

BJP'S DOUBLE-ENGINE PLEDGE TRIGGER WARNINGS IN BOLLYWOOD TARIQUE RAHMAN'S NEXT BATTLE
THE MAGIC OF MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ ANITA DONGRE'S FASHION VISION DOCTRINAIRE ENVIRONMENTALISM

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AIMING HIGH

INDIA JOINS THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REVOLUTION WITH GUSTO

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CONTENTS

3
LOCOMOTIF
 By S Prasannarajan

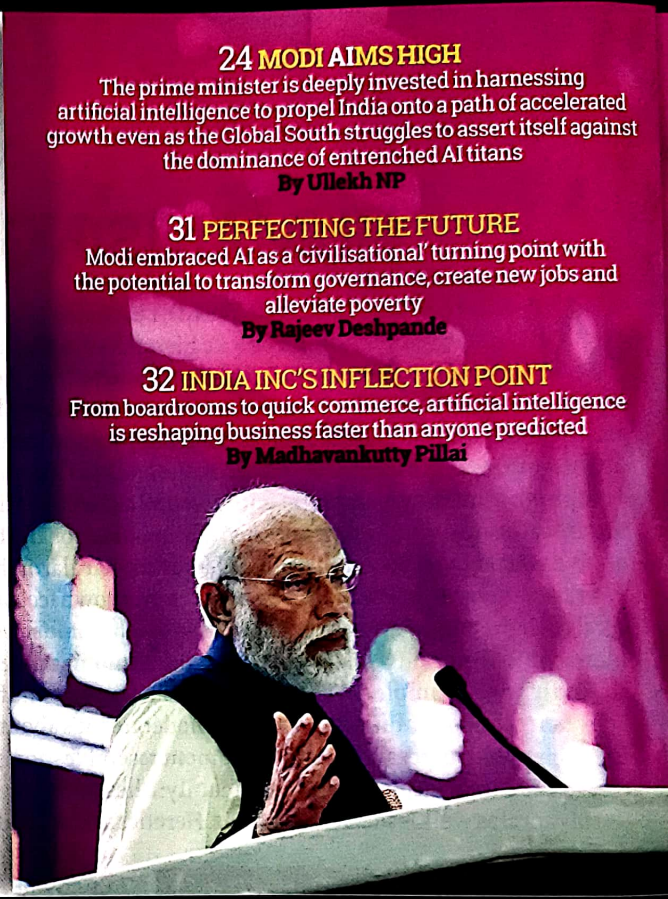
6
OPENINGS

15
OPEN DIARY
 By Swapan Dasgupta

17
**GAME, SETH
 AND MATCH**
 The death of debate
 By Suhel Seth

18
COMMENT
 The Baloch pivot
 By Harsh V Pant
 and Vinay Kaura

20
OPEN ESSAY
 Can Tarique Rahman
 be the redeemer?
 By Syed Badrul Ahsan



24 MODI AIMS HIGH

The prime minister is deeply invested in harnessing artificial intelligence to propel India onto a path of accelerated growth even as the Global South struggles to assert itself against the dominance of entrenched AI titans
 By Ullekh NP

31 PERFECTING THE FUTURE

Modi embraced AI as a 'civilisational' turning point with the potential to transform governance, create new jobs and alleviate poverty
 By Rajeev Deshpande

32 INDIA INC'S INFLECTION POINT

From boardrooms to quick commerce, artificial intelligence is reshaping business faster than anyone predicted
 By Madhavankutty Pillai

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

India's cities are no longer collapsing in dramatic bursts but instead they are eroding in plain sight ('The Civic Nightmare of Indian Cities', February 23, 2026). Roads cave in, drains overflow, bridges do not align and garbage piles up. These are not freak events. They are signs of a system that does not work. The real problem is not a lack of money or big plans. It is the absence of clear responsibility. Different departments handle roads, drains, transport and utilities, but no single authority owns the final outcome. One agency digs up a road, another repairs it, a third manages traffic. When something goes wrong, blame travels in circles. Filling potholes is treated as success, even if the road fails again in the next rain. Drains are cleaned, yet neighbourhoods still flood. Funds are allocated, but daily life does not improve. Citizens adjust instead. They buy water, install air purifiers, avoid certain roads and keep children indoors. Coping has replaced expectation. A city should make life easier, not teach people how to endure it.

Tanvi Puri





34 THE RISE OF ARTISTIC INTELLIGENCE

AI is not just generating patterns in India's art and craft world. It's reorganising access to design, markets and legitimacy
By V Shoba



38 INDIAN LEADERSHIP AT THE GLOBAL AI VANGUARD
By Madhavankutty Pillai

42 CAPITALISING THE FUTURE
For India, it is not a question of adoption but capability
By Amit Kapoor and Anandita Doda



44

THE DOUBLE-ENGINE PLEDGE

In the upcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, BJP hopes to challenge the regional with the national
By Rajeev Deshpande



46

TRIGGER WARNINGS

With shots fired at Rohit Shetty's house and threats issued against Ranveer Singh, Bollywood grapples at the prospect of the return of the underworld
By Lhendup G Bhutia



52

THREADS OF INHERITANCE

Anita Dongre is building a fashion empire steeped in tradition and sustainability
By Sohini Dey



56

I'M A BRIDGE

Marina Abramović is a doyenne of performance art. She gave an exclusive lecture at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale recently
By Bose Krishnamachari

59

FEUDAL TO BALLOT
The post-Independence evolution of Rajasthan
By Ullekh NP

60

LIVING AND BELONGING
A foreign correspondent's cultural discoveries
By Sohini Dey

61

THE SOFT BOIL
A maternal nudge
By Suvir Saran

62

PLAYTIME WITH BORIA MAJUMDAR
An unequal rivalry

64

WATCH PARTY

66

STARGAZER
By Kaveree Bamzai

Cover by SAURABH SINGH

DISRUPTION POLITICS

The recent scenes in Parliament show why discipline and seriousness matter in public life ('Not on the Same Page', February 23, 2026). Debate is welcome in a democracy, but disruption is not. When members climb onto tables, block the prime minister's path, or wave around unverified material, it lowers the dignity of the House. The government was right not to allow discussion based on a book that was not officially available. Parliament cannot function on rumours or political theatre. If there are concerns about national security or foreign policy, they must be raised responsibly and within the rules. India faces serious challenges, from border security to trade negotiations. These require focus, not slogans. Voters expect constructive debate on the Budget and national interest. The country needs stability, not headline-seeking confrontations.

Kunal Bhatnagar

SILENT DISCONNECT

The suicide note left by three teenage sisters in Ghaziabad reveals a worrying mix of loneliness, excessive screen use and emotional distance ('We Love Korean, Sorry Papa', February 23, 2026). Their interest in Korean pop culture was not the real issue; it appeared to fill a gap created by limited social interaction and lack of support. Blaming one culture or entertainment form ignores deeper problems such as parenting pressures, digital overuse and poor mental health awareness. The tragedy shows how teenagers can build strong online identities when real-life connections are weak. It also raises questions about schooling disruptions and supervision after the Covid pandemic. Rather than imposing bans, the emphasis should be on balanced screen time and easier access to counselling, ensuring that pop culture remains a harmless interest.

R Narasimhan

SPIRITUAL GROOVE

Kirtan, once seen as a traditional spiritual practice, is becoming popular with Gen Z ('Kirtan Is the New Cool', by Saumyaa Vohra, February 23, 2026). Many young people are choosing devotional Hindu music for its rhythm, sense of community and calming effect. Bhajan gatherings now feel like social events, with live music and group singing creating a festive atmosphere without the excess linked to nightlife. This trend reflects a growing desire for meaningful and mindful ways to unwind in a fast digital world. Social media has helped spread the appeal by showcasing these spaces as welcoming and visually engaging. While some may view it as a trend, it shows that spirituality and youth culture can coexist. Devotional music is being rediscovered as a joyful, safe and culturally rooted alternative to typical parties.

Yashna Kumar