

An insight on Bihar Elections 2025

BUREAUCRACY INDIA

Volume 14 | Issue 12 | December 2025 | ₹100 | bureaucracyindia.in



**INDIA 2025-
INDIA'S GLOBAL RISE
IN 2025**



The Nature Mayaa

CONTACT US

90-575-45-069

NATUROPATH & AYURVEDIC BENEFITS

in One Product **HEAL YOUR AURA** Naturally



Shop Now



www.naturopathayurvedicremedies.com



Free Shipping



भारत सरकार
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
सूक्ष्म , लघु और मध्यम उद्यम मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM
ENTERPRISES

Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro & Small Enterprises

CGTMSE



Encourages first generation entrepreneurs to venture into self-employment opportunities by facilitating credit guarantee support for collateral free loans/third party guarantee free loans to MSES.

Key Benefits :

Credit guarantee for loans up to **Rs. 5 crores**, without collateral and third-party guarantee.

Guarantee coverage ranges from **90%** (Women owned enterprise) to **75%** (others).

How to apply :

- Through Member Lending Institutions (Banks and NBFCs)

Scheme applicable for :

- Micro and Small Enterprises

For detailed guidelines please scan QR Code



BUREAUCRACY INDIA

Volume 14 | Issue 12 | December 2025



Editor-in-Chief Deepak Vyas
deepak@bureaucracyindia.in

Executive Editor Suhani Nagpal
suhani@bureaucracyindia.in

Consultant Editor Arun Arora

Spl. Correspondents

Bureau North Anjali Bhardwaj
Bureau East Tanya Arora
Bureau West Naman Mukerjee
Bureau South Srinivas Iyer

Political Correspondent Dhvani Vyas

Events Correspondent Shivam Nagpal

Guest Writer+ Vibha Gurtu

Graphics Knitdreams

Photography Varun Gogna

Digital & Web Support Knitdreams

**Director Operation
Circulation &
Subscription** A.K. Sharma

**Printer, Publisher
and Owned by** Deepak Vyas
4/15, Bholanath Nagar,
Shahdara, New Delhi -
110032

Printed at BB Graphic Printer
A-23, Okhla Industrial Area,
Phase – I, New Delhi - 20

R.N.I. No. DELENG/2012/45681

For Marketing, Advertising and Public Relations
contact Suhani Nagpal: 91- 8800149149
suhani@bureaucracyindia.in

Editorial Team can be contacted at: info@bureaucracyindia.in
H-125, Phase – 1, Ashok Vihar, New Delhi - 110052



As we close 2025, one truth stands out unmistakably: India is no longer waiting for the world to move, it is moving the world. This month's cover story, "2025: India's Global Rise," captures the scale, confidence and strategic intent with which India redefined its global identity. From diplomatic assertiveness to digital governance exports, from climate leadership to economic resilience, 2025 was not merely a year of achievements it was a year of arrival.

But global rise does not happen in isolation. It is rooted in what happens within our borders: in our politics, our governance systems, and our national challenges. And that is why this edition also brings together the stories that shaped India's domestic pulse this month.

The Bihar elections reminded us that India's federal politics is evolving with unprecedented speed. Voters demanded performance over promises, delivery over rhetoric. The outcome signals a deeper shift, one where governance, jobs, welfare efficiency, law & order, and the state-centre dynamic will redefine political alignments in 2026.

Another winter, another emergency. Our ground reportage examines not just AQI data and policy gaps, but the silent administrative battles, crop residue policies, mobility challenges that determine whether Delhi breathes cleaner air or not. Pollution is no longer an environmental story; it is a governance stress test.

The blast near the Red Fort shook Delhi and the nation. Beyond the headlines, we analyse the security architecture, intelligence coordination, emergency response timelines, and the administrative machinery that moves instantly yet often invisibly in moments of crisis.

Being the Media Partners, our exclusive coverage of ITB Asia highlights what makes it the most outstanding tourism event and how India's tourism vision, digital facilitation, state-led showcases, and renewed branding efforts drew unprecedented global attention.

2025 was India's year of global confidence.
2026 must be India's year of governance competence.

As you turn the pages of this edition, you will see a nation balancing aspiration with action, challenges with breakthroughs, and crises with resilience.

This is the India we report and the India we believe in.

Deepak Vyas
Editor-in-Chief



Don't forget to share your views and feedback at info@bureaucracyindia.in
Keep following our social media platforms to get updates regularly.



8
PSU
Watch

6 ▲
Appointments



16 ►
Political
Picture
*Bihar Elections
2025*



10 ▲
Delhi Pollution

20
Cover Story



26
Feature
*Women
Cricket Team*



14
Insight
*Red Fort
Explosion*

30 ►
Event
*ITB Asia
2025*



34
WTM
London



37
Spirituality
Dev Deepawali

Harikishore S. Appointed as Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism



The Government of India appointed Harikishore S. (IAS: 2001: KL) as the new Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism. With extensive experience in state tourism promotion and public policy, his appointment aims to accelerate the national tourism infrastructure and ease of travel initiatives under the government's global branding strategy 'Dekho Apna Desh'.

Dr Pankaj Kumar and Dr Dirghau Raut to Represent India at IMF

In major international postings, Dr Pankaj Kumar and Dr Dirghau Keshao Raut, both from the Reserve Bank of India, were appointed as Senior Adviser and Adviser respectively to the Executive Director (India) at the International Monetary Fund, Washington DC. The appointments reflect India's growing influence in global financial governance circles.



Ranjan Prakash Thakur (IRTS: 1990) Repatriated to Parent Cadre from ONGC

Ranjan Prakash Thakur, a 1990-batch IRTS officer serving as Chief Vigilance Officer at ONGC, has been prematurely repatriated to his parent cadre, as per government orders issued in October 2025. Thakur had earlier received an extension in his CVO tenure, but has now been relieved from the post. No fresh appointment, including any Advisor role in NITI Aayog, has been announced for him during this period.



Tripti Gurha Returns to Cadre from WCD Ministry

Tripti Gurha (IRTS: 1993), who was serving as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Women & Child Development, has been repatriated to her cadre. Her work in strengthening policies for women's entrepreneurship and digital safety has been widely acknowledged in government circles.



Dharmendra Kumar Singh Gets Defence Extension

Dharmendra Kumar Singh (IA&AS: 2000), Joint Secretary, Department of Defence, has received an extension of central deputation till March 31, 2026. His continued service reflects consistency in the key financial oversight functions of the Ministry of Defence during an important modernization phase.



Tarun Kumar Pithode (IAS) Appointed Member Secretary, CAQM

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved Tarun Kumar Pithode, IAS (2009 batch, Madhya Pradesh cadre), as Member Secretary of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on 13 October 2025. He will serve for five years, until 8 September 2029, or until further orders.

Serving as the Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Shri Pithode has now assumed the Member-Secretary of the Commission.



Raj Kumar Arora (IDAS) Appointed Financial Adviser, Defence Services

The ACC approved the appointment of Raj Kumar Arora (IDAS, 1990 batch) as the Financial Adviser, Defence Services in the Ministry of Defence on 15 October 2025. Arora, currently Special Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA), will take charge from 1 November 2025, reinforcing the financial oversight in defence expenditure.



Raj Kumar Arora

KK Pathak Finally Relieved for Central Posting

After weeks of administrative deadlock, the Rajasthan Government has relieved Dr KK Pathak (IAS: 2001) from his post as Secretary, Department of Personnel, allowing him to join the Ministry of Fertilisers as Joint Secretary on central deputation. The move marks the resolution of a rare Centre-State impasse over senior officer transfers.

Archana Agrawal Appointed Chairperson, UPSRTC

Soon after her repatriation from the Centre, Archana Agrawal (IAS: 1990: UP) has been appointed Chairperson of the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC). Known for her administrative acumen, Agrawal's leadership is expected to boost reform and financial turnaround efforts in one of India's largest transport undertakings.

Massive IPS Reshuffle in Rajasthan: 34 Officers Transferred

In one of the largest police reshuffles this year, the Rajasthan Government transferred 34 IPS officers, reassigning several district police chiefs and key departmental heads. The overhaul, led by the state's Department of Personnel, aims to enhance administrative efficiency, streamline law enforcement, and prepare for upcoming state-level challenges.



KK Pathak



Archana Agrawal

Mega PSU Bank Merger Plan Under Review by Government

The Government of India is revisiting its plan for the next phase of PSU bank consolidation, potentially merging smaller entities such as Indian Overseas Bank, Central Bank of India, Bank of India, and Bank of Maharashtra with larger anchor banks like SBI, PNB, and Bank of Baroda. The move, still under Cabinet evaluation, aims to create fewer but stronger institutions that can drive robust credit growth, operational efficiency, and resilient support for agriculture and MSMEs.

RBI Proposes New Funding Guidelines for PSU Mergers

The Reserve Bank of India has released draft guidelines allowing banks to finance up to 70% of mergers, acquisitions, and PSU takeovers for listed corporates. This measure is expected to facilitate long-term value creation and increased consolidation in the sector. By easing access to growth capital, the RBI strengthens the roadmap for strategic reshuffling and modernization of India's distinguished public sector enterprises.

APPOINTMENTS

Mahesh Kumar Sharma Takes Charge as Director (Finance), NHPC Limited

Mahesh Kumar Sharma has formally assumed the position of Director (Finance) at NHPC Limited, India's leading hydropower utility. With more than two decades of experience in public sector finance, Sharma is expected to guide NHPC's financial strategy during a significant phase of expansion and modernization. His expertise in project finance and regulatory affairs is seen as a crucial asset for NHPC's ambitious targets in renewable energy integration and national grid management.



Anand Mohan Appointed Joint Managing Director, NAFED

Anand Mohan (IRTS Cooperative: 2012) has been appointed Joint Managing Director (Cooperation and IT) at the National Agricultural Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED). Serving at the Deputy Secretary level on deputation under the Department of Agriculture, he will oversee cooperation and IT initiatives for improving agricultural marketing mechanisms. Mohan's technological expertise and sectoral insights are vital for innovating farm-to-market linkages, digital platforms, and stakeholder engagement under modern agri-business models.



Dun & Bradstreet Honours Outstanding PSUs at 2025 Summit

At the 2025 Public Sector Excellence Summit, Dun & Bradstreet recognized Indian PSUs and key ministries across various categories for innovation, governance, and sectoral impact. The awards highlight outstanding achievements in digital transformation, sustainable growth, and strategic adaptation among public sector enterprises—reinforcing the critical role PSUs play in India's economic progress and global competitiveness in the post-pandemic era.

NITI Aayog Advocates Strategic Strengthening of Public Sector Bank

In a significant policy pivot, the government announced an emphasis on organic growth, technology adoption, and governance upgrades for PSBs—stepping back from further mergers for now. The focus is to position two state-run banks among the global top 20 and enhance agricultural and MSME support nationwide. This strategy is expected to bring stability, resilience, and expanded international presence for major PSBs in the coming years.

State Bank of India (SBI) — Senior Management Retirements

State Bank of India announced the retirement of three senior executives, including its Managing Director and two Deputy Managing Directors, effective 30 November 2025. These upcoming exits mark a major leadership transition at the country's largest public sector bank, with new appointments expected to shape SBI's next phase of growth and reform.

ONGC — Apprentice Recruitment Drive 2025

ONGC concluded its large-scale apprentice recruitment drive for 2,623 positions across technical and non-technical roles. The initiative aimed to strengthen workforce capacity while providing youth with valuable industry experience and skill development. The recruitment reflects PSU efforts to nurture talent and support future operational demand.

Benny Joseph Takes Over as Director (Technical & Operations) at HLL Lifecare Ltd

Benny Joseph has assumed charge as the Director (Technical & Operations) at HLL Lifecare Limited, a strategic public sector healthcare company. Known for his operational rigour and process innovation, Joseph is tasked with streamlining technical workflows and expanding HLL's role in public health initiatives. His leadership is anticipated to steer new product launches, optimize manufacturing practices, and elevate HLL's impact in India's medical supply chain, especially amid growing health infrastructure needs.

S Sakthimani Recommended as CMD of FACT

The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) has recommended S Sakthimani for the prestigious post of Chairman & Managing Director of Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore Limited (FACT). With a strong track record in operational leadership, Sakthimani's appointment is expected to fortify FACT's growth trajectory, modernize manufacturing practices, and energize industry partnerships. His strategic focus will assist the company in navigating evolving policy frameworks and boosting its contribution to India's "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative.

Indian PSU Oil Companies — International Collaboration

Indian PSU oil companies indicated willingness to collaborate with Korean firms on LNG and crude-oil carrier ship construction. This move highlights India's growing openness to international partnerships, aiming to strengthen domestic capabilities, modernise infrastructure, and improve competitiveness in the global energy and shipping sectors.

BHEL Stock — 52-Week High Performance

BHEL shares touched a 52-week high during November trading, reflecting renewed investor optimism in PSU stocks. The surge was supported by improved order flows, positive market sentiment, and expectations of increased domestic infrastructure and energy sector spending.



Toxic Skies: The Delhi Story No One Can Escape

by Anjali Bhardwaj

Every November, Delhi wakes up to a familiar, choking truth: the city has once again transformed into a gas chamber. The Air Quality Index (AQI) slips into “severe” territory often crossing 450, sometimes touching 500 or more. Schools shut, hospitals overflow, construction halts, flights get delayed, and the capital of the world’s largest democracy becomes, without fail, one of the most polluted cities on Earth.

Why does this happen every year? Why has the crisis become a seasonal ritual rather than an avoidable public-health emergency? And why, despite a decade of alarms, outrage, and government meetings, does Delhi still breathe like this?

This story is not a rant. It is a critical, fact-driven examination of how India’s capital reached this point and what it means for the millions living under its grey skies.

Everyday Life in a City That Is Losing Its Breath

At a children’s hospital in South Delhi, a paediatric pulmonologist describes the same scenario every year: “We see a drastic jump—sometimes nearly 30%—in children with breathing difficulties. Infants come in struggling, toddlers wheeze, teenagers complain of persistent chest tightness.” Parents bring in children with burning eyes, unstoppable coughs, and disturbed sleep cycles.

When AQI levels cross into the “severe” zone, schools are forced into shutdowns. Masks return not because of a pandemic, but because of the air itself. In many classrooms that still function, teachers watch students speaking through masks, rubbing their eyes, losing focus.

“We move online every November,” says a government-school teacher in East Delhi. “But as teachers, we know these aren’t the days kids should be losing. Winter is already a challenge for learning. Pollution makes it worse.”

For working professionals, winter comes with headaches, throat soreness, fatigue, and an almost constant feeling of heaviness. People report a “brain fog” that makes even routine tasks mentally tiring. Delivery workers, cab drivers, traffic police, street vendors—those who spend most of their hours outdoors—breathe the worst air with the least protection.

Delhi’s air crisis is not an occasional inconvenience. It is a sustained assault on public health.

Why This Keeps Happening—Year After Year

By now, Delhiites can describe the causes with the accuracy of environmental scientists: stubble burning in neighbouring states, vehicular emissions within the city, dust from construction sites, industrial pollution drifting in from NCR, and winter inversion layers that trap all of it close to the ground.

While the science is sound, the governance is not.

Delhi’s geographical disadvantages are real, but they are not destiny. Many cities trapped in valleys, surrounded by farmland, or with brutal winter inversions have still managed to dramatically improve air quality. Beijing’s air, once infamous, has improved through strict multi-year controls on industry, vehicles, and construction. London introduced congestion pricing. Seoul created large-scale emissions monitoring. Mexico City banned certain fuels, redesigned transport lanes, and expanded public transit.

Delhi, on the other hand, appears caught in a loop: the same reasons, the same excuses, the same seasonal panic.

Why has the capital of India, a country that commands global attention for growth and innovation, failed to build a long-term, enforceable clean air strategy?

Why does Delhi only get attention in November?

Short-Term Measures: Visible, Loud, and Often Ineffective

Odd-even vehicle restrictions. Water-sprinkling trucks. Construction bans. **GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan)** stages. School closures. Messages advising citizens to “stay indoors.”

These actions may create a sense of urgency, but they rarely offer lasting relief. Odd-even improves traffic flow but barely reduces overall emissions in a city where the number of private vehicles increases every year. Water spraying suppresses dust for hours, not days. Nighttime construction continues in many pockets even during restrictions. And advisories urging people to stay indoors assume that citizens have the luxury to do so.

One office worker in Gurugram says, “Every year we breathe poison for weeks, and every year the solution is to shut schools—never offices, never factories.”

This is the heart of Delhi’s crisis: measures meant to appear decisive often avoid the deeper decisions that require political will, economic compromise, or long-term planning.

Stubble Burning: A Convenient Villain, But Not the Whole Story

It is true that crop residue burning in Punjab and Haryana contributes significantly, sometimes as much as 30-40%, to Delhi’s peak pollution days. Satellite images show clusters of fires, and Delhi’s AQI spikes accordingly.

But it is simplistic to stop the conversation there.

Farmers burn stubble because they have mere weeks between harvesting paddy and sowing wheat, and machines like the Happy Seeder are expensive even with partial subsidies. Crop choices are skewed by procurement systems that strongly favour paddy.

Why have policy frameworks not shifted procurement incentives? Why is crop diversification still a distant dream? Why aren’t cleaner alternatives to burning subsidised at the scale required?

Blaming farmers is easy. Reforming agricultural economics is not.

Meanwhile, Delhi breathes the consequences.

Vehicular Emissions and the Endless Rush of Cars

Delhi has one of the highest vehicle densities in India—over 1.3 crore registered vehicles, aside from thousands entering the city daily from neighbouring states. Even with newer fuel norms, the cumulative emissions remain massive.

Public transport, though improved by the Metro, still lags behind demand. Many areas lack adequate buses or last-mile connectivity. Women feel unsafe on long commutes, pushing households toward private vehicles. As ride-share apps grow, so does traffic volume.

Beijing added thousands of electric buses. London expanded cycling zones. Singapore introduced extremely strict vehicle ownership rules. ***Delhi, however, continues to expand roads—and with them, cars.***

How many more flyovers can one city build before realising that they only bring more traffic, not less?

Construction Dust and Industrial Emissions: The Quieter Monsters

Across Delhi-NCR, construction is constant—highways, residential towers, malls, metro lines. Dust-control norms exist, but enforcement is weak. Plastic sheets are left open, trucks carrying debris leak material onto roads, and many sites operate around the clock. Meanwhile, industrial zones in Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Bahadurgarh and Bhiwadi release pollutants that drift easily across state borders.

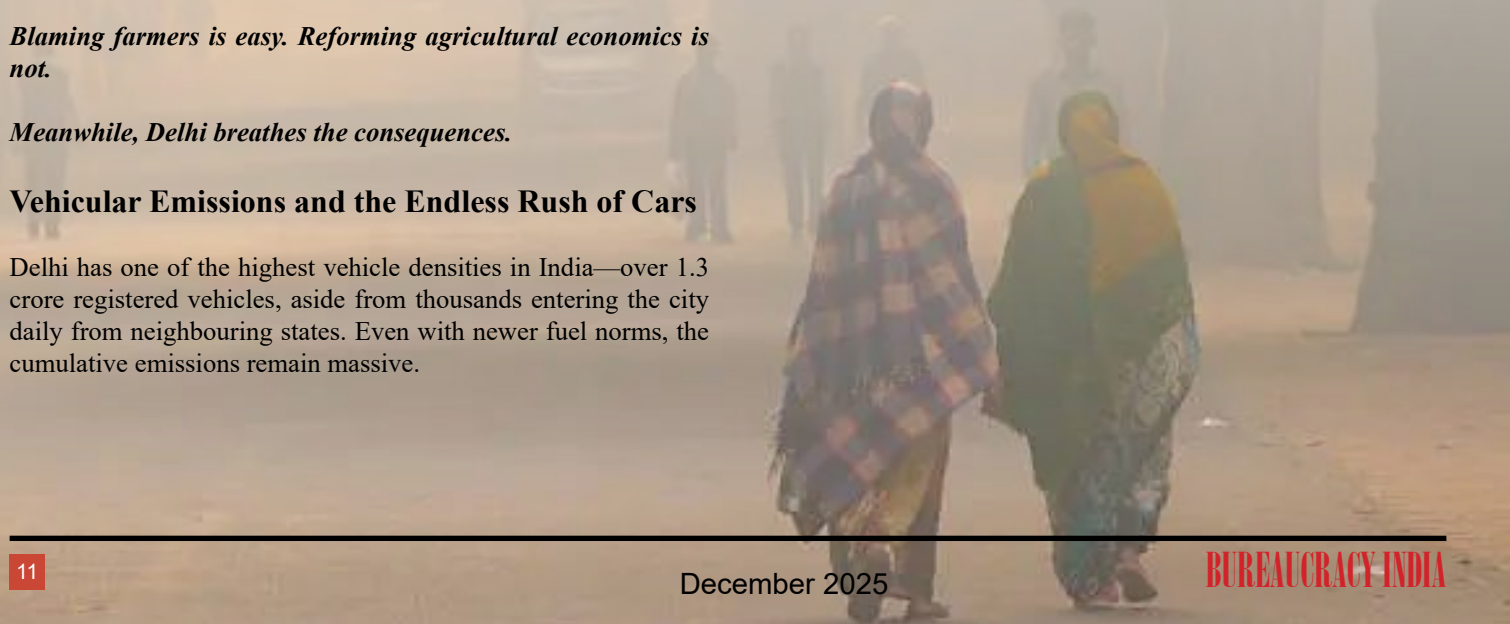
A senior doctor in a private hospital says, “*Pollution is not a winter problem. It is a year-round problem that becomes unignorable only in winter.*”

If industries can evade monitoring and construction sites can casually violate dust norms, how can any emergency measure succeed?

Environmental Inequality: Who Breathes the Worst Air?

Air pollution does not affect everyone equally.

Daily wage workers, construction labourers, ragpickers, delivery staff, auto-rickshaw drivers and municipal workers inhale the most polluted air every day. Yet they have the least access to healthcare, masking, or air purification.



One construction worker near Dwarka says quietly, “*Mask pehenne se khana thodi aa jayega? Kaam toh karna hi padega.*” (“Wearing a mask won’t put food on the table. I have to work.”)

Children in low-income neighbourhoods play outside because they have no indoor spaces. Families in single-room homes do not have the option to “stay indoors.” Migrant workers sleep in poorly ventilated rooms. Traffic police officers work eight-hour shifts breathing exhaust directly.

This is environmental injustice at its starkest: ***those who contribute least to pollution suffer the most.***

Clean air has become a privilege—a commodity accessed by those who can afford air purifiers, sealed apartments, and weekend escapes to the hills.

Should breathable air in the capital city of India really be a luxury?

Who Is Responsible When Everyone is Responsible?

Every year, state governments, central authorities, and various agencies exchange blame. The Delhi government cites vehicle pollution and external factors. The Centre points to local mismanagement. Neighbouring states cite farmer compulsions and lack of support.

Everyone is responsible and therefore, in practice, no one is fully accountable.

Where is the year-round coordination?

Why don't central and state governments create a unified, independent NCR Clean Air Authority with enforcement powers?

Why are decisions still fragmented across dozens of agencies?

The air crisis cannot be managed through press conferences and court submissions. It requires political courage and shared responsibility across borders and party lines.

Until that happens, Delhi will continue to gasp in bureaucratic limbo.

Emergency Mode Is Not a Solution

Every winter, as AQI rises, authorities respond with emergency actions—school closures, construction bans, advisories, and temporary restrictions. But emergency mode is a sign of chronic governance failure.

Cities do not become clean by reacting. They become clean by planning.

Delhi needs:

- *a massive, reliable public transport transformation*
- *strict dust-control enforcement*

- *measurable industrial regulation*
- *cleaner fuel transitions*
- *agricultural policy reform*
- *and, above all, political cooperation that lasts beyond news cycles*

Winter pollution cannot be fixed in winter.

The Paradox of Development

Delhi wants world-class roads, high-rises, and expressways. But each project produces dust and emissions, and each new road encourages more vehicles.

The city is racing toward development while suffocating under its byproducts.

Economic growth cannot be meaningful if it steals years from people's lives.

How Many More Winters Will Delhi Have to Breathe Like This?

As this winter unfolds, the questions grow louder.

A 16-year-old student in Dwarka says, “*I just want to breathe without thinking about it.*”

A doctor at a major hospital warns, “*We are witnessing long-term damage in children. Reduced lung capacity. Increased asthma. Higher risks later in life.*”

An office worker asks, “*Why should my health depend on the wind direction?*”

These voices echo the same fear: ***this crisis is becoming normal.***

But it should never have been normal.

Clean air is not a privilege. It is a fundamental right. And for the millions who call Delhi home, especially its children, that right remains undelivered.

So we end with the question that hangs over the city every November—a question policymakers cannot ignore forever:

How many more winters will Delhi have to breathe like this? **BI**





RUDRA INTERIOR STUDIOS

Crafting interiors that
reflect your vision

OUR SERVICES

Corporate Interiors
Residential Interiors
Architectural Services
Turnkey Project Execution
3D Rendering & Walkthroughs

📍 H 125, 2nd floor, Phase -1, Ashok Vihar, New Delhi-110052
✉️ rudrainteriors.studios@gmail.com
🌐 www.rudrainteriors.in

☎️ 99999 67707

Behind The Red Fort Blast: The Network, The Lapse, The Fallout

by Anjali Bhardwaj

vice used ammonium nitrate fuel oil; forensic teams also found links to encrypted communications and bomb-making instructions allegedly shared by foreign handlers.

The suspected driver of the car has been identified as Umar Nabi, a doctor reportedly affiliated with a terror module.

Immediate Response by Authorities

The explosion site was swiftly cordoned off by the Delhi Police, and forensic teams alongside bomb-disposal squads and units from the National Security Guard (NSG) were deployed.

The nearby heritage monument, Red Fort was closed to visitors between 11 and 13 November for security assessments and forensic investigations.

Adjacent dense markets such as Chandni Chowk were shut temporarily amid panic and precautionary lockdowns.

The explosion triggered a national-level security alert. Several states tightened surveillance at transport hubs, public spaces and sensitive locations.

Related Recent Terror-Linked Incidents & Preventive Actions

The Red Fort explosion comes amid a broader security crackdown. In the days before the blast, security agencies busted a so-called “white-collar terror module,” arresting multiple individuals, including medical professionals from a Faridabad-based institution, and seizing nearly 2,900 kg of bomb-making material comprising ammonium nitrate, detonators, sulphur and other precursor chemicals along with firearms.

Encrypted communications including bomb-making tutorials allegedly transmitted by foreign handlers to module members, have been recovered, suggesting cross-state terror networks.



On the evening of 10 November 2025, a powerful explosion rocked a car near the entrance to Red Fort (Lal Qila) in Old Delhi’s historic district — a place of profound symbolic value to India. The blast triggered immediate alarm across the national capital, raising concerns about public safety, heritage-site vulnerability and the state of counter-terror preparedness in urban centres.

What Actually Happened

At approximately 6:52 pm on 10 November 2025, a white Hyundai i20 car exploded at a traffic signal near Gate No. 1 of the Red Fort Metro Station, close to Netaji Subhash Marg.

The explosion resulted in multiple fatalities and injuries. Official and media reports initially cited eight dead and about 20 injured.

Subsequent updates from authorities placed the death toll at 12–13, with over 20 wounded. In response, the government invoked anti-terror legislation, labelling the incident a “terrorist act.”

Investigators recovered evidence suggesting a large-scale bomb-making module. According to preliminary enquiry, the de-

In the wake of the blast, there was a barrage of hoax bomb threats across public institutions: schools run by CRPF, court complexes and the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI), triggering evacuations and intensive security checks — all later declared false.

The Larger Security Concern

India with its dense urban centres, heritage sites, crowded public spaces and heterogeneous population remains vulnerable to terror threats. Iconic landmarks such as the Red Fort or crowded hubs like Chandni Chowk or major transport nodes are high-value targets for those seeking maximum impact. The recent explosion underscores how such vulnerabilities can be exploited.

At the same time, the incident reveals both the strengths and limits of India's security and intelligence architecture: a major terror plot was partially disrupted, but one car with an improvised explosive device (IED) still detonated, causing civilian casualties.

Surveillance and Modern Counter-Terror Tools

Following the investigation, agencies have pointed to coordinated surveillance, intelligence-sharing across states, monitoring of suspicious purchases of precursor chemicals (fertilisers and explosives), and cyber surveillance as key in tracing and busting terror modules.

Encrypted messaging apps, online bomb-making videos, and foreign-based handlers coordinating through untraceable channels underscore the evolving nature of terror, requiring equally advanced investigative tools, timely data analysis and inter-agency cooperation.

In the immediate aftermath: footfall at heritage-tourism sites dropped; markets in Old Delhi and surroundings remained closed for days; public movement slowed under heavy security presence.

The blast triggered widespread fear and uncertainty, while successive hoax threats added to public anxiety. Court hearings were delayed, flight operations briefly disrupted, and daily life faced an atmosphere of heightened tension. The episode also raised fresh concerns about the security of heritage landmarks and public spaces.

Expert Views and Security Challenges

Security analysts observing the saga note that: While the disruption of a broad terror module shows the ability of agencies to detect and act on intelligence, the fact that a car carrying a powerful IED succeeded in reaching the heart of the old city suggests persistent security and surveillance gaps.

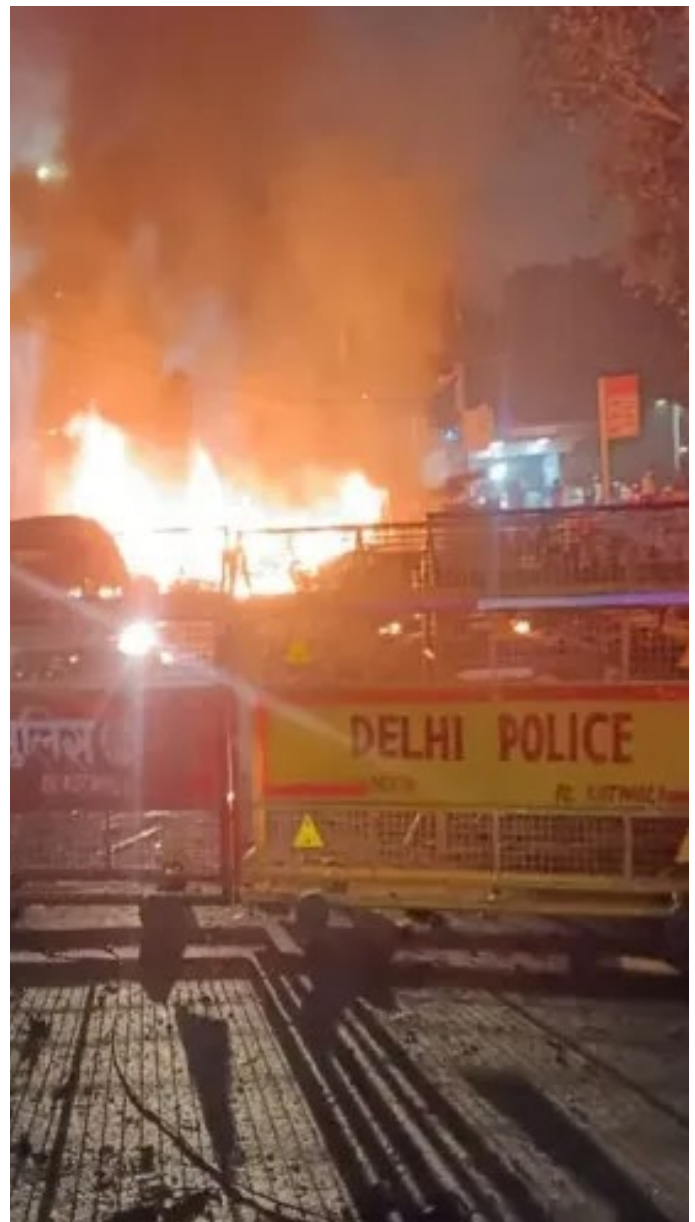
They stress that vigilance public and institutional remains critical. Monitoring sales of bomb-making chemicals, tracking suspicious transfers, and ensuring timely data-sharing across states can be decisive in pre-empting attacks.

Public awareness and cooperation reporting suspicious activity, following advisories often make the difference in averting tragedies.

Conclusion

The 10 November 2025 explosion near Delhi's Red Fort is a stark reminder of the fragility of public safety, even in well-guarded capitals. While swift action by police, bomb disposal squads, intelligence agencies and the invoking of anti-terror laws reflect a robust security apparatus, the tragedy exposes vulnerabilities that can be exploited by determined operators.

As investigations continue, the incident underlines the need for constant vigilance by agencies and citizens alike and strengthened systems to safeguard heritage sites, public spaces and urban populations. In the face of evolving terror threats, a calm, coordinated, and alert security framework remains India's best defense. **BI**



Bihar Elections 2025

The Forces That Reshaped the State's Political Map

by Dhvani Vyas



The 2025 Bihar Legislative Assembly election concluded in a resounding verdict: the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) secured a landslide victory, relegating the Mahagathbandhan (MGB) to a marginal presence in the state legislature. With 243 assembly seats at stake, the scale and outcome of the polls carry deep implications for governance, policy direction, and broader political arithmetic in Bihar — and by extension, India. The election outcome not only defines who will govern Bihar for the next five years but also underscores changing voter alignments, electoral strategies, and the evolving priorities of the electorate.

Bihar Elections at a Glance

Total Assembly seats: 243

Majority mark: 122 seats (more than half)

Election type and process: The 2025 polls are conducted in two phases, under the supervision of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Phase I covered 121 constituencies, Phase II the remaining 122.

Voter eligibility in Bihar: Nearly 7.43 crore electors, including men, women and a small number of third-gender voters, following a fresh electoral roll revision by the ECI.

The Verdict: The NDA won **202 out of 243** assembly seats, comfortably exceeding the majority mark of 122 seats.

Election Results

Within National Democratic Alliance (NDA): the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as the single largest party with 89 seats, while the Janata Dal (United) (JD(U)) — headed by incumbent Chief Minister Nitish Kumar — won 85 seats. Smaller NDA allies also contributed: the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) (LJP-RV) won 19 seats, while allied regional outfits secured the remainder, taking the alliance tally to 202.

Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) / Opposition bloc: the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) managed just 25 seats, while the Indian National Congress (Congress) won 6. Left and other smaller parties added a handful more, but the combined opposition tally stood at 35 seats.

Newcomer **Jan Suraj Party (JSP)**, which contested with visible ambition, failed to win any seat.

The polls also saw representation from smaller parties outside the major alliances including a few seats won by outfits such as **All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM)** and others.



The vote-seat mathematics was striking: despite the RJD reportedly securing the highest vote share ($\approx 23\%$), its seat yield remained disproportionately low compared to its vote share; conversely, BJP and JD(U) converted their vote shares ($\sim 19\text{--}20\%$) into a dominant seat count.

Following the verdict, **Nitish Kumar took the oath as Chief Minister yet again** marking his **tenth** time in the role.

What Impacted the Results: Key Factors

1. Alliance Strategy and Seat Allocation

The NDA's seat-sharing and alliance cohesion proved effective. BJP and JD(U) contested key seats without splitting anti-opposition votes. The smaller allies — LJP-RV, regional parties — added complementary support across regions. This united front allowed the NDA to project itself as a stable, cohesive alternative, capitalizing on regional and caste dynamics in favour of the alliance.

Meanwhile, the MGB and opposition allies failed to translate their vote share into seats, suggesting vote splitting, inefficient vote-seat conversion, or sub-optimal targeting of winnable seats. The poor performance of the newly launched JSP further fragmented the non-NDA vote.

2. Voter Turnout & Participation — Especially Women and Youth

The 2025 election recorded record voter turnout: around 67%, marking the highest since 1951. Reports indicated that women's turnout ($\approx 71\text{--}72\%$) outpaced men ($\approx 63\%$), a significant shift from past patterns.

High participation among women and youth — demographics often targeted by government welfare and social schemes — likely influenced outcomes. The increased mobilisation may have favored parties that marketed themselves as providers of social justice, development, and welfare benefits.

3. Social Welfare, Benefit Schemes & “MY-Factor” Appeal

Analysts attribute part of the NDA's success to effective rollout and communication of welfare schemes — especially those tar-



geting women and youth. The so-called “MY (Mahila & Youth) factor” resonated strongly across rural and semi-urban Bihar, seemingly translating into widespread support for the ruling alliance.

4. Fragmentation of Opposition and Vote Splitting

The entry of new or smaller parties (e.g. JSP) and multiple opposition players likely diluted the anti-NDA vote in several constituencies. In a first-past-the-post system, even modest division among opposition candidates can shift result margins decisively — particularly in tightly contested or minority-dominated pockets. This appears to have impacted MGB's seat count severely, despite a respectable vote share.

5. Targeted Ground Campaign & Regional Hit Rate

The NDA leveraged its organisational network across districts effectively. In many constituencies, their candidates won with comfortable margins; even where margins were narrow, the alliance's cohesive ground strategy paid off. For instance, the BJP — contesting 101 seats — achieved a high strike rate ($\approx 88\text{--}90\%$), winning 89 of them.

In contrast, the MGB's ability to convert support into wins was weak — suggesting either a lack of strong on-ground penetration or ineffective candidate selection in several segments.

6. Electoral Roll Revision & Voter List Changes

Ahead of the election, the electoral rolls underwent revision. According to official data referenced in media reports, the final lists showed a reduction in total electors compared to earlier drafts — part of a larger exercise to clean up outdated or duplicate entries, and to include newly eligible voters.

Such a revision can have electoral consequences, especially in tight constituencies, possibly affecting traditional vote bases. The changes may have contributed, directly or indirectly to shifts in constituency-level results.

Deeper Drivers Behind the Mandate

While the primary factors behind the NDA's sweeping victory have already been outlined, the 2025 Bihar Assembly election results were also shaped by deeper political undercurrents — involving organisational strength, changing caste coalitions, economic sentiment, perceptions of governance delivery, and the BJP-JD(U)'s evolving political brand. Together, these elements created a layered and powerful influence on voter choices, making the outcome more than just the sum of campaign strategies or alliance decisions.

1. Caste Coalitions Evolving Beyond Traditional Boundaries

Bihar's politics has long revolved around caste configurations, particularly the arithmetic of OBCs, EBCs, Dalits, and upper castes. What stood out in 2025 was the broad-based consolidation of Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) behind the NDA. Historically nurtured by Nitish Kumar's social engineering, this EBC base did not fragment despite the presence of new contenders like JSP or smaller caste-driven parties. Instead, the alliance profited from a perception of continuity and tangible benefits reaching lower socioeconomic groups through schemes like skill development programs, women self-help group support, and livelihood grants.

At the same time, upper-caste support for the BJP remained steady, reinforcing a stable backbone that allowed the party to contest difficult constituencies with confidence. The Mahagathabandhan struggled to retain its traditional MY (Muslim-Yadav) base uniformly; although these groups remained loyal in many districts, it was not enough to counterbalance the NDA's widening coalition.

2. Perception of Governance, Delivery and Administrative Experience

Nitish Kumar's tenth swearing-in was not just symbolic of political longevity — it was also a reflection of voters' trust in continuity of governance, particularly in rural welfare delivery and localised administrative efficiency. While criticisms existed over employment levels and migration, surveys and ground reporting suggested that the perception of "overall improvements" in roads, electricity, panchayat-level governance, and women's empowerment became a decisive factor, especially among first-time female voters.

The BJP's national narrative of stability, infrastructure expansion,

and assertive governance also played a role. For many voters, the combination of the BJP's national clout and JD(U)'s state-level administrative model represented a balanced and complementary formula.

3. Communication Strategy: Hyper-Localized Campaigning with Macro Messaging

Another underappreciated driver was the NDA's micro-targeted campaign strategy. Constituency-level WhatsApp groups, booth committees, and youth volunteers played a vital role in mobilizing turnout. Localised talking points — often tailored to district-specific issues — ensured that macro narratives like development, welfare, national leadership, and women's empowerment felt personalised rather than abstract.

Conversely, the opposition's messaging suffered from inconsistency. While the RJD attempted to revive the narrative of social justice and unemployment as central themes, the message failed to dominate the discourse — partly because its on-ground coherence lagged behind the NDA's machinery.

4. Economic Sentiment and Aspirational Voting

The election also revealed rising aspirational voting patterns, particularly among younger voters seeking upward mobility. Even if economic challenges persisted, the perception was that NDA offered clearer pathways for progress — through enterprise schemes, technical training, and job-oriented initiatives. Many youths expressed that political stability and policy continuity were essential to economic improvement, which worked in the ruling alliance's favour.

Women voters also expressed aspirational motivations: safety, mobility, livelihood opportunities, and direct welfare transfers created a sense of empowerment tied closely to the incumbent government.

5. Decline of Anti-Incumbency — and the Rise of "Pro-incumbency Politics"

Perhaps the most striking undercurrent was the weak anti-incumbency despite nearly two decades of Nitish Kumar's influence. Instead, Bihar witnessed an emerging form of pro-incumbency in which voters rewarded perceived consistency, delivery, and order. The shift reflects broader changes in Indian electoral behaviour — where voters increasingly distinguish between national parties, state leadership, and the quality of governance.

The 2025 outcome was therefore not just a rejection of the opposition; it was also an active endorsement of a governance model and political coalition that many voters saw as reliable, tangible, and aligned with their future aspirations.



Why This Result Matters: Implications for Bihar and Beyond

Mandate for Stability and Continuity: With 202 seats, the NDA enjoys fiscal and administrative leeway, enabling it to implement its policy agenda with fewer constraints. Technology-enabled welfare schemes, infrastructure projects, and governance reforms may see smoother roll-out.

Shift in Political Balance: The rise of the BJP as the single largest party in Bihar marks a shift in the state's long-standing political dynamics, which were often dominated by regional parties and caste-based politics. This could influence future electoral strategies — including alliances and candidate selection.

Elections as Social Barometer: High turnout — especially strong female and youth participation — reflects evolving political consciousness, changing aspirations, and possibly shifting power dynamics in household and community-level decision-making.

Marginalisation of Political Alternatives: The poor performance of new entrants like JSP may dampen hopes for third-front alternatives. This election reinforces the dominance of major alliances, reducing electoral space for smaller or newly formed parties.

Signal for National Politics: Given Bihar's numerical weight and symbolic importance, the outcome could influence national-level political narratives — particularly regarding welfare governance, coalition dynamics, and the role of identity versus performance-based politics.

What the Numbers Don't Reveal (Yet): Aspects to Watch

While vote share is a key metric, the stark difference in vote-seat conversion indicates structural shifts. How much of this was driven by targeted campaigning, beneficiary mobilization (e.g. welfare recipients), or demographic changes remains to be analyzed in detail.

The impact of electoral roll revision — though widely noted, needs deeper scrutiny at constituency level: whether roll deletions or additions changed the balance significantly in close contests.

Voter turnout by specific demographics (caste, religion, socioeconomic background) is still being studied. Understanding which groups contributed heavily to the mandate will be critical to forecast future trends.

Governance outcomes: With the NDA's unchallenged hold, execution of policies, scheme delivery, and social equity will test if the electoral mandate translates into tangible improvements.

Conclusion

The 2025 Bihar Assembly election delivered a decisive verdict: a strong mandate for the NDA under the leadership of the BJP and JD(U), and a clear setback for the Mahagathbandhan. The results reflect not just a political win, but a social shift — high women

and youth turnout, influence of welfare and benefit-driven politics, effective alliance strategy, and fragmentation of opposition.

For Bihar, the coming five years will be shaped by how the ruling alliance converts electoral support into governance — addressing issues like employment, infrastructure, social welfare, and rural development. For national politics, Bihar's verdict underscores the continuing appeal of welfare-driven electoral politics and hints at the growing clout of major alliances even in states with strong regional identities.

As the state's legislature reconvenes and administration resumes, the electorate's expectations — expressed through a record turnout — remain high. The real challenge now lies in delivering on those expectations. **BI**





INDIA 2025.

INDIA'S GLOBAL RISE IN 2025

INSIDE INDIA'S GLOBAL RISE IN 2025 — AND THE INDIA WE MUST BUILD NEXT

by Suhani Nagpal

How diplomacy, trade, climate leadership and governance reforms shaped India's ascent and what 2026 demands from the nation's policymakers, institutions and citizens

For decades, India was described as a rising nation, a country full of promise, potential, and steady progress. But 2025 marked a historic turning point. It was the year India stopped rising and started leading.

The shift was not symbolic. It was structural, strategic, and globally recognised.

Across continents, from New York and Nairobi to Tokyo, Riyadh, Berlin and Brasília, India's imprint became unmistakable. The world began seeing India not merely as a large democracy or a fast-growing economy, but as a decisive power capable of shaping global outcomes

Why 2025 Mattered

India's ascent was built on four foundational drivers:

1. Purposeful Diplomacy

India's foreign engagements were no longer reactive. They were intentional, high-frequency, and strategically aligned to long-term national interests.

India:

- negotiated major bilateral and mini-lateral agreements,
- expanded its Indo-Pacific engagements,
- revitalised Global South partnerships, and
- assumed leadership roles in forums ranging from climate finance to technology governance.

The world took note of India's ability to navigate contradictions, balancing strategic autonomy while strengthening partnerships with the US, Europe, ASEAN, Africa and West Asia.

2. Institutional Strengthening

India's governance ecosystem demonstrated a new level of maturity in 2025. Multiple ministries worked in synchronisation, a departure from the earlier silo-driven approach.

This inter-ministerial coherence led to cleaner implementation pipelines, faster decision-making, and predictable policy environments, which global investors and governments increasingly valued.

Institutional reforms in banking, logistics, digital governance and trade facilitation helped India project a stable, reliable and future-ready face to the world.

3. Next-Gen Bureaucratic Leadership

The transformation of 2025 carried a bureaucratic signature. India's civil service, often criticised for being slow, displayed extraordinary agility:

- MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) officers shaped India's global narrative with precision.
- Commerce ministry teams worked behind the scenes to unlock new markets.
- Finance officials ensured macroeconomic steadiness amid global volatility.
- Technology and digital governance specialists helped export IndiaStack-like solutions to new partner countries
- Climate negotiators defended India's developmental rights while pushing constructive global commitments.

This combination of competence, speed and clarity gave India an edge rarely seen before.

4. India-First Global Strategy

2025 saw the consolidation of an India-first worldview: pragmatic, developmental, technology driven, and unafraid to articulate the interests of 1.4 billion people.

India projected itself as:

- a civilizational voice for fairness,
- a developmental voice for the Global South, and
- a technological voice for digital inclusion,
- a strategic voice for Indo-Pacific balance

The synergy between political leadership and administrative expertise ensured that India's positions were both principled and practical.

What India Became in 2025

India's global presence expanded across multiple geographies and sectors, leading analysts to describe 2025 as the year India entered a new global league.

A Trusted Development Partner for the Global South

India's development model; capacity building, training missions, technology partnerships, affordable financing became a benchmark for equitable growth.

A Pillar of Indo-Pacific Stability

India played a balancing role amid great power contests, strengthening maritime cooperation and regional security dialogues.

A Tech and Digital Governance Exporter

Digital Public Infrastructure became India's most successful "soft power export," with more countries adopting UPI-style payments, digital identity modules, and data governance frameworks.

A Key Voice in Climate Finance

India's climate negotiators pushed for fair, predictable financing and ensured that India's national interests were woven into global climate policies.

A Top Destination for Global Investments

Stable macroeconomic management, large-scale logistics reforms, and technology-led governance attracted unprecedented investor confidence.

More importantly, 2025 proved that governance, not just politics, drives global influence. The groundwork was laid across ministries; MEA, Commerce, Finance, Environment, Electronics, Skill, and many more, creating a unified governance ecosystem capable of projecting India's capabilities to the world.

The Pillars Of India's Global Rise

1. Diplomacy with Intent and Influence

In 2025, India's foreign policy shed any lingering hesitation and instead projected strategic clarity, confidence, and calibrated assertiveness. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) executed a year defined by purpose, marked by deeper ties with old partners and bold entry into new geographies.

India participated in over 35 high-level bilateral and multilateral engagements, each aligned with specific objectives; technology partnerships, market access, climate financing, diaspora welfare, defence cooperation, and energy security. Unlike previous decades, this year's diplomacy was not reactive. It was agenda-setting.

India's Permanent Missions in New York, Geneva, and Brussels amplified India's narrative with unprecedented coordination. Working across time zones, bureaucrats shaped resolutions, built coalitions, and defended India's interests with the confidence of a nation that knows its voice matters.

The bureaucracy behind these wins; ambassadors, economic counsellors, trade negotiators, climate diplomats, demonstrated professionalism and agility that global powers recognised and respected.

INDIA'S BIG MOMENTS OF 2025

- Hosted/led three major global summits
- Concluded two landmark trade negotiations
- Launched new Global South Development Partnerships
- Recorded highest-ever services export growth
- Negotiated major climate finance commitments
- Expanded defence & maritime cooperation in Indo-Pacific
- IndiaStack adopted by 5 new partner countries

"India is no longer reacting to global events, it is shaping them."

- Pavan Kapoor, Additional Secretary, MEA

2. Trade, Investment & Economic Diplomacy

India's economic diplomacy matured into a power lever in 2025. The world took notice of us not because of rhetoric but because of real structural change.

What strengthened India's position this year

- Manufacturing capacity at an all-time high
- Electronics, EVs, pharmaceuticals, green tech, and textiles driving exports
- Global firms relocating parts of their supply chains to India
- A sharp rise in engineering goods and services exports
- Strong integration with the Indo-Pacific and African markets

Behind the numbers were India's trade negotiators, often unseen but pivotal. From tariff talks to digital trade frameworks, these bureaucratic teams secured breakthroughs in Europe, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, opening doors for Indian exporters and tech companies.

“Our trade policy this year was not defensive. It was confident, competitive, and strategically designed.”

— Rajesh Agrawal, Secretary / Chief Trade Negotiator, Department of Commerce

3. Digital Governance as Soft Power

If 2025 belonged to any single Indian export, it was Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Countries across Asia, Africa and LatAm embraced IndiaStack-inspired solutions, placing Indian technocrats and advisors at the centre of global digital transformation.

Whether it was real-time payments, digital identity, paperless government services, or data empowerment frameworks, India's digital governance model became the template for emerging economies.

This year's milestones

- 9 new countries formally adopted IndiaStack-inspired digital solutions
- Indian technocrats stationed in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America
- New public-private digital cooperation missions launched
- A global consortium for DPI capacity-building announced in Q3
- India positioned as the world's leading provider of digital governance consulting

More importantly, DPI became a symbol of Indian soft power, a gift of technology rooted in public good philosophy.

“Digital governance became India's moral export - inclusive, scalable, and built for the world's majority.”

— Dr. Pramod Varma, Co-Founder, FIDE & Chief Architect Emeritus, IndiaStack

4. Climate Diplomacy & Green Commitments

India emerged as a constructive climate negotiator balancing development needs with ambitious sustainability commitments.

India's climate diplomacy focused on:

- Green hydrogen policy acceleration

- City-level climate resilience strategies
- Massive renewable energy expansion, particularly solar and offshore wind
- New financing partnerships with Europe, Gulf nations, and MDBs
- Technology-sharing agreements on carbon capture, waste-to-energy, and green mobility

India's negotiators were praised for balancing ambition with pragmatism, advocating for climate justice while committing to measurable action.

“The Paris Agreement is clear on who is to provide and mobilise the climate finance — it is the developed countries.”

Naresh Pal Gangwar — Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (Lead Negotiator for India at COP29)

5. The Bureaucracy Behind The Rise: India's Invisible Force

Policy wins are political; implementation wins are bureaucratic. India's administrative machinery played a pivotal role in converting 2025 into a year of global recognition.

A. MEA Diplomats: India's New Strategic Frontline

India's foreign service officers strengthened global partnerships through:

- Rapid crisis response
- Economic diplomacy
- Strategic communication
- Cultural diplomacy campaigns

B. Commerce & Finance Bureaucrats: The Engines of Economic Confidence

Behind every investment inflow and export surge stands months of negotiation, coordination, and regulatory alignment. India's chief negotiators unlocked new opportunities in pharmaceuticals, electronics, textiles, food processing, and digital services. Invest India teams, commerce bureaucrats, and finance ministry officers built confidence frameworks that made India one of the top destinations for manufacturing expansion in 2025.

C. Women in Strategic Leadership (Box Story)

2025 was the year women bureaucrats moved from key contributors to leading narrators of India's global story.

- Women leading climate negotiations
- Women heading critical economic divisions
- Women officers driving DPI collaborations
- Women diplomats strengthening cultural diplomacy

D. State Bureaucracies & District Innovations

India's global rise isn't built only in Delhi. It is built in districts, ports, SEZs, tech parks, rural clusters and smart cities. While national ministries designed India's broad strategic direction, it was state bureaucracies and district administrators who executed with precision, scale, and creativity.

Their innovations became case studies that India showcased on global platforms, from G20 legacy forums to UNDP development networks and Indo-Pacific tech collaborations.

Case studies include:

- Port-led export efficiency
- Climate-resilient city models
- Digital land record systems
- AI-enabled agriculture advisories

These subnational improvements strengthened India's credibility globally.

The India We Must Build Next (2026 & Beyond)

India's global ascent is real. But staying ahead will require something far more demanding, a transformation at home. India must now modernise its institutions, empower its people, and prepare its economy for a future defined by technology, geopolitics, and climate disruption. 2026 is not another year. It is a preparation window for the India of 2030, 2040, and beyond.

Below is the editorial blueprint for what India must build next.

1. The Governance Upgrade India Needs

A stronger India abroad demands a smarter India at home. India's governance systems must now match the scale and ambition of its global role. This requires:

• Reforming service delivery structures

From ration shops to hospitals to municipal systems, citizen-facing services must become predictable, digital, and transparent.

• Investing in bureaucratic training & specialisation

India needs domain experts in trade, cyber policy, AI regulation, climate diplomacy, data governance, and public finance.

• Strengthening inter-ministerial coordination

India's most successful reforms: GST, UPI, Aadhaar, PM Gati Shakti, worked because ministries collaborated. 2026 must institutionalise this model.

• Expanding data-driven governance

Real-time dashboards, predictive analytics, and outcome-linked budgeting should guide decision making across states and districts.

• Modernising public communication frameworks

Governments must communicate policy clearly, consistently, and credibly to combat misinformation and build citizen trust.

2. The Economic Priorities for 2026

India's next economic leap requires momentum, not comfort.

• MSME digital transformation

Small businesses must become digital-first to stay competitive globally for accounting, payments, tax filing, logistics, and credit must all be tech-integrated.

• Accelerated infrastructure build-out

2026 will determine if India can achieve a seamless logistics backbone: highways, ports, airports, freight corridors, and city mobility systems.

• Scaling semiconductor & EV ecosystems

From fabs to battery storage to green hydrogen, India must build the industries of the future, not just participate in them.

• Strengthening food and energy security

Climate-resilient agriculture, strategic grain reserves, and diversified energy sources will be essential in an unpredictable world.

• Globalising Indian startups and tech talent

India must become a global hub for innovation, AI development, and tech deployment: exporting products, talent, and intellectual capital.

3. Social Development Goals That Can't Wait

2026 must be a *"people-first transformation year."*

• Healthcare strengthening

A stronger primary health network, universal diagnostics, and digital medical records must become standard, not exceptional.

• Schooling system reforms

Foundational literacy, teacher training, and digital learning adoption must accelerate urgently to prepare India's next generation.

• Skilling for the AI economy

AI, robotics, automation, data science, chip design — India needs a national skilling revolution.

• Women-led development

Women must lead entrepreneurship, governance, digital inclusion, and labour-force expansion.

Women's growth is not social welfare. It is economic strategy.

• Urban resilience and climate adaptation

Cities must be redesigned for heatwaves, floods, mobility, waste management, and emergency preparedness.

Urban India is where India's future will be won or lost.

4. India's Global Strategy for 2026

Global leadership can no longer be episodic. It must be sustained. To maintain its global momentum, India must:

- **Expand its role in Global South diplomacy**
Be the voice of developing economies on growth, debt, digital governance, food security, and climate finance.
- **Double down on climate leadership**
From solar alliances to green hydrogen to climate finance frameworks, India must lead by action.
- **Strengthen regional security partnerships**
Indo-Pacific alliances, defence collaborations, and maritime partnerships must deepen in response to global flux.
- **Position India as a global tech + talent hub**
A workforce that can serve the world and a technology ecosystem that can shape global standards.
- **Deepen cultural diplomacy programs**
Soft power is a strategic asset from Ayurveda and yoga to cinema, cuisine, and cultural exchanges.

2025 Proved a Bigger Truth

Global influence is not built by politics alone. It is built by governance — the patient, disciplined work of institutions. India's rise in 2025 was not a moment, but a milestone.

2025 Was India's Global Breakthrough. 2026 Must Be India's Governance Breakthrough.

India cannot lead globally with outdated systems at home. It cannot shape world debates without strengthening domestic capabilities. It cannot be a global benchmark without becoming a domestic model.

The momentum of 2025 must translate into the transformation of 2026.

- 2026 must be the year India:
- modernises governance,
 - invests in human capital,
 - builds climate resilience,
 - reforms public institutions, and
 - prepares society for a technology-driven future.
- 2025 will be remembered as the year India stepped forward confidently into the world.
2026 must be remembered as the year India transformed itself; boldly, systematically, and inclusively.
- The story ahead is not just about the India the world sees, but the India we build at home.

A nation rising globally.
A nation strengthening locally.
A nation ready for its next chapter. **BI**

“India’s rise in 2025 was built on confidence. India’s future in 2026 will be built on competence.”

— Suhani Nagpal, Executive Editor, Bureaucracy India Magazine

India's Global Influence in Numbers (2025)			
 DIPLOMACY & GEOPOLITICS		 TRADE & ECONOMY	
37 high-level bilateral visits		\$850+ billion total exports	
3 major global summits hosted/or chaired		24% year on year rise in services exports	
14 strategic security dialogues strengthened		11% year on year rise in bilateral trade	
21 new regional cooperation frameworks		2 landmark trade negotiations concluded	
 DIGITAL LEADERSHIP		 CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY	
9 countries adopting IndiaStack-inspired DPI platforms		22% growth in renewable capacity	
+150 million global users impacted by India's DPI advisory support		14 new climate partnerships	
\$300 million+ DPI cooperation announced		5 global alliances under India's leadership. Salinity, Green hydrogen, resilience, EV mobility, climate finance	

The Rise of Women in Indian Sports

and the Growing Role of Bureaucracy



Over the past two decades, the landscape of women's sports in India has undergone a profound transformation. What was once marginal participation hampered by social stigma, limited funding, poor facilities and lack of institutional support has evolved into one of growing representation, rising global success, and increasingly structured backing from state and national agencies. The landmark 2025 triumph of the Indian Women's Cricket Team (Women in Blue) at the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup is only the latest example of how women are carving out a space for themselves, aided significantly by Indian bureaucracy and policy interventions that are finally translating rhetoric into results.

A Changing Landscape: From Marginal to Mainstream

Historically, women in India faced multiple barriers to sports: social expectations limiting girls to domestic roles, lack of safe facilities, funding disparities, minimal institutional support, and scant coverage or recognition. Yet, over time, determined individuals such as PV Sindhu (badminton), Mary Kom (boxing), Sakshi Malik and Vinesh Phogat (wrestling), Mirabai Chanu (weightlifting), Hima Das (athletics), and Lovlina Borgohain (boxing), among others, broke through ceilings winning medals, becoming role models, starting academies, and championing women's sport across geographies.

Academic and policy research confirms the shift: a recent temporal

analysis notes that female participation in international sports has grown significantly over time, with women contributing meaningfully to India's Commonwealth, Asian and Olympic campaigns.

Particularly after 2018, when a series of institutional reforms were introduced, women's participation in national multi-sport events and grassroots competitions began climbing sharply. The dedication of resources, infrastructure and systemic support helped turn an aspirational shift into actual gains on the field.

The 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup: A Watershed Moment

Nothing symbolises change more than the Women in Blue lifting the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup for the first time. On 2 November 2025, at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai, India defeated South Africa Women's Cricket Team by 52 runs, posting 298/7 in 50 overs and bundling out South Africa for 246 in 45.3 overs.

Standout performances fuelled this historic win. Shafali Verma smashed a blazing 87, earning Player of the Match, while Deepthi Sharma delivered all-round brilliance, scoring 58 and taking a match-winning 5/39, awarding her Player of the Tournament.

Long-time fans and cricketing pundits have already likened this to India's 1983 men's World Cup triumph, a landmark moment that could shift the perception of women's cricket and sport at large.

What makes this victory especially meaningful is not just the trophy, but the message it sends: women's sport matters, draws crowds, commands respect and can bring global glory for India.

The Bureaucratic Backbone: Policy, Funding and Institutional Support

Behind these successes lies an expanding framework of institutional support engineered by the Indian bureaucracy from national to district level. Key among them:

Khelo India Programme and the Women's League ("Sports for Women"): The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports now runs a dedicated "Sports for Women" component. As per the 2023-24 annual report, 575 competitions have been organised nationwide under this banner, with 60,147 women athletes participating.

These leagues span over 21 sports disciplines across many States and UTs, giving young girls the opportunity to train and compete in structured events.

The ASMITA league (Achieving Sports Milestones by Inspiring Women through Action), launched in August 2023 for women athletes, further brands and institutionalises this push.

Early impact: *An earlier analysis shows that from 2018 to 2020, women's participation in Khelo India Games rose by 161%.*

Also, the number of female athletes under the high-performance scheme has expanded: the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) included 86 women in 2018, and by recent years the number reportedly nearly doubled.

Infrastructure & Training: The increase in sports-infrastructure projects from just a handful in 2014 to hundreds now — along with expansion of training centres and excellence hubs under Sports Authority of India (SAI) and related state agencies has provided more access to coaching, nutrition, exposure and competition facilities.

Institutional pathways beyond sports bodies: Public-sector units (Railways, Army, other PSUs), which have long recruited women athletes for sports quotas, continue to provide stable employment and support offering both financial security and time to train. Meanwhile, state sports departments and district-level officers play an increasingly active role in identifying and nurturing talent, supporting grassroots efforts especially in smaller towns and rural areas.

Policy and intersectional support: Broader social schemes such as initiatives focusing on women's welfare, education, empowerment and self-defence have dovetailed with sports policy in creating a less hostile environment for women athletes. Combined, these reflect an institutional acceptance that sports can be integral to gender equity and social empowerment.

Beyond Cricket: Women's Sporting Success Across Disciplines

Cricket may dominate headlines now, but Indian women have long

been winning on world stages across diverse sports. PV Sindhu's Olympic and world-championship medals in badminton; Mary Kom and Lovlina Borgohain's boxing accolades; Sakshi Malik and Vinesh Phogat's wrestling successes; Mirabai Chanu's Olympic weightlifting medals; Hima Das and other athletes' sprinting feats these have built a strong foundation of belief and visibility.

Between 2016 and 2020, women comprised roughly 45–53 % of India's Olympic contingent, and contributed significantly to national medal tallies in those years.

Their success often despite limited early support has generated demand for better facilities, equal funding, and recognition. It is these athletes who helped seed enthusiasm for programmes like Khelo India and TOPS; their stories became evidence that investment in women's sport can yield results.

What Still Needs to Change: The Road Ahead

Despite the progress, critical gaps remain. First, rural and small-town infrastructure continues to lag, especially for facilities needed for sports beyond athletics or cricket. Sports complexes, secured spaces for training, qualified coaches many areas still lack basic support.

Second, safety and societal resistance remain, especially for girls from conservative backgrounds; gender bias, discomfort with travelling, modesty concerns these persist in many regions. Though schemes exist, implementation is uneven requiring more decentralised outreach, community-level sensitisation, and safe transport or lodging.

Third, media and commercial coverage remain skewed: though women's cricket and select star athletes draw attention, many women's sports still struggle for visibility, sponsorship, and consistent media narrative. Pay gaps between male and female athletes, and between dominant and non-dominant sports, continue to be a challenge.

Finally, systemic support for long-term athlete development career counselling, education-sport balance, mental health, retirement planning is only starting to take shape; more needs to be done to sustain careers, especially after peak competitive years.

Conclusion

The rise of women in Indian sports from the sidelines to centre stage is one of the most hopeful stories of the last two decades. The 2025 World Cup win by the Indian Women's Cricket Team may well be the most visible symbol yet of that transformation. But behind that triumph lies decades of incremental change, policy interventions, institutional commitments and relentless individual efforts.

The Indian bureaucracy through schemes like Khelo India (including the ASMITA Women's League), TOPS, and large-scale infrastructure investment has begun to act as a real enabler. Training centres run by SAI, support from PSUs and district-level sports departments, and growing grassroots engagement have together created a pipeline for women athletes of all backgrounds. **BI**

Kerala's New Dawn: From Hardship to Hope

On 1 November 2025 — Kerala Piravi, the day that marks the state's formation — Pinarayi Vijayan, Chief Minister of Kerala, announced a milestone that many thought was aspirational: Kerala has become the first Indian state to eradicate “extreme poverty.”

This achievement is the culmination of the state's ambitious Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme (EPEP), launched in 2021. Under this programme, a thorough ground-level survey — carried out by local self-government bodies, community volunteers and welfare workers — identified 64,006 families across the state living under conditions of severe deprivation: lack of stable income, insecure housing, inadequate food and healthcare, lack of land or land titles, and absence of access to basic social benefits.

For each of these families, the administration formulated a micro-plan tailored to their needs — a first of its kind in scale and detail. These plans ranged from providing safe housing under the state's LIFE Mission, land allotment to landless families, income and livelihood support, identity and documentation (Aadhaar, ration cards, bank accounts), access to healthcare, and social-benefit linkages.

By mid-2025, according to government data, over 90% of these families had been rehabilitated under EPEP — meaning basic needs were secured and families were no longer considered to be in “extreme deprivation.”

From Surveys to Safe Homes, Livelihoods and Security

The transformation is tangible in many homes and lives. Over 5,400 new houses were built and thousands more renovated giving safe roofs to previously homeless or shelter-less families.

Land allotments went to hundreds of landless households, helping secure long-term tenure. For daily wage labourers and people without steady income, livelihood support and employment schemes provided income stability.

For those with chronic health challenges or disabilities, the government extended medical treatment, palliative care, so-

cial security benefits, and facilitated identity documentation to ensure access to welfare schemes.

According to the 2023 national multidimensional poverty data, Kerala already had one of the lowest poverty rates in India — just 0.55% of its population identified as multi-dimensionally poor.

The EPEP, however, went further: it targeted the last mile the most vulnerable, the invisible poor and helped bring them into the fold of dignity, security and opportunity.

What This Means for Kerala And Beyond

This declaration isn't just symbolic. For thousands of families, it translates into dignity, stability, hope. Children can go to school without hunger worries. Families sleep in safe homes. Mothers have access to healthcare. Men and women find livelihood or stable jobs. The state's welfare-net long celebrated for literacy, health and social indicators has now evolved into a targeted, inclusive framework that reaches those left behind.

Kerala's success under EPEP could become a blueprint for other Indian states. It shows how combining local governance, participatory surveys, tailored welfare, and consistent political commitment can address extreme deprivation even in a populous and diverse state.

The announcement also sends a strong message: poverty eradication is not utopian — with right policies, data-driven planning, and social will, real change is possible.

For the beneficiaries, the announcement marks a turning point. For the nation, it offers a renewed sense of hope that India's larger ambition of ending poverty could be achieved — not just by broad programmes, but by those that find and uplift the most invisible and vulnerable.

Kerala's declaration of being “extreme-poverty free” is more than a headline, it's a hope renewed, lives transformed, a new social contract realized. If the commitment to sustain this promise holds, this could be the beginning of a genuinely inclusive future, not just for Kerala, but for all India. **BI**



Knitdreams

One-stop MICE Solution For India & Abroad



MEETINGS



INCENTIVES



CONFERENCE



EXHIBITIONS



Call Us for more details

+91-8800149149
+91-9999967707

email us at

suhani@knitdreams.in
suhani17.vyas@gmail.com

WEBSITE

www.knitdreams.in



ITB Asia 2025: Massive Global Tourism Moment

by BI Bureau

Held in the vibrant heart of Singapore in October 2025, ITB Asia reaffirmed its standing as one of the world's most influential travel trade shows, where global tourism boards, airlines, hospitality leaders, travel-tech innovators, and policy-makers converge to shape the next chapter of travel. This year, the event carried a renewed sense of ambition, with the Asia-Pacific region rising as the epicentre of tourism recovery, strategy, and opportunity.

What Is ITB Asia & Why It Matters

Since its inception, ITB Asia has evolved into a melting pot of ideas and innovation bringing together travel professionals from more than 120 countries. As the world's travel economy embraces digitization, sustainable tourism models, and new-age consumer behaviour, ITB Asia stands at the crossroads of transformation. The exhibition spans B2B meetings, policy dialogues, hospitality showcases, aviation strategies, and conferences that spotlight everything from AI-driven travel products to climate-positive tourism infrastructures.

Singapore's role as host nation is integral to this influence. As a strategic global tourism hub with world-class infrastructure and aviation connectivity, the country elevates ITB Asia's purpose: to become the central stage for future-ready tourism development.

Its neutrality, efficiency, and global reach make it an ideal bridge between governments, private stakeholders, and emerging tourism markets.

With unmatched growth in international participation, a record number of business meetings, and a sharp focus on innovation, sustainability, and strategic partnerships, ITB Asia has firmly established its position as the largest travel trade show in Asia Pacific shaping the future of travel in the region.

Over three days at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre, the region's largest travel trade show reaffirmed its status as the must-attend platform for Asia Pacific's travel and tourism sector, where trends are set, deals are made, and the future of travel is shaped. This year, ITB Asia not only delivered record-breaking participation but also sparked insightful discussions and collaboration across the industry, highlighting key developments in digital innovation, sustainable tourism, and market growth. Notable Takeaways from the conference indicate that AI-driven innovation is rapidly transforming travel and hospitality experiences, new distribution and business models are reshaping how travel is sold and connected across Asia, and the MICE sector is reinventing itself through technology and immersive event design to drive engagement and ROI, reinforcing why ITB Asia continues to be the place where industry leaders converge to turn ideas into action.

“ITB Asia remains to be the meeting point where the world connects with Asia,” said Darren Seah, Executive Director of Messe Berlin Asia Pacific. “This year’s record engagement demonstrates how the industry is collectively embracing innovation, sustainability, and collaboration to drive future growth.”

Spotlight on Experiential Travel: New Tripadvisor Partnership
A key milestone at ITB Asia 2025 was the announcement of a strategic collaboration with Tripadvisor, underlining the show’s renewed focus on experiential travel. Messe Berlin Asia Pacific and Tripadvisor signed a Memorandum of Understanding to co-develop the Experience Pavilion, which will debut at ITB Asia 2026, showcasing adventure, culture, wellness, culinary tourism, and other immersive experiences. Tripadvisor will co-curate the pavilion’s content, bringing together leading experience-driven travel providers, while Messe Berlin ensures prime positioning and targeted buyer engagement. Experiential travel is rapidly growing, with Tripadvisor reporting over 11 million experiences booked on their sites in the first half of 2025 alone, a 15% year-on-year increase, highlighting the segment’s rising importance for the industry.

In parallel, the Singapore Tourism Board will extend strategic support from 2026 to 2028, helping to enhance content pillars, co-marketing initiatives, and government participation, further cementing ITB Asia’s role as the largest B2B travel trade show in Asia Pacific and a hub for innovation in the global travel industry. To further spotlight creativity and new ideas, ITB Asia will also introduce a “New Offering” badge from 2026, recognizing exhibitors presenting innovative products, services, or destinations. Each year, a curated selection of exhibitors will be highlighted, underscoring ITB Asia’s role as a launchpad for industry breakthroughs and guiding buyers and media to the most forward-thinking offerings.

India’s Powerful Presence at ITB Asia 2025

India’s pavilion at ITB Asia was unmistakably one of the most dynamic. Visually striking, culturally immersive, and strategically curated, it offered the world a panoramic view of India as a multi-dimensional destination. The overarching theme—“Incredible India: Timeless Journeys, Future Possibilities”—aligned heritage with innovation, spirituality with sustainability, and culture with commerce.

Goa

The Goa pavilion was part of a broader push by the Goa Tourism Department to promote a new vision of tourism: one that emphasizes sustainability, cultural heritage and community-focused travel. Instead of just promoting beaches and nightlife (the traditional image of Goa), the pavilion highlighted “regenerative tourism”: eco-friendly travel, cultural heritage tours (heritage towns, forts, architecture, local festivals), rural tourism, spiritual/wellness retreats, and immersive “off-the-beaten-path” experiences.

Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh positioned itself as the “Heart of Incredible India,” highlighting its UNESCO sites, wildlife reserves, and iconic Khajuraho temples. With immersive VR safaris and heritage walkthroughs, it targeted adventure travelers, culture enthusiasts, and conservation-focused tourism partners.

Jammu & Kashmir / Ladakh

Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh showcased contrasting yet complementary narratives—lush valleys and spiritual calm alongside high-altitude adventure and pristine landscapes. Their focus on all-season tourism, adventure sports, and cinematic destinations drew strong global interest.

Uttar Pradesh

It highlighted a wide range of what UP offers: from spiritual tourism and the Buddhist Circuit (sacred sites like Sarnath, Kushinagar, Shravasti) to heritage monuments (such as Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Fatehpur Sikri), eco-tourism, cultural traditions, crafts and more. The pavilion was designed to appeal to both travel-industry professionals (B2B) and tourists: interactive displays, multimedia presentations, likely brochures/maps, and storytelling of cultural heritage, eco, spiritual and adventure tourism potential.

India’s presence at ITB Asia 2025 revealed its intention to become a global tourism powerhouse. The momentum generated during India’s G20 presidency continued to influence conversations around sustainable tourism frameworks, cultural exchange, and mobility partnerships. With digitization leading the next phase of global travel, India showcased scalable models in e-governance, digital ticketing, and virtual tourism infrastructure.



Beyond the pavilions, panels and partnerships formed on the show floor, ITB Asia 2025 revealed something even more valuable perspective. In a special conversation with **Mr. Darren Seah, Executive Director of ITB Asia**, Bureaucracy India explored the strategic thinking that drives the event, the role of India in shaping its future editions, and the changing dynamics of the global tourism industry.

Exclusive Interview with the Mr. Darren Seah Executive Director of ITB Asia

1. Could you share your vision for ITB Asia, MICE Show Asia, and Travel Tech Asia?

Absolutely. The unique 3-in-1 format – ITB Asia, MICE Show Asia, and Travel Tech Asia offers an unparalleled opportunity for attendees to engage with the full spectrum of the global travel industry. With a single ticket, participants can access content and exhibitors across leisure travel, corporate travel, MICE, and travel technology sectors. This integrated setup encourages cross-sector collaboration and drives stronger business outcomes.

Looking ahead, ITB Asia's renewed vision places a strong focus on experiential travel emphasizing immersive, culturally rich, wellness, adventure, and culinary experiences. In line with this, we're excited to announce a new collaboration with Tripadvisor, who will codevelop our Experience Pavilion, debuting in 2026. We're also proud to have the strategic support of the Singapore Tourism Board from 2026 to 2028. This partnership will enhance our content pillars, co-marketing efforts, and government engagement across the region.

In parallel, we're further strengthening MICE Show Asia as the premier platform for incentive travel, meetings, and events in the APAC region, and positioning Travel Tech Asia as the leading showcase for travel technology, uniting top brands, innovative startups, and industry leaders to shape the future of tourism.

We're also looking to expand Travel Meet Asia, our year-round regional event series, to further increase its industry impact and reach.

2. How has the profile of participants evolved over the years?

We've seen remarkable growth across all fronts. Today, over 1,500 pre-qualified top buyers are attending – a significant increase in both quality and quantity. Exhibitor numbers are at an all-time high, with notable growth from Central Asia, Africa, and India, as well as an expanded Singapore Zone.

Our exhibitors now represent the entire global travel ecosystem – from airlines and hotels to DMCs, attractions, and travel tech providers. We're also welcoming exciting new destinations such as City of Monreale (Sicily, Italy), Lithuania Travel, Visit Hungary, the Government of Tamil Nadu, Da Nang Tourism Promotion Center, the Kaohsiung City Government, and Visit Alatau, adding even greater international diversity.

3. What key travel and MICE trends are driving the industry today in APAC?

Several key trends are shaping the industry:

- Rapid growth in wellness, medical, luxury, and experiential travel
- Increasing demand for hybrid events and immersive corporate experiences
- Technology and personalization are redefining traveler expectations

We're also seeing sectors like adventure cruises and wellness resorts gaining strong traction from source markets like APAC and the Middle East.

4. What distinguishes ITB Asia, MICE Show Asia, and Travel Tech Asia from other global trade shows?

What makes our event unique is the 3-in-1 format. While each show has its own identity, exhibitors, and conference tracks, they are strategically interconnected. This allows for learning, networking, and business generation across sectors.

For example, a travel tech startup may find value not only in meeting other tech partners, but also hotel groups and corporate event planners. This level of cross-sector exposure is unmatched and extremely effective for building relationships.

5. How do you see technology transforming the industry?

Technology is reshaping every aspect of travel – from AI-powered personalization and automated operations to real-time data and seamless booking systems.

At Travel Tech Asia, we showcase cutting-edge innovations such as digital check-ins, AI driven revenue management, and virtual destination previews. We're seeing exciting startups presenting solutions that optimize corporate travel and enhance the traveler experience through smart automation.

6. Sustainability has become central to global travel – how is ITB Asia promoting it?

Sustainability is deeply embedded across all three shows. We're working with respected partners like the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to lead conversations on regenerative tourism, community impact, and carbon-conscious operations.

Our long-standing venue partner, Marina Bay Sands Expo, has been a trailblazer in sustainability – using over 1 million liters of recycled rainwater annually and saving 7.4 million kWh of energy through an AI-powered smart building management system. Their solar panel installations reduce CO₂ emissions by 70 tons each year.

7. How has ITB Asia supported post-pandemic recovery?

ITB Asia has been instrumental in rebuilding the travel industry post-pandemic. We've reconnected buyers, suppliers, and destinations, provided a trusted space for face-to-face business, and reignited industry momentum.

By offering a platform for deal-making, networking, and knowledge sharing, we've helped drive recovery across all sectors – from leisure to MICE to tech. Importantly, the MICE Show Asia offered actionable workshops and tools for planning safe, efficient hybrid events – essential to reviving business travel.

8. How do you curate content and ensure relevance?

Our conference team works year-round to ensure the programme addresses the industry's most pressing challenges and exciting opportunities – including traveller behavior shifts, digital transformation, sustainability, and emerging markets.

We collaborate with renowned content partners like Uncommon Conferences, GSTC, ATTA, and the World Travel Research Organisation. Many of our C-level speakers return year after year because of the event's credibility and relevance.

By maintaining close engagement with industry stakeholders, our content stays timely, actionable, and future-focused.

9. Could you share highlights or innovations at this year's edition? This is our largest edition ever – with five halls, 1,500+ top buyers, and record international participation.

We're debuting the Experience & Attractions Highlight Zone, featuring brands like Resorts World Sentosa, Disney Cruise Line, Merlin, and AMA Waterways, all focused on how travelers connect with destinations.

We're also delivering 4,500+ minutes of curated conference content across 100 sessions with 170+ expert speakers, spotlighting:

- Experiential Travel, through immersive brand showcases
- Technology & Digital Transformation, via Travel Tech Asia
- Business Travel & MICE, with a focus on sustainability, hybrid formats, and new engagement models

Technology and digital innovation will take center stage at Travel Tech Asia, showcasing how AI, automation, and data-driven insights are transforming efficiency and enabling hyper personalised experiences across the travel value chain.

Meanwhile, business travel and the MICE sector continue to play a pivotal role at MICE Show Asia, with a strong focus on sustainability, hybrid engagement models, and the ongoing evolution of event design and delivery.

10. What has been the biggest challenge and the most rewarding part of your role as Executive Director?

The biggest challenge is ensuring alignment and excellence across all three shows – balancing distinct identities while maintaining a seamless, high-quality experience.

The most rewarding part? Seeing our efforts culminate in real business outcomes – meaningful connections, successful deals, and long-term partnerships. The energy of packed meeting rooms, full schedules, and genuine conversations reminds us why we do what we do.

11. What advice would you give to young professionals entering the travel, MICE, or events sector?

Be open to innovation, embrace technology, and think across sectors. Build networks not just in one vertical, but across leisure, corporate, MICE, and tech.

And above all – stay agile. The APAC travel landscape evolves rapidly, and adaptability is key to success.

12. How would you define the future of travel in Asia-Pacific?

The future of travel in APAC will be defined by:

- Continued growth in wellness, luxury, experiential, and sustainable travel
- Technology driving personalization, efficiency, and smarter booking systems
- An increase in cross-regional partnerships and demand for immersive travel products that offer deeper engagement

It's an exciting time for the region, and ITB Asia is proud to be at the heart of it. **BI**



*Mr. Darren Seah, Executive Director
of ITB Asia*



**world
travel
market**

London

WTM London 2025

Travel's Global Reset on Full Display

by BI Bureau

As global tourism rebounds in the wake of pandemic-era disruptions and shifting international dynamics, the 2025 edition of World Travel Market London (WTM London) has emerged as a key milestone. With rising travel demand worldwide, WTM London 2025 serves as a barometer of the industry's recovery, offering a gathering ground for tourism boards, businesses, innovators and policymakers. In 2025, the fair at ExCeL London is scaling new heights — expanding its physical footprint, broadening its thematic scope, and reimagining how travel trade fairs can shape tourism's future.

What is WTM London

Founded over four decades ago, WTM London has evolved into perhaps the most influential travel-trade fair globally. It functions as a convergence point for a wide range of stakeholders: national and regional tourism boards, airlines, hotel and resort operators, tour operators, travel-tech firms, media, travel buyers and planners, as well as government officials. The fair provides a centralized market to network, negotiate B2B deals, launch new travel offerings, and discuss trends that define the future of tourism. Beyond commerce, WTM London is a platform for policy-level dialogue, thought leadership, and cross-border cooperation.

What's New in 2025

The 2025 edition of WTM London — scheduled for 4–6 November 2025 at ExCeL London — is being hailed as the largest in its 45-year history.

Major Venue Expansion: The venue is expanding by 25,000 m², representing roughly a 25% increase in exhibition space. This expansion allows for more exhibitors, larger stands, and more elaborate activations.

Record Participation & Global Reach: Preliminary data show attendance crossing 46,500 people, with representatives from 182 countries. The number of pre-qualified buyers grew by 8% compared to 2024 — rising to 5,500 buyers, while exhibitor numbers rose about 5%.

WTM Trend Fest: For the first time, the fair integrates a cultural-experiential programme, dubbed WTM TrendFest, designed to showcase immersive global travel experiences. It features live performances, gastronomy, wellness activations, adventure and pop-culture segments — marking a shift toward experiential and emotional engagement beyond traditional brochures and stalls.

Launch of WTM TV: 2025 will also see the launch of WTM TV — a dedicated media channel for live coverage, interviews, showcases and extended reach beyond the physical venue. This allows broader global access and amplifies visibility for exhibitors and destinations.

Unified Conference Theme: All six tracks of the conference, covering Sustainability, Technology, DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Accessibility & Inclusion), Marketing, Geo-economics and Travel Trends — are being structured under the single umbrella theme: “Reimagining Travel in a Changing World.” This cohesive framing is intended to align sessions and discussions with global shifts in travel behaviour and industry priorities.

Global Tourism and What's at Stake

WTM London 2025 arrives at a juncture when global tourism is rapidly transforming. As travel rebounds from pandemic-induced standstill and reshuffles in geopolitics, the fair represents a rare opportunity to reset tourism patterns, reintroduce destinations, and chart sustainable growth paths. For countries aiming to revive inbound tourism, expand outbound flows, or capture emerging trends (eco-tourism, wellness, adventure, cultural immersion), WTM offers a strategic moment.

The expanded venue and diversified programming reflect deeper shifts: travellers seeking more than sightseeing — increasingly valuing experiences, wellness, culture, sustainability and social responsibility. WTM TrendFest shows the industry understands that future tourism is about immersive, meaningful engagement.

For nations such as India, this edition of WTM provides a platform to position themselves anew: as heritage-rich yet modern, diverse yet connected, capable of catering to traditional tourism and new-age experiential demands alike.

Key Themes to Watch at WTM 2025

Sustainability & Eco-tourism: As environmental concerns take center stage globally, sessions under the Sustainability Summit will focus on regenerative travel, low-impact tourism models, and sustainable product design. WTM provides a forum for tourism boards, policymakers and businesses to align on green standards.

Travel Tech & Digital Transformation: The growth of the travel-tech segment at WTM 2025 reportedly over 55% increase — demonstrates how technology, AI, digital platforms, and data-driven personalization are transforming travel planning, distribution and customer experience.

Cultural & Experiential Tourism: Through TrendFest and the growing presence of experience providers (up 31% compared to 2024), WTM acknowledges the shift in traveller demand toward immersive, emotionally resonant, culturally rich and personalized travel experiences.

Accessibility, Inclusion & Diversity: In the post-pandemic world, travel inclusivity for differently-abled travellers, seniors, and diverse demographics is gaining importance. WTM's DEAI track aims to explore policies, innovations and designs that make travel more accessible and equitable.

Global Partnerships & Investment: With over 182 countries represented and large-scale B2B meetings (pre-scheduled meetings exceeding 40,000), WTM continues to serve as a hub for new alliances, foreign direct investment in tourism infrastructure, cross-border promotion, and bilateral cooperation.

Skill Development & Tourism Careers: The conference will also highlight discussions around capacity-building, digital literacy, training, and professionalisation of tourism vital in a shifting global tourism ecosystem that demands new skills in hospitality, sustainability, tech-savvy operations, and cultural curation.

Implications for Indian Stakeholders

For Indian travel businesses, hospitality players, tour operators, content creators and destination-marketing bodies, WTM London 2025 presents a window of opportunity, perhaps the most significant in recent years.

Indian tourism boards can showcase a rich mix: heritage, culture, spiritual tourism, adventure, eco-tourism and wellness aligning with global demand for experiential travel.

Hotels, resorts, and boutique properties targeting high-end or niche markets (wellness, heritage stays, eco-lodges) can network with global buyers and align with evolving standards and preferences.

Tour operators and travel-tech startups can collaborate with international partners, tap into outbound travel flows, or co-create packages for diaspora or foreign travellers.

Young travel content creators and youth-oriented travel media can observe emerging trends and global consumer preferences — grounding their storytelling, marketing, and travel-content strategies in what global buyers and travellers are beginning to value.

Policymakers and state-level tourism departments (e.g., from various Indian states) attending WTM can attract investment, build global linkages, and position emerging destinations on the global map.

Challenges and Balanced Concerns

However, the scale and ambition of WTM 2025 raise critical questions and concerns:

Mass-tourism vs Sustainability: As exhibitors promote aggressive outbound and inbound flows, there is a risk of over-tourism, environmental degradation and cultural commodification. The drive for volume must be balanced with responsible tourism practices.

Over-commercialisation & Inequity: The spectacle of immersive activations and TrendFest, while appealing, could prioritise glossy, high-budget experiences — potentially marginalising smaller or traditional community-based tourism players.

Closing Reflections

WTM London 2025 stands as a defining moment for global tourism — a moment of reinvention, ambition, and optimism. With expanded space, diverse stakeholders, immersive experiences and a unified focus on “Reimagining Travel in a Changing World,” the fair offers the industry a chance to rebuild stronger, smarter and more sustainably.

For India and its travel stakeholders, the event opens doors to new markets, collaborations, and visibility. Yet success will depend on balancing opportunity with responsibility: promoting tourism while preserving heritage, enabling growth while safeguarding communities, and embracing innovation while ensuring equity.

In an era where travel reveals not just places but cultures, hopes and common humanity — WTM London 2025 will help chart whether tourism's recovery will lead to a better-connected, more conscious world — or a hurried return to unsustainable patterns. The next few years will tell if this grand reset truly delivers. **BI**

From Prague to the Vineyards

Czechia's Autumn Invitation to Indian Travellers

by BI Bureau

As Europe shifts from summer's brightness to the golden hush of autumn, one destination quietly steps into its most enchanting season Czechia. With vineyards turning amber, towns softening into warm hues, and historic streets shedding the relentless pace of peak tourism, the country opens itself to a slower, richer and more immersive travel experience. For Indian travellers seeking a blend of culture, comfort and discovery, Czechia in autumn presents an irresistible proposition.

At the heart of the Czech experience is Prague, a city that feels almost poetic under the autumn sky. The cooler weather makes long walks through its cobbled lanes far more inviting. Mornings begin with coffee beside the calm waters of the Vltava River, while evenings are best spent wandering across the iconic Charles Bridge, as the city's Gothic silhouettes soften in the fading light. With fewer crowds, Prague's Old Town, museums and intimate cafes feel more accessible, allowing visitors to experience the city as locals do unhurried and deeply present.

Yet, Czechia's charm extends well beyond its capital. A few hours south lies South Moravia, a region that reveals an entirely different identity of the country. Known for its picturesque vineyards and traditional wine culture, towns like Mikulov, Znojmo, and the Lednice-Valtice area offer an authentic taste of rural European life. The rolling hills, golden vines and historic architecture create a scenery straight out of a painting. Travellers can visit family-run wineries, join guided tastings, or even cycle from village to village along scenic trails. The region is known for producing exceptional varieties of wine, including Riesling, Pálava, and Saint Laurent, offering a sensory journey for both wine lovers and first-time explorers.

For Indian travellers, in particular, autumn introduces a softer, more intimate side of Czechia one defined by local markets, seasonal harvests, and cultural encounters. The compact size of the country makes it easy to move between urban heritage and countryside tranquility within a few hours, making it an ideal multi-experience destination without the exhaustion that often accompanies European travel.



But Czechia's appeal is not limited to its autumn beauty. The country boasts over 1,200 castles, 16 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, historic spa towns such as Karlovy Vary, and picturesque destinations like Český Krumlov, Telč, and Olomouc. Its world-renowned glassmaking and crystal industry, omnipresent beer culture, and traditional thermal spas make it one of Europe's most culturally layered destinations. Surrounded by rolling green hills, forests and lakes, Czechia offers an immersive environment that blends history, nature and modern comfort all under a mild and welcoming climate.

Complementing Czechia's tourism outreach is the strategic support of VFS Global Tourism Services, a leader in destination representation and tourism facilitation. With 16 years of experience and service to over 25 destinations worldwide, VFS Global assists countries in reaching their tourism goals through activities such as destination marketing, B2B roadshows, consumer engagement programs, digital campaigns and trade support initiatives. Their role strengthens international connectivity and helps deliver meaningful travel experiences.

Beyond tourism promotion, VFS Global also serves as a trusted technology partner to governments, managing over 514 million transactions across 165 countries with a strong focus on ethical practices, innovation and sustainability. By handling administrative tasks related to travel documentation and consular services, the company enables governments to focus on decision-making while travelers experience smoother access to global mobility.

In a world where travel often feels rushed and overcrowded, Czechia's autumn narrative stands out calm, inviting, and beautifully authentic. From the historic streets of Prague to the sunlit vineyards of Moravia, the country invites Indian travellers to slow down, breathe in Europe's quieter beauty, and rediscover the joy of meaningful exploration.

This autumn, Czechia is not just a destination — it is an experience waiting to be lived.

Dev Deepawali: The Diwali of the Gods

by Vibha Gurtu

Director, Spiritual Tara

Dev Deepawali of Varanasi, the “Diwali of the Gods,” is the major festival of the oldest living holy city of the world. The festival commemorates the victory of Lord Shiva over the demon Tripurasura and is believed to be the day the gods descend to bathe in the Ganges, and so devotees participate in holy dips and elaborate Ganga Aarti.

The ghats are illuminated with millions of earthen lamps on the full moon night (Kartik Purnima).

This year, it was celebrated on November 5, 2025.

We at Spiritual Tara decided to take a group of people for a holy trip to Kashi to witness the grand festival of lights.

The itinerary, of course, included darshans of Kashi Vishwanath Temple, a jyotirlinga and the Vindhyanchal Temple which is a shaktipeeth.

The much revered temples where millions of devotees desire to be blessed by the shiv and the shakti; to ask, to thank, to complain and to simply be in the divine presence were only awe inspiring. We experienced the essence of Kashi, the culture of Banaras and the history of Varanasi as if looking through a colourful kaleidoscope.

The mesmerising ghats lit up with half a million diyas, the melodious aartis and the sky decorated with exquisite fireworks were the highlights of the Dev Deepawali celebrations; the Banarasi chaat keeping us rooted to the reality of mother earth.

The deities, Shiva & Shakti sat in the splendour of their respective sanctum sanctorum watching over and blessing every soul that passed in front of them, hearing each voice, each whisper of a prayer and quietly fulfilling each wish that arose from loud chants of Har Har Mahadev and Jai ho Maiya ki.

The pandits, however, made hay of the pilgrims' prayers, their feelings, fears and desires filling their own greed in the guise of a guide and a navigator.

But in Shivas own abode everything is fair; the Banarasi sari, the Banarasi chaat, the Banarasi ikka (although invisible on modern streets), Banarasi paan and the not to miss Banarasi thug. He himself sits on top of them all smiling at the multitudes as they try and find their ways to Him.

The entire experience left all of us humbled and overwhelmed, both at the same time.

We brought the light and the warmth of Dev Deepawali back with us. The chaos of Banaras filled our hearts with calm that we discovered there. Maa Ganga helped us wash away our fears, obstacles, limitations and made us feel fulfilled and complete once more... **BI**



Vibha is an author, a practitioner and facilitator of Shamanism and an intuitive healer. Trained in reiki, pranic healing, hypnotherapy, tarot card reading and others, she founded Aumtara, a spiritual hub, in New Delhi. Vibha is a spiritual guide, talk therapist and an image consultant. She uses her learning and experience to

create inner and outer balance. Vibha assists people to break repetitive patterns to achieve life goals through clarity. She provides holistic healing to bring a shift internally in thoughts and externally with behaviour and appearance. She has conducted numerous workshops on image makeover, relationships and empowerment at individual and corporate levels.

To learn more, visit www.vibhagurtu.com



Specialized in organizing Destination Weddings and Luxury Events.

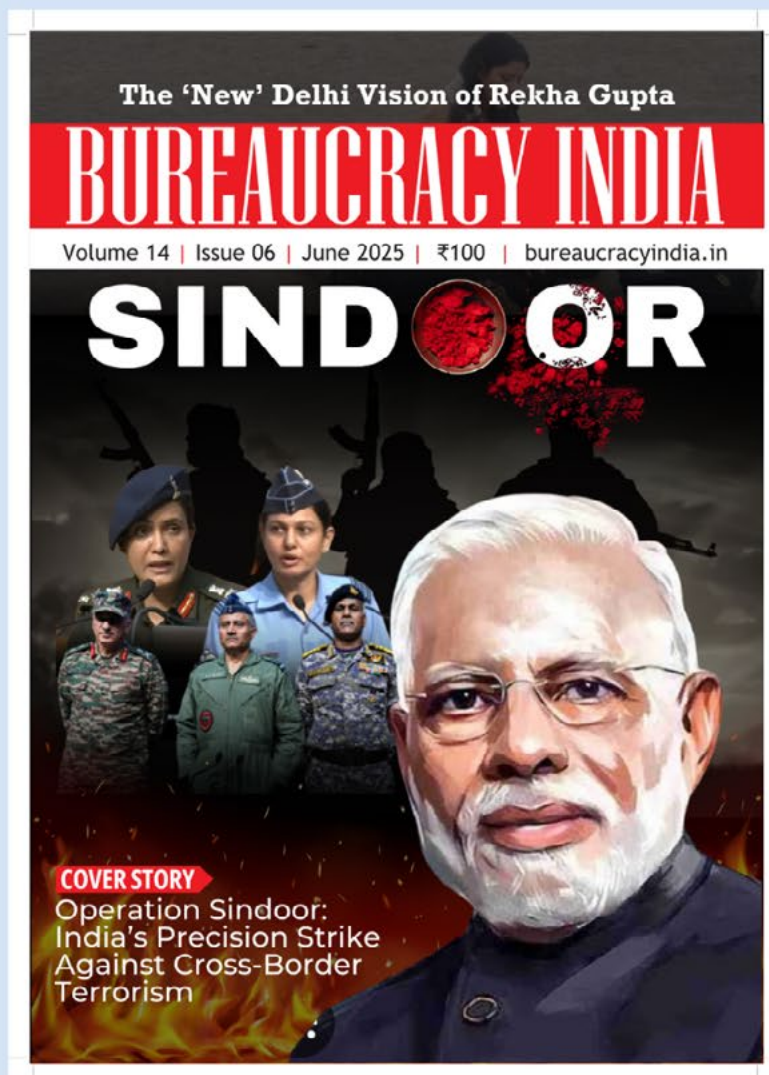
**HOSPITALITY
WEDDING BRANDING
TRANSPORTATION
ACCOMMODATION
FOOD & BEVERAGE
ENTERTAINMENT
DÉCOR & DESIGN
FIREWORKS
PHOTOGRAPHY**



Scan QR code for instagram page

**suhani@knitdreams.in, suhani17.vyas@gmail.com
+91-8800149149, +91-9999967707
www.knitdreams.in**





SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Please enroll me as a subscriber,

Name(Mr./Ms.).....
 Designation.....
 Company.....
 Name.....
 Address.....
 City.....State.....Pin Code.....
 Ph.....Mob.....
 Email.....

Received Cash /
 Cheque.....Dated.....Rs.....bank.....
against the subscription of ?
BUREAUCRACY INDIA foryear.

Signature of Sales Person

Save Rs.
 210/-
 per 2 year

SUBSCRIPTION CHARGES

Period	Issues	By Post
One Year	12	Rs.800/-
Two Year	24	Rs.1600/-

Add Rs.100/- for outstation cheque.

I am enclosing a
 Cash / Cheque / DD No.....Dated.....
 For Rs.....favouring **BUREAUCRACY INDIA** drawn on
 Foryear/s, payable at Delhi.

Signature of Subscriber

BUREAUCRACY INDIA

4/15, Bholanath Nagar, Shahdara, New Delhi - 110032
 info@bureaucracyindia.in Ph. : +91 99999 67707



A billion faces. A billion sites to see. Incredible India. A billion reasons to visit,

Incredible India

www.incredibleindia.org 1-800-953-9399