

# Her roars before home crowd in Delhi

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Trinamul leaders said such buses had come from almost every district of Bengal — which meant that the majority of Abhishek's audience was from his home state. Which also meant that the young politician, who had done a professional course in Delhi, had to liberally pepper his Hindi speech with sentences in Bengali.

The upshot: the Trinamul Yuva meeting clocked a turnout of at least 2,000. The actual crowd was bigger but some restless supporters chose to loiter around.

That the crowd count was playing on Abhishek's mind was clear when he thundered: "Jo log soch rahi the sammelan mein log nahin



**Abhishek Banerjee speaks at the rally in Delhi on Thursday.** Picture by Yash Lalpal

ayenge, unko apne aankh se kaalaa patni hata ke dekha chahiye (those who thought that there will be no crowd should remove the blinkers and see)."

In an unfortunate coincidence, Trinamul veteran Saugata Roy, sitting on the edge of the stage, was sporting dark glasses.

Although Roy is not known to have made any comments against Abhishek and there was little to suggest that the young politician was targeting him, the boast on the turnout was seen as a reply to some senior leaders who had sniggered and doubted his ability to carry off the event on the "national" stage.

Mukul, who was in charge of the flop Mamata-Anna show, equated Abhishek with his "son" but largely kept to himself on the stage. Initially, Abhishek was seen conferring with Subrata Bakshi and Sudip Bandyopadhyay while Mukul sat quietly in a corner. Later, Abhishek returned to

sit beside Mukul, but for a brief while.

Many in the audience had led and the venue looked sparse when Mukul spoke at the end.

"Abhishek, who is like my son, along with some other young members, organised this historic youth convention and I thank him from the deepest corners of my heart and bless him," Mukul said.

The meeting was organised to articulate the anger of Trinamul's youth wing at the manner in which the CPI was conducting investigations into the Saradha scam and central agencies were unilaterally probing the Burdwan blast.

The 27-year-old Trinamul MP, however, appeared to be using the opportunity to assert his control over party affairs. Abhishek strode on the stage with a wireless microphone and roared intermittently, imitating Mamata, as the seniors sat with an air of nonchalance.

"Modiji Saachhi Bharat ka nara de rahi hain. Pehle apna party saaf karao aur phir Mamata Banerjee ke taraf dekho (Modiji has given a call for Clean India. He should first clean his own party and then look towards Mamata)," Abhishek said.

Neither Abhishek nor the other party MPs referred to the Saradha scandal or the Burdwan blast. The focus was on attacking the Modi government over price rise, communal disharmony and neglect of Bengal.

Mukul was among a couple of MPs who were allowed to speak from the stage. All of them hailed the nephew for staging the successful show.

If anyone was looking hard for undercurrents of competition, a cue came while Abhishek and Mukul referred to Trinamul's national ambitions. Mukul referred to the growth of the party outside Bengal, and understandably under him. The Trinamul All-India general secretary said the party had MLAs in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and the northeastern states.

In his classic prescriptions to princes, the Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli had reckoned hereditary rulers faced "far fewer difficulties" running states than first time claimants to power.

But he also held out to them a dire warning: "...one who is born a prince and loses his state through incompetence is doubly shamed" — for being incompetent and for losing their inheritance. In a polity replete with clans and inheritance narratives, Machiavelli's isn't a caution off heeded, or even grasped.

**RAHUL GANDHI**



The fifth in a line of Nehru-Gandhi successors, he is also perceived as the most reluctant. As vice-president of the Congress, Rahul has dangled in semi-anointment as leader of a party currently at its nadir. Nobody in the Congress even imagines daring his suzerainty over the party, but Rahul himself has not stepped forward to assert himself with any determination or consistency. His interventions in the party have been subject to correction by the old guard, his own modus operandi have, at best, remained enigmatic.

His mother and Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, handed him the chalice with the caution power politics could prove a poison. Rahul has been palpably reluctant to embrace it. He appears to have an on-and-off relationship with public life; he has been reluctant to assume public responsibility, having declined several times to accept an apprenticeship in governance under Manmohan Singh. His outings post the historic drubbing in the May 2014 general election have done little to inspire public confidence in his leadership abilities or in his party's to serve up a credible alternative.

But this is just the beginning of Rahul's tenure in the political wilderness, a test that is for him to flunk or fly through. When the moment came, Omar was determined enough to snatch leadership, even if it was his own father he was depriving. Feroz Abdullah had publicly announced himself the future chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir when all results of the 2008 elections had come in. The following morning, Omar had extracted a succession, convincing both the elder Abdullah and the Congress

**OMAR ABDULLAH**



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**STALIN**

He has shown he is adept at in-house power play. He has repulsed determined bidders by elder brother Alagiri to claim the DMK crown and eventually had him formally cast aside. He has astutely sidelined step-sister Karanmozi. The ailing Karanmozi has left nobody in doubt Stalin is his chosen successor. But Stalin may have much more to prove than he has thus far. The DMK remains at the wrong end of public opinion, Jayalalitha, despite her conviction, remains quite the heroine of the Tamil Nadu street. Stalin is staring at a steep uphill; and if and when he gets there, he will find he must begin to learn what he has never done before: govern a state

**AKHILESH YADAV**



He was quite the dynamic that drove the Samajwadi Party (SP) to a spectacular victory in the 2012 Assembly polls in UP, and he earned the just reward of chief ministership from father Mulayam Singh. But since then, it has been up and down for Akhilesh, more down than up. A key problem: he has not been able to come into his own. Mulayam Singh continues to be perceived, including by the bureaucracy, to be the real power centre, and Akhilesh daily contends with too many domineering "elders", Shivalp Yadav and Azam Khan among them. Result: Akhilesh has not been able to deliver his promised gen-next touch on governance, neither has he succeeded in crafting a new, modern SP that many thought he would

**AKHILESH YADAV**



**JINGLE BELLS**

## Private firms to join US nuke talks

International nuclear safety law. The government has so far refused to even contemplate tweaking India's laws amid fears of allegations of capitulating to pressure from Russia. The decision to include private nuclear firms from both nations in the talks was a key element of the deal. Narendra Modi's recent visit to Washington, said senior officials to officials from both countries who independently detailed the key elements of the deal to The Telegraph. "We see this as a definite, significant move forward on solving the problem that has basically kept the Indo-US nuclear deal stillborn," a US official said. "After years, we're possibly finally headed in the right direction." The dispute revolves around provisions — in India's 2010 nuclear liability

**WAITING IN THE WINGS**

**JAGAN REDDY**



Here's a case of succession denied. Jagan was zealously keen he be handed chief ministership as a matter of right when father Y. Rajasekhara Reddy died in a chopper crash in 2009. The Congress wouldn't have it, and a split came to pass. Jagan becoming boss of his own enterprise called the YSR Congress. He has proved a doughy customer, enervating the Congress, building a base of his own, and rendering himself a contender even as he fought what he alleges to be trumped up corruption charges. Power still eludes Jagan though, and that, should he achieve it, will spring new challenges.

**SUPRIYA SULE**



She's Sharad Pawar's pet, but nobody in the NCP is sure she is up to the challenge of making a go for it when the time comes. Among young parliamentarians, Sule has come to acquire a space and profile quite her own, but she has, in her party, a hard-boiled political rival in cousin Ajit Pawar. Has she done enough on the ground to play the hard game and wrest the mantle? Or does she already belong in a fading political undertaking? Sunday's outcome from Maharashtra may offer some clues

**PANKAJA MUNDE**



Another Maharashtra scion on the rise. BJP MLA and daughter of the late Gopinath Munde. Pankaja has not shied from suggestions she could be in the running for chief ministership should her party win the state Assembly. She has been one of the provincial stars of the election campaign, and, as daughter of Munde, who died in a freak road accident following the BJP's May victory, she believes she has a natural claim. Her leadership may not, though, for it wears an anti-dynasty ticket on its sleeve. Little doubt, however, that Pankaja has displayed a foregrounded ambition for stepping into the space vacated by her father

**LALU CLAN**



Too many of them vying for what is yet no more than a pie in the sky. There's the eldest daughter Misa, who fought and lost the Lok Sabha elections in May from Patliputra. There's Tejaswi, failed T20 cricketer with ambitions of becoming the new face of the Rashtriya Janata Dal. There's also the reclusive, but no less ambitious, Tej Pratap, about whom little is known other than that he's quirky enough to sometimes believe he's the avatar of Lord Krishna. None of them displays anything close to the public connect or charisma that Lalu Prasad still has. But all of them are driven by the charm of a vacancy at the top in the family — their father is barred from contesting, courtesy his conviction in the fodder case. But all of them must also rely first on their father to turn the sunken fortunes of the party.

**NATION BRIEFS**

### Azam bullets

■ **New Delhi, Oct. 16 (PTI)** Uttar Pradesh urban development minister Azam Khan was stopped by security officials at the Delhi airport after he was found carrying four live rounds of bullets in his hand baggage before boarding a flight to Lucknow. Khan was intercepted by CISF personnel at the airport terminal. "The minister has been allowed to travel to Lucknow after he produced his arms license. However, the bullets have been seized," an official said.

### Jaya appeal

■ **New Delhi (PTI):** A petition has been moved in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to shift Jayalalitha to Central Prison, Chennai, from a Bangalore jail where she has been lodged since her conviction in an assets case. The plea is likely to be heard on Friday

### US plane

■ **New Delhi (PTI):** A US-registered aircraft was grounded by the DGCA after a surprise safety check at Delhi airport on Tuesday. The eight-seater aircraft, registered in Michigan, did not have the mandatory oxygen masks or operations manual on board and its emergency exit was blocked up with baggage.



Pranab Mukherjee shakes hands with Santa Claus during the first visit by an Indian President to Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, Finland, on Thursday. Rovaniemi is situated directly on the Arctic Circle. Santa Claus operates from his office in the village where visitors can meet him throughout the year and ask him to grant their wishes. The President told Santa: "People in India love you a lot. By meeting me, you have made my day." Santa replied: "No Excellence you are the President of such a big nation. By coming here you have made my day." (PTI)

### Spotted: signs of 'awareness' in vegetative state

and maintaining consciousness about the external world. Their findings, published today in the journal *PLOS Computational Biology*, suggest that non-invasive electroencephalograph (EEG) recordings may be used to identify those patients in a vegetative state who are somewhat aware of their external surroundings. "This is a key step towards developing a bedside tool to assess brain function and awareness in such patients," Chennu, who had studied computer science and engineering in Bangalore before he moved to the UK for a PhD in neuroscience, told The Telegraph. The study bolsters earlier evidence that a small minority of patients in a vegetative state have brain networks that might support some awareness of the external world despite the patient being unconscious and unable to behaviourally or verbally respond to requests or queries. Chennu's Cambridge colleagues had in a pioneering experiment conducted eight years ago asked a vegetative patient to imagine playing tennis while the patient was given a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan. They observed activity in specific regions of the brain responsible for planning body movements, just as they

### Spotted: signs of 'awareness' in vegetative state

would appear in healthy volunteers, although this patient was behaviourally unresponsive. The experiment has since been replicated with other patients and produced similar observations several times. "The implication is that the patients understood the auditory instructions we gave them to play tennis, and chose to do so in a sustained manner for 10 minutes or so," said Chennu, who decided to switch from engineering to brain science research after reading



**Phantoms in the Brain**, written by Indian-origin neuroscientist Vilayanur S. Ramachandran at the University of California, San Diego. In the new study, the researchers have shown that some patients in a vegetative state who had shown signs of such hidden awareness when tested through the tennis-imagery test. But while this test requires MRI scans, assessing brain networks through EEG could, Chennu said, be conveniently addressed at a patient's bedside. A combination of tests could improve the accuracy of predicting likely outcomes for patients. "If a patient's awareness networks are intact, then we know that (the patient is) likely to be aware of what is going on around (the patient)," Tristan Bekinschtein, a researcher at the Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit at the University of Cambridge, said. "But unfortunately, (the findings) also suggest that vegetative patients with severely impaired networks at rest are unlikely to show any signs of consciousness."