

TRUMP CONTROLS THE FUTURE BY MJ AKBAR • AN UNEQUAL FIGHT AGAINST POLLUTION

MINHAZ MERCHANT ON THE AGE OF INDIA • PLAYING POLITICS WITH JALLIKATTU

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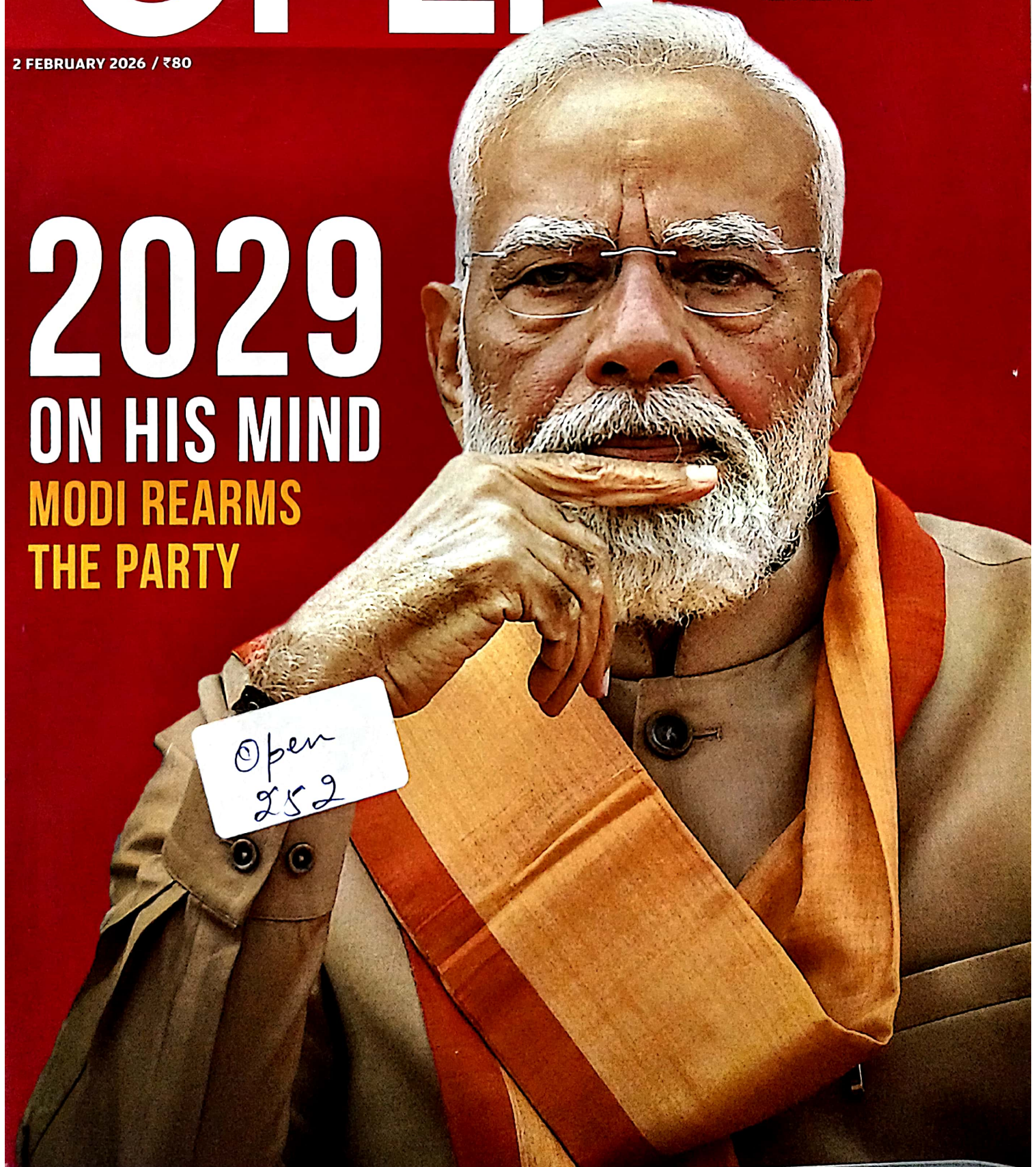


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ON HIS MIND
MODI REARMS
THE PARTY



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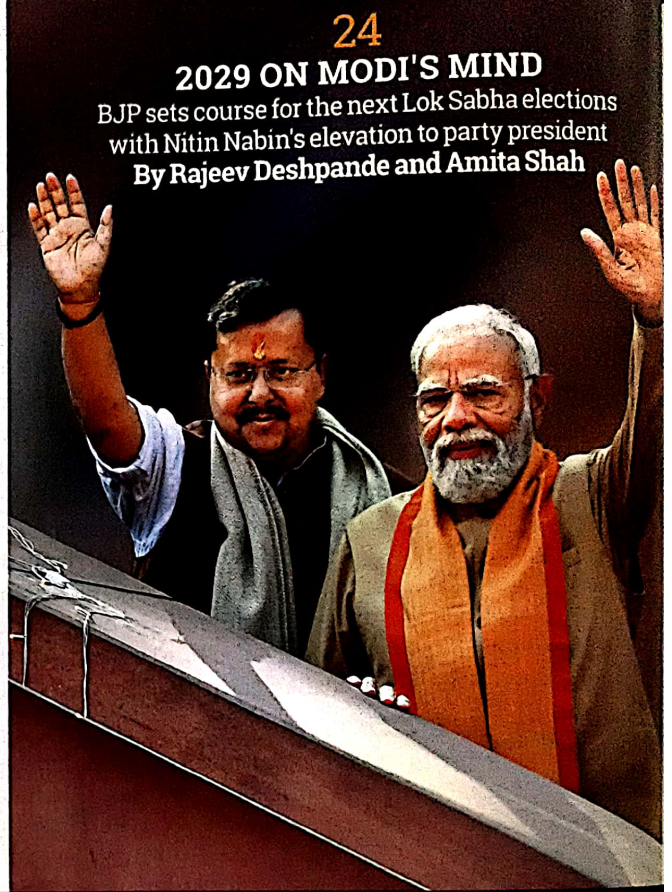
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editor@openmedianetwork.in

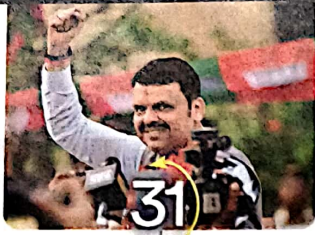


LETTER OF THE WEEK

US President Donald Trump's Venezuela operation feels less like a surprise than a sequel ('Rule Americana', by Seema Sirohi, January 26, 2026). He announces his intentions loudly, acts briskly, and dares the world to keep up. From Caracas to Tehran, and now mineral-rich Greenland, the message is blunt: power unused is power wasted. Is this a coherent doctrine or a series of impulses stitched together by bravado? Latin America has seen such confidence before, but the setting is wider and the guardrails thinner. After all, when former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's answer to US pressure was that he would step down in three years, Trump's response was to have him taken to the US. When the US president says his own conscience is the final check, international law begins to sound like optional reading. The larger unease is the vacuum Trump exploits. The post-war order is fraying, the UN is fading, and strong states are shopping for assets. It is Venezuela today, and Greenland could still go tomorrow. Is this a new age of empires, or is the old one finally speaking plainly? Smaller nations are watching nervously.

K Chidanand Kumar





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LIGHTING THE LAMP

The dispute over the Thiruparankundram Karthigai Deepam in Tamil Nadu is more or less over ('The Deepam Pitch', January 26, 2026). The recent Madras High Court verdict upheld the right to light the *deepam* on the hill's stone pillar (Deepastambam), overturning government objections. The controversy centred on the location where the traditional Karthigai Deepam should be lit on the Thiruparankundram hill. This is revered as the first of the Tamil god Murugan's six abodes. The dispute involved the state government, temple authorities, activists, and the judiciary. Some saw it as a deliberate attempt by DMK to appease minority communities while others argued that rightwing groups were attempting to create communal disharmony for political gain. The verdict has silenced

these arguments for the moment.

CK Subramaniam

GIG RELIEF

The promise of 10-minute deliveries led to gig workers holding a nationwide strike on New Year's Eve in 2025, drawing attention to workers' health, safety and income ('Undeliverable', January 26, 2026). Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart removed their 10-minute delivery claims from apps, websites, and marketing following meetings with Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya. Advocates have hailed this move as a win for safety while some critics call it political theatre. Others say that the demands of gig workers are unrealistic. But there is no turning away from the fact that there is very real danger involved when a delivery rider is trying to beat the 10-minute timer. The change eases pressure on gig workers who

risked accidents speeding through traffic. Human life is precious and certain experiments have severe limitations.

Jayanthi Subramaniam

STRONGER TIES

India and Germany are finding common ground ('Weathering the Trump Storm Together', January 26, 2026). Germany is recalibrating its foreign policy under pressure from the Ukraine war, the US-China rivalry and the fragmentation of global supply chains. India is establishing itself as a strong voice in the Global South and the Indo-Pacific. Friedrich Merz's decision to make India his first Asian destination as chancellor sends an important message that Germany's strategy is no longer limited to Europe. The renewed push for defence collaboration addresses shared security challenges.

Bal Govind