam**

The UPPL's birth in 2015, out of the union of two older parties, had signified the heating up of competition within the Bodo political space. Basumatary is a face of its verve, having defeated Bodoland People's Front veteran Chandan Brahma for his 2021 assembly debut. Now he has trounced BPF No. 2 Kampa Borgoyari to enter the Lok Sabha.



**RICHARD VANLALHMANGAIHA, 46**

| **ZORAM PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT** | **Mizoram (ST)**

This is the first time the ZPM, the ruling party in Mizoram, has won the state's only Lok Sabha seat since its 2017 birth. Its recent ascendancy perhaps made it a logical outcome, but the way this commerce graduate defeated K. Vanlalvena, a Rajya Sabha MP and Mizo National Front stalwart with 42 per cent votes, puts a seal on it.



# SURPRISE ELEMENTS

**Tireless party workers beavering away in the background, husbands/wives of politicians or soldiers taking the political plunge, these new MPs were catapulted suddenly into prominence**

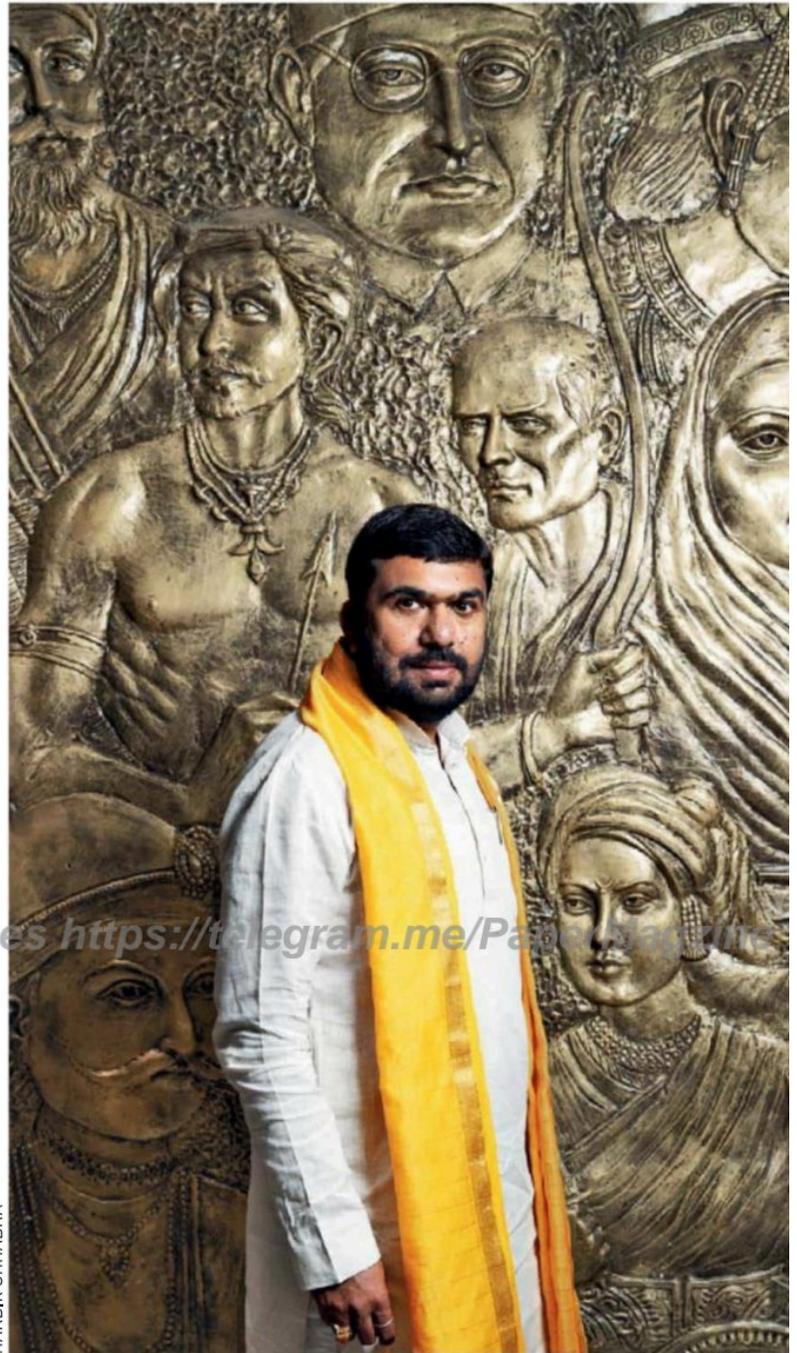
## VIVEK 'BUNTY' SAHU, 45 ▶

| **BJP** | Chhindwara, MP

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**G**uts is something this 45-year-old seems to have in spades. A BCom dropout, Vivek Sahu, a.k.a. 'Bunty', had decided to beard the lion in his den in November 2023, taking on Congress heavyweight Kamal Nath in his bastion Chhindwara. That effort came to nought. As had the earlier one against Nath's son, Nakul, in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. But persistence seems to have paid off as has the BJP's faith in its Chhindwara district chief. Sahu achieved the impossible this election, defeating Nakul, the sitting MP, by over 110,000 votes and wresting a seat Congress had never lost in a general election since 1952.

HARDIK CHHABRA

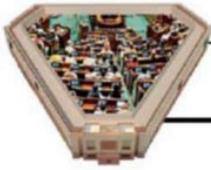


## ◀ BAPI HALDER, 37

| **TRINAMOOL CONGRESS** | Mathurapur (SC), West Bengal

**R**iverine Mathurapur was the only political playground Halder had ever known, his pisciculturist family tracing its roots to these parts. His association with the TMC goes back to the days of its inception in 1998. He was elected to the local gram panchayat in 2013,

became pradhan two years later and won the same seat in 2018. "Mamata Banerjee has proven that in our party if one fights for the people, works for them, even a grassroots worker like me can become an MP," he said after his win over his nearest rival, the BJP's Ashok Purkait.



**▲ CAPT VIRIATO FERNANDES, 55**  
| CONGRESS |  
South Goa

Having gone through a series of near-amoebic splits as veterans like former CM Digambar Kamat and Michael Lobo left to join the BJP, retaining the South Goa seat became crucial for the state Congress unit. Enter Indian Navy officer-turned-activist Capt. Viriato Fernandes, who replaced the incum-

bent Congress MP, the 78-year-old Francisco Sardinha. As a navy engineer, Fernandes was part of the military mobilisation during the 1999 Kargil war and took part in Operation Talwar, which sought to choke Pakistan's trade channels. After an early retirement, he was associated with the NGO Goencho Avaaz, and later

joined the Congress. An electoral foray in 2022, from the Dabolim assembly constituency, ended in failure. Now comes parliamentary success, on the back of support from the Roman Catholics, who form about 36 per cent of the population in Salcette, the region around Margao, helping him defeat the BJP's Pallavi Dempo.



**▲ MANJU SHARMA, 64**  
| BJP | Jaipur

Manju Sharma's father Bhanwar Lal Sharma was the Hawa Mahal MLA six times in a row from 1977 to 1998; she lost it by 580 votes in 2008. Ever since, this postgraduate from Kanodiya College stuck to running her jewellery business and a few party posts. This year, she was chosen over sitting MP Ramcharan Bohra to contest from Jaipur, a parliamentary seat that comprises the assembly segments of Rajasthan CM Bhajan Lal Sharma and deputy CMs Diya Kumari and Prem Chand Bairwa. The BJP considers Jaipur a safe seat, and it was no surprise that Manju defeated former state transport minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas of the Congress by more than 300,000 votes.

**▶ CAPT. BRIJESH CHOWTA, 42**  
| BJP | Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka



Chowta entered politics after an eight-year stint in the army, where he served in 8 Gorkha Rifles. After retiring early, his aim was to get into policymaking and administration. Hailing from a family with strong RSS ties, he joined the BJP's youth wing, the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, in 2013, and became the state secretary of its Karnataka unit in 2023. A year later, he was handed the ticket to Dakshina Kannada in place of sitting MP Nalin Kumar Kateel. Having won, after besting Congress's Padmaraj Poojary, he plans to develop the Dakshina Kannada coastline by improving road and rail infrastructure connecting to the Mangaluru port.



**▲ KULDEEP INDORA, 54**  
| CONGRESS |  
Ganganagar (SC),  
Rajasthan

Son of former Rajasthan minister Heera Lal Indora, Kuldeep had two unsuccessful assembly poll outings. Still, the Congress gave him a ticket, as he worked hard to get Anoopgarh, in Ganganagar, district status, and wife Seema is ex-chairperson of Anoopgarh municipality. Kuldeep himself has been a party national secretary in charge of a few states. An 88,000-vote win over the BJP's Priyanka Balan Meghwal will now see him in the Lok Sabha, where the newly-minted MP hopes to raise issues of Dalits and agriculture, as his constituency is part of the Indira Gandhi Canal-irrigated belt.



▲ **SHYAMKUMAR BARVE, 46**

| **CONGRESS** | Ramtek (SC), Maharashtra

It was former Nagpur zilla parishad chief Rashmi Barve who was to be the Congress candidate from Ramtek, a seat reserved for SCs. But it was her husband Shyamkumar who ended up fighting the election in her place since Rashmi's caste certificate was cancelled. The Barves are supporters of ex-Congress minister Sunil Kedar. Shyamkumar himself is a coal miner's son, and was deputy sarpanch of Kandri village. Shyamkumar got the better of Congress MLA Raju Parwe, who had switched to the Shiv Sena for a Lok Sabha nomination.



▲ **ASHISH DUBEY, 54**

| **BJP** | Jabalpur, MP

When the BJP announced Ashish Dubey as the candidate from the Jabalpur LS seat, the general reaction was that a deserving worker has been rewarded. Dubey hails from a family of landowners from the Katangi-Patan area in rural Jabalpur. He has held various organisational posts in the BJP and is presently its state general secretary. Dubey's name was doing the rounds for an assembly segment in Jabalpur before the 2023 assembly polls too. He beat the Congress's Dinesh Yadav by over 480,000 votes. Armed with BCom and law degrees, Dubey vows to work for the development of his constituency.

▶ **VIJAYLAKSHMI DEVI, 61**

| **JD(U)** | Siwan, Bihar



In a landscape still in the long shadow of its ex-MP Mohammed Shahabuddin, you'd think challenging his widow, Hina Sahab, contesting as an Independent, was a lost cause. But Vijaylakshmi Devi, exemplar of Nitish Kumar's Luv-Kush (Kurmi-Kushwaha) equation, conquered all misgiving—and her rival-in-chief. Vijaylakshmi's political leanings have mirrored her husband's, the former JD(U) MLA Ramesh Singh Kushwaha, who has been with the CPI(M) Liberation, the JD(U), the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party, and back to the JD(U) in March.



▶ **BIJULI KALITA MEDHI, 45**

| **BJP** | Guwahati, Assam

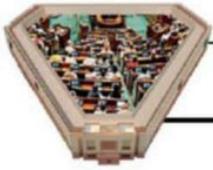
Medhi started her career as a grassroots BJP worker with no political legacy, and was a surprise pick by the party—which dropped its sitting MP, Queen Ojha—for the prestigious Guwahati constituency. A post-graduate from Guwahati University, she is a former president of the BJP's Mahila Morcha and a vice-president of the party's Assam unit. Medhi defeated firebrand Mira Borthakur Goswami, who had defected from the BJP to the Congress in 2018, by a margin of 251,090 votes.

▶ **KALICHARAN SINGH, 62**

| **BJP** | Chatra, Jharkhand



Kalicharan's career trajectory has followed the exact path of state BJP president Babulal Marandi, whose close associate he is. Like Marandi, Kalicharan began as a teacher. The son of a school headmaster himself, he taught mathematics in a government school. Like Marandi, he too quit his job to become a full-time BJP worker. That was in 1986, and Kalicharan rose steadily through the ranks to become the state BJP vice president. Remarkably, the 2024 Lok Sabha polls was the first time he contested any election. Kalicharan was fielded in place of sitting MP Sunil Kumar Singh and did not disappoint, felling his rival, the Congress's Krishna Nand Tripathi, by a handsome 220,000-vote margin.



# GODMEN, SHAMANS & CLERICS

From novice imams to suave dynasts to voodoo shamans to self-styled mahants, the whole gamut is on show in the House

## MOHIBULLAH NADVI, 48 ▶

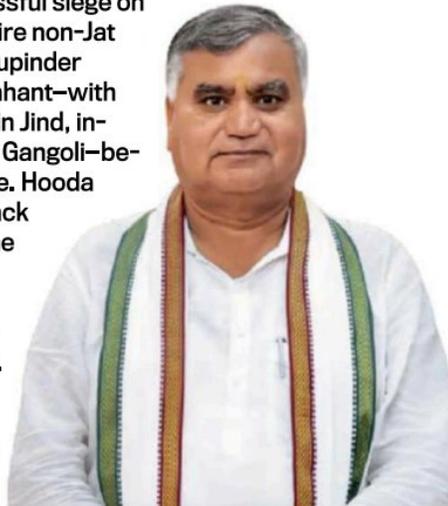
| SAMAJWADI PARTY | Rampur, UP

Call him the Muslim card who outfoxed the Muslim high roller—in a manner of speaking. The imam from Delhi, Nadvi was the ‘outsider’ fielded by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav against the wishes of local biggie Azam Khan. Nadvi managed to mine his native roots—he was born in a Rampur village—and his clerical cachet to pull off a win. Muslim MPs often went to the mosque where he has been imam since 2005, near Parliament, for namaaz. Now, Nadvi has made the reverse journey.

## SATPAL BRAHMACHARI, 60 ▼

| CONGRESS | Sonipat, Haryana

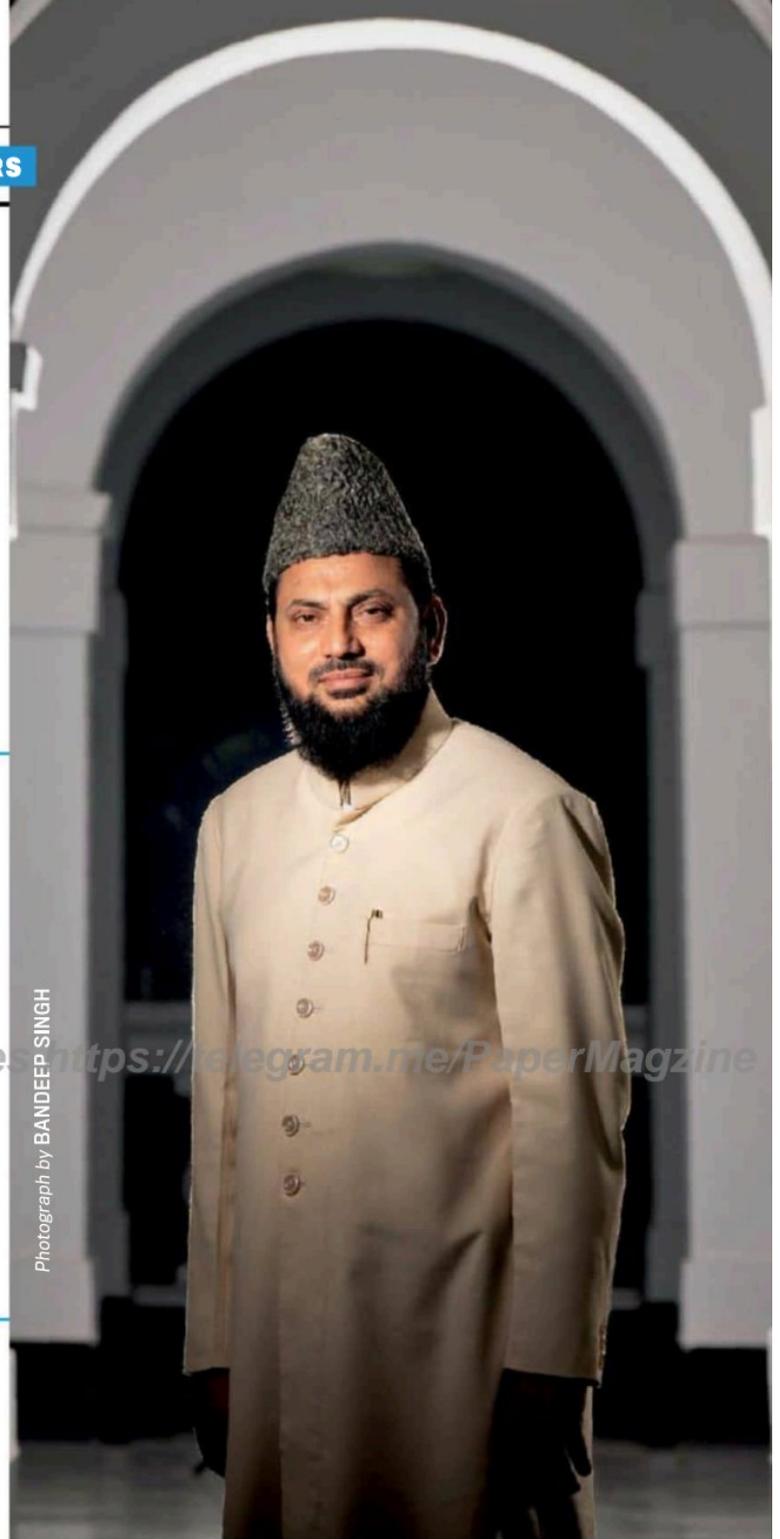
He made heads turn when he got a ticket, and again when he won. The last two times, the BJP had staged a successful siege on the Jats at Sonipat with the entire non-Jat phalanx, felling even ex-CM Bhupinder Hooda in 2019. The Brahmin mahant—with two ashrams in Haridwar, two in Jind, including one at ancestral village Gangoli—became the GOP’s divine recourse. Hooda reckoned that Brahmachari, back home after two futile bids on the Uttarakhand assembly, would pull in enough local devout. Add the tailwind of Jat consolidation, and the mantra worked.



## MIAN ALTAF AHMAD LARVI, 66 ▶

| NATIONAL CONFERENCE | Anantnag-Rajouri, J&K

The hereditary Sajjada Nasheen of a Sufi shrine nestled against the scenic backdrop of forested mountains in Ganderbal, with a following in millions, far exceeding his natal Gujjar tribe and other pastoral-



Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

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▼ **CHINTAMANI MAHARAJ, 56**

| **BJP** | Surguja (ST), Chhattisgarh

A godman can have many hands and tick many boxes. Chintamani is a dynast, having inherited godmanship from father Gahira Guru. He's a tribal priest—his shrine in north Chhattisgarh beckons both his Kanwar tribe as well as the Oraon. He is also a Sanskritist, having picked up enough proficiency while clearing



his Class 12 (as late as in 2014) to even chair the state's Sanskrit board once. He's also politically ambidextrous: first a BJP MLA (2008-13), then Congress (2018-23), switching back to the right hand before the 2023 assembly polls. The BJP rewarded him with a ticket from Surguja to Lutyens' Delhi.

**BHOJRAJ NAG, 52** ▶

| **BJP** | Kanker, Chhattisgarh

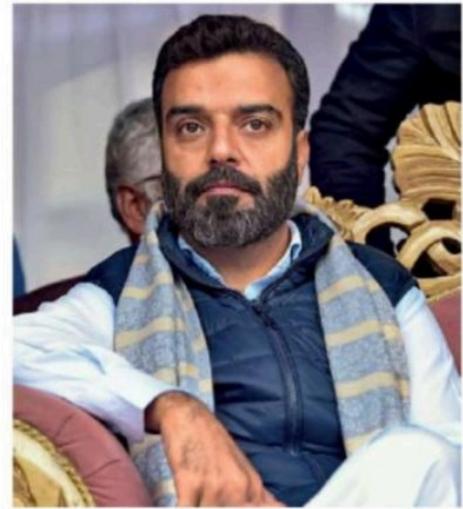
The constituents of this bone-dry end of southwest Chhattisgarh would like nothing more than potable water. The long-haired Bhojraj offers them dharma on tap. The anti-conversion, pro-Sanatana activist with a yen for controversial remarks started dispensing his wisdom at the grassroots. Claiming supernatural powers as a medium between the gods and humans, he offers to treat those deemed



beyond cure by modern medicine. During the campaign, Nag offered his services for development and said if any deficit popped up on that front, he would rectify it using *jhaad phoonkh* (shamanic voodoo) and slicing a lemon. CM Vishnu Deo Sai concurred, saying Nag as MP would banish all *bhooths* (ghosts) from Kanker.

nomads like the Bakerwals. Heir to a political family that has consorted with everyone from Nehru downward and has never lost an assembly election for three generations since 1952. His grandfather was founding president of the Gujjar-Jat Conference. His father, Mian Bashir Larvi, was a Padma Bhushan, a scholar, a pacifist, a lover of fine horses and cars, and several times minister. So has Altaf been, twice, since his legislative career began in 1987.

ABID BHAT



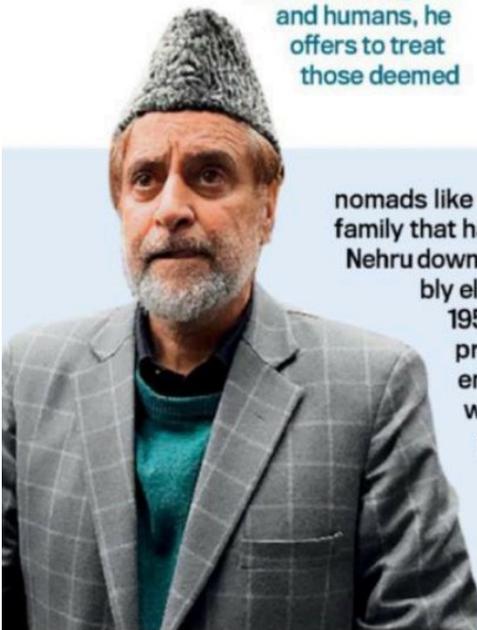
▲ **AGA SYED RUHULLAH MEHDI, 46**

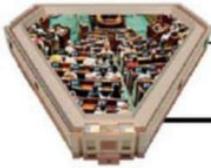
| **NATIONAL CONFERENCE** | Srinagar, Lok Sabha constituency

He inherited his Shia cleric status from his father Aga Syed Mehdi, an activist-politician whose assassination in 2000 was mourned even by local Kashmiri Pandits. But his religious role is not why Ruhullah's being called the "rising star of Kashmir politics". For those who haven't followed his arc as an articulate voice post-2019 and the abrogation of Article 370, his much-interrupted maiden speech in the House held a few pointers. One of the most keenly watched events in the Valley, the scripture he quoted was the rule-book, as he said to the Speaker: "You will be judged by how you handle situations when a Muslim MP is called a terrorist in the biggest institution of democracy." He lamented how the Article 370 bill "was brought in a minute, and passed in half an hour" in the previous House. Even Mehbooba Mufti, leader of Valley rival PDP, was moved to congratulate him for his "fantastic" debut. A three-time MLA, his marriage to an Iranian happened just before the election.

-Anilesh S. Mahajan, Rahul Noronha, Prashant Srivastava and Moazum Mohammad

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# THE SENIOR CLUB

At 70 years and above, this cohort may have made a late debut, but it is accompanied by a wealth of experience



▲ **NALIN SOREN, 76**

| **JMM** | Dumka (ST), Jharkhand

As a seven-term MLA from Sikari-para and a contemporary of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) patriarch Shibu Soren, this seasoned tribal leader's political journey—which started from the undivided Bihar—has been marked by loyalty and rigour. Though only four years younger to Shibu, Nalin idolises him and has remained steadfastly loyal to him and his son Hemant. Nalin's Lok Sabha win has been celebrated across the party cadre because he has not only reclaimed Dumka, a seat previously held by Shibu, but also because he defeated Sita Soren, Hemant's estranged sister-in-law who joined the BJP ahead of the election.

▶ **BRIJENDRA SINGH OLA, 72**

| **CONGRESS** | Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

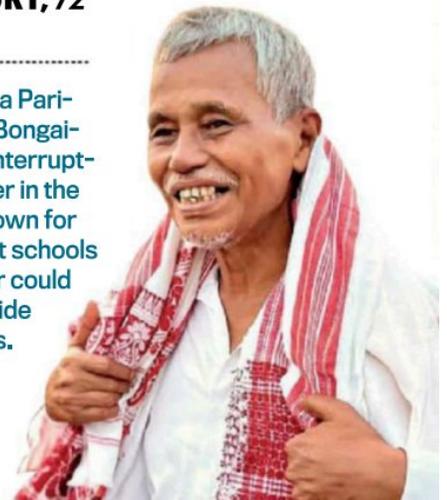


A postgraduate in political science from Rajasthan University, Ola lived up to the legacy of his father—the late Jat stalwart and former Union minister Shish Ram—as he won Jhunjhunu assembly seat for fourth time in a row in 2023 before winning the parliamentary seat this year. This former transport minister in the Ashok Gehlot regime is close to Sachin Pilot, who during his stint as the Rajasthan Congress chief had stayed in his MLA accommodation in Jaipur for five years. It was on Pilot's call that Ola agreed to contest the Lok Sabha election after publicly expressing his unwillingness, and went on to wrest the seat held by his father for five terms from the BJP after a decade.

▶ **PHANI BHUSAN CHOUDHURY, 72**

| **AGP** | Barpeta, Assam

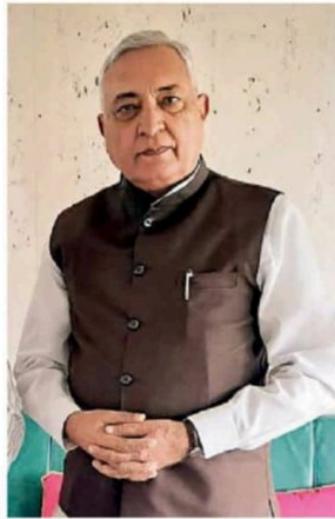
A former teacher, this Asom Gana Parishad leader has occupied the Bongai-gaon assembly seat for an uninterrupted four decades and became a minister in the BJP-led state government in 2018. Known for his austere living, he used to often visit schools in his constituency to teach children or could be seen getting a haircut from a roadside barber or hitchhiking on two-wheelers.



◀ **V. SOMANNA, 72**

| **BJP** | Tumkur, Karnataka

**N**ow the Union minister of state for railways and Jal Shakti, this Lingayat leader started off as a corporator in Bengaluru in 1983. After long stints in the Janata Dal and the Congress, Somanna made a switch to the BJP in 2008. Having held various portfolios during the party's two terms in Karnataka, he challenged the Congress's Siddaramaiah from the latter's home turf Varuna in the state election last year. Siddaramaiah won and went on to reclaim the CM's chair. That failure notwithstanding, Somanna has staged a comeback by defeating former Congress MP S.P. Muddahanumegowda to enter the Lok Sabha from Tumkur.



▲  
**DEVESH CHANDRA THAKUR, 71**  
| **JD(U)** |  
Sitamarhi, Bihar

**A** former chairperson of the Bihar Legislative Council, Thakur is a four-term MLC who has also served as a minister in the Nitish Kumar government. While studying law in Pune, he was elected as the Maharashtra Youth Congress vice-president. Known for having travelled extensively around the world, Thakur ran into controversy soon after he was elected to the Lok Sabha. The Brahmin leader said he would not entertain "personal" requests from Muslims and Yadavs as they did not vote for him though he would work for all communities. He later retracted the statement, calling it an "emotional outburst", but the damage had been done.

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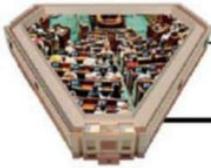
HINDUSTAN TIMES

◀ **RAMVIR SINGH BIDHURI, 71**

| **BJP** | South Delhi, Delhi

**A**n old war horse in Delhi politics, Bidhuri's association with the saffron party goes back to 1970 when he joined its student wing ABVP while pursuing BA from Deshbandhu College, Delhi University. A four-term MLA, he represented Badarpur, a seat he had won for the first time in Delhi's maiden election in 1993. Among the eight BJP candidates who won the assembly election in 2020, Bidhuri was appointed the Opposition leader. In 2008, he was conferred with the 'Best MLA' award by then Speaker Somnath Chatterjee. With that illustrious career behind him, he now comes to the Lok Sabha, after putting AAP's Sahi Ram 'Pehalwan' on the mat.

-Rohit Parihar, Ajay Sukumaran, Kaushik Deka, Amitabh Srivastava and Avishek G. Dastidar



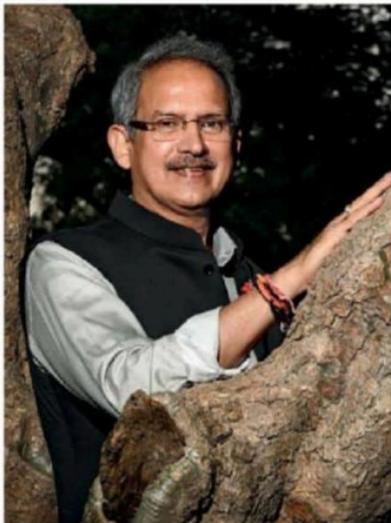
# SHIFTING HOUSE

Rajya Sabha veterans who have finally squared up to the ballot—and won—will be a welcome addition in the House of the People

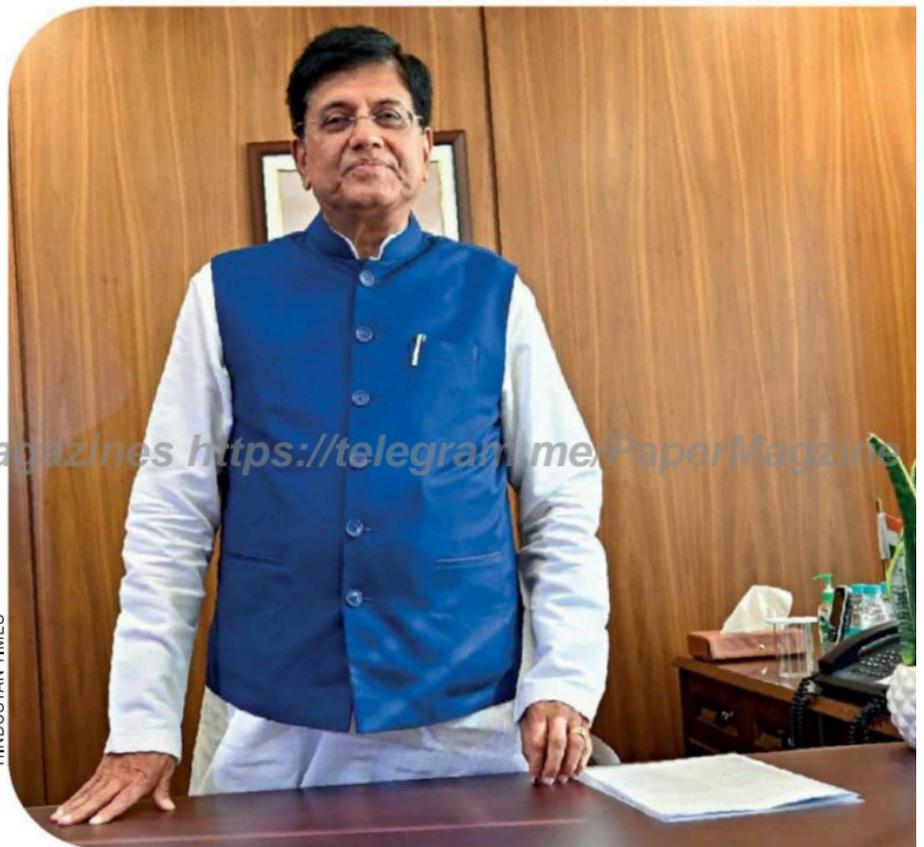
## ▼ ANIL DESAI, 66

| **SS (UBT)** | Mumbai South Central, Maharashtra

**A** two-term MP in the upper house, Desai's affable self sets him aside from the archetypal Shiv Sainik. Yet, the party veteran was a crucial back-room strategist for the undivided Shiv Sena. A former employee of the New India Assurance Company, Desai heads the Sthaniya Lokadnikar Hakka Mahasangh, the Sena's union for white-collar workers. Originally from Canacona in Goa, Desai is a close confidant of party chief Uddhav Thackeray, and was chosen to take on two-term Sena MP Rahul Shewale of the Shinde faction. It proved a wise choice, though the win was aided by overwhelming Muslim and Christian support.



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR



HINDUSTAN TIMES

## ▶ MANSUKH MANDAVIYA, 52

| **BJP** | Porbandar, Gujarat

**L**ike Piyush Goyal, he has been in Parliament before. But unlike him, the soft-spoken Leuva Patel comes from a humble farming family in Hanol village, a few miles out from the historied Jain centre of Palitana, with its temple-bedecked Shatrunjaya Hill. Blooded in the ABVP while a

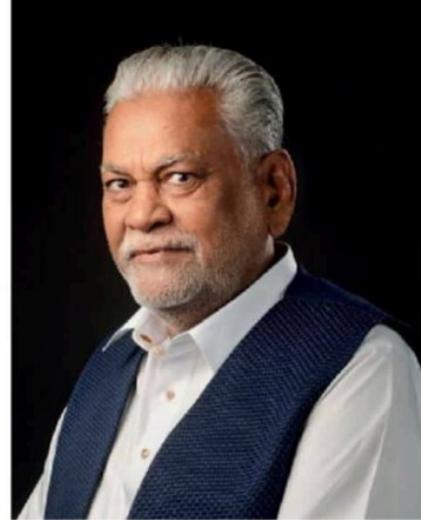
student of both the political and veterinary sciences, he was the youngest MLA at age 30 in the Gujarat assembly in 2002. All through his 12 years as an Elder and eight years (and counting) as a Modi cabinet minister, Mandaviya has retained his simplicity and is often seen riding a bicycle to Parliament.

## PARSHOTTAM RUPALA, 69 ▶

| BJP | Rajkot, Gujarat

The maharajas had given their daughters to foreign rulers and the British—it was a potentially well-meaning remark with republican values from the Modi cabinet minister with a perch in the Upper House since 2016. But it stirred up a hornet's nest and this Amreli native's foray into Rajkot

became one of the events of the 2024 campaign—whose Richter reading was felt far beyond Saurashtra or even Gujarat. Though Rajput ire was not quite salved by many apologies, the BJP persisted with the veteran and, among other factors, a Patidar counter-mobilisation lifted him to safety.



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

## ◀ PIYUSH GOYAL, 60

| BJP | Mumbai North, Maharashtra

When Piyush Goyal was dispatched to this “safest seat” to seek a popular mandate for the first time, he wasn't exactly being parachuted into alien territory. His father Ved Prakash Goyal—industrialist, long-time BJP treasurer and Union minister under A.B. Vajpayee—was a naturalised citizen in these parts, even a Rajya Sabha MP from Maharashtra. His mother Chandrakanta Goyal was entrenched deeper in Mumbai—corporator from Sion and a three-time Matunga MLA. The Union minister didn't quite maintain the party's post-2014 vote share of 70-plus per cent in the seat, but held off the INDIA tide sweeping the state with a 65.6 per cent catch.



## ▲ VIVEK THAKUR, 54

| BJP | Nawada, Bihar

The son of former Union minister C.P. Thakur, he was pretty much bequeathed with a pre-scripted political journey that began with the BJP's youth wing and now arrives at the Hall of the Elect—after a Rajya Sabha detour from 2020. A degree in political science from Delhi University's Kirori Mal College, one in law, and another from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade in Delhi, frame the kind of savvy that took him to membership of the commerce ministry's consultative committee. Party colleagues too say it's not for nothing that he's feted as one of the “most educated MPs from Bihar”, calling him a widely-read person with a fresh, progressive perspective.



## ▲ RUDRA NARAYAN PANY, 65

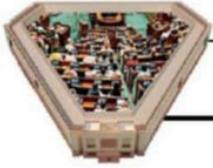
| BJP | Dhenkanal, Odisha

Another former Rajya Sabha member (2004-12), he'd never been an elected MP before—but not for want of trying. What sets Pany apart is that his debut entry to the House of the People comes on the seventh attempt! As a dyed-in-the-wool saffronwala even when the colour wasn't so popular in Odisha, he contested unsuccessfully from Dhenkanal in 1991, 1996, 1999 (as an Independent), 2009, 2014 and 2019. His perseverance must have impressed the BJP's Chanakyas enough to hand him another ticket—and he rode the wave.



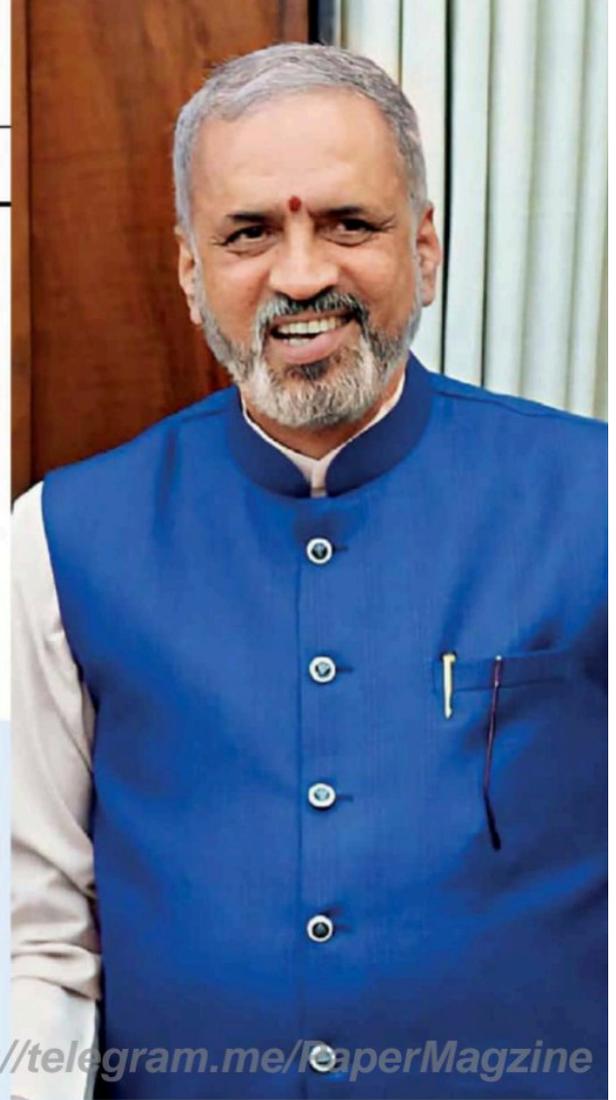
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# IN THE MAJOR LEAGUE NOW

So far, the state was their playground. The June 4 verdict has elevated them to play in the nationals



## VISVESHWARA HEGDE KAGERI, 62 ▶

| BJP | Uttara Kannada, Karnataka

A six-term MLA till his victory run—on since 1994—was halted in 2023 in his picture-pretty Malnad home base of Sirsi; a minister in the BJP’s first government in Karnataka; speaker in 2019. The Havyaka Brahmin law graduate became a comfortable fallback for the BJP when it had to hastily drop its six-term Uttara Kannada MP Anant Hegde after his remarks about “changing the Constitution”.

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## ◀ VASANTRAO CHAVAN, 69

| CONGRESS | Nanded, Maharashtra



S arpanch of his village, Naigaon; two terms in the state legislative council; MLA in 2009...such was the resume of the Chavan picked to fill the giant hole left by another Chavan. In 2019, the BJP’s Pratap Patil Chikhalikar had delivered a shock defeat to Ashok Chavan in his very fortress—the chance of a revenge match evaporated when the ex-CM migrated to the BJP. The new Chavan was meant only to put up a semblance of a fight against Chikhalikar. But the buzzphrase ‘Lokanni nivadnuk hatat ghetli aahe (The people have taken the elections into their hands)’ lit up Nanded, and the tide turned.



## ▲ BALWANT WANKHADE, 56

| CONGRESS | Amravati, Maharashtra

Going up against the feisty Navneet Kaur Rana isn’t a prospect anyone would harbour casually. The Congress’s surprise pick not only survived, he weighed in at 19,731 votes more than the actress-MP with the whiplash oratory. Wankhade had a long stint in the RPI (Gavai) and came up via the slow grind, but for the big leap, he had to join the Congress. The assembly opened its gates in 2019, and now the LS has too.



**K. RADHAKRISHNAN, 60** | **CPI(M)** | Alathur (SC), Kerala

Born to plantation workers in the high ranges of Idukki, he still visited his sylvan homestead and worked on the land when he could, even as one of the popular members of the Pinarayi Vijayan cabinet. The textbook humble Marxist politician, he's had five terms as MLA (since 1996), even rising to be speaker. Now, he's the lone CPI(M) MP from Kerala.



**SANDIPANRAO BHUMARE, 62** | **SHIV SENA** | Aurangabad, Maharashtra

Aurangabad, or Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar as it has been renamed, was the first city the Shiv Sena planted roots in outside the Mumbai-Thane belt. This time the victor was five-time Paitan MLA Bhumare of the Shinde faction. His rough-and-ready style endured in a triangular contest despite this being outside his home base and allegations of wine shop connections.



**NARESH CHANDRA UTTAM PATEL, 68** | **SAMAJWADI PARTY** | Fatehpur, UP

Fateh(pur) for SP's Kurmi leader who upset Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti's applecart... went a media headline that said it all. A member of Mulayam Yadav's first ministry in 1989, an SP founding-member and its state president till late, Patel's fateh (victory) in his Kurmi-dominated home base makes him a clean, educated face in the SP's new caste inclusive contingent.



**KOTA SRINIVASA POOJARY, 64** | **BJP** | Udupi-Chikamagalur, Karnataka

His humble beginnings enforced a dropout from school in Class 7, yet Poojary's activism ran strong. From age 34, he ran the gamut of state politics, finally rising to ministership. On the side, he also took the literary route—writing columns for the dailies to highlight local issues. Poojary also represents the BJP's success among the OBC Billava community in coastal Karnataka.

**▼ AMARINDER SINGH RAJA WARRING, 46**

**| CONGRESS | Ludhiana, Punjab**

**T**his Lok Sabha debut is nothing short of thriller web series material. Battling a tangled web of intra-party factionalism, challenging the mightiest outside and finally winning against his best friend. Orphaned while still not a teenager and brought up by his maternal uncles, he created his first splash in the 2012 assembly poll by wresting the Badal bastion Gidderbaha (and never lost his nemesis-like stance towards the family since, even opposing Manpreet Badal when he was a partymate). This time, he shifted constituencies to challenge his best friend Ravneet Bittu who had switched to the BJP. Bittu, despite the loss, is now a Modi 3.0 mantri.



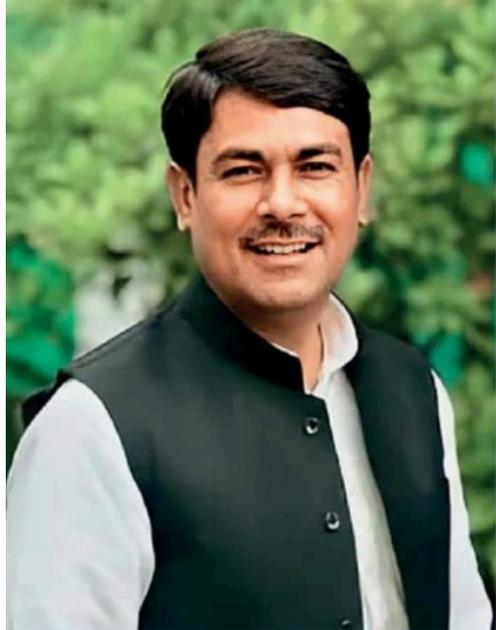
ANI



**◀ E. TUKARAM, 57**

**| CONGRESS | Bellary, Karnataka**

**O**nce an accountant in a mining firm who rose to be a minister in 2018, the four-time MLA from iron ore-rich Sandur, with his saintly name, went up against a biggie in B. Sreeramulu, aide to the (in)famous 'Bellary Brothers'. He's had a busy time since the victory, mostly to deny that he was quitting his seat to join the Siddaramaiah cabinet and affirming that he'd rather work as an MP to fulfil Rahul Gandhi's promise to make Bellary famous for an attire that originated with miners—as India's jeans capital.



### ▲ ANAND BHADAURIYA, 46

| SP | Dhaurahra, UP

One of Akhilesh Yadav's *navratnas*, associated with him since the satrap started his political journey, this ex-MLC's name was in the SP's first list, with all the kinsfolk. What went viral after his win: an old photograph which has since become a symbol of police brutality—a 2011 party protest in Lucknow where the new MP from Dhaurahra is seen fallen on the road with then DIG D.K. Thakur's shoe pressed to his cheek.



## THE DEBUTANTS

## EX-LEGISLATORS



### RANJIT DUTTA, 67

| BJP | Sonitpur, Assam

One of the earliest leaders of the BJP in Assam, the ex-state unit chief is a five-time MLA and was a minister in the Sarbananda Sonowal ministry (2016-21).



### NAGESH PATIL ASHTIKAR, 52

| SS (UBT) | Hingoli, Maharashtra

A former MLA and a long-time Shiv Sainik who'd stayed true to the Thackerays, Ashtikar won this demographically diverse Marathwada seat—a bastion for the undivided Sena—due to a convergence of Maratha, Muslim and Dalit votes.



### K. GOPINATH, 61

| CONGRESS | Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu

Partymen, disappointed at sitting MP A. Chellakumar being denied the ticket, boycotted him as he went to file his nomination. But the Class 10-pass veteran, a three-time MLA from his native Hosur segment here, had learnt the ups and downs of this hilly Vijayanagara outpost well enough.



### ◀ TOKHAN SAHU, 54

| BJP | Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

The only face in the Union cabinet from Chhattisgarh today, the OBC leader climbed up step by step—panch, sarpanch, MLA from Lormi in 2013, and now MP. His predecessor in Bilaspur, state BJP chief Arun Sao, is now MLA from Lormi.

### ▼ LAXMIKANT PAPPU NISHAD, 54

| SP | Sant Kabir Nagar, UP



The former Menthadawal MLA is another face of the SP's new ingress into non-Yadav OBC segments in eastern UP.

### ▼ PARIMAL SUKLABAIYA, 66

| BJP | Silchar, Assam



A five-time MLA and minister with several portfolios, he's known for his clean image.

### ANOOP PRADHAN VALMIKI, 47

| BJP | Hathras (SC), UP

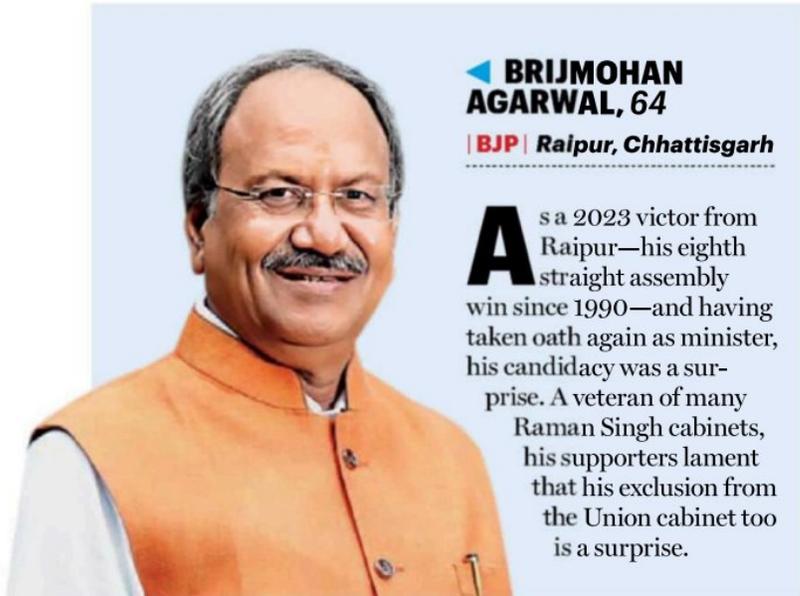
Fate plunged him into a crisis right after his victory—with the deadly July 2 stampede in Hathras—so the ex-MLA (from adjacent Khair) who began as a gram pradhan in 2010 will need all his people skills to offer salve to his western UP constituency.



### ◀ SALENG A. SANGMA, 45

| CONGRESS | Tura (ST), Meghalaya

The four-time MLA was pushed out of the Congress in 2013 by then CM, Mukul Sangma. In 2023, when Mukul left to join the TMC, Saleng did a *ghar wapsi* from the NCP. And got even by defeating Mukul's brother Zenith, as also CM Conrad Sangma's sister Agatha.



**◀ BRIJMOHAN AGARWAL, 64**

**| BJP | Raipur, Chhattisgarh**

**A**s a 2023 victor from Raipur—his eighth straight assembly win since 1990—and having taken oath again as minister, his candidacy was a surprise. A veteran of many Raman Singh cabinets, his supporters lament that his exclusion from the Union cabinet too is a surprise.



**▲ DULU MAHTO, 49**

**| BJP | Dhanbad, Jharkhand**

**W**hen the BJP opted to move the three-time MLA from Baghmara—in the Giridih LS constituency next door—right into the heart of coal, it raised eyebrows as it had to unseat three-time MP Pashupati Nath Singh. The future MP had a bit of history too: Dulu has been convicted in two criminal cases—one involving an attack on the police; the other an excise team. He was eligible only because he got less than two years' jail in both cases. Dulu has challenged both verdicts in the Jharkhand HC... the other 20 cases can presumably wait.

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**SHIVMANGAL S. TOMAR, 60**

**| BJP | Morena, MP**

This farmer's son, deemed close to ex-Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar, was seen as a shoo-in for another stint as Dimani MLA, but his mentor was dispatched there in 2023. He got the return gift, though, in another 'switch hit' by the BJP.



**BHARAT SINGH KUSHWAHA, 54**

**| BJP | Gwalior, MP**

A minister in the Shivraj Chouhan cabinet (2020-23), this ex-Gwalior Rural MLA was a surprise pick ahead of Jyotiraditya Scindia—especially since he'd lost in 2023. Being a 'Narendra Tomar man' in the Gwalior-Chambal belt has its perks.



**BHAJAN LAL JATAV, 55**

**| CONGRESS | Karauli-Dholpur (SC), Rajasthan**

Twice MLA from Weir, and even MoS (home) and PWD minister in the Ashok Gehlot ministry after 2018, he'd come third in the party's 2023 assembly poll washout but has since got it back with interest.



**▲ ATUL GARG, 66**

**| BJP | Ghaziabad, UP**

**T**he son of Ghaziabad's first mayor D.C. Garg, who got to be an MoS in Yogi Adityanath's first ministry, is a chip off the old Vaishya block, with strong associations in the education industry.

**◀ CHHATRAPAL SINGH GANGWAR, 68**

**| BJP | Bareilly, UP**

**T**he lifelong RSS man and ex-MLA became the Gangwar to replace another Gangwar—former Union minister Santosh Gangwar. The near-continuous Bareilly MP since 1989 fades into the septuagenarian sunset.



—Prashant Srivastava, Ajay Sukumaran, Dhaval S. Kulkarni, Amarnath K. Menon, Kaushik Deka, Rahul Noronha, Jeemon Jacob, Rohit Parihar and Amitabh Srivastava



EX-ADMINISTRATORS

# FROM DESK TO DAIS

Sa far, familiar with implementing policy, these former bureaucrats will now have an inside view of the legislative process itself



▲ **G. KUMAR NAIK, 60**

| CONGRESS | Raichur (ST), Karnataka

**T**he 1990-batch IAS officer, who retired from service in September 2023 as the Bangalore Development Authority commissioner, served as deputy commissioner of Raichur between 1999 and 2002. Now, representing the seat in Parliament, he faces a far bigger challenge. Part of the Kalyana Karnataka region, Raichur is an economically backward area of the state, facing significant healthcare disparities. Bringing an AIIMS campus there is chief among Naik's goals.

▶ **SASIKANTH SENTHIL, 45**

| CONGRESS | Tiruvallur (SC), Tamil Nadu

**S**enthil set a record in his electoral debut by winning the Lok Sabha election with a margin of over 572,000 votes, the highest in Tamil Nadu. The 2009-batch Karnataka cadre IAS officer quit service in 2019 citing his inability to continue when "fundamental building blocks of a diverse democracy are being compromised" after the BJP came to power. It was in protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the buzz around the National Register of Citizens. A year later, he joined the Congress and made his mark as a war room strategist after his team helped the party's victory in the 2023 Karnataka assembly election. Born in Chennai, Senthil contested the election from Tiruvallur, his mother's hometown. He holds an engineering degree, briefly worked in a software firm, and pursued teaching before entering the civil service.

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▶ **MANNA LAL RAWAT, 52**

| BJP | Udaipur (ST), Rajasthan

**H**is tenure as the additional transport commissioner in Udaipur made him a familiar face among the tribal communities. His deep involvement in the activities of the RSS and its tribal wing, the Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad, only cemented that influence. Keeping a low profile did not help, as the BJP took notice of his work and nominated him from the ST-reserved constituency. Rawat, who holds a Vidya Vachaspati (equivalent to a PhD) and has a post-graduate degree in public administration, defeated another ex-bureaucrat-IAS officer Tara Chand Meena of the Congress.



## THE DEBUTANTS

### ▶ DAGGUMALLA PRASADA RAO, 62

| TDP | Chittoor (SC), Andhra Pradesh

**A**fter voluntarily retiring from the Indian Revenue Service in 2019 as a joint income tax commissioner, Rao steered two family-run entities in the construction business. But it was not enough. Ergo, a turn to politics. He joined the TDP in March and won the LS election in June. Now his goal is to see Chittoor develop as an MSME hub.



### ▶ NAMDEO KIRSAN, 66

| CONGRESS | Gadchiroli-Chimur (ST), Maharashtra

**B**efore joining the excise department, where he served as a district superintendent until his voluntary retirement in 2008 to pursue a career in politics, Kirsan was a college professor in Nagpur. However, it was the support of the influential Vijay Wadettiwar, the leader of the Opposition, that ensured his victory against two-term BJP MP Ashok Nete. A PhD in Gandhian thought, he earned an MBA in 2017.



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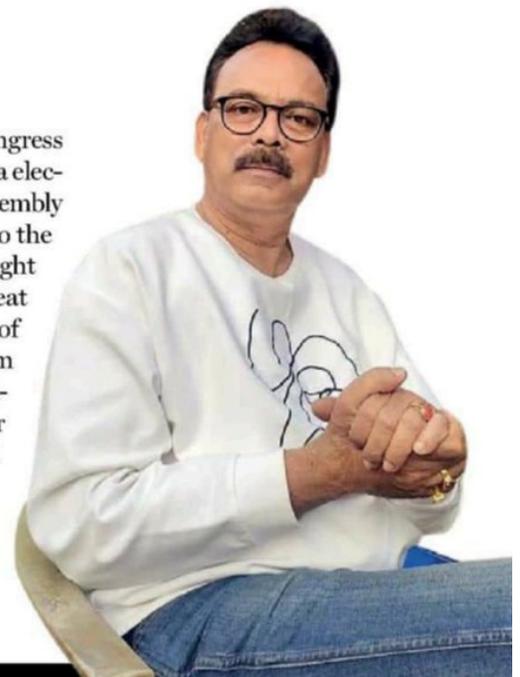
Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH



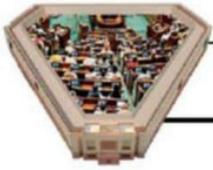
### SUKHDEO BHAGAT, 63 ▶

| CONGRESS | Lohardaga (ST), Jharkhand

**I**n 2019, Sukhdeo Bhagat switched from the Congress to the BJP after narrowly losing the Lok Sabha election. The switch did not pay off as he lost the assembly poll later that year by a big margin. It was back to the Congress in January 2022, on whose ticket he fought this year's election and wrested the Lohardaga seat from the BJP with a respectable victory margin of over 139,000 votes. A postgraduate in History from Delhi University, Bhagat worked first as a probationary officer in a bank and then as a deputy collector from 1997 to 2005. It was then that the political bug bit him, and he has never looked back since.



—Amarnath K. Menon, Ajay Sukumaran, Rohit Parihar, Dhaval S. Kulkarni and Amitabh Srivastava



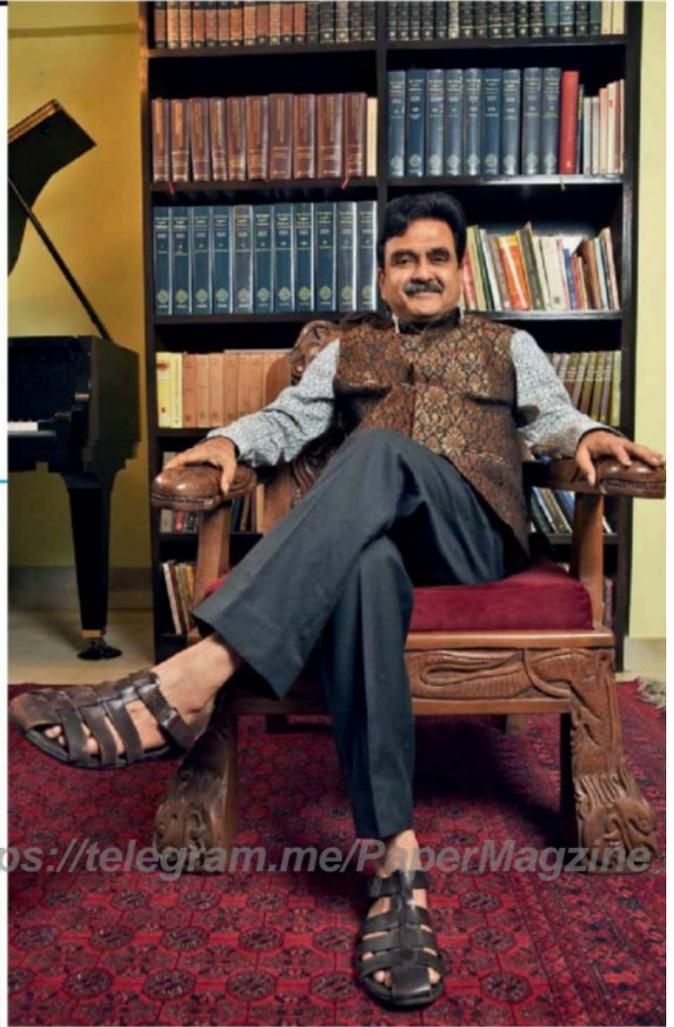
# UPHOLDERS TO MAKERS OF LAW

It should be a seamless transition for these new MPs from courtroom drama to parliamentary negotiation

## ABHIJIT GANGOPADHYAY, 61 ▶

| **BJP** | Tamluk, West Bengal

**T**he former Calcutta High Court judge emerged as a lightning rod in this year's polls. Justice Gangopadhyay's resignation from the bench just months before his scheduled retirement to join the BJP ignited a fierce debate on judicial propriety. Known for his contentious rulings, including the high-profile CBI inquiry into Bengal's cash-for-recruitment scam, Gangopadhyay became a polarising figure, drawing both bouquets and brickbats. And his poll campaign was marked by controversy too, leading to a censure from the Election Commission for his "improper, injudicious, undignified" comments about Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Given his past as an active member of the theatre group 'Amitra Chanda', it's no surprise that his flair for drama shone during election campaigns.



DEBAJYOTI CHAKRABORTY

## ▶ GOWAAL PADAVI, 31

| **CONGRESS** | Nandurbar (ST), Maharashtra

**T**he son of six-time MLA and former Maharashtra minister K.C. Padvi practised law in the Bombay High Court before his surprise entry into politics. A football fan, his journey into electoral politics was as swift as a goal scored in extra time, initiated mere days before the Lok Sabha election. Yet, the political newbie mounted a spirited campaign, reaching out to voters in remote corners. His diligence bore fruit as the Congress reclaimed Nandurbar from the BJP's grasp after a decade-long hiatus.



## ◀ KRISHNA PRASAD TENNETI, 64

| **TDP** | Bapatla (SC), Andhra Pradesh

**I**n a striking move this year, the 1986-batch IPS officer, formerly a BJP spokesperson in Telangana, crossed party and state lines to join the TDP in Andhra Pradesh and it paid off. His rich educational background—an engineering degree from National Institute of Technology (NIT) Warangal, an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad, and a law degree from Osmania University—had prompted his former party to appoint him chairman of the Board of NIT Jamshedpur in 2023.



**DINESHBHAI  
MAKWANA, 54**  
| BJP | Ahmedabad  
West (SC),  
Gujarat

A lawyer by profession, Makwana has been deeply entrenched in the local politics of Ahmedabad for nearly four decades. The former MLA of Sojitra also served as deputy mayor of Ahmedabad city. Known to be an affable and accessible leader, he has patiently worked his way up the BJP ranks and come good at the hustings.



**C. ROBERT  
BRUCE, 62**  
| CONGRESS |  
Tirunelveli,  
Tamil Nadu

The seasoned Congressman and lawyer from Kanniyakumari district finally clinched his chance to contest. Notably, he was the last candidate announced by the party from Tamil Nadu. His nomination held particular significance as it fulfilled the long-standing demand of the Christian Nadar community for representation in Tirunelveli.



**A. MANI, 55**  
| DMK |  
Dharmapuri,  
Tamil Nadu

It baffled many when the DMK fielded lawyer-turned-politician A. Mani instead of incumbent MP Dr D.N.V. Senthilkumar S., who was quite popular. The battle got even tougher when Sowmiya Anbumani, wife of PMK chief Anbumani Ramadoss, entered the fray. In the end though, the senior DMK leader justified his party's trust.



RAJWANT RAWAT

**BHUPENDER YADAV, 55**  
| BJP | Alwar, Rajasthan

As a Supreme Court lawyer, Yadav seems to have laid enough groundwork to facilitate his foray into politics. He served as the government counsel for both the Liberhan Commission, which probed the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition, and the Justice Wadhwa Commission, which investigated the murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines in Odisha. Now, a two-time Rajya Sabha member, he is a debutant Lok Sabha MP and Union minister, having risen to become one of the most influential BJP leaders of the past decade. Known for his organisational acumen and low profile, he has masterminded the party's electoral strategies for various state assembly elections. And that responsibility has not ceased, tasked as he has been with overseeing the upcoming Maharashtra polls.

**R. SUDHA, 46** ▶

| CONGRESS | Mayiladuthurai, Tamil Nadu

The lawyer and ex-chief of the Tamil Nadu Mahila Congress has become the second woman to be elected from Mayiladuthurai, a seat the party has won 10 times. Long journeys are no deterrent—her presence in Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra enough proof of that.



**SUKANTA KUMAR  
PANIGRAHI, 57**

| BJP | Kandhamal, Odisha

An advocate and an agriculturist by profession, Panigrahi brought the combined skills of jurisprudence and rootedness to bear on his poll campaign and defeat the well-known edupreneur and Biju Janata Dal candidate Achyutananda Samanta in Kandhamal, a seat that Naveen Patnaik's party considered its fortress. Of course, there was also the groundwork done by the Sangh Parivar affiliates in the area that was hit by communal riots in 2008, forcing the BJD to part ways with the BJP.

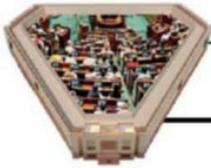


**S. MURASOLI, 46**

| DMK | Thanjavur,  
Tamil Nadu

Courtroom antics he is familiar with. His campaign too was far from run-of-the-mill. At times, the staunch party loyalist would play a round or two of basketball with his electorate; in the final two days of his campaigning, he cycled his way through. Another time, he donned an apron, and proceeded to serve steaming bowls of herbal soup to voters, winning not just their palates but also their support. His victory against his nearest rival from DMK has helped DMK equal the Congress record of winning nine times from the constituency.

— Arkamoy Datta Majumdar, Amarnath K. Menon,  
Dhaval S. Kulkarni, Rohit Parihar and Jumana Shah



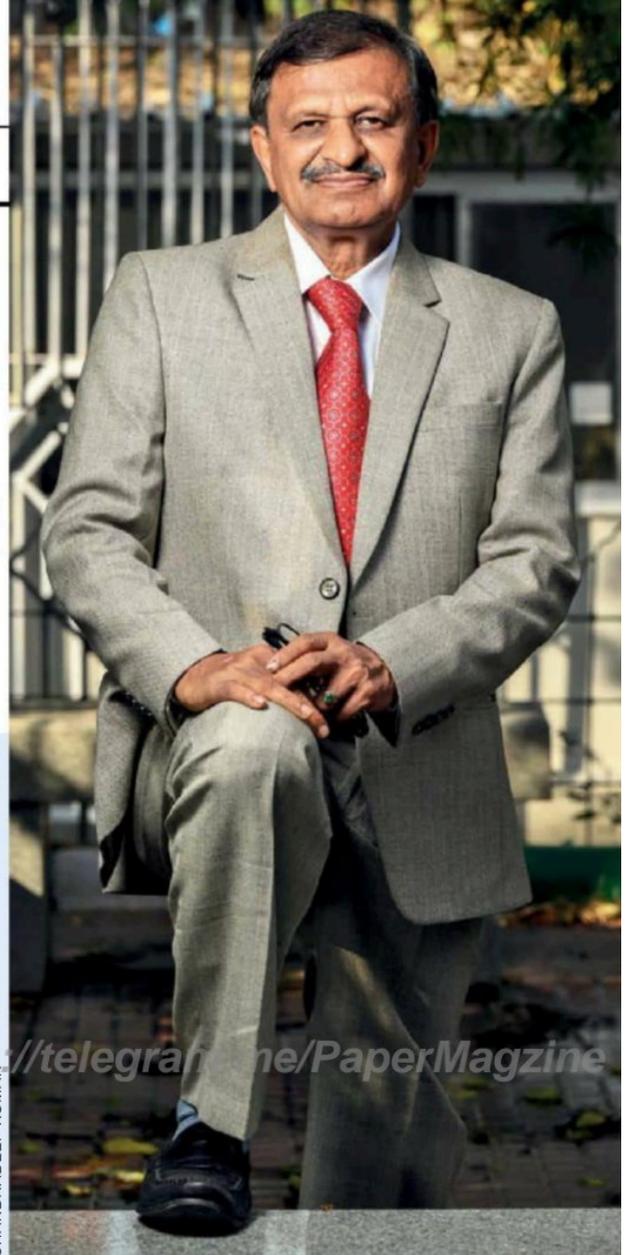
# HEALTHY CORPS

India's health policies should benefit from the entry of these healthcare professionals from fields as diverse as cardiology, psychiatry, Ayurveda and homeopathy

## C.N. MANJUNATH, 66 ▶

| BJP | Bangalore Rural, Karnataka

When Dr Manjunath puts his heart into politics, the electoral operation is bound to be successful. A lesser mortal may perhaps have felt shaky taking on Karnataka deputy CM D.K. Shivakumar's brother, the two-term MP D.K. Suresh, but clinical precision is the exact forte of the eminent cardiologist and Padma Shri awardee. There is already a Manjunath Technique for Balloon Mitral Valvuloplasty, the term could soon signify political acumen as well. Having transformed the Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research into one of Asia's premier cardiac care centres over his 18-year tenure as director, the son-in-law of former PM H.D. Deve Gowda exemplifies how a government heart institution can provide affordable world-class care.



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

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## ◀ SAMBIT PATRA, 50

| BJP | Puri, Odisha

His sharp wit and cutting commentary on TV in his role as national spokesperson of the BJP betray no hint of his past as a trained surgeon, or his brief stint as a medical officer at the Hindu Rao Hospital in Delhi. His political journey has long overshadowed that entry on his CV. What remains is the rollercoaster ride that has been his political career—from losing his first election as a BJP candidate for the post of councillor in Delhi's municipal corporation polls in 2012 to winning the prestigious Puri seat on a second try.

## ▼ RAJ BHUSHAN CHOUDHARY, 47

| BJP | Muzaffarpur, Bihar

Armed with an MD from Darbhanga Medical College, Choudhary practised medicine in Rosera, Samastipur, for a while. A member of the extremely backward Nishad community, Choudhary met Mukesh Sahani in 2017 and joined his Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) a year after. However, he lost the 2019 Lok Sabha election on its ticket, and shifted to the BJP in 2022. He was nominated by the party this year. Choudhary defeated incumbent MP Ajay Nishad of the saffron party, who had defected to the Congress after being denied renomination. Choudhary is now the Union minister of state for Jal Shakti.



▼ **PRABHA MALLIKARJUN, 48**

| **CONGRESS** | Davanagere, Karnataka



**A** dental surgeon from the Bapuji Dental College, Prabha married into the family that ran the 66-year-old Bapuji Educational Association, which has over 47 schools, colleges and healthcare facilities in Davanagere. Soon, she not only found herself organising health screening camps and skill development through the SS Care Trust, but also participating in the family's political campaigns. Her father-in-law Shamanur Shivashankarappa, 93, is the Congress MLA from Davanagere South while her husband S.S. Mallikarjun represents Davanagere North. It was only a matter of time before Prabha took the electoral plunge herself. Pitted against another woman, Gayathri Siddeshwara of the BJP, Prabha edged past by a mere 26,000-odd votes to wrest a seat that her party had not won since 1999.

▶ **SHARMILA SARKAR, 45**

| **TMC** | Bardhaman Purba (SC), West Bengal



**P** sychiatrist Sharmila Sarkar had never envisioned a career in politics until March, when a phone call from her elder sister—a TMC worker—changed everything. She was asked to contest the LS poll. “I was hesitant in the beginning. But then I thought that since my job is to heal the minds of people, let me try doing it as their parliamentarian,” says the former faculty member at the Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital, who is married to Dr Sudip Kumar Ghosh, who heads the dermatology department at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

◀ **KALGE SHIVAJI BANDAPPA, 55**

| **CONGRESS** | Latur (SC), Maharashtra



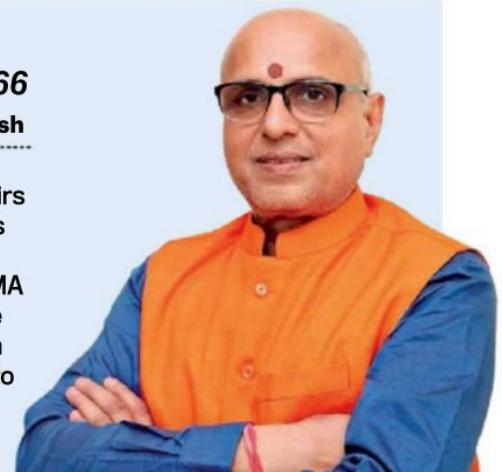
**T** he ophthalmologist is believed to have had his eye on the Latur Lok Sabha constituency ever since 2009 when it was reserved for the Scheduled Castes. However, Kalge—a Lingayat from the Mala Jangam caste—could only emerge as a contender for the seat three elections later. The Grand Old Party has won the constituency a remarkable 11 times, but had lost it to the BJP. Kalge has now brought back honour, and the seat, back to them.

**A** n alumnus of the MGM Medical College, Indore, Mishra traded his dental tools for the political spotlight when he left his government service as a dentist. His first foray into politics came in 2008, when he ran unsuccessfully in the assembly election as a BSP candidate. Undeterred, he later joined the BJP. Mishra's private nursing home in Sidhi is now run by his son, also a doctor. His two daughters are also dentists, while his wife is a medi-

▶ **RAJESH MISHRA, 66**

| **BJP** | Sidhi, Madhya Pradesh

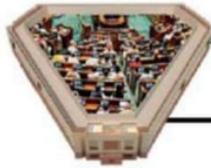
cal practitioner, making theirs a truly family affair. Mishra's own thirst for knowledge is insatiable, as he added an MA in Political Science from the Indira Gandhi National Open University two years back to his qualifications.





▲ **KADIYAM KAVYA, 41**  
| CONGRESS | Warangal (SC), Telangana

For the pathologist, politics is in her bloodwork. In November 2023, Kavya quit her government job to campaign for her father, Kadiyam Srihari, a former deputy chief minister in the BRS government. She soon followed his path into politics, and both switched to the Congress in March. Kavya was then nominated from Warangal, a seat her father had won in 2014. After earning her MBBS in 2007 and MD in Pathology in 2013, she worked at a private medical college before joining a government community health centre in 2018. Her husband, Mohammed Nazeerulla Shaik, teaches forensic medicine at a private medical college.



**THE DEBUTANTS | DOCTORS**



**GUMMA THANUJA RANI, 31**  
| YSR CONGRESS PARTY | Araku (ST), Andhra Pradesh

Thanuja Rani was serving as a medical officer in Alluri Sitharama Raju District Medical and Health Office in Paderu when YSR Congress Party chose her as its candidate from the ST-reserved Araku. Daughter-in-law of former Araku MLA Chetti Palguna, Thanuja Rani's husband Vinay is an active member of the YSRCP too. While father Syam Sunder, on retiring from BSNL, became a village sarpanch, mother Varalakshmi works as a head nurse in Paderu.



**RANI SRIKUMAR, 41**  
| DMK | Tenkasi (SC), TN

An anaesthetist at Sankarankovil Government Hospital, Rani stayed away from active politics even though she has reportedly been a member of the DMK since 2002. In a surprise move, the party nominated her as the candidate over incumbent MP Dhanush M. Kumar. Rani's political ties run deep: husband G. Sri Kumar, a government contractor, and father Sivakumar, a retired clerk, are also associated with the party. Her uncle P. Durairaj became MLA twice, first representing the DMK and later winning on an AIADMK ticket.



**VINOD KUMAR BIND, 50**  
| BJP | Bhadohi, UP

It was with extreme felicity that the orthopaedic surgeon, who runs a hospital in Chandoli, made his move from the operating theatre to the political theatre. The Samajwadi Party fielded him as its candidate from Gyanpur in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly election but rescinded the decision within two days. Miffed, Bind joined the Nishad Party and won from the Majhawan seat. Cut to 2024, when the BJP chose him to replace incumbent MP Ramesh Chand. Bind won, defeating Lalitesh Tripathi of the Trinamool Congress.

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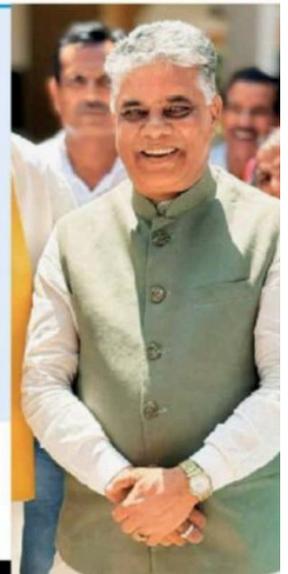
▶ **K. SUDHAKAR, 51**  
| BJP | Chikballapur, Karnataka

Trained in medicine, Sudhakar came into his own when he switched from the Congress to the BJP in 2019, along with a group of legislators whose defection helped the saffron party come to power in Karnataka that year. But he lost the assembly poll in 2023 from Chikballapur, a seat he had held for 10 years. The Lok Sabha win now should salvage some of that honour.



▶ **RAJEEV BHARADWAJ, 61**  
| BJP | Kangra, Himachal Pradesh

Few in Himachal anticipated that the dentist would land a BJP ticket. Not only did the party nominate him, but he also achieved a remarkable victory by defeating Congress veteran Anand Sharma by more than 250,000



## ▼ **SHOBHA BACHHAV, 64**

**| CONGRESS | Dhule, Maharashtra**

In 1992, the Congress—while looking for a woman candidate for the Nashik civic polls from Peth Road-Panchavati—chose Bachhav. She was the first woman with a medical practice in the area, having earned her now-defunct LCEH degree in 1983. Bachhav won, backed mainly by slum-dwellers who were her patients. She later went on to become the first woman mayor of Nashik, serving until 2002. In 2004, Bachhav, a Maratha and doctor, inflicted defeat on another Maratha and doctor, the senior BJP leader Daulatrao Aher, in the assembly poll and became a minister. After a decade of political obscurity, she returned as an LS candidate from Dhule. Also a director of the Nashik District Central Cooperative Bank for 25 years, Bachhav runs a 30-bed nursing home with her husband and occasionally finds time to see her patients.



## ▶ **PRASHANT PADOLE, 45**

**| CONGRESS | Bhandara-Gondiya, Maharashtra**

When the Congress nominated the little-known Padole, he was thought to be a proxy for state party chief Nana Patole, who had won the seat in 2014 but chose to sit it out this time. The Ukraine-educated doctor proved his worth when he defeated BJP's Sunil Baburao Mendhe. Son of influential cooperatives leader Yadavrao Padole, Prashant was elected director



of the local cooperative milk federation in 2005. In 2014, he had fought from the Sakoli assembly seat on a Sena ticket, but lost.



## ◀ **HEMANG JOSHI, 33**

**| BJP | Vadodara, Gujarat**

Joshi wears many hats. After a bachelor's degree in physiotherapy, he did his master's in human resource management; he is also a poet and writer. The city convener of the BJP's Doctor Cell and Yuva Morcha got a big boost in his career when he was chosen for Vadodara, a prize seat where PM Modi contested in 2014. He bettered Modi's winning margin of 570,000 votes with a lead of 582,000 votes.



## ◀ **BYREDDY SHABARI, 40**

**| TDP | Nandyal, Andhra Pradesh**

A radiologist who runs a clinic with her gastroenterologist husband in Kurnool, Shabari is the only woman MP of the TDP. She is the daughter of Byreddy Rajasekhar, a former TDP minister, who founded the Rayalaseema Parirakshana Samithi, which opposed Andhra Pradesh's bifurcation and demanded a separate Rayalaseema region if Telangana was granted statehood. Her grandfather, Byreddy Seshsayana Reddy, was a three-term MLA.

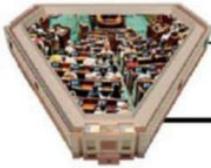
votes. A resident of Depot Market in Dharamshala, Bharadwaj is affectionately known as "depot wale doctor sahib". He got noticed for his work with families displaced during the construction of Pong Dam—a group he himself belongs to, as his native village Mangwal in Dehra tehsil was submerged by the dam's waters.



## ◀ **KALYANRAO KALE, 61**

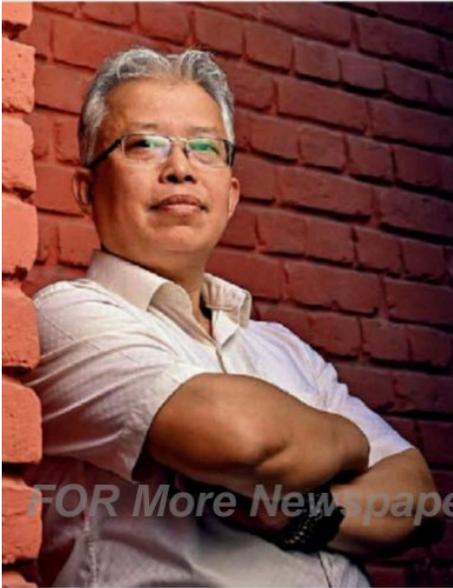
**| CONGRESS | Jalna, Maharashtra**

The homoeopath and his electoral rival Raosaheb Danve, a prominent BJP leader and former Union minister, shared not just political battles but also family ties. In 2009, Kale posed a formidable challenge to him. This time around, he approached the contest with reluctance. But fortune favoured Kale, and the winning margin was over 100,000 votes. His journey in the assembly has seen him represent two different seats: Aurangabad East and Phulambri.



# AN ESTEEMED FACULTY

School teachers as well as professors of business, computer science and cultural studies, they got out of classrooms, stepped into the hurly burly of politics and have landed first-time Lok Sabha success



RAJWANT RAWAT

## ◀ ANGOMCHA BIMOL AKOIJAM, 57

| CONGRESS | Inner Manipur, Manipur

Angomcha Bimol Akoijam, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, wears many hats. The Meitei academic from Manipur is also a filmmaker and, if you ask his mother, had a brighter future as a musician. Indeed, in a viral video, he was seen singing a song by the rock band Scorpions. Known for his expertise in social/political psychology and cultural studies, his was a strong voice from Manipur in the national media during the Meitei-Kuki-Zo ethnic conflict. Critical of the government's role, he accused the Indian Army and Assam Rifles of bias and documented the media's alleged prejudice against Meiteis. His victory over the BJP's Thounaojam B.K. Singh accounting for 47 per cent vote share in the Meitei-dominated seat reflected popular dissatisfaction.



## ▲ RICKY ANDREW J. SYNGKON, 52

| VOICE OF THE PEOPLE PARTY | Shillong (ST), Meghalaya

Ricky Andrew J. Syngkon entered politics in 2023, when he contested, and lost, in the Meghalaya assembly polls. Now, Syngkon, from the Voice of the People Party, has defeated three-time Congress MP Vincent Pala by 370,000 votes in the Shillong LS seat. The assistant professor of small business and entrepreneurship at North-Eastern Hill University has an MA in Economics, an MCom and a PhD. Syngkon is also a church elder at Pohkseh Presbyterian Church, and was supported by the Church during his campaign.

## ▶ RABINDRA NARAYAN BEHERA, 61

| BJP | Jajpur (SC), Odisha

Rabindra Narayan Behera will have a story to tell all his life. The debutant MP lost to Sarmistha Sethi of the BJD by 496 EVM votes. But when postal

ballots were counted, he marched ahead with a lead of less than 2,000 votes. A professor of computer science engineering at the Synergy Engineering College in



Dhenkanal, Behera has a PhD in computer science from Utkal University.



## ▲ VARSHA GAIKWAD, 49

| CONGRESS | Mumbai North Central

In the 2004 LS polls, little-known Dalit leader and then Dharavi MLA Eknath Gaikwad defeated Lok Sabha speaker Manohar Joshi from the Mumbai North Central seat. His

daughter Varsha, an academic and three-term MLA from Dharavi and president of the city Congress, has won the reconstituted seat, beating the special public prosecutor in the 2008

Mumbai terror attack Ujjwal Nikam by over 16,000 votes. Riding on support from ally Shiv Sena (UBT), the former professor of mathematics got her calculations right against the BJP.



▲ **SHOBHANABEN BARAIYA, 51**

| **BJP** | Sabarkantha, Gujarat

A school teacher by profession, teaching Gujarati, Hindi and English languages to primary school students at a government school in Gujarat's Sabarkantha, Shobhana opted for voluntary retirement earlier this year. Wife of former Con-

gress MLA Mahendrasinh Baraiya, who joined the BJP in 2022, Shobhana had no political standing till the BJP fielded her from Sabarkantha. The party had earlier nominated VHP veteran Bhikhaji Thakor as its candidate for the seat, but he backed out.

While the school teacher's nomination had initially led to protest within the party, the BJP was able to contain it. Shobhana defeated the Congress's Tusharsinh Chaudhari, son of former tribal chief minister Amarsinh Chaudhari, by a margin of 155,682 votes.



ANI

▲ **NIMUBEN BAMBHANIYA, 57**

| **BJP** | Bhavnagar, Gujarat

A two-time mayor of Bhavnagar city, Nimuben has been made a minister of state in Modi 3.0. A member of the Koli community, the most dominant of the OBC communities in Gujarat, Nimuben has studied BSc and BED, and was a teacher in a private school. A known face in Saurashtra politics, she rose through the party ranks in the past two decades. She has also served as vice president of BJP's state Mahila Morcha. Considered soft-spoken and straightforward, she won by a margin of 455,289 votes over AAP's Umeshbhai Makhwana.

▶ **MANOJ TIGGA, 52**  
| **BJP** | Alipurduars (ST), West Bengal

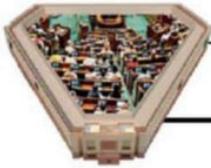


A primary school teacher in Alipurduar district (currently on lien), Tigga is a member of the Oraon tribe and comes from a family of tea plantation labourers. He unsuccessfully contested the West Bengal assembly elections in 2001, 2006, 2011, before finally winning from Madarihat in 2016 and 2021, serving as the BJP's chief whip in the assembly between 2016 and 2024. Onward to a parliamentary stint now, after defeating TMC's Prakash Chik Baraik by 75,447 votes.



▶ **JAGADISH CHANDRA BARMA BASUNIA, 60**  
| **TMC** | Coochbehar (SC), West Bengal

A physical education teacher at a school in Coochbehar district, Basunia retired from the post this January. Time therefore to focus solely on his political career, which began from the gram panchayat in Coochbehar district in 1993 and saw him get elected as MLA from Sitai constituency in 2016 and 2021. Now, he has defeated former Union MoS for home affairs—under Amit Shah—Nisith Pramanick.



# FLOOR-CROSSERS

The turncoats who clinched electoral wins after jumping ship and pledging new loyalties

HARDIK CHHABRA



## ▶ RAHUL SINGH LODHI, 40

| BJP | Damoh, Madhya Pradesh

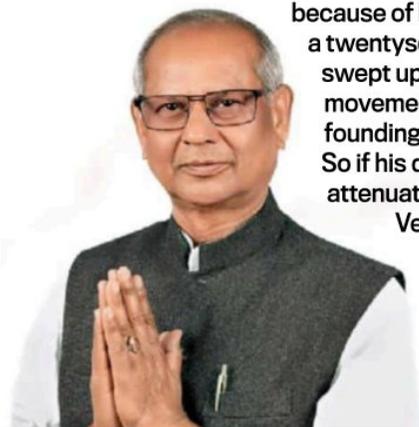
Just one switch shot till now makes him a near-apprentice—but full of promise. From a family of feudatories in the outback, Lodhi won the Damoh assembly seat on a Congress ticket in 2018 against BJP veteran Jayant Malaiya. However, in 2020, he defected to the BJP and unsuccessfully contested a bypoll from the same seat in 2021. His defeat was rewarded with a Lok Sabha ticket: close ties with party veteran and caste-mate Prahlad Patel reportedly helped. Worthy of an alumnus of Christ Church Boys in Jabalpur—a nursery of bureaucrats and politicians for Mahakoshal and Bundelkhand.

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## ▼ NARAYANDAS AHIRWAR, 63

| SP | Jalaun (SC), UP

Usually, 'defectors' are spoken of in tones ranging from strong disparagement to mild amusement—at best, conferred with a pragmatic tolerance of enlightened self-interest in politics. But Ahirwar's 2015 move to the SP, and his unseating of five-time BJP MP and Union minister Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma from a prize reserved constituency in Bundelkhand this time, also spoke of something more—primarily because of his political biography. As a twentysomething, Ahirwar was swept up into Kanshi Ram's DS4 movement, whence he became a founding member of the BSP in 1984. So if his departure was a sign of the attenuation of the BSP's Jatav core, Verma's loss became emblematic of even the non-Jatavs deserting saffron.



## ▶ BABU SINGH KUSHWAHA, 58

| SP | Jaunpur, UP

A key aide and minister under Mayawati, Kushwaha was expelled from the BSP in 2011 due to his alleged role in a Rs 1,000 crore scam. After doing time in jail and a flirtation with the BJP, the Class XII pass founded the Jan Adhikar Party in 2016. As an SP man, he faced another convert, lassoed in from the Mumbai Congress. That Kripa Shankar Singh lost was a measure of Rajput ire at the BJP, subdued local don Dhananjay Singh being its symbol.





▲ **THANGA  
TAMILSELVAN, 63**

| DMK | Theni, Tamil Nadu

**W**arning: Dravidian alphabet soup ahead. Tamilselvan's shift from the AMMK, a break-away faction of the AIADMK, to the DMK enabled its alliance to clinch the only seat it had lost in 2019. Giant leap for one who's made headlines in 2001 as the AIADMK MLA from Andipatti who sacrificed his seat to allow then CM J. Jayalalithaa to contest a bypoll. That endeared him to the AIADMK supremo—duly rewarded with a Rajya Sabha seat, he returned to represent Andipatti in 2011 and 2016. Post-Jaya, he joined the AMMK but lost from Theni in 2019. That triangle now comes a full circle.

▼ **VIRENDRA SINGH, 65**

| SP | Chandauli, UP

**T**his Banarasiya—from Chirraigaon, pretty much within the holy town's extended parikrama—was presumably schooled in BHU student affairs to be undogmatic about political choices. He got to be an MLA with the Congress (his original habitat) in 1996, was part of the short-lived splinter called Loktantrik Congress that backed Kalyan Singh's BJP regime (where he

got to be minister), stayed back when the splinter splintered further, then tossed his hat in the BSP ring to become MLA again, then arrived at the SP to be a minister under Mulayam Yadav but didn't build a pucca house yet. A rumoured return to the Congress and another BSP detour intervened before his flight landed, with ideological baggage deemed solid enough to be made national spokesman.



▼ **SANJAY  
DESHMUKH, 55**

| SS (UBT) |  
Yavatmal-Washim,  
Maharashtra

**H**e may well qualify for the Maharashtra title bout for being an 'Aya Ram, Gaya Ram'—no small feat. When the Shiv Sena took root in Vidarbha, Deshmukh was among those who joined its ranks and duly rose to be its Yavatmal district chief. He was elected to the assembly twice (1999, 2004)—but as an Independent, defeating the official Sena nominee, Shrikant Munginwar. Deshmukh has been a long-time opponent of another Sanjay (Rathod), the soil and water conservation minister who defeated him in 2009. At that time, Deshmukh was with the Congress. He later joined the BJP, only to pivot to Uddhav Thackeray's Sena after Rathod joined Shinde's Sena. Hope that clarifies things.



▶ **JITENDRA  
KUMAR DOHARE, 54**

| SP | Etawah (SC), UP

**T**he home base of UP's Yadav dynasty is an SC-reserved seat, so the Samajwadis chose a 2020 import from the BSP, a strong organisation man who lists "farming, contractor work and public service" as professions and whose sister chairs a panchayat with 91 villages under its purview. It worked.



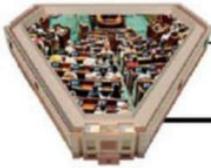
▶ **PRADEEP KUMAR  
PANIGRAHY, 61**

| BJP | Berhampur, Odisha

**T**he Naveen Patnaik loyalist, three-time Gopalpur MLA and ex-minister was expelled from the BJD in 2020 due to "anti-people activities". He joined the BJP in February and defeated his closest rival, Rasmi Ranjan Patnaik, of the Congress. Trained as a lawyer, he has a PhD in Conservation of Biodiversity under International Law with Special Reference to India. Maybe it has applications in political science too.



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## THE DEBUTANTS | DEFECTORS

### ▼ GANAPATHY P. RAJKUMAR, 59

| DMK | Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu



**T**he defeat of the voluble state BJP chief K. Annamalai was an event that registered nationally, but who was the victor? Someone who cut his teeth in the AIADMK, and stayed there from 1989 to 2020. Loyalty ran thin after a long sense of feeling sidelined, and Rajkumar switched to the DMK. Four years later, he has helped the Dravidian major win the Coimbatore seat for the first time since 1998. Elected councillor in 2001, and mayor from 2014 to 2016, he gets by alright with small-scale business and farming.

### ▶ NILESH LANKE, 44

| NCP (SP) | Ahmednagar, Maharashtra

**C**all it hubris or naive folly, but Dr Sujay Vikhe Patil, incumbent MP and BJP candidate, had thought it a good campaign idea to mock his challenger's command over English and Hindi. Voters spoke a different language: the neurosurgeon (and son of revenue minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil) was trounced. The earthy Lanke knew all soil types too: once with the Shiv Sena, he joined the NCP and wrested the Parner assembly seat from mentor Vijayrao Auti in 2019. He backed Ajit Pawar's splinter NCP but reversed just in the nick of time.



### ▲ EATALA RAJENDER, 60

| BJP | Malkajgiri, Telangana

**I**f we're talking political conversions, this one probably traces the longest and most dramatic arc. Eatala's roots lie in left-wing extremism, now he's a rising star in the BJP. In between, he helped K. Chandrasekhar Rao during his agitation phase, evolved into a campaigner for separate statehood, became an MLA seven times, even rose to be FM. But KCR's "authoritarian ways" led to unease, and he decamped to the BJP in 2021. Now he represents one of Asia's largest constituencies. With a thriving poultry and egg business, he is not one to count his chickens before they hatch but Eatala is a front-runner to be the next state BJP chief.

### IMRAN MASOOD, 54

| CONGRESS | Saharanpur, UP

The former MLA, who rejoined the Congress just before the Lok Sabha polls, had changed three parties in the last three years.



### LALJI VERMA, 69

| SP | Ambedkar Nagar, UP

After the rough and tumble of student politics in the Awadh town of Tanda and early Janata Dal dabbling, the six-time Kurmi MLA was a BSP stalwart till he joined the SP just before the 2022 polls.



### RUCHI VIRA, 62

| SP | Moradabad, UP

A brief excursion to the BSP in 2019 apart, Ruchi has been a Vaishya face for the SP who prefaced her present win—as a last-minute replacement—with a debut 2014 win in a Bijnore assembly bypoll.



### MADHAVANENI RAGHUNANDAN RAO, 59

| BJP | Medak, Telangana

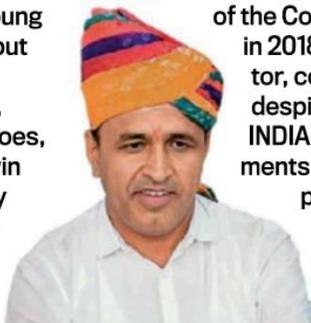
In 2013, the former statehood campaigner in the then TRS got disillusioned with its founder, K. Chandrashekar Rao, and left the party to join the Congress. He moved to the BJP in 2014 and became an MLA.



▼ **UMMEDA RAM BENIWAL, 47**

| **CONGRESS** | Barmer, Rajasthan

All the media attention was being lavished on the young and swashbuckling Rajput leader Ravindra Singh Bhatti, fighting his Independent fight. But as the old desert saying goes, those who lose Baytu often win Barmer. Beniwal lost Baytu by only 910 votes in the 2023 assembly poll, contesting on a Rashtriya Loktantrik Party



ticket. His nemesis—Harish Chaudhary of the Congress, who'd defeated him in 2018 too—turned into a benefactor, convincing him to join the GOP despite the RLP being part of the INDIA bloc. Beniwal, who supplements farm income with projects, passed the triangular test with flying colours. Bhatti came second, Union minister Kailash Chaudhary third.

▼ **MALVINDER SINGH KANG, 45**

| **AAP** | Anandpur Sahib, Punjab

In the past two years of CM Bhagwant Mann, Kang has emerged as AAP's voice in Punjab, defending party and government during challenging times. Nothing askew about that, except people forget how not too long ago he was seen as a protégé of BJP leader Anurag Thakur. The Gwalior boy, who made a name in Panjab University politics, spent a decade in the BJP before joining AAP during the 2020-21 farm protests.



▼ **PRAVEEN PATEL, 45**

| **BJP** | Phulpur, UP

His dad was a Congressman, quite the norm in what was then known as "Nehru's constituency". But son learnt swimming with the BSP, so picked up enough skills to reach saffron shores—he proved his winnability for both at the assembly level. He's scaled that up to a higher level, even if only in a "thrilling finish" with 4,332 extra votes.



▼ **RAJ KUMAR CHABBEWAL, 55**

| **AAP** | Hoshiarpur (SC), Punjab

Just before the polls, the two-time Congress MLA and the second-in-command in the party legislative team switched to AAP. Chabbewal, who began his political career with the BJP, joined the Congress in 2009. After an unsuccessful bid in the 2012 assembly poll, he won the next two elections. Chabbewal's former Congress colleagues claim he faced vigilance pressures following allegations of distributing fake sanction letters to SC beneficiaries of the Punjab Nirman Programme ahead of the 2022 assembly polls.



**RAKESH RATHOR, 60**  
| **CONGRESS** | Sitapur, UP

An OBC leader and former BJP MLA from Sitapur, Rathor joined the Congress only last year. In May 2021, several purported audio clips were leaked in which he criticised the Yogi Adityanath government.



**KRISHNA DEVI PATEL, 53**  
| **SP** | Banda, UP

Krishna Devi joined the Samajwadi Party last year, along with her husband, former minister Shiv Shanker Patel, following his suspension from the BJP.



**ABHAY KUMAR SINHA, 52**  
| **RJD** | Aurangabad, Bihar

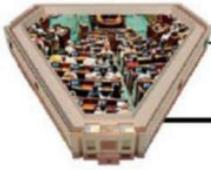
The ex-JD(U) MLA switched to the RJD only in March. The Kushwaha leader, who defeated sitting BJP MP Sushil Kumar Singh, also influenced his community voters across Bihar.



**NEERAJ MAURYA, 54**  
| **SP** | Aonla, UP

The former two-term BSP MLA from Jalalabad, who served from 2007 to 2017, briefly joined the BJP before switching to the Samajwadi Party in 2022.





# A HARVEST OF AMBITIONS

Sons of the soil come in various packages, union men to strongmen to Left veterans. What they have in common is a deep connect with the land



Photograph by RAJWANT RAWAT

**HARENDRA ▲  
MALIK, 69**

**| SAMAJWADI PARTY |  
Muzaffarnagar, UP**

**A** slogan that went viral said it all. It's not just that he started as a student leader in 1978, in the high noon of Jat farmer icon Charan Singh's political life. Or that four MLA terms, one stint in the Rajya Sabha and three political parties later, he defeated fellow Jat and local BJP toughie Sanjeev Balyan

in a high-stakes contest. Right after his oath-taking, the burly Malik leaned into the mic and said, "Jai Chaudhary Charan Singh, Jai Netaji Mulayam Singh, Jai Akhilesh." No one in western UP missed that thumbed nose at Charan Singh's grandson, RLD chief Jayant Chaudhury, watching from the treasury benches.

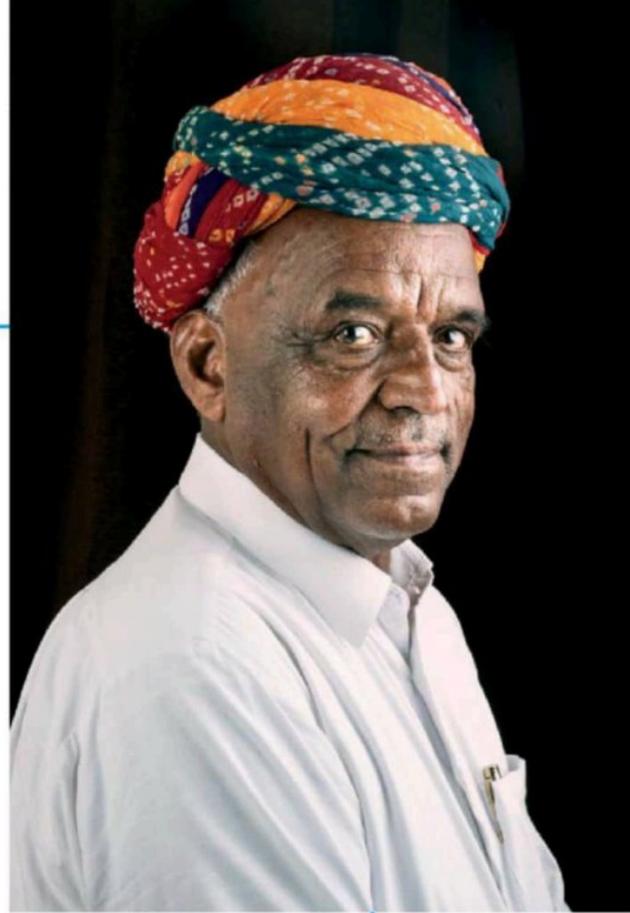
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## AMRA RAM, 68 ▶

| CPI(M) | Sikar, Rajasthan

**T**his grassroots Marxist is a better exemplar of the never-say-die spirit than the parable of King Bruce and the spider. It's on his eighth attempt that he has entered Parliament, defeating two-time BJP MP Sumedhanand Saraswati at that. He first contested 28 years ago! Still living the simple Shekhawati life he was born into, this BSc-BEd-MCom holder quit his government teacher's job for politics, was an elected sarpanch from 1983-93 and a four-time MLA, but never lost that earth connection, including when he camped for 11 months with protesting farmers on the Delhi borders in 2021-22.



HARDIK CHHABRA



## ▲ DARSHAN SINGH CHAUDHARY, 48

| BJP | Hoshangabad, MP

**D**on't be misled by his four Master's degrees—in Economics, History, Philosophy and English. The bachelor-agriculturist grew up organically on RSS farms, possesses only a mobike, leans towards cow-based natural farming, and has a yen for agitations, with 11 prison logs to show for it. The state Kisan Morcha chief hasn't entirely quit his engagement with his first vocation, teaching, either. On both counts, he'll have plenty to be agitated over in Parliament.



## ▲ PRADEEP PUROHIT, 58

| BJP | Bargarh, Odisha

**T**he man with a permanent red tilak on his forehead started as a green activist—leading the 'BALCO Hatao' agitation of the 1980s, one of India's oldest environmental movements, where tribals laid a four-year protective shield around the verdant Gandhamardan Hill. Purohit's potential has been mined well, though: after stints as an MLA and state Kisan Morcha chief, Purohit has now taken the Ram rath all the way to Delhi, with Odisha's highest victory margin in 2024.

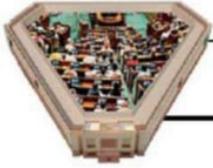


## ▲ RAJARAM SINGH, 66

| CPI(ML) | Karakat, Bihar

**I**t was billed as a fight between polyvalent politician Upen-dra Kushwaha and Bhojpuri actor-singer Pawan Singh. But any labourer at the chai shops in Karakat could have told you that this one was for Rajaram. The son of a marginal Kushwaha farmer, and a BTech who chose not to pursue a career in engineering, the left-winger spent his life ploughing himself back into the soil. Another sentinel from the farmer siege on Delhi's borders, Rajaram now has the chance to cultivate the debate in the Hall of the People.

—Prashant Srivastava, Rohit Parihar, Arkamoy Datta Majumdar, Rahul Noronha and Amitabh Srivastava



# ROOTED IN THE MASSES

From raising farmers' issues to rural jobs creation and MSP, these sons of the soil are aiming for change in Parliament

▼ SELVARAJ V., 63

| CPI | NAGAPATTINAM (SC), Tamil Nadu



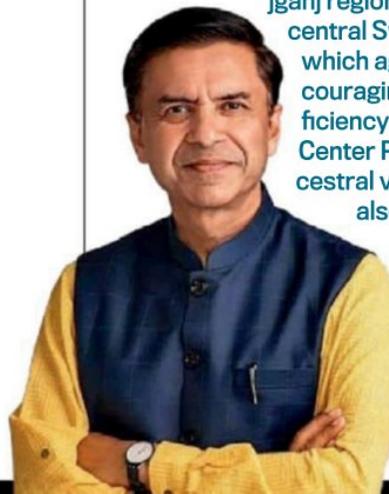
As CPI leader Selvaraj puts it, Nagapattinam comes at the “tail end” for water from the Cauvery river, shorthand for the farmers’ distress over the lack of it for irrigation or even the dearth of state support for fishermen going out to sea. This was the first Lok Sabha election for Selvaraj, who has been a loyal soldier of the country’s oldest Communist party for over four decades now. The party chose to place its faith in their Tiruvarur district secretary since four-time MP from here and his namesake, M. Selvaraj, had been ailing for a while (he passed away on May 13). The new MP won by over 200,000 votes and he will be hoping to repay the people’s faith in Parliament.



▼ SHASHANK MANI TRIPATHI, 54

| BJP | Deoria, UP

An IIT Delhi graduate and son of the late Lt General and former MP of Deoria, Prakash Mani Tripathi, Shashank started with the non-profit, Jagriti Yatra, in 2008 to promote entrepreneurship in the Purvanchal (eastern UP) region, including Deoria, Kushinagar, Gorakhpur and Mahara-jganj regions. He’s also been an integral part of the central Swavlambi Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) scheme, which again goes back to his core beliefs of encouraging awareness about start-ups, self-sufficiency and jobs creation. The Jagriti Enterprise Center Purvanchal has its head office in his ancestral village of Barpar in Deoria. Shashank has also authored three books including *India: A Journey Through a Healing Civilization*. He defeated the Congress’s Akhilesh Pratap Singh by close to 35,000 votes.



## ◀ **SACHITHANANTHAM R., 54**

**| CPI(M) | Dindigul, Tamil Nadu**

**T**he Dindigul district unit secretary since 2018, the Marxist leader is a three-decade veteran in championing the cause of farmers. He has led agitations across the state, demanding remunerative prices for crops and better wages for farm workers, as well as protests for increased water supply for irrigation. The CPI(M) leader defeated the AIADMK's Mohamed Mubarak M.A. by a margin of over 400,000 votes. He says his major focus will be MSP for all farm produce and reviving the sick spinning mills in Dindigul.



## ▲ **UMESHBHAI PATEL, 48**

**| INDEPENDENT | Daman & Diu (ST)**

**A**n Arts graduate, Umeshbhai first shot into the limelight in 2017 when he led the protest against a Gujarat High Court proposal to merge Daman and Diu with neighbouring Gujarat, for better implementation of the latter's prohibition laws (because of people from the state crossing over to the UT to quench their 'thirst'). Umeshbhai runs various organisations that are engaged in social work in the UT, such as the Daman Youth Action Force and the Swami Vivekanand Vidhyalay. This was his second attempt at entering Parliament and he defeated three-time BJP MP Lalubhai Patel by a margin of 6,225 votes. The independent candidate reportedly ran a frugal campaign, canvassing with a few friends or his wife and daughter. He has said he will work for the development of Daman and Diu, as the UT has been allegedly ignored by the major parties.



## **KUNDURU RAGHUV EER, 44**

**| CONGRESS | Nalgonda, Telangana**

A social activist working for orphaned children, he has set a record for victory margins in Nalgonda, defeating the BJP's Saidi Reddy Shanampudi by 5,59,905 votes.



## **THARANIVENTHAN M.S., 59**

**| DMK | Arani, TN**

Has moved up the party rungs since the days he was enlisted as a member way back in 1979. Rallied farmers and farm workers in protests for better prices for produce, apart from demanding improved irrigation facilities. Defeated the AIADMK'S Gajendran G.V.



## **MATHESWARAN V.S., 52**

**| DMK | Namakkal, TN**

Matheswaran has in the past highlighted issues faced by those residing in the Senthamangalam panchayat area and served as the Senthamangalam panchayat union vice-chairman. Defeated the AIADMK's Tamilmani S.



▲ **BHUPATHI RAJU SRINIVASA VARMA, 56**

| **BJP** | Narsapuram, Andhra Pradesh

A former activist of the CPI's All India Students Federation, he was part of the ABVP and the RSS, before enlisting in the BJP. Has helped the party mobilise mass protests on various issues. Defeated the YSRCP's Umabala Guduri.



▲ **AJENDRA SINGH LODHI, 53**

| **SP** | Hamirpur, UP

A grassroots OBC leader from the Bundelkhand belt, he's been effective in building up the SP cadre in Hamirpur. Defeated the BJP's Pushpendra Singh Chandel.

▶ **DEVESH SHAKYA, 43**

| **SP** | Etah, UP

Devesh defeated the BJP's two-time Etah MP Rajveer Singh, son of the late Uttar Pradesh chief minister and veteran Lodh leader Kalyan Singh. A law graduate and non-Yadav OBC leader, he is also considered as someone with grassroots connections in the Etah belt. Devesh has also been successful in aligning the non-Yadav OBCs—especially the Shakya voters (part of the larger Kushwaha community) who are considered important in the Etah belt—with the SP, which was probably why Akhilesh handed him the poll ticket.



◀ **RAJKUMAR SANGWAN, 64**

| **RLD** | Baghpat, UP

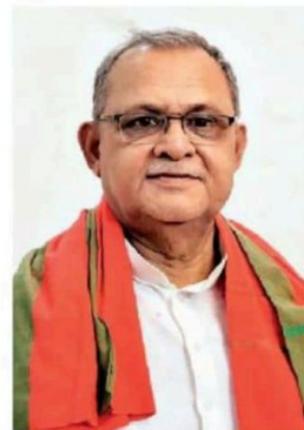
The senior RLD spokesperson is considered close to party chairman Jayant Chaudhary's family and has served in various key positions. He has also focussed on building the party's cadre base in west UP. A PhD in philosophy, he defeated the SP's Amarpal.



▶ **SANATAN PANDEY, 61**

| **SP** | Ballia, UP

Considered a trusted aide of the late Samajwadi Party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav, he won the 2007 UP assembly polls from Chilkahar before unsuccessfully contesting the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. He has retained grassroots connect, which is believed to have worked in his favour. He defeated the BJP's Neeraj Shekhar, son of the late PM Chandra Shekhar in the family's home bastion.



- By Amarnath K. Menon, Prashant Srivastava and Jumana Shah

# EXTREME WINNERS

In Punjab and J&K, embers from a turbulent past burn bright again at the hustings



Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

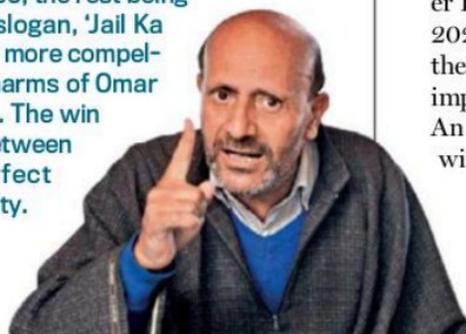
◀ **AMRITPAL SINGH SANDHU, 31**  
**| INDEPENDENT | Khadoor Sahib, Punjab**

**H**e popped up seemingly out of nowhere, a face with no history, attired like Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, invoking the slain terrorist, and talking his talk. That was all the historical resonance Punjab needed, or at least those disillusioned with the void in the formal panthic space. Open advocacy of Khalistan, calling his Indian passport a mere "travel document", a headline-grabbing raid on a police station in Ajnala with the Guru Granth Sahib as shield, a dramatic 20-day chase, a surrender at Bhindranwale's Rode village...it had already been a whirlwind ride before he won by Punjab's highest margin, 197,120 votes. Amritpal's NSA imprisonment at Dibrugarh has been extended by a year, so it must have been a curious spectacle, the non-believer's swearing-in on July 5.

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**SHEIKH ABDUL 'ENGINEER' RASHID, 57** ▼  
**| INDEPENDENT | Baramulla, J&K**

**G**roomed in Abdul Ghani Lone's pro-azadi People's Conference, 'Engineer' Rashid—so called for his decade with the state public works corporation—was a "people person" whose street cred helped him win state elections in 2008 and 2014. In the 2019 LS poll, he stood third from Baramulla. That chaotic August, Rashid became one of a long list of political prisoners: with terror funding charges against him, he'll soon complete five years in Tihar. The 2024 poll campaign was anchored by son Abrar for just Rs 27,000, the rest being community-funded. His slogan, 'Jail Ka Badla Vote Se', proved far more compelling than the moderate charms of Omar Abdullah and Sajjad Lone. The win also showed up the gap between New Delhi's picture-perfect claims and Kashmir's reality.

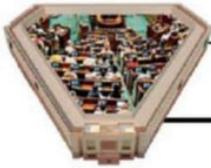


**SARABJIT SINGH KHALSA, 47** ▼  
**| INDEPENDENT | Faridkot, Punjab**

**U**nlike Amritpal, Sarabjit's credentials are inherited. As the son of Indira Gandhi's assassin Beant Singh, he ran for the Lok Sabha thrice before but couldn't repeat the 1989 triumphs of grandfather Sucha Singh (Bathinda) and mother Bimal Kaur (Ropar). But 2024 has proved propitious, with Amritpal watering the fields next door in Khadoor Sahib, the Akalis in implosion mode, and the AAP racked by factionalism. An enthused Sarabjit is now talking of a new Akali Dal, with the kin of other slain Sikh militants.



—Anilesh S. Mahajan



# HIGH JUMPERS

They had never seen the inside of even a state legislature. Now they have catapulted to the national one

## MURLIDHAR MOHOL, 49 ▶

| BJP | Pune, Maharashtra

What that image doesn't tell you is that the man with the bullocks was also the mayor of Pune, and got it to be one of 50 Champion Cities in a 2021 global challenge. He oversaw the Metro's expansion, had a medical college set up and was praised for being hands-on during the pandemic. But the photo does exude the aroma of the village clay he's formed of: born into a native martial art ethos shaped around wrestling, he went to Kolhapur, the mecca for grapplers, to learn its finer points. One loss in a 2009 assembly poll apart, that skill has not deserted him in politics—long-time RSS/BJP youth wing incubation now blossoming into a surprise Union MoS slot. To reach it, he defeated Congress's Ravindra Dhanekar.



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## MAHESH KASHYAP, 48

| BJP | Bastar (ST), Chhattisgarh



The core ethos of the BJP's tribal outreach is expressed fully in this victor from the most canonical of tribal constituencies. The new Bastar MP began as a sarpanch in his village near Jagdalpur but was soon cutting his teeth on the right wing's anti-conversion drive, joining the Bajrang Dal as a 21-year-old in 1996, and then the VHP and a slew of kindred organisations. Besides the promotion of Hindu culture in Bastar, this Class 10 pass with six children—wife Champa is a janpad panchayat chief—also has interests in kabaddi. He beat the Congress's Kawasi Lakhma by over 55,000 votes.

## RAJPALSINH JADAV, 42

| BJP | Panchmahal, Gujarat

It was a tricky poll for this partyman of 24 years from the OBC Kshatriya caste of Baraiyas: all Kshatriyas were protesting against the BJP for the comments made by Parshottam Rupala. But the two-term district panchayat member found himself alongside BJP heavyweights like Union home minister Amit Shah and state president C.R. Paatil who won with a lead of over 500,000 votes. The Godhra assembly segment is a part of this seat, where the release of Bilkis Bano's rapists had added to extreme polarisation. He beat Congress's Gulabsinh Chauhan.



## ▼ MITALI BAG, 47

| TMC | Arambagh (SC),  
West Bengal



**T**he last TMC MP here, Aparupa Poddar, had gotten into a bit of a tangle on the question of whether she had turned into Afrin Ali (after marrying a Muslim), and whether that disqualified her from this SC reserved seat. Anyway, in came an unmarried unknown—a mofussil Mamata, so to speak. An anganwadi worker in 2010, her diligence as a zilla parishad member had caught the scouting eye of I-PAC surveyors. The poorest among the new LS MPs, with just Rs 7.8 lakh to her name, she finally wrested a seat even the TMC leadership thought would go to the BJP.

## ▼ HAJI HANIFA JAN, 55

| INDEPENDENT | Ladakh



**O**ne figure emerged from the fog of factionalism. The INDIA bloc missed a trick, and his name was Haji. The National Conference district chief, a former chief executive councillor of the Kargil section of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, was his party's original choice. But it went along with the Congress's choice

from Leh: Tsering Namgyal. When Haji went renegade, the whole Kargil unit of the NC resigned en masse in support. That he also got bipartisan support from Buddhist Leh showed how angry and united Ladakh was on its key demands: statehood, Sixth Schedule protection and two Lok Sabha seats. That the BJP came third was proof.

## ◀ BHARTI PARDHI, 54

| BJP | Balaghat, MP



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

**H**er grandfather-in-law, Bholaram Pardhi, represented Balaghat in the 1960s but she was a fresh arrival in the major league. The highest she had risen till she was picked for the Lok Sabha contest ahead of sitting MP Dhal Singh Bisen was the post she held, that of local corporator. But she was from the Panwar community, influential in this part of Mahakoshal, and the party had held this Narmada-fed constituency since 1998. Affable, and graceful in victory, her first visit was to the house of Ashok Saraswar of the Congress, whom she'd defeated by 174,512 votes.



## ALOK SHARMA, 56

| BJP | Bhopal,  
MP

A Bhopali from the Old City, whose recent passion has been to obliterate its nawabi past—nomenclaturally. For all his saffron upbringing—ABVP, BJP youth wing—and perceived proximity to Shivraj Singh Chouhan, corporator and mayor is all Sharma managed, losing assembly polls twice from Bhopal North—in 2008 and in 2023. But his lifelong zeal was rewarded with one of the safest seats for the BJP in the country.



## CHANDU SHIHORA, 62

| BJP | Surendranagar,  
Gujarat

Farmer by profession, civil engineer by education, ex-president of the Morbi district panchayat, partyman for decades, and a community leader among the 'most backward' Chuvaliya Kolis—so went a hinterland resume with as much promise as any other in the BJP. But the Kshatriya protests had intensified around this seat, so it was marked as a 'tight contest'. Moreover, a rival Koli subcaste had wanted their man in, so were upset. But his philanthropism, especially the mass weddings he organised, ensured another handsome debut.



## HARIBHAI PATEL, 63

| BJP | Mehsana,  
Gujarat

Once a teacher of fine arts, now running a business, his political apex till now had been a modest one: president of the standing committee of the district panchayat. But his 30-year party association and roots in the influential Kadva Patidar community sufficed to secure him a comfortable margin of 320,000 votes.



## THE DEBUTANTS

## EX-LOCAL BODY HEADS

### ▶ NARESH MHASKE, 54

| SHIV SENA |  
Thane,  
Maharashtra

Like Eknath Shinde, he was among the Shiv Sainiks mentored by Anand Dighe, who exerted talismanic sway over supporters in Thane. Unlike Shinde, Mhaske had never been able to realise his ambition of becoming an MLA. Becoming Thane's mayor twice (2012, 2017) had been the pinnacle for this former youth wing activist. That changed when Shinde's Sena fought off the BJP's claims on its heartland zone—it became even more of a prestige fight against Sena (UBT) pick Rajan Vichare. Mhaske kept factional honour intact.



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

### ▲ ANITA NAGAR SINGH CHAUHAN, 39

| BJP | Ratlam (ST), MP

She owns a 0.315 rifle and has a 12 bore shotgun licence too—among the few female lawmakers in MP to have arms licences. But she's no hellraising Calamity Jane. The district panchayat president of Alirajpur and a PG degree holder in law is pursuing a doctorate from an Indore private university on crimes against children. Her husband is the state forest minister. Ratlam, with its high tribal population, is considered a Congress bastion but Anita managed to defeat GOP veteran Kantilal Bhuria by a 2-lakh margin.



### ▶ RADHESHYAM RATHIA, 52

| BJP | Raigarh (ST), Chhattisgarh

Once represented by CM Vishnu Deo Sai, this was a prestige seat for the BJP. To renew its lease, it found none better than a quintessential organisation man who traced that same grassroots arc: deputy sarpanch in his village, district panchayat member, then janpad panchayat chief in Gharghoda. Schooled in the ways of the BJP's ST Morcha, that was good enough to vanquish the Congress's Dr Menka Singh, of the erstwhile royal family of Raigarh.



### ▶ BHARAT SUTARIYA, 53

| BJP | Amreli, Gujarat

Gujarat is happy hunting ground for debutants—as long as you're from the BJP. Just one year short of four obedient decades in the party wasn't enough to buy this district panchayat president a smooth journey to his first LS ticket: Amreli was shaken by protests against his nomination, incumbent MP Naranbhai Kachhadiya being the chief objecter. The party kept things in check for the Leuva Patel with a Class 10 certificate. Result: a victory margin of 3.2 lakh votes.

### ▼ D. MALAIYARASAN, 48

| DMK | Kallakurichi, Tamil Nadu



Under 'Administrative Experience', Malaiyarasan's CV lists only a decade (2006-16) as panchayat president. But the farmer with an M.Com in Banking and Insurance Management is dyed deep in the DMK's red and black: loyalties instilled right in childhood, and 31 years of graduating up the pecking order, right up to Parliament now. But victory was soon followed by a hooch tragedy that put Kallakurichi on the national news map. Deciding priorities won't be tough. Malaiyarasan beat Congress's R. Kumaraguru by over 50,000 votes.

—Dhaval S. Kulkarni, Moazum Mohammad, Rahul Noronha, Arkamoy Datta Majumdar, Jumana Shah, Amarnath K. Menon

# THE WRITE PLATFORM

Formerly members of the Fourth Estate, they will now occupy the seat of Indian democracy



X@ANIL\_BALUNI

## ▲ ANIL BALUNI, 53

|BJP| Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand

In 2002, a young Anil Baluni quit his job as a journalist in Delhi to return home to the newly-formed state of Uttarakhand to contest its first assembly polls. But his nomination from Kotdwar on a BJP ticket was rejected on technical grounds, and he later lost the re-election when that decision was overturned. Gujarat governor S.S. Bhandari made him his OSD then, and his active participation in BJP activities in Gujarat caught Narendra Modi's eye. He has risen since to become the party's national media in-charge and was also a Rajya Sabha MP in 2018. This time, he defeated Congress's Ganesh Godiyal by over 163,000 votes. An authority on the flora and fauna of Uttarakhand, Baluni continues to wield the pen, writing for dailies like *The Indian Express*.



## ▼ RAMESH AWASTHI, 56

|BJP| Kanpur, UP

In his three decades as a journalist, Ramesh Awasthi has worked, among other publications, with the Sahara Group. Associated with the RSS since his student days, he was a back-room worker of the BJP for long till the party decided to replace its sitting MP from Kanpur, Satyadev Pachauri, with him this time. Proving his worth, he defeated the SP's Alok Mishra. A member of the Centre's Hindi Official Language Advisory Committee, Awasthi also has a more interesting charge—organising the annual mango festival in Kanpur.



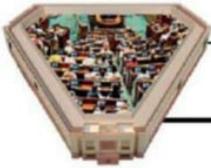
## ▲ KALLISETTI APPALANAIDU, 50

|TDP| Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh

A law graduate who began his career as a journalist, Appalanaidu joined the TDP two decades ago and became chairman of the Ponduru Marketing Committee in the constituency. Later, he was in charge of the TDP North Andhra training institute in Vizianagaram where he trained TDP cadre on governance. He had hoped to contest in 2019 from the Etcherla assembly seat, part of the Vizianagaram LS constituency, but it went to the BJP as part of the seat-sharing agreement. A member of the Turpu Kapu community, its sizeable population in Vizianagaram helped him beat the YSRCP's Bellana Chandra Sekhar by around 250,000 votes.

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-Amarnath K. Menon,  
Anilesh S. Mahajan  
and Prashant Srivastava

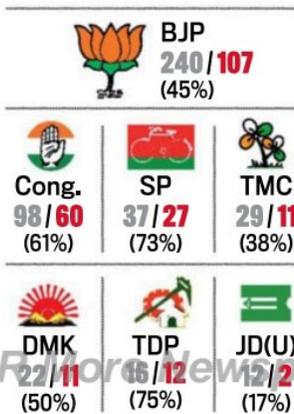


# FIRST-TIME MPs' FACTS

Lack of prior experience is no disqualification for these first-timers. Their work in other fields has encouraged them to earn sufficient electoral chops to merit a place in the 18th Lok Sabha

## PARTY-WISE DEBUTANTS

The TDP and SP have the highest share of newcomers in their ranks



■ Total MPs ■ Debutants  
% of debutants in ( )

## THE RICHEST DEBUTANT...

**Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, 48 | TDP |**  
Guntur, Andhra Pradesh  
Assets: **Rs 5,705 crore**



## ... AND THE POOREST

**Mitali Bag, 47 | TMC |**  
Arambag, West Bengal  
Assets: **Rs 7.8 lakh**

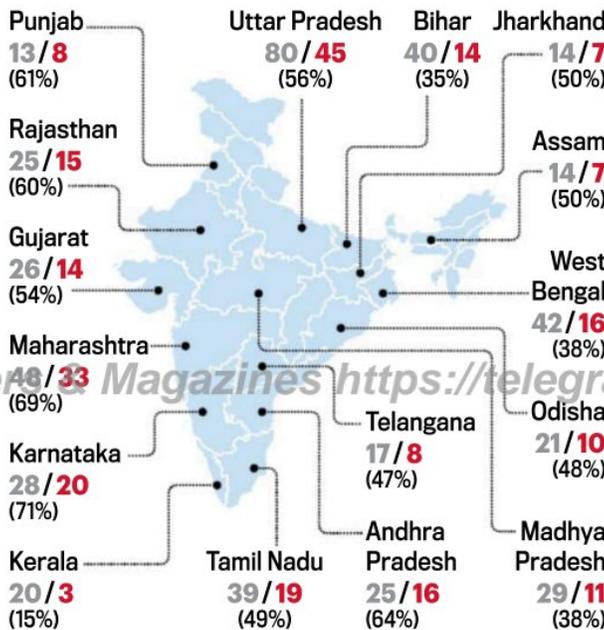


**44**  
Debutants among the 74 women MPs



## WHICH STATES HAVE ELECTED THE MOST FRESHERS?

Around 70 per cent of the MPs elected from Karnataka and Maharashtra are new entrants

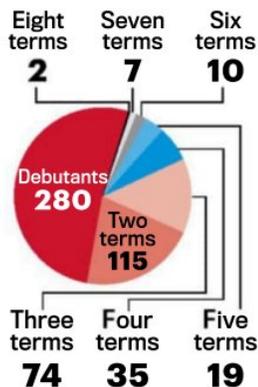


■ Total MPs ■ Debutants; % of debutants in ( )

Note: States with at least 10 seats analysed

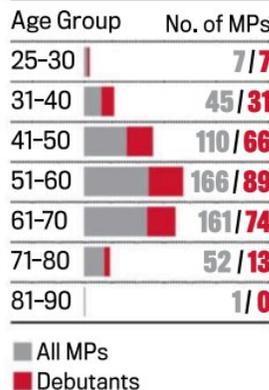
## NEWBIES VS OLD-TIMERS

(Out of 542 MPs\*)



\*Total MPs are 542 as Rahul Gandhi got elected from two seats

## THE AGE PROFILE



■ All MPs ■ Debutants

## A MATTER OF DEGREE

201, or 72%, of the 280 debutant MPs have at least a graduate degree

### All MPs / Debutants

Doctorate	20 / 9
Professional Postgraduate	40 / 19
Postgraduate	135 / 79
Professional Graduate	27 / 4
Graduate	181 / 90
Undergraduate	17 / 9
Inter/Higher Secondary	41 / 31
Diploma Course	12 / 4
Certificate Course	1 / 0
Matriculate	23 / 10
Under-matric	4 / 2
Others	6 / 5

### The most qualified first-timer

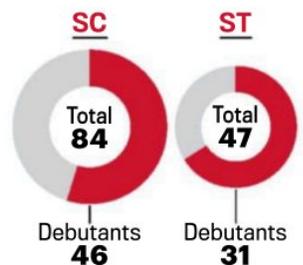
**Charanjit Singh Channi, 61 | CONGRESS |**  
Jalandhar, Punjab



The ex-Punjab CM boasts LLB, MBA, PhD degrees

## THE CASTE FACTOR

77, or 59%, of the 131 MPs elected in reserved seats are fresh faces in Lok Sabha



INDIA  
TODAY

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A CONSUMER-FRIENDLY  
APPROACH

INVESTING  
BUILDING ETHICAL  
ASSETS

LEARNING CENTRE  
WHAT IS ADVANCE  
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## A PLAN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

Change your mindset to fit your shifting financial needs

Illustration by SIDDHANT JUMDE



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Illustrations by SIDDHANT JUMDE

COVER STORY

# A PLAN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

Change your mindset to fit your shifting financial needs, rather than trying to fit your lifestyle into rigid rules to realise your financial dreams

By **Narayan Krishnamurthy**



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A few decades ago, a side hustle mostly meant one was saving up for a big expense like buying a car or that home theatre which was so appealing. Today, a side hustle is all about ending a month without going hungry or a delay in paying out rent. It was easy to save money from the salary, even if it was little, today if you

ask someone from among the GenZ about saving money, they would stare in disbelief. It is not that they aren't trying, money just doesn't seem to be enough today. Rising living costs, economic uncertainty and jobs are all causes of concern when managing one's finances.

Traditional personal finance advice—save 10 per cent of your income, don't spend over 40-45 per cent of your income on rent and household expenses or don't pay EMIs of over 25-30 per cent of your income—are all statements that sound good in theory, but the way we deal with money these days is different and complicated. Consumer spending is on the rise, unemployment is on the rise and income levels aren't going up fast enough for financial goals to be easily achievable. Personal finance is changing and you need to adapt to knowing the old ways while factoring in the new.

It is appealing for one to go pick that new phone available on EMI rather than wait for months to save up for it. Chances are that the model you saved up for is being phased out and a newer one is more useful. For a youngster, it is more important to have the new gadget now than delay the decision to own it later. Their mindset is different and it is not always to keep up with others. As phones have become essential and their usage a lot more complex than using them for a voice call, they may have professional benefits forcing one to change the phone frequently.

Similarly, the traditional advice to save up to six months of household income towards emergencies fell flat during the pandemic years from 2020. The changing circumstances meant one actually required a lot more money than a few months' household income. Many also faced a situation of lesser pay or job loss, yet often their expenses continued to go up. What we are

earn, are either because the salary is small or expenses are constantly on the rise. Let's face it, the traditional household budgets are difficult to adopt not because it is complex, but because expenses aren't steady anymore. For instance, your grocery bills aren't the same month after month and it is not because you are consuming more, it is because prices are changing far too often.

## PERSONAL FINANCE IS CHANGING. YOU NEED TO KNOW THE OLD ADVICE WHILE FACTORING IN THE CHANGING NEW WAYS

looking at now is a situation where traditional financial planning at best could be a reference point, but it needs to consider changing lifestyle needs. For instance, retirement at 60 years for a 20-something is far too away to imagine and work on.

To hoodwink consumers, many packaged groceries are adopting a shrinking pack-size trick by maintaining the price, but reducing the quantity in the packaging. This is shrinkflation, a concept of making you believe that you aren't paying more, but in reality, you get a lot less for the same price over time. Likewise, the 50/30/20 budget rule which states that you should spend up to 50 per cent of your post-tax income on needs and obligations, 20 per cent to service loans and use the rest the way you want is no more practical.

Moreover, inflation is well understood today when working on financial plans because its impact is felt strongly on not just expenses, but also savings and investments. We have come a long way from a thumb



### NAVIGATING COMPLEXITIES

There is a general feeling among most salaried people that they aren't earning enough to meet their financial needs and aspirations. While everyone's financial circumstances are different, the reasons why our salaries are just not enough, regardless of how much we

rule of taking life insurance cover of 10 times our annual income to using calculations that factor in financial goals, existing insurance and other financial needs that may arise when taking an insurance cover. Financial advice is no more general, it is specific and has more to do with personal than finance. The four pillars of financial planning—assets, debts, income and expenses—are getting complex.

**THINK ABOUT AN EVOLVING FINANCIAL LIFE WHICH INCLUDES STAGES SUCH AS CHANGING CAREER, RAISING A FAMILY ETC.**

For instance, today when you are servicing a home loan, you also have the convenience to borrow a percentage against the money you have repaid on the loan. Basically, an asset which you don't fully own could also be used as collateral to borrow against. Likewise, spending through an app or card often refunds you in the form of cashback, which is nothing but indirectly creating income on expenses. These are some examples of how complex financial planning can become.

The influence of technology in financial advice is making financial advice accessible, but with access also comes the difficulty of being disciplined. For instance, every time one sees the worth of their investments rise, they tend to cash it to satisfy a

financial wish. Technology is also creating a web of complex financial solutions which are difficult to understand. Take for instance a simple UPI (Unified Payments Interface) payment, it is convenient, fast and less stressful than carrying cash. Now imagine if you used the UPI 10 times a day at various places, it is not a straightforward tracking history about which merchant you paid for what service or product. You have to check the UPI tracking number to know what you spent on. The convenience of a wallet on you comes with the responsibility to control your spending. DIY financial advice is another aspect which offers you the option to manage your finances on your own. However, not all of us are capable of handling financial decisions such as investing or borrowing on our own.



**➤ DYNAMIC FINANCIAL PLANNING**

The belief that financial planning is all about creating an emergency fund, taking life and health insurance, planning for retirement and estate planning is wrong. These are all just contours of financial planning. It is no more about compartmentalising saving, spending, investing and protection. Financial planning is all about how each financial decision you make impacts your overall financial goals. Think of the impact of contributing

**THE CROREPATI FIXAT**

**A** dream that many Indians live with is to become a crorepati. Such was the fascination for this figure that the British TV game show, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* was made into *Kaun Banega Crorepati (KBC)* in India to play on the magic figure. The iconic show has made the figure of a crore seem achievable and now many people wish to know what it will take for them to become a crorepati, even as many others wish to know if a crore is a good sum to retire with. Yes, Rs 1 crore is a big amount, especially when many of us are barely able to save a few thousands each month.

But, with discipline and risk-taking, achieving a corpus of a crore is within reach. Let us take the case of 30-year-old Rakesh, who wishes to accumulate Rs 1 crore by the time he is 50 years old. He could easily reach this target by investing Rs 13,060 each month for the next 20 years in an instrument earning 10 per cent returns. Now, if Rakesh had started to work on this target five years earlier, he would have needed Rs 7,474 each month, earning the

same returns. A delay of just five years nearly doubles what he should save each month now.

Likewise, if he had delayed to start saving for this target by five years, he would need Rs 23,927 each month (see *Target Rs 1 crore*). The essence of this example illustrates the need and advantage to start saving early to reach a desired financial goal. So, Rs 31.3 lakh invested over two decades becomes Rs 1 crore. However, these figures don't factor in inflation. If we assume an inflation of 5 per cent, to reach the target in 20 years, Rakesh would need to invest Rs 24,906 each month, which is a rise of Rs 11,846 each month or an additional Rs 28.43 lakh over the two decades.

The impact of inflation should be understood with the fact that what Rs 1 crore is today is not going to be the same 10 or 20 years from now. Going with the same example: suppose Rakesh has Rs 1 crore with him today, its worth would be Rs 35.8 lakh when he turns 50 and just Rs 12.85 lakh when he is 70 years old (see *Value of Rs 1 crore over time*). The drop in

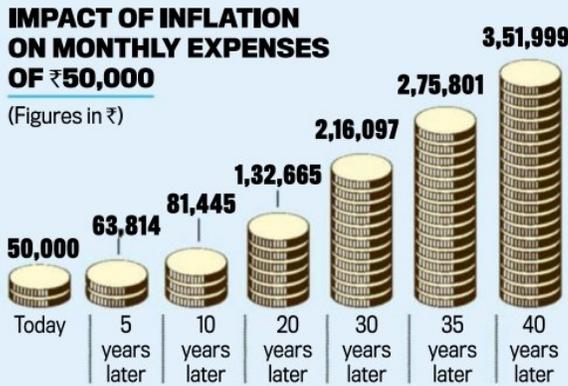
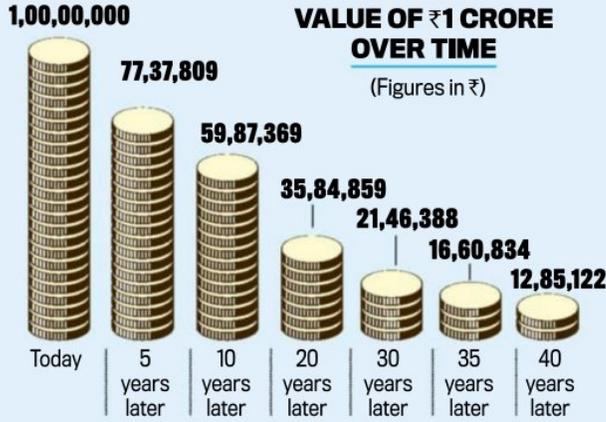
**SHRINKFLATION IS A CONCEPT OF MAKING YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU AREN'T PAYING MORE, BUT IN REALITY YOU GET A LOT LESS FOR THE SAME PRICE OVER TIME**

TARGET ₹1 CRORE	
YEARS TO TARGET	MONTHLY INVESTMENT
30	₹4,387
25	₹7,474
20	₹13,060
15	₹23,927
10	₹48,414

Assuming 10% return on investments

value of a crore over time is not to scare you, but for you to understand that the impact of inflation eats into your wealth. You need to set a much bigger target for wealth creation than settle for just a crore, which today seems a good sum, but may not be enough a couple of decades from now.

Another way to factor in inflation is to understand its impact on your monthly household expenses. Suppose, your monthly household expenses today are Rs 50,000, with 5 per cent inflation, this figure will be Rs 1.32 lakh in 20 years when you turn 50 (see *Impact of inflation on monthly household expenses of Rs 50,000*). So, as much as Rs 1 crore seems a big as well as achievable target to save for, it is not a



HOW LONG WILL ₹1 CRORE LAST?	
MONTHLY EXPENSES	NO. OF YEARS
₹50,000	12
₹75,000	8 years 9 months
₹1 lakh	7 years

Assuming the corpus earns 5% returns without adjusting inflation

constant figure. Those aspiring to have Rs 1 crore with a few decades ahead of them should aim for a higher target.

Likewise, those having this sum right now and considering retirement need to rethink if they are in their 40s and early 50s because, with increasing longevity, this sum will not be enough for them as their withdrawal from this corpus may increase or their risk appetite would go down and the corpus may just about match inflation. For instance, if Rakesh has Rs 1 crore today and considers retiring, this money at Rs 50,000 monthly expenses would last him just 12 years (see *How long will Rs 1 crore last?*).

So, even those who are closer to retirement and with a crore with them need to think about this figure just not being enough to last their retired life of 20 years or more. Suddenly, it seems that a crore is just not enough. It becomes important for one to start early with saving and investing to build the first crore and then continue the boring habit of regular investing to boost this target. While it looks very easy to accumulate a crore, it needs discipline.

For instance, by investing Rs 10,000 through an SIP and earning a 10 per cent return for 30 years, you will accumulate Rs 2.27 crore. But, if you delay this process by even a year, your accumulation will be dented by Rs 22 lakh and add up to Rs 2.05 crore. A five-year delay could shave off your corpus by Rs 95 lakh, which is a big sum to lose out over a late start. You need to realise the impact of the power of compounding and the advantage of SIPs to accumulate a target, but not at the expense of losing out on the opportunity due to a late start. ■

Rs 5,000 less to repay the EMI or investing the sum on a goal and its impact on your finances.

Think about an evolving financial life which includes your financial stages such

as changing careers, raising a family and changing circumstances in life which your financial plan needs to adjust to. While traditional financial planning also factors in stages of life, it sets a

blueprint for you to follow at each stage. For instance, a family of two kids with the possibility of parents staying together calls for having a 3-4 bedroom house to manage the multi-generational

home. However, as children start moving out, chances are the need for the house reduces to two bedrooms.

In the above example, one could actually own a 2-bedroom house while

living in a 4-bedroom house paying rent, because that works well. Now, if one were to buy a 4-bedroom house to manage 15-20 years of their life, the higher cost for it would impact other financial goals and needs. Dynamic financial planning is about aligning finances to your values and changing life that ensures financial decisions are personally fulfilling and not following a textbook principle.

**A**n aspect of traditional planning which has provided confidence to people that they can achieve their financial aspirations is goal-based financial planning. Goal-based planning is the process of helping you prioritise your financial goals and work out an optimal plan to fund it. For instance, your goal is to have Rs 20 lakh 10 years from now, when your eight-year-old son will enter college. To achieve this goal, you need to invest Rs 13,100 each month in a financial instrument earning 10 per cent returns. Generally, such an instrument tends to be a mutual fund, because mutual funds offer the convenience to invest each month regularly.

This encourages you to list all your financial goals and put them in a matrix considering the money you need and the time frame for it, with an assumed rate of return. There are numerous online resources and calculators which will throw up how much you need to invest each month to realise all these goals. It is a wonderful approach to

break down your financial goals into a small regular investment. Imagine the ease of investing towards your retirement, children's education and accumulating funds for the down payment of a house all at the same time being convenient.

Mutual funds have done their bit in popularising goal-based investing, which has made accumulating any amount of money theoretically possible. There are tools specifically aimed at accumulating a crore, which is achievable

and ability to make SIP contributions.

With the goal-based investment approach, you have a roadmap for achieving specific financial outcomes rather than simply accumulating wealth. These days, goal-based calculators factor in inflation and encourage you to dynamically change your goals and contributions. Your unique circumstances and objectives such as age and risk profile are factored in to tailor the investment product to match



**▶ LOAN TO BRIDGE THE GAP**

Traditional financial advice encourages borrowing to buy a house or fund education. These two loans fall under the asset-creating category because the value of a house is likely to go up in future and education can help you increase your income generation. From being that excellent financial tool for people who needed products and services now but didn't have the money for them, loans have become an easy way out. However, remember that every loan comes at a cost—repayment with interest through EMIs (equated monthly instalments).

Such is the influence of loans in one's life that it is rare to find someone not servicing a loan of some kind. Loans can play an essential role in financial planning in several ways, especially in financing large purchases like buying a house, which is otherwise almost impossible to achieve these days. You could also use credit to bridge the gap in your financial goals. For example, if you fall short on funds when purchasing a car, you could borrow the shortfall and buy that car. The same goes for funding a vacation or buying a gadget.

Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) as a concept and a loan product has become the most in-demand financing option to pay for groceries to existing loan repayments.

**FINANCIAL ADVICE IS NO MORE GENERAL, IT IS SPECIFIC AND HAS MORE TO DO WITH PERSONAL THAN FINANCE, MAKING ADVICE FOR YOU UNIQUE AND DISTINCT**



if you start investing early (see *The crorepati fixation*) and continue to do so for long periods. Mutual funds allow you to make monthly investments through SIPs (systematic investment plans) which make reaching financial goals achievable. You can choose the type of fund you are comfortable with based on your risk

closest to your needs. You can track the progress made on the accumulation front for each goal and modify it accordingly. For instance, if you are falling short a little on one goal, you could contribute more to it, while temporarily reducing the contribution to a goal where you have more time.

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

This facility is used mostly by youngsters who fall short of money towards the end of the month to pay for products and services which they cannot do without. These are very short-term loans that bridge the financial shortfall until one receives their next pay.

There is another advantage of borrowing money; it leaves a credit trail which helps you manage your cash flows and, when needed, leverage your assets. But, taking too much debt can also harm your financial future.

If you are impatient and someone who can't wait to save and then realise a financial goal, a loan is a smart way to achieve your financial goal. A loan in general is not bad as long as you get something out of it financially or otherwise. However, be careful when servicing loans, because defaults and delays are expensive and could leave an unfavourable mark on your credit score impacting the possibility of borrowing when you may really need it.



➤ **FINANCIAL DECISIONS**

Your lifestyle choices are a reflection of your values, priorities and aspirations. Whether you prioritise travel, education or philanthropy, the choices have financial implications. For instance, if you value experiences over material possessions, your spending and

saving patterns will reflect that. A traditional financial plan might prioritise saving for a home or retirement. In contrast, a lifestyle-based plan would incorporate ways to fund your wishes while also securing your financial future. In the above example, you are more likely to live on rent than owning a house. You may also be less possessive of materialistic things and all such habits and behaviour have financial implications.

As life expectancy rises, so does the need for active engagement with your financial plans. Relying solely on savings or investments may not be enough. You will need to extend your working life to as long as possible and keep abreast with the changing financial landscape. It is not just financial instruments that you will need to know about, you should also learn about concepts that would help you form a guideline that you could use to stay on top of your financial life. Keep customising your investments to align with your unique financial goals and risk tolerance for long-term success.

One does fear the unknown when it comes to personal finance. The fear of losing money while investing or worrying over making a wrong financial choice or the fear of missing out on wealth creation opportunities makes many avoid taking any decision. Handling money is an emotional task and at Smart Money, we believe in empowering you to make informed financial decisions based on knowl-

**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW OF PERSONAL INVESTING**

Published in Scott Adam's book *Dilbert And The Way Of The Weasel*, in the chapter on Financial Weasel

- Make a will
- Pay off your credit card balance
- Get term life insurance if you have a family to support
- Fund your company 401K\* to the maximum
- Fund your IRA# to the maximum
- Buy a house if you want to live in a house and can afford it
- Put six months' expenses in a money market account
- Take whatever is left over and invest 70 per cent in a stock index fund and 30 per cent in a bond fund through any discount brokerage company and never touch it until retirement
- If any of this confuses you, or you have something special going on (retirement, college planning, tax issue), hire a fee-based financial planner, not one who charges you a percentage of your portfolio

\*An employer-sponsored, defined-contribution, personal pension (savings) account; # Individual Retirement Account in the US

edge and understanding rather than succumbing to fear. And there are ways to manage it on your own or seek the help of those who do it for a fee.

Yes, there are several aspects around financial planning and plenty of financial products, financial jargon, rules and regulations that one needs to know. But

the best way to reach your financial objectives is to work on a plan, which would give you a certain degree of discipline and allow you to utilise your income more optimally. Think of managing your finances as any other big moment in your life—cracking a competitive exam, planning a movie with friends or a family vacation and so on. Managing money smartly follows the same logic; you need a plan to start.

To see essential personal finance needs in a simple manner, you could read the financial advice given by Scott Adams, the creator of the Dilbert cartoon character. In fact, so profound is this less-than-a-page (see *Everything you need to know of personal investing*) advice that it addresses 95 per cent of an American's financial needs. If one were

**DUE TO INFLATION, THE VALUE OF A CRORE OVER TIME WOULD DROP DRASTICALLY. IT SHOULD NOT SCARE YOU, BUT LET YOU REALISE WHAT YOU WILL FACE**

to switch the IRA (Individual Retirement Account) and 401K with PF (provident fund) and NPS (National Pension System) in India, the advice given by Adams would apply to every Indian income taxpayer.

Yet, knowingly or unknowingly we all complicate our financial lives with many bank accounts and linked debit cards, take on numerous insurance policies without analysing how they work or put money into investments which may be too risky for us and so on. One of the reasons for complicating financial lives is the lack of understanding and seeking excitement with our finances. Smart money moves take time and patience and is boring, because it is so focused, sticking to a plan and being consistent. Moreover, it is all about working on future financial needs, while you give up on some things that you may wish for at this instant.

Remember, implementing your financial plan is not the end; it's just the beginning. Make ongoing adjustments to your financial plans and journey because life is dynamic and full of surprises to scuttle even the best-laid plans. You need to assess your investments, change in tax rules and your own targets to stay relevant. For instance, if you are going through a financially challenging period, you might need to renegotiate loan terms or consolidate debts to manage your liabilities better. These adjustments ensure that your financial plan remains aligned with your evolving life circumstances.

Lastly, think of financial planning as a long-distance train journey—you know the start and you know the end; the in-between can pose challenges you haven't planned. Be prepared to face the challenges by being informed. With financial systems drastically shifting, you can keep evolving with time to get the best out of your money. ■



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## HEALTH INSURANCE

# MAKING IT CONSUMER FRIENDLY

The new master circular on health insurance by the regulator repeals past circulars and is a step towards making insurance transparent and consumer friendly

One usually takes health insurance to protect one's finances during illness and as a cover for medical expenses. It helps families manage health-care, treatment, medication costs and diagnostics. There are many types of medical insurance available, yet policyholders find it a challenge to navigate health insurance, especially policy terminology and benefits. Complaints about excessive documentation, delays in claims or claims partially paid are prominent pain points.

To address policyholder concerns, IRDAI (Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India) has issued a comprehensive master circular on health insurance products. There are many policyholder-

friendly changes announced which should address common concerns, especially the language of policy documents which aren't easy to understand. There are 20 heads that the circular covers and there are guidelines for insurers too. Some of the prominent aspects of the circular which would reduce policyholders' worries are:

➤ **Insurance for all:** All age-related limits are removed, so insurers have to offer health insurance to all age-groups. This clause will help senior citizens who find it difficult to get a policy at an older age.

➤ **Faster claims:** Health insurers are mandated to accept or reject a cashless claim latest by within one hour, and settle

Illustration by SIDDHANT JUMDE

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## INSIDE THE CUSTOMER INFORMATION SHEET

Mandatory for insurers to provide under the IRDAI circular, The Customer Information Sheet (CIS) is a 'know your policy' document which captures all aspects in the policy in a clear and uniform format. This means that the CIS is standardised across insurers and the language used in it is easy to follow. As a policyholder, it is in your interest to read and understand this and not be surprised with policy clauses, sub-limits and claim procedure among other requirements

<b>General information</b>	Name of the policy and policy number
<b>Policy Type</b>	a) Indemnity b) Defined Benefit c) Combination of a) and b)
<b>Sum Insured</b>	The sum insured is clearly stated
<b>Policy Coverage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Pre-hospitalisation</b> (treatment prior to admission in hospital) of xx days amounting to x% of claim</li> <li>➤ <b>Post-hospitalisation</b> (treatment after discharge) within xx days from date of discharge amounting to x% of claim</li> <li>➤ <b>Specified / Listed procedures</b> requiring less than xx hours of hospitalisation (day care)</li> <li>➤ <b>OPD coverage</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Maternity benefit</b> etc</li> </ul>
<b>Exclusions</b>	➤ <b>Insurer</b> has to ensure listing of all applicable exclusions
<b>Waiting period</b>	➤ <b>Details of waiting</b> periods for certain procedures and pre-existing conditions, as well as exclusions/ deductibles
<b>Financial limits of coverage</b>	➤ <b>The policy</b> will pay only up to the limits specified for the following diseases/ procedures. Details of sub-limit, co-payment, deductible and any other limit are explained
<b>Grievance Redress</b>	➤ <b>Provides contact details</b> of the company's grievance officers and IRDAI-appointed ombudsman offices
<b>Portability &amp; Migration</b>	➤ <b>Details and process</b> for switching your policy to another insurer or policy
<b>Moratorium Period</b>	➤ <b>After completion of 5 continuous</b> (moratorium period) years, no look back to be applied. The moratorium would be applicable for sums insured of the first policy and subsequently completion of five continuous years would be applicable from date of enhancement of sums insured only on the enhanced limits. After the expiry of moratorium period, no policy shall be contestable except for proven fraud and specified permanent exclusions
<b>Your Obligations</b>	➤ <b>You need to disclose</b> all pre-existing disease/s or condition/s before buying a policy. Non-disclosure may affect the claim settlement

such a claim on discharge within three hours, else bear the additional cost, if any. This is a major step in streamlining the ordeal of hospital admission and discharge.

➤ **Hospitals can't hold up:** Often hospitals would not discharge patients for

want of authorisation from the insurer. The circular says a hospital can't do this and introduces a penalty clause on the insurer for delayed authorisation. This is a big relief as discharge from hospital, especially when insurance claim is being worked, causes a lot of anxiety.

### INSURERS ARE ASKED TO DESIGN MEDICAL INSURANCE PRODUCTS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS, CHILDREN, MATERNITY, STUDENTS AND OTHERS

➤ **Pre-existing disease (PED):** Maximum waiting period for covering pre-existing diseases has been reduced from 4 years to 3 years. This is good news for those with PED looking for insurance cover. The circular prohibits insurers from refusing policies to those with severe PED such as heart disease, cancer, renal failure and AIDS.

➤ **No more indemnity-based policies:** Health insurances functioned on the principle of indemnity—a policy compensates you for only the extent of the loss incurred. The circular does away with this, meaning insurers can issue only benefit-based policies to cover expenses. This will ensure that a fixed sum is paid to policyholders upon the diagnosis of a covered disease.

➤ **Multiple policies:** Policyholders with multiple health insurance policies get to choose the policy used for the claim. So, the primary insurer with whom the claim is first submitted will coordinate settlement of balance amount from the other insurers. This is useful for those who have a mix of group and individual policies with coverage limits.

Policyholders can also receive premium refund for the unexpired policy period if they cancel the policy mid-way. All individual policies are renewable and cannot be denied on the basis of previous claims.

The circular also asks insurers to include a customer information sheet (see *Inside the Customer Information Sheet*) as part of the policy document. Hospitals are mandated to immediately release the mortal remains in case of death of a policyholder and not make attendants wait for settlements. ■

—Narayan Krishnamurthy



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## INVESTING

# CONSCIENTIOUS ASSETS

Mixing social responsibility and investing is an ethical way of making investment choices and has takers among a niche in the investor community

Investing is not for just returns; there are investors who go beyond the math and invest in companies and businesses that support causes or care about the environment and governance. Environmental, social and governance (ESG) investing has existed in some form or the other for several decades, but in recent years there has been a resurgence in this type of investing. The ESG space encompasses climate change, biodiversity, health, financial inclusion,

livelihood, women's empowerment and food security, among others. As a result, ESG is at the forefront of investment decisions and the functioning of many businesses even as regulators across the world are framing guidelines for ESG investing.

### ▶ WHAT IS ESG INVESTING?

Broadly speaking, ESG investing is the consideration of environmental, social and governance factors, alongside financial factors, in the

investment decision-making process. But when you dwell deeper, you can understand the many subtle details that are involved in defining the ESG space. ESG includes factors that measure the sustainability of the company and how companies make money rather than just how much they make. Many factors are considered under each head—environment, social and governance (see *Three Pillars of ESG*). Likewise, ESG also loosely refers to ethical investing or

responsible investing and impactful investing.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has issued regulatory guidelines which administer and give an impetus to ESG investing. On July 20, 2023, SEBI issued a circular for mutual funds, introducing a separate sub-category for ESG investments under the thematic category of equity schemes. Further, within this category, six different types of funds can be introduced depending

## THE ESG MUTUAL FUND CATEGORY

**A**ccording to SEBI, ESG funds should have a minimum of 80% of the total assets under management (AUM) invested in equity instruments of that particular strategy of the scheme, while the remaining portion cannot be in contrast to that strategy. The six strategies that ESG funds could follow are:

➤ **EXCLUSION:** Aims to exclude securities based on certain ESG-related activities, business practices, or business segments

➤ **INTEGRATION:** Aims to consider ESG-related factors that are material to the risk and

return of the investment, alongside traditional financial factors, when making investment decisions.

➤ **BEST IN CLASS AND POSITIVE SCREENING:** Aims to invest in companies and issuers that perform better than peers on one or more performance metrics related to ESG matters.

➤ **IMPACT INVESTING:** Aims to generate a positive, measurable social or environmental impact alongside financial return and deals with how the fund manager intends to achieve the impact objective. Also

evaluates if that impact is being measured and monitored.

➤ **SUSTAINABLE OBJECTIVES:** Aims to invest in sectors, industries or companies that are expected to benefit from long-term macro or structural ESG-related trends.

➤ **TRANSITION/TRANSITION-RELATED INVESTMENTS:** Aims to invest in companies and issuers that support/facilitate environmental transition and just transition. The investment should generate a positive and measurable social and environmental transition.

on the strategy they adopt (See *The ESG Mutual Fund Category*). There are a handful of funds in this category for now, and many others are in the pipeline, with clarity in the structure of ESG funds that one could introduce.

Mutual funds with an ESG framework typically seek to invest in companies that score highly on environmental, social and governance criteria. That typically means they are working to reduce their environmental impact, treat employees and customers well, value corporate diversity and align their policies with the interest of shareholders. ESG matters because, as investors, one should also consider their role in society and not narrow their views to only profits from investing. We have come a long way

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**MUTUAL FUND INVESTMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO MARKET RISKS,  
READ ALL SCHEME RELATED DOCUMENTS CAREFULLY.**

## THREE PILLARS OF ESG

ENVIRONMENTAL	
<b>Climate Change</b>	↳ <b>Carbon emissions</b> , carbon footprint, energy efficiency
<b>Natural Resources</b>	↳ <b>Raw materials</b> (including its sourcing), water management, land use, financing environmental impact
<b>Pollution</b>	↳ <b>Toxic emissions</b> , waste management, electronic waste, packaging
<b>Opportunities</b>	↳ <b>Focus on renewable energy</b> (solar, wind etc), clean technology, green building
SOCIAL	
<b>Human Resources</b>	↳ <b>Labour issues</b> and management, local communities, indigenous people, health & safety, labour standards of suppliers etc.
<b>Product</b>	↳ <b>Product quality</b> , product safety, security of financial products, data privacy and safety, environment friendly product etc.
<b>Opportunities</b>	↳ <b>Improving communication</b> (telecommunication, data, software etc), access to funding, improving healthcare and finance
<b>Stakeholders</b>	↳ <b>Relationship</b> with suppliers and customers
GOVERNANCE	
<b>Corporate behaviour</b>	↳ <b>Business ethics</b> , anti-competitive practices, processes for preventing corruption, executive pay
<b>Corporate governance</b>	↳ <b>Ownership and management control</b> , protection of interests of minority shareholders, composition of board of directors, board diversity
<b>Government &amp; Public Policy</b>	↳ <b>Political lobbying</b> and donations
<b>Accounting standards</b>	↳ <b>Compliance and practices</b> , tax strategy

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from when large investor groups such as charities and endowment funds invested in ethical companies.

Currently, there are a handful of mutual funds that follow the ESG guidelines with funds that follow this theme. These are also evolving and though their asset base is not significant right now, it has the potential to grow. With investor awareness increasing and consciousness on where their money is invested on the rise, the interest in these funds is also rising. New funds that are lined

### IT IS WISE TO INVEST IN COMPANIES THAT FOLLOW CORPORATE GOVERNANCE BECAUSE TRANSPARENCY IN CONDUCT AND INTEGRITY PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN PROFIT-GENERATION

up should make this space interesting for investors. Moreover, with a lot of media coverage and scrutiny, transparency is important for companies to operate.

Does ESG investing work? If one analyses funds solely on the returns parameter, ESG may not fit in well. But, returns are not the only

factors on which one invests based on the ESG principles and one could debate this. For instance, based on ESG principles, one may shun to invest in pharmaceutical companies because of animal testing. However, if you see the upside of how vaccines save lives and many other life-saving drugs that have

been developed you may see merit in them being within the ESG ambit.

To invest in companies that follow ESG and score high on ESG ratings, as well as mutual funds that follow the ESG guideline, the investment opportunity—though limited—is immense. You need to make hard decisions before committing to investing in these funds, sticking to your beliefs and ensuring that the fund managers practice the investment principles laid down when investing in such funds. ■

—Narayan Krishnamurthy

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## LEARNING CENTRE

# WHAT IS AN ADVANCE MEDICAL DIRECTIVE?

An instruction recording the medical care preferences an adult individual wishes to opt for if they become incapacitated, it guides the family and healthcare providers

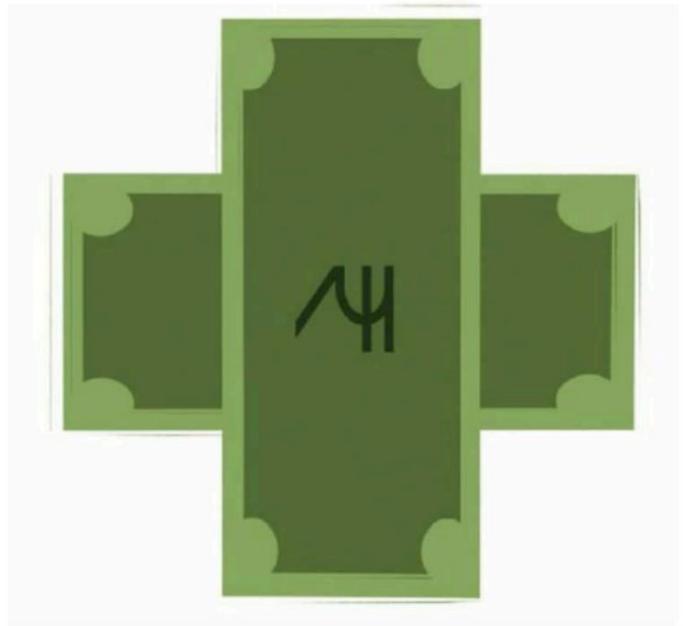


Illustration by SIDDHANT S

**W**hen it comes to medical treatment, informed decisions by patients are a must. Healthcare providers need to seek consent or informed agreement from the patient before procedures or treatment can be imparted.

However, this process presumes that the patient is competent to make decisions and has understood the possible risks and the outcomes of the procedure or treatment. With ageing, and sometimes near the end of life, a patient may not be able to make informed decisions.

Thus, Advance Medical Directives (AMD) guide the family and care providers when patients cannot make a choice on their own. It is essentially a written legal instruction regarding the preferences for medical treatment if one becomes incapacitated. In 2018, the Supreme Court, recognising the right to die with dignity as a fundamental right, prescribed a detailed set of

guidelines for the registration and execution of AMDs, targeted at preventing abuse of the process.

The AMD should clearly specify the name of a guardian or close relative who, in the event of the patient becoming incapable of taking a decision at the relevant time, will be authorised to consent to or refuse the medical treatment. It should also state when a medical treatment may be withdrawn or if any specific medical treatment that will have the effect of delaying the process of death should be given. All such instructions must be absolutely clear and unambiguous.

**IN 2018, THE SUPREME COURT PRESCRIBED A DETAILED SET OF GUIDELINES FOR THE REGISTRATION AND EXECUTION OF AMDs**

**LEGAL VALIDITY**  
Until 2023, the AMD had to be signed by the patient in the presence of two witnesses, preferably independent, and countersigned by a Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC), so designated by the district judge concerned. This was proving to be cumbersome, making it difficult for those seeking to document an AMD. In 2023, the apex court modified its order, doing away with the need for a JMFC. Now, the AMD can be attested before any notary or a gazetted officer who will ascertain its veracity and genuineness.

There is also flexibility in the appointment of guardians with the inclusion of multiple guardians and close relatives, which makes the AMD flexible to execute with the option to address other contingencies. Remember, the person who is drawing up the AMD should be of sound mind and in a position to communicate, relate and comprehend the purpose and

consequences of executing the document and it must be voluntary.

The AMD comes into effect when the person becomes terminally ill and is undergoing prolonged medical treatment with no hope of recovery and cure of the ailment. Family members should make the hospital or the physician treating the patient aware of the AMD. This will allow the institutions to ascertain its authenticity and explain the medical condition and consequences to the guardians.

You should use the AMD as a means to avoid unwanted medical treatments and procedures in an effort to preserve life at any cost. By having personal wishes and preferences documented, the decision-making burden on family and healthcare providers is reduced. At the same time, patient autonomy and dignity are preserved by tailoring medical care based on the patient's own choices. ■

—Narayan Krishnamurthy

## QUIZ

# HOW SMART ARE YOU?

How much do you know about the basics of personal finance? Find out if you are as smart as you think you are

### BEGINNER

**Q1. Generally, there is no relationship between risk and return when investing**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

**Q2. You can make your investments grow faster by reinvesting any interest or dividends earned**

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE



**Q3. The fees you pay when investing can impact your investment returns**

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE

**Q4. If you are a first-time investor and unsure of where to start, simply invest in the same products as your friends or family**

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE



**Q5. Holding shares of only one company is less risky than holding many shares from different industries or countries**

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE

**Q6. You cannot start investing with a small sum because investing requires a lot of money**

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE

### INTERMEDIATE

**Q1. You can tell how an exchange-traded fund (ETF) will perform by looking at its past performance**

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE



**Q2. If you buy a company's bond... you lend money to the company**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

**Q3. An emergency fund can help pay for your next SIP investment**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE



**Q4. SEBI has the power to regulate all listed companies and investment advisors.**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

**Q5. If you buy a company's stock... You own a part of the company**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

**Q6. Over the past 10 years, returns from FDs have out-performed stocks**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

### EXPERT

**Q1. If you own 100 shares of a company and it announces a 2-for-1 stock split, you will have 50 shares after the split**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

**Q2. Generally, the investment that appears to offer the biggest potential return guarantees it**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE



**Q3. G-Secs are the safest guaranteed return instruments**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

**Q4. Capital loss from sale of shares can be carried forward for 7 assessment years immediately following the assessment year in which the loss was first computed**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

**Q5. Day trading is a long-term investment strategy**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

**Q6. A margin call acts as a safeguard to protect both you and your broker from potential losses**

- a) FALSE
- b) TRUE

Flip page to see answers

EXPERT  
1. a) False 2. a) True  
3. b) True 4. a) False  
5. a) False 6. b) True

INTERMEDIATE  
1. b) False 2. b) True  
3. a) False 4. b) True  
5. b) True 6. a) False

BEGINNER  
1. a) False 2. a) True  
3. a) True 4. b) False  
5. b) False 6. b) False

# Q+A BRIDGING THE GAP

Esther Duflo's *Poor Economics for Kids* is an illustrated children's version of the seminal economics text she co-wrote with Abhijit V. Banerjee

**Q. Is this the beginning of a parallel career as a children's book writer?**

It's not the beginning, it's the end! Although the Indian version published by Juggernaut is one book, in the original French it was 10 separate books. I'm back to adults for my next one on climate justice.

—with Amit Dixit

**Q. Why did you decide to do this children's book?**

I always wanted to do it. I thought it was interesting to highlight the subject for children, operating with a very different set of constraints and codes. People who live in poverty are kind of invisible and not really talked about for children. I thought it important to reach children with good literature on a topic they are not exposed to often.

**Q. How challenging was it to simplify complex economic concepts?**

I don't think I could have written this children's book without first writing *Poor Economics*. It requires you to understand a topic extraordinarily well to be able to concentrate it into these nuggets. The key is not what is complicated; the key is what's important to say.

**Q. How did a busy economist like you find the time to do the book?**

The project predated Covid but it was only during the lockdown that Cheyenne Olivier, the illustrator, who was living with us at the time, and I were able to sit down and actually do it. Other people started baking and we wrote a book! It eventually took us three years to wrap up the project.



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