

SHASHI THAROOR'S MANIFESTO FOR KERALA'S RENEWAL
CAMPAIGN DISPATCH FROM TAMIL NADU



OPEN



RNI CODE NO. HARENG/2023/89741
VOLUME 5 ISSUE 16 WEEKLY

27 APRIL 2026 / ₹100

www.openthemagazine.com

BENGAL THRILLER 2026

THE PLOT THICKENS

MAMATA BANERJEE FACES HER TOUGHEST BATTLE

+

INSIDE THE BJP WAR ROOM

মা মাটি মানুষ-এর হাত শক্ত কর



উন্নয়ন ঘরে ঘরে
ঘরের মেয়ে ভবানী

Open
264



Scanned with OKEN Scanner

EDITORS Prasannarajan
 CONSULTING EDITOR-AT-LARGE Rajeev Deshpande
 EXECUTIVE EDITOR Ullekh NP
 EDITOR-AT-LARGE Siddharth Singh
 DEPUTY EDITORS Madhavankutty Pillai (Mumbai Bureau Chief), Rahul Pandita, Amita Shah, V Shoba (Bengaluru), Sudeep Paul, Lhendup Gyatso Bhutia (Mumbai)
 ART DIRECTOR Jyoti K Singh
 DEPUTY ART DIRECTOR Saurabh Singh
 SENIOR EDITORS Moinak Mitra, Aditya Iyer, Sohini Dey
 SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITOR Antara Raghavan
 ASSISTANT EDITOR Soumava Haldar
 SENIOR COPY EDITOR Neelabh Raj
 SENIOR DESIGNERS Anup Banerjee, Veer Pal Singh
 PHOTO EDITOR Raul Irani
 DEPUTY PHOTO EDITOR Ashish Sharma
 DIGITAL CONTENT OFFICER Rajiv Kumar Singh
 SENIOR EDITOR (WEB) Vijay Soni
 DIGITAL DESK OFFICER Prabhjeet Singh Sethi
 DIGITAL CORRESPONDENT (WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA) Shailja Tiwari
 SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER Prashant Kumar
 JUNIOR DIGITAL DESK OFFICER Aniket Jha

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Sahil Shetty
 CFO Raas Taneja
 NATIONAL SALES HEAD Shilpa Saxena
 REGIONAL MANAGER - WEST Akanksha Abhinav Shah
 HEAD - EVENTS Preeti Misra
 HEAD-MARKETING Anupam Ashish
 NATIONAL HEAD -CIRCULATION Dhanpreet
 Amol Joshi (West & East)
 Ranjeet Kumar Yadav (North)
 N Kishore Kumar (South)
 HEAD-PRODUCTION Maneesh Tyagi
 HEAD DESIGN-ADVERTISING Liju Varghese

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

Printed and published by Raas Taneja on behalf of Open Media Network Pvt Ltd
 Printed at Thomson Press India Ltd, 18-35 Milestone, Delhi Mathura Road, Faridabad-121007 (Haryana) and Published in English from 1st Floor, Tower 3A, DLF Corporate Park, DLF City, Phase-III, MG Road, Gurugram, Haryana - 122002.
 Editor: S Prasannarajan

For subscription and other enquiries: WhatsApp 'openmag' to 9999800012 or log on to www.openmagazine.com or call on our Landline no: (0124) 4561900 or email at: customercare@openmedianetwork.in

Volume 5 Issue 16, Weekly, ₹100
 RNI Code No. HARENG/2023/89741
 For April 21-27, 2026
 Total no of pages 68

CONTENTS

3 THE BIG PICTURE

6 OPENINGS

15 GAME, SETH AND MATCH
 The man who started the fire
 By Suhel Seth

16 SOFT POWER
 The end of radical Islam
 By Makarand R Paranjape

18 COMMENT
 The stabiliser of South Asia
 By Harsh V Pant

20 COMMENT
 Orange is the new money
 By Amit Kapoor and Sai Sruti Panda

22 OPEN ESSAY
 A manifesto for Kerala's renewal
 By Shashi Tharoor



28 A STORM IS COMING

Like the sudden Nor'westers of April, change might be in the air as Bengal is gripped by the excitement of uncertainty
 By MJ Akbar

34 BANKING ON THE MODI MYSTIQUE

The prime minister's grassroots appeal and the fear of rising crime have improved BJP's prospects in a close contest
 By Rajeev Deshpande

OPEN MAIL

editor@openmedianetwork.in



LETTER OF THE WEEK

The ceasefire between the US and Iran feels less like an ending and more like a fragile and liable to fracture pause ('The War That No One Won' by Jason Burke, April 20, 2026). There is already a rush to name this war, but any title risks hiding the truth that very little has been settled. Each side claims victory, yet these claims depend on what they choose to highlight. The US can point to its strikes and the damage it has done. Iran can point to the fact that it has endured and shown how easily it can disrupt the global economy through the Strait of Hormuz. Israel may argue it has changed the balance, though the political gains are unclear. What we are left with is something familiar: military success without a clear political outcome. The Iran proxies achieved little, and the so-called asymmetric response proved limited. Instead, the real impact came from disruption—of trade, markets, and stability. That uncertainty may be the most dangerous outcome, making future conflict more, not less, likely.

Devanshu Mishra



27 APRIL 2026



SUCCESSION RITES
DMK's Udhayanidhi Stalin turns lineage into a political asset on the stump
By Aditya Iyer



THE LAST BASTION
Welfare fatigue and TVK are testing AIADMK's hold on the Kongu Belt
By V Shoba



EXPERIMENTS OF A TAMIL NATIVIST
NTK leader Seeman fields unconventional candidates to reshape state politics and expand his footprint
By Ullekh NP



BREAKAWAY DAUGHTER
With no plans to join the race in her father K Chandrashekar Rao's BRS, K Kavitha is launching her own party with a Telangana First motto
By Amita Shah



THE BABY SLUMP
The fear of plummeting birth rates looms over India as Andhra Pradesh follows Sikkim's lead in pushing couples to have more children with cash incentives and subsidised IVF treatment
By Lhendup G Bhutia



IN MEMORIAM
[ASHA BHOSLE 1933-2026]

THE VOICE OF COSMOPOLITAN COOL
She was the alchemist who could turn pain into passion, sorrow into seduction, and loss into yearning
By Kaveree Bamzai

ETERNAL SISTERS
Limits of the Lata-Asha comparison
By Rachel Dwyer



60

BECOMING QUEEN
A female impersonator reflects on changing times
By Sohini Dey

61

BITTER SWEETNESS
A debut novel baked in power and loss
By Neelabh Raj

62

THE SOFT BOIL
Fashion is freedom
By Suvir Saran

63

TECH TALK
Star wars
By Lhendup G Bhutia

64

WATCH PARTY



STARGAZER
By Kaveree Bamzai

Cover Photograph by SUBRATA BISWAS

ROUTE CONTROL

The conflict between Iran and the US shows that control today is not just about owning resources but about managing how they move ('The Rites of Oil' by MJ Akbar, April 20, 2026). The real pressure point lies in routes, timing, and the ability to disrupt flows that the global economy depends on. Even limited actions can have wide effects far beyond the battlefield. What stands out is how outcomes are now measured. Endurance, leverage, and the ability to influence events seem as important as military success. A pause in fighting shifts the tension to a different place. What comes next is likely to be shaped less by force and more by negotiation and calculation. Power will be exercised through access, pressure, and deals where economics and strategy are closely tied together.

Pranav Iyer

INDIAN OPENING

Pakistan's efforts to present itself as a peacemaker is being weakened by its own mistakes ('Mind the Mediator', April 20, 2026). Errors in official statements and unclear messaging have created doubts about its intent and ability. In diplomacy, perception matters as much as action and Pakistan is struggling on both fronts. This lack of credibility gives India an opening to strengthen its ties with the Gulf countries. With clearer communication and a more steady approach, India appears more reliable and focused. That matters in international relations. At the moment, Pakistan seems to be losing trust while India should use the opportunity to build stronger and more stable partnerships in the region. If this trend continues, the regional balance of influence could tilt further in India's favour.

R Jayanthan

SMART POLICING

The uncovering of a surveillance network using cheap CCTV cameras to monitor sensitive Indian locations highlights a worrying shift in security threats ('The Terror Cam Plot', April 20, 2026). These cameras, placed in ordinary settings, were reportedly used to send live feeds to handlers linked to ISI. The method is striking for its simplicity. There was no complex technology, only everyday devices used with clear intent. What exposed the network was not sophisticated intelligence, but alert local policing and routine checks. That is the real lesson. India's security risks are no longer limited to its borders. They now exist within its cities, hidden in plain sight, making public awareness and vigilance more important than ever. India's next challenge is staying alert to what looks ordinary.

Sukanto Lahiri