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Overview



Eastern India, long celebrated for its rich cultural legacy and deep-rooted traditions, is today emerging as a dynamic hub of business and enterprise. The region, which encompasses states such as West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Tripura, and Assam, has historically been associated with natural resources, agriculture, and heritage industries. Yet, over the last decade, it has steadily begun to redefine itself with a more diversified economy, one that balances its traditional strengths with modern entrepreneurial ventures.

What makes this transformation especially significant is the sheer variety of enterprises that have taken root and are thriving in the region. From infrastructure, manufacturing, and tourism to information technology, services, and consumer goods, the entrepreneurial spirit here is multi-dimensional. It is not confined to large conglomerates alone; rather, small and mid-sized businesses are also stepping forward with innovation, resilience, and ambition. These enterprises are not only creating jobs but also fostering a new ecosystem of opportunity that benefits local communities while contributing to India's overall economic growth.

A major force behind this transformation has been the proactive approach of state governments across Eastern India. State governments across Eastern India have played a crucial role in driving this transformation. Recognising the region's potential, they are attracting investment, improving infrastructure, and supporting entrepreneurship. Odisha has advanced in industrial policy, West Bengal is strengthening MSMEs, and Jharkhand and Bihar are promoting manufacturing and agro-based industries. In the Northeast, Assam and Tripura are focusing on connectivity, trade, agriculture, and tourism. Meanwhile, healthcare and education are emerging as key growth areas, with ongoing efforts to enhance access, infrastructure, and skills.

Eastern India's growth story is also a reflection of its changing aspirations. Once overshadowed by the more industrially advanced western and southern states, the region today is carving out its own identity as an emerging growth engine. Improved connectivity, increasing investment in infrastructure, and the rise of a young, skilled workforce are fuelling this momentum. As a result, cities such as Kolkata, Ranchi, Bhubaneswar, Agartala, and Guwahati are beginning to feature prominently on the country's business map, attracting attention from both national and international stakeholders.

Equally noteworthy is the resilience demonstrated by businesses in this region. In the face of challenges, whether infrastructural bottlenecks, limited access to capital, or the broader economic fluctuations of recent years, entrepreneurs here have continued to adapt, innovate, and push ahead. Their ability to navigate complexity while remaining rooted in local contexts makes Eastern India a fascinating case study in India's wider growth journey.

Highlighting these stories is more than an act of recognition; it is an acknowledgement of the immense potential that resides in this part of the country. Each enterprise represents not just commercial success but also the aspirations of a region eager to claim its rightful place in India's growth narrative.

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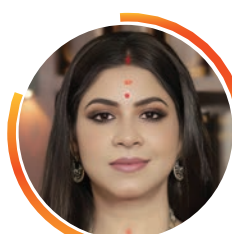
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Guardians of Fair Trade: Sri Biplab Mitra on Consumer Rights in West Bengal

Sri Biplab Mitra, Minister of Consumer Affairs, Government of West Bengal, shares how the Consumer Affairs Department is protecting consumers, driving awareness, and adapting to today's digital challenges.



Sir, could you give us an overview of the Consumer Affairs Department and its functions?

The Consumer Affairs Department, West Bengal, works to protect consumers, raise awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and provide redressal. It functions through three wings: the Directorate of Consumer Affairs & Fair Business Practices, the Directorate of Legal Metrology, and the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions at the State and District levels. While the first focuses on awareness, the Commissions deliver speedy and affordable justice, and the Legal Metrology wing enforces correct weights, measures, and packaging rules. The Department also serves as the Nodal Department for the West Bengal Right to Public Services Act, 2013, ensuring the timely delivery of government services.

Over the years, how has the Department's role evolved in public life, particularly in the digital era?

Under the leadership of Hon'ble Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, we have adopted new methods to spread awareness and resolve grievances. West Bengal was the first state to establish a separate Consumer Affairs Department under a Cabinet Minister, reflecting the Government's commitment. Since 2011, it has grown into a household name. With technology reshaping consumer behaviour, we remain alert to unfair practices in e-commerce. Initiatives like e-Jagriti, virtual hearings, and registration through E-Parimap highlight our adaptability, while campaigns educate citizens on safe digital transactions and available remedies.

What grievance redressal mechanisms are available for the public?

Aggrieved consumers can visit any Regional Office or the Central Consumer Grievance Redressal Cell for 'pre-litigation mediation,' a free, lawyer-free,

consumer-friendly process. If mediation fails, they are guided to file complaints with the Consumer Commissions. The Consumer Assistance Bureau also offers support in filing and managing complaints without charge.

How is the Department spreading awareness of consumer rights?

We use a wide outreach model—through TV, radio, newspapers, metro CCTVs, and even the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway—along with hoardings, banners, and seminars in collaboration with BIS, RBI, SEBI, State Police, and FSSAI. The annual Kreta Suraksha Mela in Kolkata and districts, along with participation in other government fairs, further extends our reach. To engage youth, nearly 1,356 Consumer Clubs have been organised in schools, colleges, and madrasas to encourage students to learn about consumer rights through competitions and activities. We also have a toll-free helpline, operating during the office hours.

Are there collaborations with other departments to enhance outreach?

Yes, we frequently collaborate with the Bureau of Indian Standards, Kolkata, and West Bengal Police (cyber wing), the banking and insurance sectors, the Health Department, and others. Their experts join our programmes, offering valuable insights and engaging directly with both our staff and the public.

How are young people being engaged through initiatives like the Consumer Clubs?

Consumer Clubs are our way of "catching them young." At present, we have 1,356 clubs across the state. These serve as platforms where students learn about consumer rights and participate in activities like drawing and slogan-writing contests. In colleges, experts from various sectors conduct awareness sessions, ensuring that future citizens grow up as informed consumers.

How is the Department addressing e-commerce and direct selling disputes?

Online shopping is now widespread, but it brings risks. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, introduced rules defining the duties of e-commerce entities. We spread awareness, resolve complaints through mediation, and work with the cyber police on related issues. Direct selling, also regulated under the Act, requires all entities to register with our department, ensuring transparency in marketing, distribution, and sales beyond retail outlets.

What message would you like to share with traders and service providers?

A healthy buyer-seller relationship is essential for an ideal market. Traders must prioritise transparency, honesty, and consumer care, while consumers should also act responsibly in this partnership. Satisfied consumers fuel business growth, and since traders are also consumers in many sectors, they too should understand consumer rights. I urge all service providers to focus on consumer care, both before and after sales, to strengthen trust and build a vibrant consumer culture in West Bengal. ●



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Strength in Legacy: Saluja Steel and Power's Half-Century of Excellence



From a single rolling mill to a regional steel leader, Saluja Steel and Power's 50-year journey blends innovation, quality, and trust, shaping enduring structures across India's rapidly growing construction landscape.

For more than half a century, Saluja Steel and Power has been a name synonymous with strength, reliability, and progress in the steel industry. Guided by the inspiring tagline “Mazbooti Sab Kuch Hai”, the company has become a cornerstone of construction across Eastern and Northeastern India. Founded in 1974 under the vision of Dr. Amarjeet Singh Saluja, it has grown from a single rolling mill into a leading manufacturer of high-grade TMT bars, billets, and sponge iron. Its journey reflects an enduring commitment to quality, technological advancement, and sustainable manufacturing practices.

Excellence in TMT Bars

The signature product, Saluja Gold TMT Rebar, stands as a hallmark of the company's dedication to engineering excellence. Manufactured using advanced Thermo-Mechanically Treated (TMT) processes, these bars offer an exceptional combination of durability, flexibility, and structural strength. Their robust outer surface and flexible core provide superior resistance to bending, twisting, fatigue, and corrosion. This makes them ideal for demanding applications such as bridges, multi-storey buildings, and heavy infrastructure projects.

The bars are also designed for superior weldability and workability. These qualities make them a preferred choice among architects, engineers, and contractors. Backed by continuous research and development, Saluja Gold TMT bars meet both national and international standards. They are designed to ensure lasting performance in diverse construction environments.

Expanding Capacity and Market Reach

From its state-of-the-art facilities in Jharkhand, Saluja Steel and Power produces up to 30,000 metric tons of TMT bars every month, alongside billets and sponge iron. The company's in-house Research & Development unit conducts stringent laboratory testing to maintain the highest levels of product quality. Over the years, the manufacturing setup has grown from a single rolling mill to two high-capacity plants. This has effectively doubled output in TMT and billet production.

The brand has built a strong market presence in Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Meghalaya, and Nagaland, with its reach extending into Nepal. Its next growth milestone is an entry into Uttar Pradesh, a move set to strengthen its footprint in Northern India. Beyond TMT bars, Saluja Steel and Power produces sponge iron through precise chemical reduction processes. With an annual capacity of 100,000 metric tons, its sponge iron serves as a high-quality substitute for scrap in electric arc and basic oxygen furnaces, supporting efficient and cost-effective steelmaking for clients.

Sustainable Practices and a Legacy of Quality

Saluja Steel and Power's manufacturing operations are rooted in eco-friendly practices, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations while minimising industrial impact. By integrating modern technology with decades of metallurgical expertise, the company continues to produce steel products that deliver high performance. These products are also manufactured with a strong focus on responsible production.



Dr. Amarjeet Singh Saluja

Reflecting on the company's journey, Dr. Amarjeet Singh Saluja shares, “Commitment to excellence in TMT bars has been our hallmark since 1974. While we manufacture billets and sponge iron, our focus on TMT bars over the past decade has solidified our position as a trusted name in the steel industry.”

This focus on innovation and quality has allowed Saluja Steel and Power to not only build structures of lasting strength but also earn the trust of generations. As it steps into its sixth decade, the company remains steadfast in its mission to deliver products that meet the evolving demands of the construction sector. It continues to uphold its core values of integrity, excellence, and sustainability. From its humble beginnings to becoming a leader in steel manufacturing, Saluja Steel and Power's story is one of resilience, growth, and unwavering dedication to its craft. The company continues to set benchmarks for quality and reliability. True strength lies in more than just steel; it lies in the trust the company forges with every project it supports. ●



Meghdut Roy Chowdhury
Chief Innovation Officer and Executive
Director, Techno India Group

“**Top AI engineers now earn salaries once reserved for Fortune 500 CEOs. To keep our students ahead of the competition, building a "School of the Future" was essential.**

When your father, Prof. Dr. Goutam Roy Chowdhury, started Techno India Group 40 years ago with just ₹5 to make computer education accessible, what key turning points shaped those early years, and how did that mission grow into today's TIG?

The turning point was my father's firm belief that technology should not be a privilege for the few. At the time, computer access was scarce, and awareness of computer education was minimal. Setting up college computer centres was rare and unprecedented. He addressed major gaps by democratising training centres through DOEACC programs (now NIELIT) and driving digital transformation across East

Reinventing the Future on a Foundation of Legacy: Meghdut Roy Chowdhury on Calcutta, Compassion and Leadership



India. From there, he expanded to engineering colleges, universities, and later healthcare and hospitality—always to bridge systemic gaps, not just grow.

What values from your family's entrepreneurial journey have shaped you as a leader, and how has your mother influenced your approach to leadership and decision-making?

Two things. First, resilience – my father built Techno India Group not with capital or pedigree but with conviction. Second, adaptability – my father, uncle (Satyam Roy Chowdhury), and mother stayed open to evolving with the community's needs rather than clinging to one plan. I've learned that vision without flexibility is dogma, and revenue follows purpose. My mother, Manoshi Roy Chowdhury, built over 40 schools and showed me how to truly care for children. She leads with kindness and compassion, even

in family business challenges, inspiring me to lead with love, patience, and openness to different perspectives.

The “School of the Future” at Techno India University departs from conventional models. What innovations are you introducing, and how will they reshape how students learn and think?

We're dismantling the industrial-age classroom, no one-size-fits-all. Instead, we use AI-driven personalised learning and peer-to-peer skill exchanges. Top AI engineers now earn salaries once reserved for Fortune 500 CEOs, with Mark Zuckerberg offering \$100 million packages to attract them. To keep our students ahead, a "School of the Future" is essential. As Google's largest education partner in India, we build young teams who outpace industry trends, showcasing our model from Telangana to Texas at global conferences.

As you guide TIG's future with personalised learning and emerging technologies, what key changes in education do you aim for, and how will they prepare students for an unpredictable world?

The most profound shift I see is the rise of everyday entrepreneurship. Education is becoming an ongoing, hyper-customised journey, with AI tutors adapting to each learner's pace and teachers acting as mentors. Technology is only a tool; its real impact is giving a kid in rural Bengal, Jharkhand, or Madhya Pradesh the confidence to design an app or launch a startup to tackle grassroots problems. I look forward to more students taking charge of their futures and India's future from their classrooms.

What inspired you to start the "Make Calcutta Relevant Again" movement and podcast, and how do they help reshape Kolkata's cultural and entrepreneurial narrative locally and globally?

"Make Calcutta Relevant Again" grew from my belief in the city's potential and the need to reshape its narrative. Through The CCU Festival, Calcutta's largest multidisciplinary homegrown event, we showcase innovation, resilience, and hope. The podcast extends this mission, featuring homegrown icons like Usha Uthup to Leander Paes, and from professionals to children shaping the city's future. Once, at a wedding in Mexico, five NRIs from Calcutta told me how much it meant to them—proof that something from my studio can reach far beyond the city.

From founding BlooperHouse Studios to running a boutique investment bank in London, you've worked across creative and business domains. How have these experiences shaped your leadership at Techno India Group?

My path blends creativity and business. I started Blooper House Studios at 19, growing it from a platform for indie musicians into a new media company producing 4000+ albums, ads, short films and a feature. My work in mergers, acquisitions, and financial advisory has connected me with HNIs, family offices, and businesses across continents. Raised between India and Europe, I learned how the world moves and money flows.



Whether backing a founder or working on a film, I ask—does it move people? That's the energy I bring to Techno India Group.

As the co-founder of the Bengal Business Council, what impact have you aimed to achieve in entrepreneurship across Bengal?

Being one of the founders of the Bengal Business Council has been all about unlocking opportunities in Bengal. It's about building a network - now 400+ businesses strong - where entrepreneurs can mentor each other, collaborate, and access the kind of support they'd only dream of otherwise. It's very satisfying to see these seeds turn into real, thriving ventures. This is Bengal stepping



onto the map as a place where businesses and big ideas are alive and kicking.

Your wife is known to be a source of strength and perspective in your journey. How has her presence influenced your personal evolution and the way you approach ambition, balance, and purpose?

Pauline is my partner and a catalyst for change within and beyond TIG. She co-founded Y-East, started River Rangers, launched the rebalance institute, and now leads the sustainability vertical at Techno India Group. For over six years, she has organised riverside clean-ups, turning vision into action like no one else. Having strong women like Pauline and my mother has shaped how I lead—creating spaces where women thrive, feel safe, and are seen. She reminds me daily that compassion and professional drive can coexist.

Finally, when you think about Techno India Group's future, what kind of legacy are you hoping to build, not just in terms of scale or revenue, but in terms of real impact on students, communities, and the broader educational landscape?

Legacy is not a balance sheet; it is about driving change and helping others thrive. I measure success not by Techno India Group's size, but by the lives we have impacted. This 40-year journey is a family effort, powered by dedicated employees and professors. Aware of my privilege, I give back through community work, NGO support, and fostering new ideas. I love what I do, and my goal for the next 40 years is to touch millions more lives. ●

The Making of a Modern Tripura People, Policy, and Possibility



Under Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha, Tripura, is seeing tangible changes—from agriculture and industry to education and heritage—that reflect a broader vision for inclusive growth.



Walking an untrodden path is uncertain, especially when life has already tested one's resilience. Yet history proves that courage with vision can turn trials into triumphs. Such is the journey of Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha, born into a wealthy family of traders in a small town, unsettled by migration and political unrest. Though expected to join the family business, he chose medicine, driven by a genuine desire to serve. Rising as Tripura's only Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon, destiny soon called him to a larger stage.

When decades of Communist rule had frayed Tripura's political fabric, Dr. Saha entered public life with the discipline of a scholar and the compassion of a medical practitioner. Armed with education and a privileged upbringing, he built a model of corruption-free governance. In over three years as Chief Minister, not a single corruption charge has touched his government—a rarity even rivals acknowledge. His clean image inspires citizens to turn to him for swift justice, rekindling trust and hope across the state.

From hospital chambers to the corridors of power, Dr. Saha's leadership has stayed rooted in service. As Chief Minister, he blends humility with foresight, steering Tripura towards stability and growth. He envisions a state once restless now at peace, where health and education reforms take root and governance brings people closer

to the system. For him, progress is not just about statistics but about citizens feeling empowered, included, and hopeful in Tripura's growth story.

Leadership Rooted in Accessibility

Unlike many leaders who remain distant, Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha's governance is defined by accessibility and empathy. Soft-spoken, gentlemanly, and well-mannered yet firm, he couples vision with zero tolerance for corruption, drug abuse, and malpractice. From sharing moments with youngsters at the Football World Cup to holding citizen-focused meetings free of red tape, he has bridged the gap between power and people, earning trust across communities. His voluntary efforts, such as revolutionising blood donation drives, have further cemented his respect, winning him admiration from the BJP's central leadership, including the Prime Minister.

While unrest gripped neighbouring states, Tripura, under his leadership, stood

as an island of calm. In just three years, it has become a model of peace and prosperity, with soaring literacy, rising incomes, and stronger social indicators. The state now boasts a literacy rate of 95.6%—third in the nation—and ranks second in the Northeast in per capita income and Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). With its Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.617, Tripura outpaces neighbours like Assam and Meghalaya in poverty reduction.

Quick to embrace reform, Tripura has also emerged as a pioneer in compliance and deregulation. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's digital governance initiative, it became the fourth state in India, and the second in the Northeast, to launch an e-cabinet. Building on this, the e-office system was extended to Gram Panchayats in November 2024, taking technology-driven governance directly to the grassroots.

Agriculture at the Heart of Transformation

Agriculture remains the heartbeat of Tripura's economy, now reshaped into a model of modern, sustainable farming. Programme like the Mukhya Mantri Integrated Crop Management is helping farmers embrace advanced practices, while organic and natural farming balance innovation with tradition. From aromatic rice and ginger to pineapples, turmeric, and the fiery Bird's Eye Chili, Tripura's produce is reaching distant



CM Dr. Saha unveiling the statue of Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya

markets, backed by schemes that secure farmers against climate risks. Livestock farming, too, has flourished, making the state a regional leader in eggs, milk, and meat.

Tripura's horticulture thrives with fruits, vegetables, and floriculture, while staggered cultivation ensures year-round harvests. Diversified practices like oil palm plantations, solar irrigation, and pack houses connect farmers to wider markets, driving a resilient agricultural future.

Building an Inclusive Industrial Base

Tripura's industrial growth is not about size alone but about inclusivity and sustainability. The Tripura Industrial Investment Policy (TIIP) 2024 and the Jan Vishwas Ordinance 2025 have paved the way for a trust-based environment that reduces red tape. Transparency and sustainability are further enhanced through the revised Logistics Policy and the new Minor Minerals Policy, ensuring industrial expansion does not come at the cost of ecology.

The 'Destination Tripura' Business Conclave witnessed the signing of MoUs worth ₹3,800 crore. These investments span manufacturing, logistics, renewable energy, and food processing, signalling investor confidence in the state's future. The aim is not only to attract large-scale capital but also to create jobs, skill development opportunities, and entrepreneurial avenues for local youth.

Powering a Sustainable Future

Aligned with its growing industrial ambitions, Tripura is rapidly transforming its energy landscape, achieving remarkable progress in power generation. Since 2018, solar capacity has grown tenfold, and the state now aims to generate 150 MW within two years and 500 MW by 2030. Ambitious initiatives like solarising government offices and 50,000 households highlight Tripura's commitment to a balanced energy mix, reducing reliance on conventional sources while ensuring reliable and sustainable power for all residents.

Advancing Healthcare Across Tripura

In the socio-economic sphere, Tripura has achieved significant progress, particularly in advancing healthcare services. The government has introduced super-specialty and post-graduate courses to strengthen medical education, while actively recruiting and promoting doctors to expand the healthcare workforce. With expert support from kidney transplantation specialists at Shija Hospital, Manipur, the State Referral Hospital in Agartala now offers this life-



CM Dr Saha with Governor and his cabinet members



CM Presenting a Job offer

saving facility, making previously costly treatments more accessible to citizens.

Empowering Tribal Communities

Tripura's initiatives in tribal welfare are equally transformative. Livelihood programmes and career counselling are providing young tribal citizens with opportunities to secure their futures. The creation of Adi Seva Kendras as single-window support centres, along with the Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan, showcases a responsive governance model dedicated to empowering Janajati communities and fostering inclusive development.

Sports and Youth Engagement

A sportsman himself, excelling in badminton and athletics, Dr. Saha has infused his passion into policy. Tripura's sports infrastructure is expanding with projects like the District Sports Complexes with Astro-turf facilities and creating modern arenas for budding athletes. He views sports as both a builder of character and a safeguard against social ills like drug abuse, encouraging youth participation as a path to discipline and well-being.

From supporting the MLA Cup Football Competition to hosting the North Eastern Zone Badminton Championship, his administration is nurturing regional talent and inspiring the next generation. For Dr. Saha, sports and youth engagement are not sidelines but vital instruments in shaping a healthier, more dynamic society.

Tourism and Heritage Revival

Further, Tripura's tourism sector is undergoing a revival that blends cultural heritage with modern experiences. The redevelopment of Ujjayanta Palace Garden has enhanced the urban landscape while



CM at the inaugural session of Janjati Gourav Divas

preserving historical grandeur, while new initiatives promoting destinations like Unakoti's rock carvings, the ancient Chabimura sculptures, and the breathtaking sunrise views from Vangmun's Eden Tourist Lodge are giving the state's tourism a dynamic new appeal.

Innovation is also reshaping the tourism narrative. Houseboat services on Dumboor Lake, inspired by Kerala's backwaters and Kashmir's shikaras, are drawing attention. Water sports activities at Jagannath Lake and partnerships with hospitality giants like the Taj Group are adding new layers to the tourism economy. The upcoming royal heritage hotel at Pushpabanta Palace stands as a symbol of this transformation. Together, these initiatives position Tripura as a distinctive tourist destination that offers both cultural richness and contemporary leisure.

Towards "Ek Tripura, Sreshtha Tripura"

Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha's leadership has ushered in a new era for Tripura, balancing tradition with progress. By focusing on education, agriculture, healthcare, digital governance, sports, and sustainable industry, he has created a foundation for inclusive development. The revival of heritage, coupled with the push towards modern infrastructure, has given the state both identity and direction.

The idea of "Ek Tripura, Sreshtha Tripura" is no longer just a slogan. It is gradually becoming a living reality for its citizens. The combination of compassionate leadership and forward-looking policies is positioning the state as a model of governance in the Northeast. If the momentum continues, Tripura is on course to transform into one of India's most prosperous and admired states. ●

Inclusive Finance and Innovation: How NEDFi is Building the North East's Future

In conversation with CMD of NEDFi, Shri PVSNL Murty, the discussion delves into how the institution fosters entrepreneurship, empowers communities, and drives inclusive growth across the North East.



Shri PVSNL Murty, CMD

What role does NEDFi play in nurturing entrepreneurship and supporting MSMEs in the North East?

North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NEDFi), established in 1995, has been pivotal in fostering entrepreneurship and supporting MSMEs across the North Eastern Region of India. Promoted by premier banks and financial institutions of the country, NEDFi provides tailored financial assistance, mentoring, market linkages, and capacity-building support. NEDFi has a strong focus on first-time entrepreneurs, women, and rural youth.

To date, NEDFi has extended financial assistance of ₹9,358 crore to nearly 28,700 projects, mobilising ₹23,852 crore in private investments and generating 16 lakh jobs. Its microfinance initiatives, largely benefiting women, have assisted ₹1,093 crore and supported over 10.50 lakh livelihoods. Through the North East Venture Fund, launched with the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER), NEDFi has extended equity support to 69 startups, creating 10,000 jobs.

Beyond financing, NEDFi provides consultancy services, undertakes sectoral studies through its Techno-Economic Development Fund. It has also facilitated the disbursement of over ₹10,400 crore central subsidies to industries across all eight States. Its

mentoring and training programmes have also empowered nearly 20,000 first generation entrepreneurs and 33,000 artisans engaged in crafts like bamboo, banana fibre, water hyacinth, and handloom.

Over the past 3–5 years, how has NEDFi contributed to the region's economic and social development?

In the last five years, NEDFi has accelerated its outreach, extending financial assistance of ₹3,627 crore, nearly 40% of its cumulative assistance. This has supported 19,977 projects, about three-fourths of all ventures financed since inception.

In 2022, NEDFi launched the Micro Lending Scheme. The scheme provides low-interest loans to micro borrowers through Business Correspondents. To date, ₹184 crore have been extended to more than 16,000 beneficiaries. This has strengthened financial inclusion and entrepreneurship at the grassroots.

The institution has also deepened startup support. Alongside the Government of Manipur, it launched the Manipur Startup Venture Fund, while its partnership with Numaligarh Refinery Limited established the NRL Ideation Angel Fund. Together, these funds have provided early-stage capital worth more than ₹15 crore, helping local startups scale their innovations.

Can you share a few success stories or impactful projects supported by NEDFi?

NEDFi has enabled countless entrepreneurs to turn ideas into livelihoods, particularly in the MSME sector, which drives much of the region's growth. Its financing has nurtured both first-generation and established enterprises, ranging from modest ventures to large-scale projects, all contributing to community well-being.

The flagship Micro Lending Scheme has become a lifeline for women-led households by offering affordable credit and reducing dependence on informal sources. Similarly, the North East Venture Fund has encouraged innovative startups, generated jobs, and built resilience in the regional economy.

What are NEDFi's strategic priorities for the next 2–3 years?

NEDFi's upcoming priorities focus on deepening financial inclusion and building long-term resilience in the region. The institution aims to expand last-mile credit delivery through digital lending platforms and local partnerships, while also strengthening the startup and innovation ecosystem with enhanced venture capital and incubation support.

At the same time, it is committed to promoting green and sustainable initiatives, particularly in renewable energy, eco-tourism, and climate-resilient agriculture. Efforts are also being directed towards improving MSME competitiveness by linking finance with technical assistance, market access, and skill-building opportunities. By leveraging technology for efficiency, monitoring, and service delivery, NEDFi envisions creating a vibrant entrepreneurial landscape that not only generates jobs but also sustains local culture and ensures inclusive growth.

From your perspective as CMD, how has your journey with NEDFi been so far?

My journey has been both humbling and fulfilling. The North East is blessed with talent and resources but faces distinct challenges. At NEDFi, I have witnessed the resilience of entrepreneurs and the determination of grassroots communities in the region. Every success story has reinforced our mission of linking financial viability with social responsibility. While gaps in infrastructure and markets remain, the progress achieved so far reflects the region's immense potential. ●

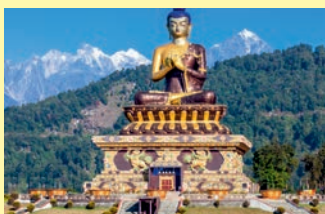


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Balancing the Grid: OPGC's Leadership in Powering a Modern Odisha

In a sector navigating the complex pivot from traditional fuels to a green future, one state leader is proving that reliability and sustainability are not mutually exclusive. We explore this winning strategy in a conversation with Kedar Ranjan Pandu, Managing Director, Odisha Power Generation Corporation.

Mr. Pandu, OPGC has achieved a remarkable trifecta this year: 1st Position among State Sector power companies, the CII Excellent Energy Efficient Unit Award, and a Silver award for Digital Transformation. What is the core philosophy at OPGC that enables such consistent excellence across operations, energy conservation, and technology?

Thank you. The core philosophy is deceptively simple: excellence is not a department; it's a culture. We don't see operations, efficiency, and digitalisation as separate silos. They are deeply interconnected. Operational excellence naturally leads to energy efficiency—a well-tuned machine uses less fuel. But in today's world, you cannot achieve either without embracing digital transformation. Our digital initiatives provide real-time data analytics that help us predict maintenance needs, optimise combustion in our boilers, and reduce auxiliary power consumption. These awards are validation that our integrated approach is working.

Speaking of financial health, OPGC posted its highest-ever revenue of over ₹4,038 crore, with profits up 12.4%. In an era where many GENCOs struggle, what is OPGC's secret to being not just operationally robust but also financially stellar?

The "secret" is disciplined execution and a relentless focus on the fundamentals. We are fundamentally a well-run, asset-heavy business. Our strength comes from high plant availability and a very strong Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with GRIDCO, which ensures offtake. But beyond that, we have instilled a culture of fiscal prudence. Every capital expenditure is scrutinised for its return on investment. Our robust debt



Kedar Ranjan Pandu, Managing Director, OPGC



“OPGC's primary mandate is to provide reliable, 24/7 base-load power to fuel Odisha's industries and homes. Our thermal plants are the bedrock of that reliability. However, as responsible corporate citizens, we are acutely aware of our environmental and social responsibilities.”

servicing record, which earned us an A++ rating from lenders, is a testament to this. It gives us the autonomy to pursue our ambitious expansion plans.

Let's talk about that expansion. Your Stage-III project to add 1320 MW is critical for Odisha's future. However, the initial tender saw no bidders. How did you pivot from that setback, and what gives you confidence in the new, split-package strategy?

The energy landscape is complex, and we must be agile. The single EPC package for a project of this scale was, in hindsight, a very large undertaking for the market at that time. Rather than seeing it as a setback, we saw it as market feedback. We pivoted swiftly to a split-package model—separating the Boiler-Turbine-Generator (BTG) package from the Balance of Plant (BOP). This makes it more manageable for a wider pool of top-tier engineering firms to bid, fostering more competitive and robust participation. We have a clear roadmap now: floating the BTG tender in September '25 and the BOP in November '25. This structured approach, backed by the unwavering support of the state government, gives me immense confidence.

We are committed to making this expansion a benchmark project for the country.

Alongside this massive thermal expansion, you're also planning a 50 MW solar plant on recovered ash pond land. This seems symbolic of a broader transition. How do you balance OPGC's identity as a thermal major with the state's and nation's push for renewables?

This is perhaps the most exciting part of our journey. OPGC's primary mandate is to provide reliable, 24/7 base-load power to fuel Odisha's industries and homes. Our thermal plants are the bedrock of that reliability. However, as responsible corporate citizens, we are acutely aware of our environmental and social responsibilities. The 50 MW solar plant on reclaimed ash pond land is a powerful symbol of this dual commitment. We are taking land that was used for one form of power generation and repurposing it for a cleaner one. It's a tangible step towards diversifying our portfolio.

You've successfully completed the Renovation & Modernisation (R&M) of Unit 2, extending its life by 15 years. Why invest in older units when the focus is on new, larger capacity additions?

This is a question of asset optimisation and respect for legacy. Those 210 MW units have been the workhorses of Odisha's power sector for decades. They are fully depreciated, paid-for assets. A well-planned R&M, which is far more cost-effective than building new capacity, gives us another 15 years of highly economical and reliable power from them. It's a smart, capital-efficient strategy.

Shifting to the broader state context, Odisha is now power-sufficient with a peak demand of around 6,242 MW. With such a strong position, what is the strategic rationale behind the state's ambitious plan to add ~15,000 MW of contracted capacity by 2036?

Sufficiency today does not guarantee sufficiency tomorrow. Think of Odisha not as it is, but as it is becoming—a premier manufacturing and industrial hub under the 'Viksit Odisha' vision. The investments we are seeing in sectors like steel, aluminum, and downstream industries are phenomenal. This 15,000 MW plan is not about meeting today's demand; it's about powering tomorrow's growth. It's about anticipating the needs of



“The energy transition is, at its heart, a technological transition. As a utility, we are excellent at execution and scaling, but the frontier innovations often come from academia.”

new industries, ensuring that energy is never a bottleneck for investment. Furthermore, this capacity addition is strategically planned with a significant renewable component, aligning with national goals and ensuring our energy mix is diverse, sustainable, and resilient for the long term.

The Odisha government recently signed an MoU with NTU Singapore and IIT Bhubaneswar for advanced research in renewables. How do you see such global academic partnerships shaping the practical future of power generation at companies like OPGC?

I am incredibly enthusiastic about such partnerships. The energy transition is, at its heart, a technological transition. As a utility, we are excellent at execution and scaling, but the frontier innovations often come from academia. A partnership like this connects the theoretical brilliance of world-class institutions like NTU and IIT with the practical, on-ground challenges we face. It can accelerate the development and deployment of technologies that are directly relevant to us—be it in advanced energy storage, efficiency improvements for thermal plants, or integration of renewables into the grid. This is how we bridge the gap between the lab and the field, ensuring that Odisha is not just a consumer of technology, but a co-creator in the future of energy.

OPGC's subsidiary, OCPL, has been a 5-star rated coal mine consecutively and just won a Platinum safety award. How do you see operational excellence in coal supply contribute to OPGC's overall resilience?

OCPL is our strategic armor. In a sector often plagued by fuel supply uncertainties, having a dedicated, efficiently run coal mine like Manoharpur is a game-changer. It provides us with fuel security, predictable costs, and a significant competitive advantage. The awards they have won for operational and safety excellence reflect a self-motivated work force. Smooth operation of OCPL is ensuring fuel security of OPGC units.

Finally, Mr. Pandu, looking at the horizon—with the Stage-III expansion, solar plans, and continuous modernisation—what is the ultimate legacy you wish to build for OPGC?

My vision for OPGC's legacy is that of a financially sustainable, technologically advanced, and environmentally responsible power company that is the bedrock of Odisha's prosperity. I want OPGC to be remembered not just for the megawatts it generates, but for the way it generates them—with efficiency, integrity, and a deep sense of responsibility towards its stakeholders and the environment. I want it to be a model public-sector enterprise that successfully navigated the energy transition, a company that powered the homes and industries of a Viksit Odisha while diligently building a greener, more sustainable future for the next generation. That is the legacy we are building, one megawatt at a time. ●

Healing with Vision: How Shanti Group is Transforming Healthcare in Odisha

Shanti Group of Hospitals, led by Dr. Sreejoy Patnaik and Dr. Rekha Das, has grown from a modest vision into Odisha's trusted multi-specialty network, blending innovation, accessibility, and compassionate healthcare for generations.



Dr Sreejoy Patnaik & Dr Rekha Das, Founders, Shanti Group of Hospitals

What began as a modest effort to provide affordable, quality healthcare more than 35 years ago has today evolved into one of Odisha's most respected medical institutions. Shanti Memorial Hospital, the flagship unit of the Shanti Group of Hospitals, has grown from a small community-focused facility into a leading multi-specialty centre. With a team of highly skilled specialists, state-of-the-art diagnostics, and advanced surgical facilities, it delivers comprehensive medical care under one roof. From robotic surgeries to personalised post-operative support, the hospital ensures patients receive the best possible treatment with compassion and precision.

The Visionaries Behind the Journey

The story of Shanti Group of Hospitals is inseparable from the lives of its founders, the renowned doctor couple, Dr. Sreejoy Patnaik and Dr. Rekha Das, who established the group in 1991. Their journey is a testament to resilience, innovation, and service. Unlike those who follow inherited paths, the couple built their vision from the ground up, guided by a strong passion to transform healthcare in Odisha.

Dr. Patnaik has pioneered several surgical milestones in the state, including Odisha's first laparoscopic surgery and its first bariatric surgery. In 2021, he took another giant step by launching Odisha's first centre of excellence for robotic surgery at Shanti Memorial Hospital, completing over 150 robotic surgeries since its inception.

Equally remarkable is the contribution of Dr. Rekha Das, a critical care specialist who leads a modern ICU with her dedicated team of doctors and paramedics. She also serves as Principal & Dean at Acharya Harihar PGI Cancer Hospital, demonstrating an extraordinary balance of clinical excellence and academic leadership.

Together, they have mentored countless surgeons and intensivists, leaving a profound impact on the medical community across India.

Expanding Horizons with Shanti Chikitsa

Building on the legacy of Shanti Memorial Hospital, the group introduced Shanti Chikitsa, a multi-specialty hospital at CDA, Cuttack. This second unit brings advanced healthcare closer to people in peripheral towns such as Dhenkanal, Angul, and Athagarh, addressing the growing demand for affordable, accessible treatment.

The hospital is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, a dedicated team of doctors, and professional paramedic staff, ensuring high-quality services across departments. With 49 beds, including nine ICU beds, it is well-positioned to serve a wide patient base. Sharing his vision for the future, Dr. Patnaik remarks, "We intend to come up with more hospitals in different parts of the state in future, taking our unique brand of healthcare services to a larger population." This expansion plan reflects the group's commitment to extending care beyond city boundaries and reaching underserved regions.

A Family Legacy of Commitment

The journey of Shanti Group of Hospitals is also a story of family dedication. Dr. Patnaik and Dr. Das have supported each other as partners in both life and work, building institutions with passion and perseverance. Their children, Dr. Abhinav Patnaik and Dr. Aditi Patnaik, are now stepping into this legacy, ensuring continuity with a fresh perspective.

Dr. Abhinav Patnaik, a promising surgeon at Shanti Memorial Hospital, combines modern learning with hands-on experience to take the group forward. His sister, Dr. Aditi Patnaik, is preparing to join the practice as well. Completing this circle of commitment is their daughter-in-law, Sneha Das, who became part of the family last year. With her keen focus on elevating patient experience and fostering an atmosphere of trust and comfort, she adds a new dimension of warmth and excellence to the Shanti Group's patient-first philosophy. Together, the family is nurturing a healthcare legacy that is not just about infrastructure but about values, vision, and patient-first care.

Looking Ahead

As the Shanti Group of Hospitals moves into the future, its path is guided by the unwavering leadership of Dr. Sreejoy Patnaik and Dr. Rekha Das, now reinforced by the energy and ideas of the next generation. With a focus on innovation, accessibility, and patient-centred care, the group is steadily redefining healthcare in Odisha.

From a single dream to a thriving network, Shanti Group of Hospitals stands as a beacon of service and excellence—an enduring movement towards equitable healthcare for all. ●



The Patnaiks at an award event with Raveena Tandon

From Bhubaneswar To The World: How KIIT Is Redefining Higher Education's New Vanguard

Soaring from local roots to global recognition, KIIT's remarkable ascent in the 'THE World University Rankings 2026' proves that innovation and purpose can redefine educational excellence.



In the fiercely competitive world of global higher education, where centuries-old institutions often lead, a new narrative is taking shape—one defined by agility, impact, and a forward-looking vision. The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2026 reflect this shift, spotlighting KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, as a rising force. In a remarkable leap, KIIT has entered the global 501–600 cohort (among 2,191 universities), advancing significantly from last year. Nationally, it ranks 5th among 128 Indian institutions and stands as Odisha's only university in the top 10. This milestone goes beyond rankings—it validates KIIT's model of combining academic excellence with strong social commitment, proving that a 21st-century university can compete with the world's most established names.

The Blueprint: A Trifecta of Industry, Internationalism, and Impact

The rankings assess performance across five key parameters: Teaching, Research Environment, Research Quality, International Outlook, and Industry. KIIT's approach has been one of targeted excellence. While it holds a strong global rank of 259th for 'Academic Excellence,' its real impact lies in areas that define the modern university. KIIT ranks first in India for 'Industry Integration,' 'International Outlook,' and 'Social Commitment'—the last measured by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This success stems from a deliberate vision to build a university connected to the world's

economic and social fabric, reflecting a broader global shift toward practical learning and ethical leadership.

The Engine of Integration: Forging a Pipeline from Campus to Corporate

Topping the charts in 'Industry Integration' reflects KIIT's strong focus on employability and innovation. With the World Economic Forum projecting that over 60% of workers will need retraining by 2027, connecting academia with industry has never been more vital. KIIT has built that bridge through strong corporate partnerships, career development cells, and industry-informed curricula. This practical, job-oriented approach attracts leading recruiters and fosters collaborative R&D, creating a self-sustaining cycle of growth, reputation, and relevance.

A Borderless Academic Ecosystem: The Power of an International Outlook

In today's interconnected world, a world-class

education must be global. KIIT's top national ranking in 'International Outlook' highlights its success in creating a borderless academic community. The university hosts students and faculty from over 65 countries and has built strong global partnerships for exchanges, dual degrees, and research. This diversity enriches learning, encourages cross-cultural problem-solving, and equips students to lead in a globalised economy—showing that KIIT is not just an Indian university, but a truly global institution based in India.

The Soul of the Institution: Where Social Commitment Meets Academic Mission

A defining pillar of KIIT's success is its top national ranking in Social Commitment (SDGs)—a value deeply woven into its identity. Guided by the vision of Dr. Achyuta Samanta, Founder, KIIT, KISS & KIMS (<https://achyutasamanta.com/>), this commitment is not peripheral but central to its academics and operations. By integrating the UN's Sustainable Development Goals into its curriculum, campus, and community work, KIIT ensures education drives real social impact. Its model proves that academic excellence and social purpose are not separate pursuits, but mutually reinforcing forces for growth and recognition.

The Visionary's Decade: From Local Roots to Global Recognition

For Dr. Achyuta Samanta, this ranking marks a major milestone in KIIT's transformative journey. "Every state aspires to have a university ranked among the top 500 globally," he reflects. "I am happy that KIIT, only 28 years since its inception and 22 years as a Deemed to be University, has been placed among the world's premier universities. This accomplishment is a source of pride for Odisha specifically, and for India as a whole." His words capture the magnitude of the achievement. In under three decades, KIIT has shown that with vision, compassion, and a steadfast focus on quality, local excellence can evolve into global recognition—offering a powerful model for a more responsible and dynamic approach to higher education. ●

HIGHLIGHTS :

Ranked **5** in India and placed in the Top **501** globally in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026.

259 globally in Academic Excellence, showcasing strong academic performance.

Top performer in India in Industry Integration, International Outlook, and Social Commitment.

Only university from Odisha to feature among **India's top institutions in the 2026 rankings.**

Building OSL Group: How Mahimananda Mishra Forged an Empire with a Conscience



Mahimananda Mishra, Founder, OSL Group

From humble dockside beginnings, Mahimananda Mishra built the OSL empire guided by timeless values, proving that business, when woven with sincerity and service, becomes a lasting force for community transformation.

point. His confidence sprang not from ambition alone, but from an unshakable belief in the dedication and indomitable spirit of Odisha's workforce—a foundation that would fuel the company's expansion from its home state to a national presence.

The Unchanging Compass in a Sea of Change

The stevedoring model Mahimananda Mishra pioneered in the late 1970s has not merely endured but thrived for decades in an evolving maritime world. Its remarkable longevity stems not from business strategy alone, but from timeless spiritual wisdom. Mr. Mishra anchored his leadership in the Bhagavad Gita's profound verse: "Karmanye vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana"—one has the right to work, but not to the fruits. This principle inspired a culture of righteous duty, fairness, and deep respect for every worker, a culture that now guides operations across the country. Further guidance came from Jayadeva's Geeta Govinda, where verses like "Smaravilasita-lalita-vanamali," speaking of constancy and tender care, reinforced steadfast, compassionate leadership.

A Tapestry Woven with Service

From its core in logistics, the OSL Group expanded into mining, hospitality, education, and shipbuilding. While this may appear as random diversification, for Mahimananda Mishra, each venture represented a logical, purposeful step taken only when genuine societal need met meaningful value creation. He never sought to build a personal empire. The common thread weaving through this diverse tapestry remains a vision centered on creating sustainable opportunities, upholding work dignity, and touching lives meaningfully. Sincerity and service are the invisible threads weaving through every venture the group has built, from its origins to its nationwide projects.

Prosperity with a Purpose

In an era of short-term gains, Mahimananda Mishra's philosophy of prosperity stands apart. For him, financial success was never the ultimate goal. He believes a business only thrives when its community prospers alongside it. Thus, philanthropy, disaster relief, and education were never peripheral activities but core to OSL's operations from the beginning. Profit serves a nobler purpose as a means, not an end. Giving back is a fundamental responsibility, not occasional charity. This conviction, that true fulfillment comes from shared success, forms his enduring legacy, proving that the greatest enterprises are built with conscience.

The Enduring Imprint of Values

After five decades of leadership, Mahimananda Mishra understands resilience as more than survival—it is the cultural DNA of learning from challenges and emerging with renewed purpose. Though often called a custodian of Odisha's business legacy, his influence and the Group's operations now span the length of the Indian coastline. His hope for future generations is simple: material wealth may fade, but values endure. If his journey inspires entrepreneurs to balance enterprise with responsibility, leading with sincerity and respect, that would be his most meaningful legacy—an imprint not of brick and mortar, but of unwavering principle and purpose. ●

The story of Mahimananda Mishra is not merely one of corporate ascent; it is a narrative woven into the very fabric of India's industrial landscape, a testament to the power of vision grounded in values. Born in Cuttack on Akshay Tritiya, an auspicious day symbolising eternal prosperity, his journey might easily be framed by destiny. Yet attributing his success to fate alone overlooks the profound power of human will, unwavering discipline, and his deep-seated belief in his people. From humble beginnings, Mr. Mishra transformed obstacles into gateways of opportunity, meticulously building the multifaceted OSL Group. While its origins were in Odisha, the Group now boasts a pan-India footprint, a legacy that began with a single vision. His life stands as a powerful testament to a philosophy where business is not an end in itself, but a vital means to foster collective growth, uphold dignity, and create lasting value for the entire community.

The Architect of Opportunity

This remarkable journey began not in a boardroom but on the bustling docks of Paradip Port. In 1978, a young Mahimananda Mishra entered the maritime world through a small manpower supply firm. During the stringent License Raj, the port sector presented an impenetrable maze of regulations where most saw dead ends. Yet where others saw insurmountable hurdles, Mr. Mishra perceived untapped potential. The pivotal acquisition of Orissa Stevedores Private Limited, with its rare and coveted stevedoring license, marked a turning



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The Surgeon's Art: How Dr. Subrat Kumar Jena Redefined Hand and Micro-Surgery

Recognised as Eastern India's leading replantation surgeon, Dr. Subrat Kumar Jena combines precision, empathy, and innovation to restore lives and redefine the possibilities of modern surgical care.



Dr. Subrat Jena receiving a prestigious award from Hon'ble Governor of Odisha

Born on April 4, 1955, in Bhubaneswar, Dr. Subrat Kumar Jena stands today as Eastern India's foremost authority in replantation and microsurgery. With over 1,800 successful limb replantations and nearly 5,000 reconstructive procedures, his name is synonymous with surgical excellence and hope for patients who arrive with injuries once considered irreparable.

A graduate of SCB Medical College, Cuttack (MBBS, 1977), and MKCG Medical College, Berhampur (MS Orthopedics, 1982), Dr. Jena pursued his M.Ch. in Plastic Surgery at Banaras Hindu University in 1985. His pioneering research in microvascular surgery on albino rats foreshadowed the groundbreaking contributions that would later define his career.

Finding His Forte in Hand Surgery

Dr. Jena's career-defining moment came in 1983, when he attended a presentation by Dr. R. Venkataswami of Government Stanley Hospital, Madras. "He showed us the magic of reconstructing upper extremity injuries—from fingertip to shoulder. I was hooked," recalls Dr. Jena.

This inspiration led him to train under Dr. Venkataswami, where he found his true calling in hand and micro-surgery. Combining orthopedics and plastic surgery, a rare skill set, he soon earned recognition as an "Ortho-Plastic Surgeon." The intricacies of hand function, he explains, fascinated him: "The hand is mobility, structure, and life. Restoring it is both science and art."

By 1996, Dr. Jena had established Doctor House Plastic Surgery Clinic in Cuttack, where his small but dedicated team became known for life-changing replantations. Often, patients arrived late at night after arduous journeys, but Dr. Jena worked tirelessly through the hours. His reputation only grew, leading to the founding of Ashwini Hospital in 2006 with his wife, neurologist Dr. Maya Gantayet.

Crafting a Legacy of Healing

Ashwini Hospital soon became Odisha's hub for trauma and reconstructive care, expanding from a 100-bed facility to a 200-bed multi-specialty teaching hospital. In 2019, recognising the urgent need for trauma-focused care, Dr. Jena founded the Ashwini Trauma Centre

(ATC), a 200-bed state-of-the-art institution dedicated exclusively to trauma cases. Today, ATC performs an average of 25 surgeries daily, with postgraduate programs ensuring the training of future specialists.

His personal statistics are staggering: from 1986 to 2024, he has successfully replanted 1,824 upper extremities, averaging four procedures each month. Including revascularisations, his total cases approach 5,000. Yet, to Dr. Jena, these numbers represent much more than medical records. "Each case is a life transformed. That's what drives me every single day," he says.

The Science and Art of Replantation

Replantation surgery is among the most complex procedures in reconstructive medicine. It demands surgical precision, time, and an unwavering mental focus. Dr. Jena describes it poetically: "Each surgery is like a multi-act play, where every stage must go smoothly for the performance to succeed."

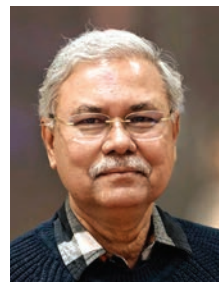
He recalls one unforgettable case: reattaching all five fingers of a young man in a grueling 12-hour operation—without assistants. "That moment remains etched in my memory," he reflects. For him, every challenge is an opportunity: "In hand injury, every situation is a welcome challenge."

Beyond surgical skill, he stresses the importance of patient communication. "Patients are scared, families are uncertain. I spend time explaining, showing photos, and building trust. Honesty is the cornerstone of healing."

Beyond the Scalpel: Vision for the Future

Though he spends more than 12 hours a day at work, Dr. Jena finds balance in family life and farming. "Walking through vegetable patches or spending time with my grandchildren keeps me grounded," he says with a smile. Looking forward, his vision is clear: "I'm excited about the future of hand restoration—from advanced preservation techniques to making hand transplantation more accessible. My greatest hope is to inspire young surgeons to take this field forward."

A mentor to countless protégés now practicing across India, Dr. Subrat Jena's legacy is one of resilience, precision, and compassion. "Stay committed. Master the art and science of restoration, and never stop learning," he advises. Through his remarkable journey, Dr. Jena has not only pioneered replantation surgery in Eastern India but has also redefined what it means to heal—with his hands, his vision, and his heart. ●



“I'm excited about the future of hand restoration—from advanced preservation techniques to making hand transplantation more accessible. My greatest hope is to inspire young surgeons to take this field forward.”

Assam Gas Company Limited: Powering Progress, Fueling the Future

Since 1962, Assam Gas Company Limited has powered growth in Assam through reliable gas distribution, strategic partnerships, and green energy projects, shaping a sustainable energy landscape for industries, households, and communities.

Established in 1962 and wholly owned by the Government of Assam, Assam Gas Company Limited (AGCL) is a leading natural gas distributor. Since its first supply to Namrup Thermal Power Station in 1967, it has grown into a trusted provider for industries, businesses, and households across Upper Assam. Headquartered in Duliajan, AGCL operates an extensive pipeline network serving thousands of consumers while focusing on stakeholder value and a cleaner ecosystem. Guided by Chairman Shri Bolin Chetia, Vice Chairman Shri Indra Gogoi, and Managing Director Shri Gokul Chandra Swargiyari, the company continues to expand with a clear vision and direction.

A Vast Network and Expanding Reach

AGCL's operations span across seven districts of Assam—Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat, Golaghat, and Majuli. With an underground pipeline network capable of transporting over 5.5 MMSCMD of natural gas, the company caters to over 500 industrial units, 1,200 commercial establishments, and more than 59,000 households. Its reputation for safety and strong industrial relations has earned it prestigious recognitions, including the Rajiv Gandhi National Safety Award.

Certifications, Recognition, and Diversification

Quality and safety remain central to AGCL's operations, with certifications including ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018. Recognised as a Category 'A' enterprise, the company contributes to state welfare while diversifying beyond natural gas into fuel retailing, green energy, and EV charging. Its seven multi-fuel outlets and CNG stations, launched in July 2025, mark a strategic step toward sustainability and convenience.

Projects for the Future

AGCL is charting ambitious plans to transform Assam's energy landscape. It is expanding City Gas Distribution to 13 towns, laying new pipelines, and targeting 100 CNG stations in five years. Beyond gas, the company is diversifying into renewables, with a focus on solar projects in Sadiya. These initiatives reinforce its commitment to sustainability and India's energy transition goals.

Joint Ventures and Strategic Partnerships

AGCL's growth has been reinforced by its strategic collaborations and investments, which allow it to



expand its footprint and strengthen the energy infrastructure of the North East. These joint ventures include:

- **Duliajan Numaligarh Pipeline Limited (DNP Ltd.)** – A subsidiary of AGCL, DNP Ltd. operates the ambitious 197 km Duliajan–Numaligarh Pipeline project worth approximately ₹380 crore.
- **Tripura Natural Gas Company Ltd. (TNGCL)** – A joint venture between AGCL, Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC), and GAIL India Ltd., TNGCL has been instrumental in expanding natural gas distribution in Tripura.
- **Purba Bharati Gas Pvt. Ltd.** – Formed in 2019 in partnership with OIL India Ltd. and GAIL Gas Ltd., this company is responsible for distributing Piped Natural Gas (PNG) and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) across Silchar, Hailakandi, Kamrup, and Kamrup Metropolitan.
- **North East Gas Distribution Company Ltd. (NEGDCL)** – Created through a consortium of AGCL and OIL India Ltd., this joint venture won the rights to develop gas distribution in six districts of Assam and six districts of Tripura.
- **Assam Petrochemicals Ltd. (APL)** – AGCL has invested ₹28 crore in equity participation here. APL commissioned a 500 TPD Methanol plant in 2023 and is in the process of launching a 200 TPD Formaldehyde project.

Together, these collaborations highlight AGCL's strategy of leveraging partnerships to accelerate growth, enhance energy access, and contribute to the broader industrial development of the North East.

Towards a Greener Tomorrow

From its modest beginnings in 1967 to becoming a leader in India's natural gas sector, Assam Gas Company Limited exemplifies resilience, innovation, and a deep sense of responsibility toward society and the environment. Guided by its leadership team and inspired by its motto "We Rise By Raising Others", AGCL is not only fueling progress today but also shaping a greener and more sustainable future for the people of Assam and beyond. ●



Weaving Sustainability: Shashi Bhushan Singh on the Future of Indian Jute

The National Jute Board, under Shashi Bhushan Singh's leadership, is blending tradition, innovation and sustainability to transform India's golden fiber into a global symbol of eco-friendly progress.



Shri Shashi Bhushan Singh (IRTC)
Secretary, National Jute Board

Could you share your journey to leading the National Jute Board and how your priorities have influenced the sector's growth?

My administrative journey with the Indian Railways taught me the importance of efficiency and sustainability, lessons that I have carried into my role at the National Jute Board. Jute is the livelihood of nearly 40 lakh farm families in India and also sustains employment in mills, MSMEs and artisan clusters. My vision is to modernize the sector without losing its heritage value.

How is the National Jute Board balancing the sector's traditional rural base with the push for sustainability and global competitiveness?

We must serve two goals: protecting livelihoods and competing globally. On one side, we continue to support farmers through productivity schemes and fair procurement. On the other hand, we are helping MSMEs and startups become globally competitive. The Capital Subsidy for Acquisition of Plant and Machinery (CSAPM) scheme has enabled small units to modernize, while the Production Linked Incentive for Jute Diversified Products is helping them scale exports.

Jute also carries symbolic value—environmental resilience and artisan empowerment. How are you bringing these aspects into policy and trade?

We have been deliberate about embedding these values in both policy and promotion. The Jute Packaging Material Act, which mandates food grains and sugar to be packed in jute, safeguards rural livelihoods while advancing sustainability. Public awareness has grown through events like the Jute Fair held every year across India. Internationally, the Jute Mark India scheme provides a trusted identity for our products, ensuring that when global buyers choose Indian jute, they associate it with quality, tradition and eco-friendliness.

India is phasing out plastics. Where does jute fit in this green transition, and what innovations excite you?

Jute is naturally positioned as India's green fiber. It is biodegradable, recyclable, and absorbs nearly 15 tons of carbon dioxide per hectare while releasing 11 tons of oxygen. Beyond packaging, jute geo-textiles are being used in road construction, slope stabilization and soil conservation. Collaborations with IITs and ICAR-NINFET are advancing innovations like water-repellent coatings and jute composites for furniture. These applications prove jute is not just part of the circular economy but a driver of it.

What steps are being taken by the National Jute Board to promote design innovation and tech-enabled growth for MSMEs and startups?

Our aim is to connect craft with technology. Jute Design and Resource Centre in Kolkata, gives artisans access to global design trends, while R&D projects are exploring fire-retardant fabrics, sound-absorbing jute panels and nanotech-enhanced geotextiles. Capital subsidy scheme has enabled small producers to modernize their equipment, and market development initiatives have supported participation in global trade fairs. These steps ensure that MSMEs and startups can scale sustainably and compete in premium global markets.

Women form the backbone of the jute economy. How is the National Jute Board strengthening inclusivity and artisan-led enterprises?

Women, particularly in West Bengal and Assam, play a crucial role in fiber processing and craft-based enterprises. We are expanding training for self-help groups, offering them design support, raw material banks and marketing linkages. Many women artisans have transitioned from household craft to running registered enterprises. Additionally, welfare schemes such as scholarships for children of jute workers, with a focus on girl students, reinforce inclusivity.

Jute products are moving beyond sacks to lifestyle, fashion and décor. How is the National Jute Board driving this diversification to appeal to eco-conscious consumers worldwide?

The perception of jute is evolving rapidly. Exports of jute manufactures, including floor coverings, grew by 13.35%, rising from about ₹2,822 crore in FY 2023-24 to nearly ₹3,251 crore in FY 2024-25. With initiatives like the Jute Mark India logo, buyers can trust authenticity and quality. The National Jute Board also supports participation in fairs across Europe, the US and emerging markets like Latin America and Africa. As global consumers turn towards eco-friendly options, our goal is to position Indian jute not only as sustainable but as aspirational and globally relevant. ●

AcreRise: Building Odisha's Urban Living Future on Trust and Foresight

AcreRise, born from friendship and foresight, is reshaping Odisha's real estate with strategic growth, thoughtful design, and a lasting commitment to building communities that reflect both present needs and future aspirations.



Sashikant Barik & Sheikh Mairajul Haque
Founders, AcreRise

At the heart of Odisha's growing real estate landscape lies a story not just of buildings, but of people and purpose. What makes this journey distinct is not only what has been achieved but also how it began. It started with a friendship built on trust, conviction, and the belief that real estate could be more transparent, thoughtful, and designed for the future.

Two professionals, Sashikant Barik and Sheikh Mairajul Haque, came together as partners in vision, laying the foundation for what would evolve into one of Odisha's most respected real estate names. Barik brought instinct, deep knowledge of market behaviour, and insight into buyer expectations. Haque brought discipline, operational expertise, and detail-oriented delivery. Together, they created a leadership model defined by balance, foresight, and consistency.

AcreRise: Shaping Odisha's Next Chapter

From this partnership was born AcreRise, a brand designed to match the pace and aspirations of Odisha's next wave of urban growth. AcreRise has always stood for more than construction—it is about building relevance, value, and trust for the long term.

Its guiding philosophy, "Keeping You Ahead," is both a promise and a practice. It reflects in every aspect

of the company's approach: safeguarding investor confidence through foresight, placing customer needs at the centre of decisions, empowering employees to grow with the brand, and prioritising quality over short-term gains.

This philosophy has shaped AcreRise's growth trajectory. With 30 lakh sq. ft. under construction, another 35 lakh sq. ft. in the pipeline, and a track record of zero RERA complaints, the company demonstrates its commitment to clarity, quality, and integrity in every project.

Growth Rooted in Strategy

AcreRise's projects are not random expansions; they are carefully placed in locations that reflect foresight and emerging potential. The brand looks ahead of the market curve, identifying zones poised for growth before they become crowded.

- **South Bhubaneswar:** A fast-developing IT and residential hub, supported by expanding infrastructure.
- **Trisulia:** A scenic riverfront corridor linking Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, with potential for lifestyle and industrial growth.
- **Pandra:** Only ten minutes from the city core, this area hosts AcreRise's largest land parcel and offers exceptional future connectivity.
- **Puri:** A spiritual and coastal hub transforming into a vibrant second-home market.

Each location reflects AcreRise's belief in placing communities not where the present demand is strongest, but where the future opportunities will unfold.

Homes with Thoughtful Design

Every AcreRise project is crafted to reflect not just present-day buyer expectations, but the evolving needs of families and changing lifestyles. Its portfolio demonstrates a careful balance between scale and thoughtful design.

- One World, a 1008-unit township in South Bhubaneswar designed by architect Hafeez Contractor, cements AcreRise's township credentials.
- AcreRise Azure, a riverside community in Trisulia, blends natural surroundings with intentional urban design.
- AcreRise Aura provides compact yet smart living spaces, balancing affordability with comfort and access.
- The Puri retreat, featuring 500+ apartments and a hotel, caters to diverse segments including investors, first-time buyers, and lifestyle seekers.
- Codename City Centre in Pandra showcases the brand's ability to scale with a large-format development, excellent connectivity, and panoramic river views.

Across all formats, AcreRise keeps its focus consistent: transparent ownership, smart layouts, and long-term value.

The Path Ahead

AcreRise is not chasing headlines. It is steadily earning recognition by staying true to principle, presence, and purpose. With Barik and Haque at the helm, the company continues to play a quiet yet impactful role in shaping Odisha's urban future.

Because when a brand is founded on friendship, strengthened by ethics, and guided by vision, it achieves more than just building homes. It creates a legacy that keeps Odisha and its people moving forward with confidence. ●

AcreRise is not chasing headlines. It is steadily earning recognition by staying true to principle, presence, and purpose. With Barik and Haque at the helm, the company continues to play a quiet yet impactful role in shaping Odisha's urban future.

Legacy, Luxury, and Leadership: Inside the World of MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts

Blending heritage with innovation, Dilip and Pooja Ray have transformed MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts into a symbol of boutique luxury, sustainability, and cultural authenticity in India's evolving hospitality landscape.

In India's dynamic and rapidly evolving hospitality landscape, MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts has emerged as a distinctive name that blends the richness of heritage with the vibrancy of modern innovation. What began decades ago as a modest family-run venture has steadily transformed into one of the nation's most respected boutique luxury chains, admired for its authenticity and consistent pursuit of excellence.

At the heart of this journey are two visionary leaders—Dilip Ray, Founder, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD), and Pooja Ray, Managing Director (MD)—whose combined leadership has shaped MAYFAIR into more than just a brand. Under their stewardship, it has become a symbol of timeless elegance, sustainability, and cultural resonance. Their approach demonstrates a rare balance of tradition and forward-looking strategy, a harmony that has not only steered the group's growth but also contributed meaningfully to redefining the larger story of Indian hospitality itself.

From a Humble Beginning to a National Presence

The story of MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts dates back to 1982, when Dilip Ray ventured into the hospitality sector by opening a restaurant called Tandoor in Rourkela. At the time, it was merely an extension of his weighbridge business, but the restaurant quickly became a popular gathering place for local families and expatriates from the nearby steel plant. This early success planted the seeds for something much bigger.

By 1983–84, Ray added four guest rooms to the restaurant, a modest move that marked the beginning of a remarkable journey in hospitality. What started as a small lodging experiment has since evolved into an expansive network of 18 luxury hotels and resorts across eight states in India. From the golden beaches of Puri and Gopalpur



Dilip and Pooja Ray CMD & MD, MAYFAIR Hotels and Resorts

to the cool mountain breezes of Darjeeling and Gangtok, and further into bustling hubs like Bhubaneswar, Raipur, Siliguri, and Guwahati, each property reflects both local character and world-class standards.

A Portfolio Rooted in Place and Spirit
MAYFAIR's properties are not mere hotels; they are immersive stories built into stone and landscape. The group has always taken care to ensure that every resort harmonises

with its environment while offering a touch of indulgence.

- **The MAYFAIR Beach Resort in Puri**, with its beachfront views, embodies the charm of coastal Odisha.
- **The MAYFAIR Spa Resort & Casino in Gangtok** blends Himalayan serenity with vibrant entertainment.
- **The MAYFAIR Manor in Jungpana** is a colonial-era jewel nestled amid tea estates, offering old-world charm.
- **The MAYFAIR Tea Resort in Siliguri**, India's first boutique tea retreat, captures the region's rich tea heritage with colonial grandeur and a living tea museum.
- **The MAYFAIR Lake Resort in Raipur** offers tranquillity by the water, while the historic MAYFAIR Gopalpur-on-Sea (1914) is a lovingly restored coastal treasure.
- **The MAYFAIR Manor in Alibaug** is a 7-room coastal retreat blending vintage elegance with relaxed seaside vibes, just a short drive from Mumbai.
- **The MAYFAIR Spring Valley Resort in Guwahati** is a luxury escape amid forested hills, offering grand lawns, 246 rooms, and versatile event spaces.
- **The MAYFAIR On Sea, Morjim (Goa)** is a serene boutique resort along Morjim Beach, ideal for intimate getaways and breezy coastal celebrations.
- **The MAYFAIR Club House in Purnea (Bihar)** offers 67 refined rooms, lush green views, and a calm ambience for business or leisure.
- **The MAYFAIR Garden and World Cup Village in Rourkela** range from the heritage Garden hotel, where the brand began, to the grand World Cup Village beside Birs Munda Stadium, perfect for signature celebrations.
- **The MAYFAIR Oasis Resort & Convention in Jharsuguda** combines leisure and business luxury with 122 rooms, lush gardens, and expansive event spaces.
- **The MAYFAIR Himalayan Spa Resort in Kalimpong** is a restored British-era estate at 4,100 ft., offering colonial elegance, wellness, and panoramic Kanchenjunga views.
- **The MAYFAIR Darjeeling**, once the Nazargunj royal family's summer home,

offers regal charm, estate teas, and spellbinding Himalayan vistas.

Upcoming projects such as MAYFAIR Paradeep and MAYFAIR Sanctuary in Bhubaneswar continue to extend the brand's philosophy of crafting destinations that blend luxury with authenticity. These projects are also expected to boost regional tourism, bringing employment, cultural exposure, and a wider global spotlight to emerging Indian destinations.

The Ethos: Luxury in Harmony with Nature

Unlike many hospitality chains that focus on grandeur alone, MAYFAIR has built its philosophy around meaningful experiences. The group's motto, "Stay with us, Stay with Nature," is not just a tagline but a guiding principle.

Properties are designed as self-sustaining microclimates, with lush landscaping, water features, and indigenous flora that naturally cool and refresh the environment. This eco-conscious approach not only reduces environmental footprint but also enhances guest comfort by creating an atmosphere of tranquillity. Guests at a MAYFAIR property are not isolated from their surroundings but rather integrated into a space where nature is a partner in luxury.

This commitment to sustainability aligns with global conversations about responsible tourism, ensuring that MAYFAIR is not only relevant today but also future-ready.

Leadership Rooted in Legacy and Progress

The rise of MAYFAIR is inseparable from the vision of Dilip Ray, whose over four decades of dedication to the hospitality sector have left an indelible mark. Under his stewardship, the brand has become a benchmark in boutique luxury, emphasising eco-friendly destinations, cultural integration, and personalised service. His advocacy for policy reforms, simplified clearance processes, and tourism promotion reflects a deep engagement not just with his business but with the industry as a whole.

Complementing his legacy is the dynamic leadership of Pooja Ray, who brings a progressive and inclusive outlook to the group. Her focus on sustainability, energy efficiency, organic

sourcing, workplace equity, and women's empowerment has redefined what it means to run a luxury brand in today's world. She has also championed the integration of Indian arts and culture into each property, ensuring that MAYFAIR remains not just a place to stay but an encounter with heritage and creativity.

A Benchmark for Experiential Luxury

Together, Dilip and Pooja Ray have positioned MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts as more than a chain—it is an experience of belonging, indulgence, and discovery. By resisting the urge to expand indiscriminately, they have prioritised quality over quantity, crafting a brand where every property feels intimate and personal.

Guests are not treated as transient visitors but as part of a larger story. From tailored services to curated cultural experiences, the group has redefined hospitality in India by showing that luxury is not measured by excess but by authenticity, connection, and memory. This philosophy resonates strongly with modern travellers who increasingly seek experiences that are both enriching and responsible. In this sense, MAYFAIR is not simply keeping pace with change but setting the agenda for the future of Indian hospitality.

Shaping the Future of Hospitality in India

Looking ahead, MAYFAIR's journey is poised to expand while remaining anchored in its founding principles. The group is exploring AI integration, digital transformation, and sustainable technologies that will further enhance guest experiences and operational efficiency. At the same time, its leadership continues to advocate for India's hospitality sector on a broader scale—whether through pushing for tourism-friendly policies, highlighting India's diverse cultural offerings, or investing in the next generation of industry leaders.

For Dilip and Pooja Ray, the path forward is clear: to continue building destinations that celebrate India's heritage while embracing the needs of the modern traveller. Their leadership ensures that MAYFAIR will remain not just relevant but exemplary, a brand that inspires both loyalty and admiration. ●

Building India from Within: Prashant Ahluwalia's Blueprint for Success with KJS Ahluwalia Group

Prashant Ahluwalia's journey with the KJS Ahluwalia Group exemplifies how a visionary, homegrown enterprise, built on resilience and responsibility, is powering the very foundation of India's economic ascent.

In the grand narrative of India's economic ascent, a quiet industrial revolution has been unfolding for decades, far from the glare of international headlines. This is a story of indigenous enterprise, of building national strength from the ground up with vision, integrity, and an unwavering belief in homegrown potential. At the heart of this narrative is Prashant Kumar Ahluwalia, a visionary whose leadership has transformed the KJS Ahluwalia Group from a regional mining operation into a ₹3,000-crore diversified empire. His journey, shared with his wife and strategic partner, Gopa Ahluwalia, is a masterclass in resilience, strategic foresight, and a deeply ingrained belief that true business success is measured not just in revenue but in the legacy you leave behind. This is the story of an indigenous champion that didn't just wait for India's moment—it helped create it.

The Foundation: Forged in Ore and Opportunity

The saga begins not in a corporate boardroom, but in the rich, mineral-dense soils of Odisha in the early 1970s. The late Shri K.J.S. Ahluwalia, with a clear eye for potential, established the group's first ventures in iron ore and manganese mining. He was a pioneer, operating in an era long before "Make in India" became a national mantra. Into this world of grit and enterprise stepped a young Prashant Ahluwalia, who, armed with a postgraduate degree in business management, joined the family business over four decades ago alongside his elder brother, Shri Kamaljeet Singh Ahluwalia.

Prashant's early immersion was not as a scion waiting for inheritance, but as an apprentice to the complex realities of Indian industry. He learned the business from the ground up, understanding that the wealth buried beneath the earth was only as valuable as the integrity and acumen used to bring it to the surface. This formative period instilled in him a philosophy that would become the bedrock of the Group's identity:



The power duo - Gopa and Prashant Ahluwalia

an unwavering commitment to self-reliance and financial prudence. In an industrial sector often characterised by towering debt and stressed assets, the KJS Ahluwalia Group carved a unique path, famously never relying on bank loans for its growth. This self-reliant approach has insulated the business from financial shocks and reflects Prashant's long-term philosophy: "In business, we never hanker after short-term profit. Our goal is sustainable growth."

The Strategic Evolution: Diversification as a Doctrine

As Prashant's influence grew, so did his vision for the Group. He recognised that to build an enterprise that could withstand economic cycles and contribute meaningfully to the nation, diversification was not an option, but a necessity. He masterfully steered the Group beyond its mining roots into a carefully curated portfolio of synergistic industries: steel, power, cement, and logistics. This was not a random expansion; it was a calculated

chess move, creating an integrated value chain where each business arm fortified the others.

The crowning jewel of this strategic expansion is Viraj Steel & Energy Ltd, a 0.3 MTPA fully integrated steel plant, situated at Gurupali in Sambalpur, born from a 2004 MoU with the Government of Odisha. Under Prashant's guidance, Viraj Steel became more than a manufacturing facility; it became a manifestation of the Group's core mission. With its 28 MW captive power plant and a state-of-the-art TMT Rolling Mill, the plant embodied a commitment to quality, transparency, and modern management. More recently, the launch of the 'Jagannath TMT' brand in 2022 signaled a keen alignment with India's unprecedented infrastructure boom, positioning the Group as a trusted partner in building the nation's new highways, urban landscapes, and homes.

The Leadership Alchemy: Vision Meets Execution

The formidable growth of the KJS Ahluwalia Group is powered by a unique leadership alchemy, a partnership where visionary foresight is perfectly balanced with operational mastery. At one helm is Prashant Ahluwalia, the Group's Chairman and Managing Director, widely respected for his strategic foresight and a deeply people-centric philosophy. For him, employees are the soul of the enterprise. "It is a fallacy to assume employees depend on us," he often reflects. "The truth is, our business depends



Plant view of Shri Jagannath Steels and Power Ltd, Barbil

entirely on their work. Their problems are, in essence, our losses." This ethos of mutual respect has cultivated a culture of rare loyalty and commitment across the organisation.

Complementing his panoramic vision is his wife, Mrs. Gopa Ahluwalia, a Director, whose influence is both profound and strategic. Her background in science and fifteen years at the helm of a chemical plant bring a formidable blend of operational rigor and analytical acumen to the Group. This powerful partnership is further fortified by their son-in-law, Mr. Anuj Malhan, a Director, who works alongside Mr. Ahluwalia to ensure seamless execution across flagship steel manufacturing units like Shri Jagannath Steels & Power and Viraj Steel. Together, they embody a modern Indian business dynasty—deeply rooted in legacy, yet masterfully adept at global-scale execution.

The Conscience of Capital: Where Responsibility Meets Action

For the Ahluwalias, the balance sheet is only one measure of their success. They operate on the conviction that a corporation's greatest responsibility is to the community it serves. Their corporate social responsibility initiatives are not peripheral activities but are central to their identity, executed with the same strategic focus as their industrial projects. The Group nurtures future generations by running a Saraswati Sishu



VIRAJ STEEL & ENERGY PVT LTD

Mandir in Guali, Barbil, providing holistic education and daily mid-day meals to over 300 children. Their compassion extends to an orphanage caring for more than 100 children, with ambitious plans to establish a



The Ahluwalias at a charity event

permanent home for them.

Education is a cornerstone of their philanthropy, with scholarships, uniforms, and books empowering over 250 underprivileged students across Odisha and Delhi. They have adopted an entire village, transforming it through access to clean water, reliable electricity, healthcare, and quality schooling, creating a replicable model of integrated rural development. Furthermore, through regular blood donation drives and monthly health camps in partnership with the National Rural Health Mission, they bring essential healthcare to the doorsteps of rural populations. Mrs. Ahluwalia further channels her energy into women's empowerment and disability inclusion, proving that their culture of responsibility is all-encompassing.

The Road Ahead: Building India's Indigenous Future

As India accelerates its journey to become a global manufacturing powerhouse, the KJS Ahluwalia Group is not just prepared

to participate; it is poised to lead. With an impressive asset base that includes a 4.0 MTPA iron ore pellet plant, 1700 TPD sponge iron units, and forward-looking forays into renewable wind energy, the Group is fully equipped to fuel the next phase of the nation's industrial saga. Their journey, from the mines of Odisha to a multi-crore, diversified conglomerate, provides a powerful blueprint for indigenous enterprise.

The story of Prashant and Gopa Ahluwalia is a vital testament to the fact that India's economic destiny is not solely in the hands of incoming multinationals. It is being shaped, steadfastly and sustainably, by homegrown champions who possess an unparalleled understanding of the nation's soil and its soul. They symbolise a powerful trinity of resilience, responsibility, and an unshakeable belief in India's potential. In the grand narrative of India's rise, they are not just characters; they are authors, crafting a legacy that proves the most enduring empires are built not just on steel and power, but on principle and purpose. ●



Steel Production

Dalma Delight: Unraveling Authentic Odia Cuisine

Celebrating 25 glorious years of Dalma, we sit down with its visionary founder Deboo Patnaik to revisit the journey, flavours, and passion that made Odia cuisine a household name.



Deboo Patnaik, Founder, Dalma

What was the seminal inspiration that led to the inception of Dalma as a pioneering custodian of authentic Odia cuisine?

The inspiration for Dalma was rooted in the desire to give Odia cuisine the recognition it long deserved. For generations, the food of Odisha had remained confined largely to homes and temples, celebrated within families but seldom showcased in the mainstream dining space. Unlike cuisines from neighboring states, Odia food lacked a visible platform in restaurants or on the culinary map of India. Dalma was envisioned as a bridge between heritage and hospitality, a place where iconic dishes such as Dalma, Mansha Jhola, Pakhala, Chhena Poda, and seasonal saagas could be experienced outside the home, yet with the same authenticity and warmth. The mission was to share Odisha's culinary identity proudly with locals, visitors, and eventually the wider world.

Why was the iconic dish Dalma chosen as the eponym for the brand, and how has the name shaped its identity over the decades?

The name "Dalma" was chosen deliberately, as the dish lies at the heart of Odia cuisine. A comforting mix of lentils and vegetables, it holds both sacred and homely value—served as part of the Mahaprasad at Puri Jagannath Temple and as a daily staple in Odia homes. The name instantly conveyed authenticity and belonging, and over the decades, "Dalma" has become synonymous with Odia food itself. For locals, it evokes nostalgia; for outsiders, it sparks cultural curiosity. This rooted identity has made the brand a true symbol of Odia culinary heritage.

In the formative years, what formidable challenges did you encounter in curating and popularising Odia gastronomy?

One of the foremost challenges in the formative years — which, to some extent, persists even today — was the paucity of professionally trained

chefs in Odia cuisine. With only a handful of structured culinary programs in hotel management institutes and limited career avenues, the pool of skilled cooks specializing in authentic Odia fare has remained rather modest. Another subtle yet significant hurdle lay in managing the expectations of local patrons, who would often compare a dish to the one lovingly prepared by their mothers at home. Persuading them that every household nurtures its own unique rendition while maintaining the essence of authenticity was no simple task. Interestingly, almost no one ever drew comparisons with their wives' cooking — mothers, it seems, have always defined the gold standard!

How has Dalma served as a cultural ambassador in elevating and mainstreaming Odia cuisine for younger generations and global audiences alike?

Dalma has transformed Odia food from a private tradition into a public experience. For younger generations, especially urban youth distant from traditional kitchens, it serves as a gateway to rediscover their roots. Each dish reflects Odisha's culture, festivals, and daily life, while the restaurant positions Odia cuisine alongside India's celebrated regional foods. By presenting authentic dishes in a structured dining setting, Dalma acts as a cultural ambassador, making Odisha's culinary identity visible, relevant, and respected.

Over the span of 25 years, what defining turning points do you consider as transformative in Dalma's growth journey?

The first significant turning point came with the opening of a second outlet in Bhubaneswar, which marked the transition from a single restaurant to a growing brand. This expansion provided the operational insights necessary for scaling further. The second milestone was historic—the launch of the first Dalma outlet outside Odisha, in Bengaluru. This was the first structured Odia cuisine restaurant beyond the state's borders, introducing the flavors of Odisha to a cosmopolitan audience. The success of this venture validated the universal appeal of Odia food and cemented Dalma's role as a pioneer in taking the state's cuisine nationwide.

As you commemorate this Silver Jubilee, what vision and aspirations guide Dalma's trajectory for the next quarter-century?

A. Looking ahead, Dalma's vision is to remain the torchbearer of Odia cuisine, both within India and globally. Over the next 25 years, the brand aspires to expand into major cities and select international destinations, offering dining experiences where traditional recipes are celebrated with contemporary comfort. Equally important is the goal of nurturing an ecosystem for Odia gastronomy. By creating structured training opportunities for young chefs, Dalma hopes to ensure that authentic skills are preserved and passed on. Beyond being a chain of restaurants, Dalma envisions itself as a cultural envoy, telling Odisha's food story with pride and authenticity to the world. ●

Beyond Sanitation: How Assam is Shaping Sustainable Rural Futures

Assam's rural sanitation journey goes beyond building toilets—it blends culture, community, and innovation to transform waste into resources, foster pride, and create sustainable, model villages for a cleaner future.

Assam's Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) story is one of transformation that bridges culture, infrastructure, and community pride. What began as a nationwide call to eliminate open defecation has evolved into a multi-faceted mission that blends local traditions with innovative waste management. From toilets painted with Assamese motifs to plastic waste being turned into roads and bricks, the state has embraced a cleanliness revolution that is both rooted and forward-looking.

Assam's Toilet Makeover

When SBM-G rolled out, it was not just about constructing latrines but about reshaping habits and ensuring dignity. Before the mission, open defecation was rare, but makeshift kachha toilets were common. The introduction of Individual Household Latrines (IHLs) and Community Sanitary Complexes (CSCs) changed that reality. To foster ownership, villagers and Gaon Panchayat committees began painting toilets with jaapi patterns and folk scenes, transforming basic structures into cultural symbols.

This creativity extended to "Mission Chamak," which enlisted youth artists to turn walls, flyovers, and public spaces into canvases carrying bold messages on plastic waste, segregation, and safe sanitation.

ODF Plus: From Toilets to Sustainability

Declaring villages open defecation free (ODF) was only the first step. The ODF Plus model embedded Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) into community life.

Assam's rise from 0.07% ODF Plus coverage in 2020-21 to 100% today reflects a remarkable shift. Composting pits, segregation sheds, biogas plants, and greywater systems now power cleaner, healthier, self-reliant villages. Nearly 90% of these have become ODF Plus Model Villages.

Greywater and Plastic Management

Greywater reuse is one of Assam's success stories. Households channel wastewater into kitchen gardens or duckweed ponds, where it nourishes plants and supports fish fodder. End-of-drain treatment systems now ensure wastewater entering rivers and wetlands is filtered through gravel beds and wetland plants, reducing pollution and restoring water quality.

Plastic Waste Management Units (PWMUs) have also been set up across 88 blocks. Collected plastic is processed for use in road construction and bricks. In Barpeta, a 1.13 km road was built with 1.8 tons of plastic waste. By turning waste into infrastructure, Assam is showing how pollution can be converted into progress.

Sustainability in Action

Under the GOBARDhan initiative, cattle dung and crop residues are converted into biogas and organic slurry, linking waste management with clean energy and soil health. The "Green Worship" initiative has introduced compost pits, plastic collection banks, and eco-friendly practices in temples, mosques, and churches, making faith-based institutions champions of environmental stewardship.

Model Villages and Youth Leadership



Villages like Rangshapara and Kakoijana Ujan Rabhapara showcase how sanitation can fuel tourism and local livelihoods. With spotless lanes and cultural attractions, they draw visitors while inspiring other communities.

Innovation continues through tools like the SwachhBandhu chatbot, offering real-time sanitation guidance, and pipe composting units in schools, which convert midday meal waste into compost. Youth-led programmes such as Neer Nirmal Mitras are turning children into WASH ambassadors, while Swajal Mitras support toilet construction and sanitation campaigns.

Urban-Rural Convergence

Assam is also bridging rural and urban sanitation. Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs) in towns now serve nearby villages, ensuring safe collection and treatment of septic tank waste. Over 400 villages across nine districts are already linked, safeguarding both health and the environment.

The Road Ahead



From artistic toilets to plastic roads, Assam's SBM-G journey proves how infrastructure, community pride, and sustainability can converge. The focus ahead will be on deepening behavioural change, integrating modern solutions, and preserving Assam's natural heritage. Initiatives like No Plastic Zones in Kaziranga and Manas National Parks, along with eco-friendly toilets for visitors, reflect this vision of blending sanitation with conservation and tourism.

Assam's story is more than a sanitation success—it is a blueprint for how cultural pride, community spirit, and innovation can together create resilient, sustainable futures. ●

Parameter	2020-21	As on date
ODF Plus State Progress	0.07%	100 %
ODF Plus Model Village	0%	92.40 %

Parameter	2020-21	As on date
Solid Waste Management saturated villages	72 villages (0.28%)	24140 villages (95.16%)
Greywater Management saturated villages	12 villages (0.05 %)	25101 villages (99%)

Inspiring Minds, Transforming Futures: Dr. Sangeeta Tripathi's Mission in Education

Professor (Dr.) Sangeeta Tripathi is a visionary academic leader whose mission blends educational excellence with ethical values, transforming management education across North East India.



Professor (Dr.) Sangeeta Tripathi

Professor (Dr.) Sangeeta Tripathi is widely regarded as a dynamic and inspirational figure in the field of management education in North East India. Over the years, she has become a role model for countless students and educators alike. Known for her compassionate heart and strong mind, she is often described as a source of unwavering motivation. Those who have worked with her or studied under her leadership view her as someone who can look beyond the horizon, make bold decisions, and lead with clarity and purpose. While education has remained the cornerstone of her life's work, she also deeply values service to society and has led several initiatives for the welfare of senior citizens and the underprivileged.

A Dedicated Career in Education and Leadership

Professionally, Professor (Dr.) Tripathi has over two decades of experience in teaching, research, training, and consultancy. She is currently the Director of NERIM Group of Institutions in Guwahati, Assam, an academic hub recognized for nurturing students in a disciplined yet supportive environment. Her teaching approach reflects her belief that management education must be a combination of knowledge, skill development, and social responsibility. She has conducted a variety of training programmes on communication skills, business etiquette, leadership, team effectiveness, and motivational practices for both students and professionals. Under her leadership, NERIM has continued to uphold high academic standards, and she has consistently prioritized institutional goals over personal interests, steering the institution through challenges with resilience and vision.

Honours That Reflect a Legacy of Excellence

Professor (Dr.) Tripathi's career has been decorated with numerous accolades that reflect her unwavering commitment to educational excellence. From

2010 to 2025, she was consecutively honoured by Competition Success Review (CSR) as one of the "Eminent Directors of Leading Institutes of India". Under her leadership, NERIM earned the "CSR Top University of India Award" with a five-star rating. Her contributions were further acknowledged in 2019 by ABP News through the "Women in Education Leadership Award." She was featured on the cover of The Week in March 2022, in an article titled; 'A Woman with Holistic Vision', and the following year, FEMINA magazine included her in its March 2023 segment on "Inspiring Women of the North East". News18 Assam North-East honoured her with the "Education Eminence Award" in 2022, and IBC recognized her outstanding contributions with the "Bharat Vidya Gaurav Puraskar". The Year 2025 was particularly significant, as she has been honoured with multiple high-profile awards, including the "Outstanding Visionary Academic Leader" title at the Times Business Awards North-East, the "Shreemoyee Award" from News18 Assam North-East, the "Mirchi Excellence Award" for the academic leadership, and the "Times Now Gems of North East Award". She was also recognized by FEMINA Achievers Awards with the "Excellence in Women's Leadership in Education & Mentorship" award.

Beyond her achievement what truly defines Professor (Dr.) Sangeeta Tripathi is her enduring belief in the transformative power of education. She upholds the ethical standards of quality learning, placing strong emphasis on human values alongside academic rigour.

A Vision Grounded in Values and Service

Professor Tripathi has played a vital role in the development of several other institutions, contributing as a member of their governing bodies and participating in selection and inspection panels for government organizations. For her, awards and rankings are secondary to the joy of mentoring students and seeing them grow into skilled professionals and responsible citizens. Her dream is to make quality education more accessible to students across the North East and to elevate NERIM's reputation on the national stage. Through her tireless efforts and visionary leadership, she continues to build a legacy rooted in excellence, integrity, and social impact. ●

Rising with Odisha: The 35-Year Journey of Utkal Builders

For 35 years, Utkal Builders has not just shaped Odisha's skyline but also etched a story of innovation, trust, and timeless design—transforming the way generations live, work, and belong.

The Odisha of the early 1990s was a place on the cusp of change. Bhubaneswar, still rooted in its quiet rhythm, was just beginning to explore the concept of apartment living. Most homes were simple, functional, and designed to meet only the essentials. Into this landscape walked Utkal Builders, carrying not merely blueprints, but a vision.

The idea was bold: to create homes that were more than four walls. Homes that could embody beauty and lifestyle, comfort and practicality. Homes that could reflect the aspirations of Odia families while honouring their traditions. From its inception in 1990, Utkal treated each project as a promise—of better living, of thoughtful design, and of a future where modern dreams could harmonise with timeless values.

What began as a quiet vision soon became a movement, as Utkal expanded beyond homes to craft offices and commercial spaces that pulsed with life. The story of Odisha's growth became intertwined with the story of Utkal, each new building a chapter of progress.

Building Quality That Endures

Dreams are fragile things unless anchored by discipline. For Utkal, quality was never negotiable. Every project demanded rigour—from the drafting table to the final brick. This obsession with perfection led to the creation of Utkal's own RMC plant, producing industry-grade concrete and bricks to maintain uncompromised standards.

But construction was only half the story. Through Utkal Team Care, the company ensured that its buildings would remain living ecosystems—maintained, secure, and cared for. Hygiene, housekeeping, and safety became as integral as the walls themselves. In this way, Utkal delivered not just buildings,



Sharad Baid
Managing Director, Utkal Builders

but sustainable communities designed to last across generations.

The Spark of Innovation

In Utkal's journey, innovation has never been a milestone; it has been a constant companion. Each project brought something Odisha had never seen before.

The state's first high-rise, Utkal Heights, rose like a beacon of ambition. Utkal iSquare introduced smart homes long before the term became commonplace. Utkal Signature dazzled with its 2.5 lakh sq. ft. glass façade, an architectural landmark that redefined the city's skyline. And with Utkal Kanika Galleria, Bhubaneswar experienced its first integrated mall—a space where commerce, leisure, and community converged.

Now, with over 5 million sq. ft. of development unfolding across Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, and beyond, Utkal continues to shape the horizon, not only building structures but also reimagining lifestyles.

Trust: The Invisible Foundation

Innovation may catch the eye, but trust secures the heart. For over three decades, Utkal has earned loyalty by keeping promises—quality upheld, practices transparent, and timelines honoured.

"Trust grew with us—because it's what we set out to earn from day one," says Sharad Baid, Managing Director, Utkal Builders. "From the start, we knew leadership wouldn't come from buildings alone but from how we built them. By raising the bar on design, quality, delivery, and customer experience, we shaped our identity. Every project must enrich life today and stand as a sanctuary for generations—a legacy of consistency, care, and character."

Baid frames this within Odisha's wider rise—₹58,195 crore in infrastructure investments, 75,000 km of new roads, and 8.5% GDP growth in 2023–24, with Bhubaneswar now a Smart City. "As Odisha rises, Utkal is not keeping pace—it is setting the pace," he notes. "We are delivering landmark projects and thriving communities, fulfilling a promise that Odisha is the best place to live, work, and grow. A promise built on innovation and sealed with trust."

A Legacy Beyond Brick and Mortar

Thirty-five years is a long time in the life of a builder. But for Utkal, those years are not measured in cement and steel alone. They are measured in the stories of families who found a sanctuary, of businesses that found a home, of communities that found a heart.

The legacy of Utkal Builders is not just the skyline it transformed, but the trust it earned and the aspirations it nurtured. As Odisha strides into a new era of growth, Utkal remains more than a builder. It stands as a custodian of dreams, a maker of landmarks, and above all, a storyteller of spaces where life, work, and community come together. ●



From Odisha to the World: The Visionary Journey of Dr. Tirupati Panigrahi

Dr. Tirupati Panigrahi's life, from hardship to healing millions, reflects how vision, education, and healthcare rooted in empathy can transform communities and inspire a legacy of trust.

***"It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves."* – William Shakespeare**

Decades ago, a young boy in Odisha scrubbed dishes, cooked in a modest hotel, and slept under tables after poverty forced him out of school. Bathing at railway stations, scavenging discarded books, and clinging to the promise he once made to his mother, to care for his siblings and transform lives — he carried a dream larger than circumstance.

That boy grew up to be Dr. Tirupati Panigrahi: one of India's most visionary educationists, philanthropists, and institution-builders.

Building Dreams, Building Futures

From hardship was born the Hi-Tech Group of Institutions as Eastern India's first private medical college, and today, a powerhouse with 3 medical colleges and 40+ paramedical, engineering, and other institutions.

At the heart of this legacy stand three world-class multispeciality hospitals with 2200 beds, including 400 ICU beds in Bhubaneswar, Rourkela, and Tirupati, equipped with advanced technology, skilled doctors, and compassionate care. Dr. Panigrahi's message to his staff remains his guiding principle: *"You just focus on the patient's ailment, not the size of his wallet."*

His Vision and Mission

Step into a Hi-Tech campus and you don't just see buildings of brick and mortar; you feel a culture of care, discipline balanced with compassion, and an unshakable belief that education and healthcare must always serve humanity first.

Under his leadership, Hi-Tech has grown into a beacon of medical education, offering MBBS and postgraduate programs where rigorous training is complemented by research and bedside learning. More importantly, he emphasized values — nurturing doctors who are not only skilled but humane, who heal not just bodies but lives.

His mission has always been to make education and healthcare affordable, inclusive, and globally competitive. Today, Hi-Tech hospitals are future-ready, equipped with advanced laboratories, AI-powered



Dr. Tirupati Panigrahi

innovations, and state-of-the-art diagnostics — proof that compassion and cutting-edge science can coexist. While riding high on technology, Hi-Tech continues to guard something even more precious: the trust of millions of families in Eastern India.

A Philanthropist at Heart

For Dr. Panigrahi, success lies in service, not wealth. The Poor Patient Treatment Fund provides free life-saving care to thousands, while Hi-Tech institutions offer free education to underprivileged students and dignified jobs to women from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Isn't true leadership when one man's vision becomes a bridge for millions to cross into a better life?

Creating a Legacy of Trust

For over two decades, Hi-Tech has earned the trust of communities across Odisha and beyond, in classrooms, hospital wards, and homes. Today, that legacy is being carried forward by the next generation, who are

investing in futuristic technology and innovation to keep Hi-Tech at the forefront of progress.

Few leaders have managed to balance affordability, growth, and innovation with such humanity. For many, Hi-Tech is not just a place of learning or healing, but a reflection of its founder: resilient, visionary, and unwavering in purpose.

From Odisha to the World

Today, Dr. Tirupati Panigrahi's name is synonymous with progress in Odisha. With three medical colleges, three engineering colleges, one dental college, and over 40 other institutions under his stewardship, the Hi-Tech Group of Institutions is not just an educational empire; it is a movement.

His contributions have earned him numerous awards and three honorary doctorates from international universities. Known for his sharp memory and unwavering commitment to his word, he is celebrated as much for his character as for his accomplishments. Yet his impact is not limited to Odisha or India. His model of integrating education, healthcare, philanthropy, and employment offers lessons to the world at large. From a boy who once borrowed discarded books to a man building AI-powered hospitals and universities with a bigger goal of making India a global leader in medical tourism, his life is proof that adversity can fuel vision.

The world needs this story because it shows that true progress is not built on profit, but on purpose, and in that purpose lies the power to transform millions of lives.

"True progress lies not in what we build, but in the lives we transform": a lesson from Odisha for the world. ●





IS YOUR PREMIUM FUEL **95 OCTANE?**

SWITCH FROM 91 OCTANE TO 95 OCTANE



IndianOil

XP95
95 OCTANE PREMIUM PETROL

Superior performance

Improves engine efficiency

Smoother Drive

Reduced emissions

From 200 sq ft to Rs. 500 Crore: Sunil Agarwal's Mission to Democratize Healthcare



Mr. Sunil Agarwal, Mr. Anil Agarwal & Mr. Sashreek Agarwal

From a modest 200 sq ft office in Kolkata to a Rs 500 crore diversified healthcare powerhouse, Sunil Agarwal's story is one of grit, vision, and a relentless pursuit of accessible healthcare. In this exclusive conversation with Forbes India – East Rising, the Managing Director of Eskag Group shares how his company is shaping India's healthcare landscape, from pharmaceuticals and hospitals to global innovations in drug delivery systems.

Q: Eskag Group has a significant footprint in India's healthcare sector. How do your diverse verticals strengthen the nation's healthcare infrastructure ?

A: Eskag Group today stands on four strong pillars.

Eskag Pharma Pvt. Ltd. is a pharmaceutical manufacturing company, our foundation, producing quality, affordable medicines for millions.

West Bengal Chemical Industries Limited (WBCIL), our API division, drives innovation through WHO-GMP certified plants and advanced R&D. Vetnova, our animal healthcare arm, supports rural economies with specialized animal feed.

Eskag Sanjeevani Hospitals, our most human-facing vertical operates four hospitals across West Bengal. Through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, we deliver 1.24 lakh free dialysis sessions every year, ensuring that life-saving care reaches even those at the bottom of the pyramid.

Together, these verticals form an ecosystem that addresses healthcare access from molecule to marketplace and from patients to communities.

Q: Your hospital chain, Eskag Sanjeevani, seems central to your mission. How does it align with the national goal of accessible healthcare ?

A: Eskag Sanjeevani today runs four multi-speciality hospitals at Baghbazar, Baranagar, Khardaha & Dainhat with NABH and NABL Accreditation treating millions annually. What sets us apart is our inclusive model—patients walk in with access, not obstacles, because

affordability is never a barrier.

We also operate over 150 PPP dialysis centres under the PM National Dialysis Programme, delivering free dialysis to thousands, along with PPP-based diagnostic and imaging services across the India. By blending hospitals, insurance-backed access & public-private partnerships, we've proven that affordability and excellence in healthcare can go hand in hand.

For us, hospitals are not just centers of treatment, they are gateways of access for every stratum of society.

Q: Products that tackle national health challenges have long-lasting impact. How does your flagship brand, SUVIDA, fit into this vision ?

A: SUVIDA is not just a pill—it's empowerment. As a birth-control solution designed for India, it addresses both health and financial challenges supporting the Government's Family Planning Programme. Through monthly awareness programs, we reach over 10,000 women across West Bengal. We listen, engage and build trust. Today, 2.5 million women take SUVIDA every day. That number represents not just success for a product but freedom, dignity, and healthier futures for families.

Q: Looking ahead, how is Eskag positioning itself in the global market for advanced drug delivery systems ?

A: The future belongs to smarter drug delivery. At WBCIL, our R&D team has pioneered **Liposomal API Technology** a game changer for bioavailability and efficacy. We've already secured **14 patents**, including for liposomal iron API. We also won the **National IP Award 2024** as India's top MSME in patent filing & commercialization.

Building on this, we are preparing to launch nutraceutical and cosmeceutical brands that will carry Indian innovation to global shelves. This is where science meets scalability and we believe it will set Eskag Group apart in the years to come.

Q: As the leader of a multi-faceted conglomerate, how do you balance ambition with personal well-being ?

A: For me, work and life aren't separate—they're intertwined through passion. If you enjoy what you do, balance comes naturally.

Every day feels like a fresh beginning, filled with new lessons and people. That philosophy keeps me grounded.

Our motto says it best: *"For The People, By Our People."*



Production Facility of WBCIL at Dahej, Gujrat

Threads of Heritage, Strands of Change: The Story of Tripathaga Textiles

Tripathaga Textiles, founded by Salina Samal, blends Odisha's handloom legacy with modern design, empowering women artisans and positioning heritage weaves on global runways while driving sustainability, inclusion, and cultural pride.

Preserving Odisha's centuries-old weaving traditions and presenting them anew to the world, Tripathaga Textiles—established under the vision of Salina Samal—has evolved into a pioneering platform that bridges cultural heritage with contemporary design. Established with the mission of blending preservation, empowerment, and innovation, the brand celebrates heritage through design, community engagement, and sustainable practices. What began as a response to the fading prominence of handloom crafts has now grown into a movement that links local artisans with the international fashion industry and shapes new conversations in sustainable fashion.

Rooted in Cultural Legacy

The inspiration behind Tripathaga Textiles lies in Odisha's rich handloom heritage, where fabrics are more than materials; they are carriers of cultural memory and generational stories. Salina Samal grew up in an environment where tradition was an everyday practice. Watching women in her community weave, dye, and spin yarn gave her an early appreciation of how craftsmanship is tied to both survival and identity. The brand's foundation was built on the understanding that fast fashion and mechanisation were threatening to overshadow these traditions. Instead of allowing this legacy to fade, Tripathaga sought to transform entrepreneurship into a means of preservation and revival. By engaging directly with artisans, particularly women in rural areas, the venture has provided livelihoods while ensuring that handloom practices remain vibrant and respected. Each creation becomes both a symbol of continuity and an act of resistance against cultural erosion.

Weaving Tradition with Modernity

At the heart of Tripathaga's philosophy is the balance between heritage and contemporary appeal. The brand does not treat tradition and modern fashion as opposites but as voices in dialogue. Iconic weaves such as Sambalpuri Ikat are reinterpreted into jackets, gowns, or



Salina Samal, Founder, Tripathaga Textiles

office wear, retaining their authenticity while adapting to new contexts. This approach allows Tripathaga to remain faithful to the symbolic depth of traditional designs while meeting the expectations of modern consumers who seek comfort, versatility, and style. By reimagining heritage in this way, the brand ensures that Odisha's handloom artistry resonates with younger audiences and international markets alike, while also inspiring pride among local communities.

Empowering Women Artisans

Empowerment forms the core of Tripathaga's identity. From its inception, the brand has positioned itself as a platform for women artisans to gain both economic independence and social recognition. Nearly 80 percent of its workforce comprises women, many of whom are provided not only with fair

wages but also with training, healthcare, safe working environments, and leadership opportunities. This model ensures that each textile carries a dual narrative: it safeguards Odisha's cultural identity while also amplifying the voices of women reclaiming their space in society. Tripathaga thus operates at the intersection of commerce and community, proving that fashion can also be a force for inclusion, dignity, and lasting empowerment.

Towards Global Recognition

Tripathaga's journey has not been free of challenges. Scepticism about the relevance of handloom in the face of mass production, financial limitations, and resistance from traditional systems tested its resilience. However, these hurdles became opportunities for innovation and collaboration. By focusing on authenticity while adapting to modern demands, the brand has positioned itself as a bridge between rural looms and global runways. Looking ahead, Tripathaga aims to establish Odisha's textiles, such as Sambalpuri and Bomkai weaves, on the world stage alongside celebrated fabrics like Kanchipuram silks. Its vision for the coming decade emphasises design innovation, eco-conscious practices, and cross-border collaborations, ensuring that artisanship remains at the forefront of sustainable fashion and continues to inspire future generations.

Guiding Principles for the Future

Tripathaga's growth is anchored in three guiding values: rootedness, resilience, and responsibility. Rootedness ensures an unwavering connection to Odisha's looms. Resilience enables the brand to adapt to change without losing its authenticity. Responsibility drives its commitment to collective growth, particularly for women artisans. These principles have transformed Tripathaga into more than a textile brand; it has become a cultural movement where tradition and innovation coexist, and where heritage is not merely preserved but continually redefined for future generations and global audiences. ●



Astrology, Humanity, and Legacy: Dr. Sohini Sastri on Wisdom, Service, and Global Recognition

Dr. Sohini Sastri, a globally acclaimed astrologer and humanitarian, blends spiritual wisdom with compassionate service, guiding lives worldwide through astrology, philanthropy, and empowering initiatives for education, women, and mental health.



Dr. Sohini Sastri

Dr. Sastri, you are recognised as one of the most respected authorities in astrology. Could you tell us about your journey and what makes it unique?

Astrology has been an integral part of my life from an early age. I was born into a family with a strong spiritual and intellectual lineage, which inspired my pursuit of this ancient science. Over the years, I have combined intellectual depth with spiritual insight, and this balance has shaped my journey. My academic achievements, including a D. Litt and a Grand PhD in Astrology, have reinforced my knowledge, but what truly defines my path is my commitment to using astrology as a tool for guidance and healing. My focus has always been to help people find clarity, peace, and solutions to life's challenges.

Your expertise is vast—spanning KP astrology, gemology, palmistry, Vaastu, and more. How do you integrate these disciplines in your practice?

I firmly believe that astrology is not limited to predictions; it is about holistic solutions. Over time, I have mastered disciplines such as classical astrology, colour therapy, gemology, palmistry, and Vaastu. Each has its unique contribution. For example, gemology can

provide corrective energies, while Vaastu helps harmonise spaces. When combined with astrology, these disciplines create a well-rounded approach that addresses not only immediate concerns but also long-term well-being. This integrative practice has earned me the trust of people from all walks of life.

You've received numerous awards and global recognition. Which milestones stand out most to you?

Every recognition is special because it reflects trust and appreciation. Being a two-time recipient of the President's Award is undoubtedly a proud moment. I was also deeply honoured to be featured in the World Book of Records in 2022 and to receive the Global Book of Excellence Award in England. Being consistently ranked among the top five astrologers globally and among India's top ten has been humbling. Another highlight is my role as International Brand Ambassador for the International Vedic Astrology Federation (IVAF) and the Global Book of Excellence, England. These achievements remind me of the responsibility I carry to represent astrology with authenticity and dignity.

Beyond astrology, you are known for your philanthropic initiatives. What drives your commitment to social causes?

For me, philanthropy is not merely generosity—it is a spiritual responsibility. Through the Sohini Sastri Foundation, we have been able to support education for underprivileged children, women's empowerment, and healthcare programs. Our work includes providing scholarships, food, clothing, and medical care, particularly in remote areas where resources are scarce. I believe true fulfilment lies in service, and as an astrologer and life coach, my mission goes beyond personal guidance to creating real, positive change in society. Causes like mental health awareness, women's empowerment, and education remain very close to my heart.

You've also contributed to astrology through your writing. What motivated you to become an author?

Astrology has often been misunderstood as superstition, and I wanted to change that perception. Writing four books allowed me to simplify complex concepts and make them accessible to the wider public. Through my books, I aim to empower individuals with knowledge so they can use astrology as a tool for self-awareness, growth, and harmony. Dispelling misconceptions has been a key goal—because when people understand astrology in its true essence, they discover it as a science that guides and heals rather than just predicts.

Finally, what do you see as your legacy, and what message would you like to leave for future generations?

Legacy, to me, is not only about awards or titles but about lives touched and inspired. My hope is that I will be remembered for combining astrological wisdom with compassion and for uplifting individuals across the globe. To the next generation, I would say: pursue your knowledge with humility, use your gifts for the betterment of society, and remember that true success lies in service. Astrology, like life, is about balance—between intellect and intuition, guidance and compassion. That is the philosophy I wish to pass on. ●

From Steel City To Opulent Oasis: Gaylords Group's Luxury Odyssey In Rourkela

Through Gaylords Group, Mohit Kayal reshapes the very idea of luxury living in eastern India, blending craftsmanship, innovation, and passion into a design language that elevates homes into works of art and communities into legacies.

In today's fast-paced business world, few visionaries take a different path—one defined by artistry, dedication, and excellence. Among them is Mohit Kayal, the dynamic CEO of Gaylords Group, a brand synonymous with elegance and quality across eastern India. Born in Rourkela, his early fascination with style grew into a mission to transform living into an art. Under his leadership, Gaylords has redefined the city's skyline with a design language that blends detail with dream and precision with poetry.

A Legacy Etched in Vision and Mentorship

Mohit's story is deeply entwined with that of his father, Mr. Sunil Kayal, Chairman of Gaylords Group, whose towering presence has shaped his journey. An alumnus of Raj Kumar College, Raipur, and a law graduate from Rourkela, Sunil Kayal is more than a business leader; he is a patron of culture, a believer in civic responsibility, and a guiding force in the city's growth. From supporting institutions like Youth Hostel and Basanti Pathaghar to serving as President of the Rourkela Chamber of Commerce and Industries, his contributions to society go beyond commerce. It is this ethos of service, hard work, and vision that Mohit has inherited.

Turning Challenges into Opportunities in a Smart City

When Mohit embarked on his journey to bring luxury projects to Rourkela, the challenges were formidable. As one of India's early smart cities, Rourkela was often perceived as a hub for budget-conscious buyers, not as a stage for luxury real estate. Yet Mohit believed otherwise. He saw a city brimming with potential, deserving of splendour that matched its evolving identity.

To realise this vision, he armed his team with the right skills and the right spirit, ensuring that every Gaylords project upheld uncompromising standards of quality and execution. What seemed impossible to many slowly became inevitable. Through perseverance and precision, Gaylords began to reshape the very perception of real estate in Rourkela, proving that luxury and innovation could thrive even in a city long defined by its industrial strength.

The Gaylords Portfolio: Where Luxury Finds Its True Form

The success of Mohit's vision can be read in the skyline of Rourkela itself. They have delivered more than 5 Lakh sqft till date, the list of projects being a long one, each a chapter in the unfolding narrative of luxury and elegance.

Ongoing projects continue to raise the bar. Gaylords-The Atlantis promises a lifestyle once unimaginable in the city, with its gated community, rooftop infinity pool, gym, theatre, and terrace gardens. Gaylords Trulli at Koel Nagar combines intimate scale with grandeur—a four-storey residence crowned with a lush terrace garden.

Groundbreaking is the upcoming LEED-rated high-rise, designed by acclaimed architect Sanjay Puri—Rourkela's first step into sustainable luxury. Alongside it, Gaylords Four Square in Civil Township is set to further redefine premium living. Gaylords is committed to develop residential projects worth around 30 Million Dollars



Mohit Kayal, CEO, Gaylords Group

in Rourkela which include apartments, penthouses and Luxury floors. Key ongoing and forthcoming projects include Gaylords Tower, Gaylords Starlight and Gaylords Sun & Sky. The Group is also extending its canvas beyond Rourkela, with Gaylords Temple Tree in Bhubaneswar.

A Life Balanced Between Vision and Values

For Mohit, success is not measured only in square feet or revenue charts—it is about balance. Sundays are sacred, devoted to his family and especially to moments with his son. Travel, too, fuels his soul. While business takes him across cities, his heart finds its truest joy in exploring India's rich culture and natural beauty, a testament to his grounding in tradition and his love for his roots.

Crafting Dreams, Shaping Futures

In a world of fleeting trends, Mohit Kayal has embraced constancy—devotion to quality, vision, and perfection. Through Gaylords Group, he has gifted Rourkela a skyline of distinction, proving real estate is as much about dreams and dignity as design and development. His journey is not just of a businessman, but of a son carrying forward a legacy, a leader unafraid to push boundaries, and a visionary who shows that while buildings rise in stone and steel, true success is built on values, imagination, and the courage to dream. ●

Affordable Escapes, Lasting Value: Sree Balaji Real Estate Developers Redefines Second Homes

Led by founder Mr. Manab Paul, Sree Balaji Real Estate Developers is redefining second homes by turning luxury getaways into affordable, well-maintained escapes that double as smart investments for today's aspiring homeowners.



Manab Paul, Founder of Sree Balaji

For years, the concept of a second home was seen as a luxury reserved for the privileged few. But entrepreneur Manab Paul, founder of Sree Balaji Real Estate Developers, set out to change that. With a vision to make second homes affordable, practical, and aspirational for the larger mass, he has redefined the idea from an exclusive indulgence into a mainstream lifestyle choice. In this conversation, he shares his inspiration, challenges, and the journey of making second homes a reality for thousands.

What made you believe second homes could be more than just a luxury for the elite?

The idea was always seen as a niche, meant only for high-net-worth individuals. I wanted to change that and make it accessible for everyone. In 2010, I launched studio apartments in Shantiniketan at just two lakhs. That bold step showed that luxury could be democratised. It became the starting point of my journey to make second homes an affordable dream for many.

How has Sree Balaji turned this idea into reality over the years?

We've built our reputation by focusing on affordability, scale, and livability. After Bolpur, we created Jalpaiguri's largest residential project in Dooars, with 700 apartments and 200 bungalows. We also brought

large-scale housing to the Himalayas for the first time. Now, we're expanding into Digha, Rajarhat, and Mayapur, with a national footprint on the horizon.

Many people confuse second homes with vacation houses. How do you see the difference?

Second homes are rooted in culture, not just modern lifestyle. Even centuries ago, Zamindars had their Bagan Baris for leisure. A primary residence ties you to daily life, while a vacation home is temporary. A second home blends both—it's permanent, secure, and gives you the freedom to live differently while still owning a solid asset.

Do you see second homes as more of a lifestyle choice or a financial investment?

They're definitely both. Owners get lifestyle enrichment, but the investment value is undeniable. For example, our Shantiniketan studios, launched at two lakhs, are now resold at sixteen to seventeen lakhs. That kind of appreciation shows how second homes, when thoughtfully designed, deliver long-term value.

What should buyers really watch out for before purchasing a second home?

The builder's credibility is the first and most critical factor. Buyers must check past records, quality, and timely delivery. Affordability and design come next—a second home shouldn't be so lavish that it becomes a burden to maintain. And of course, the location matters. Gated communities with security and amenities give peace of mind. But above all, it's the builder's ability to maintain the property long-term that makes or breaks the experience.

What are the biggest hurdles people face after buying a second home?

Maintenance. These homes are often in remote or holiday destinations, so construction is tough enough. But the real challenge begins afterward. Without proper upkeep, gardens, amenities, and facilities can quickly deteriorate. Emergencies at odd hours or harsh weather only add to the stress. A dream home can turn into a liability if not cared for properly.

How does Sree Balaji ensure that doesn't happen?

For us, construction is only half the job. The real work lies in upkeep. With 18 years of experience, we've built strong teams available 24/7 for emergencies, security, and maintenance. From the moment buyers walk in, they know everything is taken care of. They don't have to worry—we handle it so they can simply enjoy their home.

Looking back, what moments define your growth journey?

It began with the Shantiniketan studios, which showed us the potential of affordable second homes. Dooars came next, with its record-breaking scale. Then the Himalayas, Digha, Rajarhat, Mayapur, and beyond. Each project has been about delivering not just homes, but complete peace of mind. Today, Sree Balaji is trusted for making luxury accessible without compromise.

AFFORDABLE ASPIRATIONS

The rise of affordable second homes shows that luxury no longer belongs to the few. With vision and commitment, companies like Sree Balaji Real Estate Developers are turning aspirations into reality, giving families across India the chance to own not just a house, but a lifestyle. ●

Nature's Luxury: Inside JAC OLIVOL's Mission to Redefine Body Care in India

From heritage-rich olive oil to science-backed skincare, JAC OLIVOL is transforming India's beauty shelves with luxurious, sustainable body care that nurtures the skin and connects with the heart.



RITESH DAS
Chairman, JAC OLIVOL

In an age where shelves overflow with synthetic beauty products, Indian consumers are seeking something purer, safer, and rooted in nature. Olive oil, treasured for centuries for its healing and nourishing qualities, is making its way from the kitchen to the vanity shelf. JAC OLIVOL is at the forefront of this movement, offering a premium body care line that blends luxury with scientific credibility. We sat down with Rajarshi Das, Managing Director of JAC OLIVOL, and Ritesh Das, Chairman of JAC OLIVOL, to discuss how they are transforming India's skincare landscape.

The Indian skincare market is evolving rapidly. Why do you think olive oil-based body care has found such strong resonance with today's consumers?

Rajarshi Das: Consumers are now more aware of what goes into their skincare products. The post-pandemic period accelerated this awareness, as people began prioritising health and self-care in all aspects of life. Olive oil offers more than just moisturisation; it is rich in antioxidants, supports skin repair, and helps slow visible ageing. For many, switching to olive oil-based products is not just about beauty, it is

about long-term skin wellness.

Ritesh Das: There is also an emotional connection. Olive oil has a heritage of purity and authenticity. When you pair that with dermatological testing and sustainable sourcing, you get a product that appeals to both the heart and the mind. In India, the demand for plant-based, chemical-safe skincare is growing fast, and olive oil fits perfectly into this narrative.

Many consumers still associate olive oil with cooking. How do you educate the market about its body care benefits?

Rajarshi Das: That is a common perception, and it is one we have been working to change through awareness campaigns, product sampling, and educational content. We focus on explaining the science behind olive oil's skin benefits. It contains vitamins E and K, which aid in skin regeneration, and squalene, a natural moisturiser. By showing visible results, such as improved skin texture and hydration, we make it easier for customers to see olive oil as a premium body care ingredient rather than just a kitchen staple.

What sets JAC OLIVOL apart in a competitive natural skincare market?

Ritesh Das: Our approach is centered on three pillars: uncompromising quality, dermatological safety, and sustainability. We source the finest olives from trusted growers and ensure that the oil is cold-pressed to retain its natural nutrients. Our formulations are tested to be safe for all skin types, and our packaging is designed to be eco-friendly. This combination of luxury, safety, and environmental responsibility is what keeps us ahead of the curve.

The pandemic seems to have influenced consumer behaviour across industries. How has it



RAJARSHI DAS
Managing Director, JAC OLIVOL

impacted the body care segment, especially for a brand like yours?

Rajarshi Das: The pandemic created a cultural shift towards self-care. People began incorporating skincare into their daily wellness routines, not just for aesthetics but for mental well-being too. For JAC OLIVOL, this meant a surge in demand for products that deliver both indulgence and health benefits. Consumers are now looking for ingredients they can trust, and olive oil naturally fits that need. This trend has encouraged us to innovate with products that cater to personalised skincare goals.

Looking ahead, what trends do you foresee in India's natural body care market?

Ritesh Das: I think personalisation will be the next big thing. Consumers are moving away from one-size-fits-all products and looking for solutions tailored to their skin type, lifestyle, and climate. We are also seeing a shift towards multi-benefit products that address several skin concerns at once. As for JAC OLIVOL, we plan to expand our range to include targeted treatments while staying true to our core philosophy of natural, effective, and responsibly sourced body care. ●

Onex Solutions: Powering Brand Conversations One Pincode at a Time

In a freewheeling conversation with Dipak Agarwal and Harsha Agarwal, the co-founders of Onex Solutions, unpack how WhatsApp, AI, and hyperlocal data are revolutionising the way brands connect with customers.

Tell us about your entrepreneurial journey and the mission behind Onex Solutions.

Dipak: My professional journey began in finance—after qualifying as a Chartered Accountant and Company Secretary, I worked with Ernst & Young. But my true passion lay in marketing and technology. I saw a gap between how brands communicate and how customers actually want to be reached. In 2013, I decided to act on that insight and launched Onex Solutions.

Harsha: I joined as a Director on the Board after building my own career as a practicing CA. Together, we've shaped Onex into a tech-led communication company that blends data intelligence with human connection. Today, with offices in Kolkata and Bengaluru, we serve more than 5,000 clients across India.

Our platforms—Ingage and E-BTL—enable businesses to engage with customers through WhatsApp, RCS, IVR, and email, all while ensuring compliance. We've built a database of over 620 million Indian data points, allowing brands to connect locally at a hyper-targeted pin code level. Our long-term vision is to take Onex public through an SME IPO by 2027 and take our innovations to global markets while staying rooted in Indian values and local business empowerment.

What makes WhatsApp such a powerful marketing tool for businesses today?

WhatsApp stands out because it feels personal—like a conversation, not a broadcast. When a clinic sends a reminder or a manufacturer confirms an order via WhatsApp, it lands directly in the customer's private inbox, making it more likely to be seen and trusted.

What really works are interactive product displays, simple quick-reply buttons, short and engaging videos, and personalised messages. Verified WhatsApp accounts, backed by Meta, build credibility and trust. The content must feel like it's coming from someone who knows you—think of the local shopkeeper who remembers your usual order. That's the standard we aim for.

How does your ready-to-use data solution help retailers target customers more effectively? What makes your approach unique?

We give retailers a powerful advantage with hyper-local intelligence - pin code-level data, shoppers data, HNI data and neighbourhood insights across India. Imagine a sports retailer identifying exactly which areas have the most cricket enthusiasts, or a jewellery brand pinpointing neighbourhood with high wedding spending. Major brands like TATA Motors, Anjali Jewellers, and Reliance Digital have used our platform to achieve remarkable targeting precision. (Our USP lies in transforming raw data into actionable customer understanding. We deliver actionable insights in local languages that help businesses speak directly to their ideal customers' needs. It's like giving every retailer the neighbourhood shopkeeper's instinct - knowing exactly who wants what, and where.)

How have RCS and Drip Marketing transformed business communication?

RCS (Rich Communication Services) and Drip Marketing have changed the game by making business messages feel alive and personal. RCS turns simple texts into interactive experiences—like getting a colorful restaurant menu with photos and "Book Now" buttons straight to your messages. Drip Marketing works like a thoughtful



Dipak Agarwal and Harsha Agarwal

friend who checks in at just the right times—sending a series of helpful, via SMS, Email, RCS, WhatsApp rather than one channel communication.

Together, they create conversations that customers actually enjoy. It's the difference between shouting in a crowd and having a warm chat across the counter—only now, it scales to millions.

What's the story behind your 'Vocal for Local' initiative Love Desi?

Love Desi is our heartfelt movement to celebrate India's homegrown talent and to put India's local artisans, creators and small businesses on the global map. It's a digital platform where authentic Indian brands shine, blending tradition with modern marketing to compete globally. Think of it as a curated marketplace for everything proudly Made in India - fashion, real estate, wellness and more - each with its own rich story.

At its core is the belief that India's true luxury lies in its craftsmanship and heritage. One special project under this "Ghar Aaja Par Desi", is connecting NRIs with meaningful homes back in India, but Love Desi's bigger vision is simpler: to make "local" not just a choice, but a badge of pride.

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Beyond the Cart: How Nextgen is Redefining E-commerce Support in India

In conversation with CA Rajev Harlalka, Founder of Nextgen Business Support Services Pvt. Ltd., we explore how the company empowers e-commerce brands with structure, compliance, and strategic insight to scale confidently in a fast-changing market.

Could you share your professional journey and the motivation behind founding Nextgen Business Support Services?

I'm a Chartered Accountant with more than 25 years of experience in auditing, taxation, and business advisory. Over the years, I've worked with companies of various sizes and sectors and noticed a recurring challenge: businesses often struggle with backend clarity even when they have a great product or market strategy. This imbalance between ambition and execution is what inspired me to co-found Nextgen Business Support Services Pvt. Ltd.

Nextgen was built to provide structure, control, and compliance to growing businesses, especially in the dynamic world of e-commerce. We work closely with MSMEs, D2C brands, and online sellers to help them build scalable and resilient business models. Our core offerings include marketplace support, virtual compliance infrastructure like PPOB (Principal Place of Business)/APOB (Additional Place of Business) services, and strategic finance through our Virtual CFO (Chief Financial Officer) model. Our mission is to ensure that businesses grow with confidence and the right foundation.

What trends are redefining the e-commerce space today, and how can sellers stay competitive?

The e-commerce industry is undergoing a rapid transformation. Quick commerce, enabled by platforms like Blinkit and Zepto, has changed how consumers perceive speed and convenience. Alongside this, artificial intelligence is becoming essential in areas like automated catalog creation, ad targeting, and customer engagement.

How does Nextgen empower sellers to boost their e-commerce performance?

We act as the operational and financial growth engine for our clients. From onboarding to platforms like Amazon and Flipkart to managing catalogues, handling payments, running ads, and reconciling revenues — we cover the entire spectrum. Our clients don't just get support; they gain a partner focused on precision.

Our Virtual PPOB service is especially beneficial for sellers aiming for pan-India presence without setting up multiple offices. Combined with our Virtual CFO offering, we provide real-time insights into profitability, tax health, and cash flows. This strategic view helps businesses move beyond guesswork and make informed decisions.

What are the most effective strategies for long-term success in e-commerce, and how can results be measured?

Long-term e-commerce success isn't just about growth; it's about sustainable and profitable growth. Brands must look beyond superficial metrics like total sales or GMV and instead focus on contribution margins, advertising ROI, repeat purchase rates, and working capital cycles.

At Nextgen, we stress the importance of financial literacy for founders and entrepreneurs. Understanding which products are profitable, which ads convert best, and how cash flows impact daily decisions is essential. When strategy aligns with measurable outcomes, businesses are far more likely to succeed in the long run.



CA Rajev Harlalka,
Next Gen Business Support Services Pvt Ltd

How can online businesses build trust and credibility with their customers?

Trust is built through consistency and visible professionalism. From clear product descriptions and verified GST details to swift refunds and regulatory certifications like FSSAI, Ptax, every detail counts. Customers often notice small indicators of credibility, even subconsciously. We help brands get the backend right — ensuring legal registrations, tax compliance, and operational hygiene are always in place. This not only creates trust but also prepares the brand to scale without hitting regulatory roadblocks.

How is artificial intelligence influencing e-commerce, and how are you incorporating it at Nextgen?

AI is transforming every aspect of online selling. Sellers are using it to analyse data, optimise campaigns, and personalise customer journeys. But the value of AI is only unlocked when a business has the right data and processes in place.

At Nextgen, we integrate AI into our services for smarter decision-making. We use it for campaign performance tracking, generating alerts, and financial forecasting. Our goal is to help even small businesses harness AI meaningfully, not just as a trend, but as a practical tool for improvement. ●

Powering India: Inside ELHARD Group on Energy, Safety, and Smart Solutions

In conversation with Amit Bagri, Director of ELHARD Marketing Ltd., the journey of a legacy brand unfolds—driven by technical expertise, customer-first values, and a vision for safe, smart electrical solutions across India.



AMIT BAGRI

From a modest office in Kolkata to a pan-India presence, **ELHARD** Group has become a trusted name in electrical distribution. The company represents leading Indian multinationals such as **POLYCAB**, **PHILIPS**, **WIPRO**, **PANASONIC**, **AKG**, **SKIPPER**, and **HONEYWELL**, supplying everything from cables and wires and PVC conduits to LED lighting and SMART BUILDING MANAGEMENT systems. At the helm of its modern growth is **AMIT BAGRI**, who brings vision, agility, and a commitment to quality. In this interview, he talks about the company's journey, the nuances of cable and lighting choices, and how **ELHARD** is building for a smarter, safer India.

Let's start from the beginning. How did a small operation in Kolkata evolve into a national distribution powerhouse?

It all began over four decades ago when my father, Sri Goverdhan Das Bagri, set up a small office in the electrical market of Kolkata. My uncle Shri Kishan Kumar Bagri joined him a few years later and they built strong relationships and focused on quality, which laid the foundation for everything we do today. When I joined the company, we made a conscious decision to scale, both vertically and horizontally. That meant expanding into new product lines and entering new geographies. Today, we have our corporate office in Kolkata, with branch operations in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Bangalore, and Bhilwara.

Choosing cables seems straightforward, but what should one actually be thinking about?

There's a lot more to cable selection than just size or price. You need to consider site-specific conditions like soil type, temperature variations, how the cable will be laid, whether underground or overground, and even risks from rodent activity. Of course, the electrical load is important, but that has to be balanced with these environmental factors. Thankfully, most quality projects today involve consultants who look at all these variables. We're also seeing a shift toward FRLS cables (Flame Retardant Low Smoke), which not only resist fire but emit less smoke, making them a safer option.

We often hear that poor installation can ruin a good product. What does proper installation actually involve?

That's absolutely true. Even the best cable can underperform if it's installed incorrectly. One of the common issues is twisting during installation, which can cause a problem called "bird caging" that damages the cable. To avoid such issues, we provide detailed installation guidelines with every shipment. Cables are the electrical lifeline of any structure, from a small home to a large factory. For underground installations, proper trenching and civil support are critical. For above-ground applications, well-spaced cable trays must be used. Maintenance also has to be tailored to the environment to ensure long-term performance and safety.

Lighting has changed dramatically in recent years. What's your view on where things are heading?

We've moved firmly into the LED era. While halogen and fluorescent lights were the standard earlier, LEDs offer unmatched energy efficiency, lifespan, and environmental benefits. At **ELHARD**, we focus solely on LED-based lighting solutions. We also have in-house lighting specifiers who work with customers to design lighting systems tailored for efficiency and visual comfort. Whether it's for a warehouse or a home, we make sure the lighting is smart and sustainable.

Energy efficiency is the need of the hour. How can lighting play a bigger role in sustainability?

Lighting is one of the quickest wins when it comes to saving energy. We encourage our clients to conduct energy audits to identify areas of wastage. Through smart technology, we now offer automated systems that can control entire lighting networks, sometimes for entire campuses or city blocks, from a single computer. These systems often work with AI and voice commands like Alexa. Reduced power usage means not just lower bills, but also a reduced carbon footprint.

What sets ELHARD apart in the competitive world of electrical distribution?

Our philosophy has always been quality-first. When a client reaches out to us, we don't rush into closing a deal. We begin with technical validation—we share a Quality Assurance Plan and Guaranteed Test Particulars so that all specifications are cleared before discussing price. In the wires segment, we promote ZHFR|HHFR over standard FR|FRLS wired for homes and offices. In lighting, we give up to five years of warranty for outdoor installations. We combine quality products with expert service to deliver not just materials, but confidence. The complete range of **POLYCAB** wires & cables are maintained at our stock points to offer better services to our esteemed customers. ●

Bodyline's Visionary Approach: Gagan Sachdev on Bodyline's Evolution and India's Fitness Revolution

In conversation with Gagan Sachdev, we discover how Bodyline blends innovation, sustainability, and smart technology to make fitness accessible, future-ready, and deeply rooted in client trust.



Gagan Sachdev

Gagan Sachdev, founder of Bodyline, is a pioneering entrepreneur who has played a key role in shaping India's fitness landscape for over thirty years. Guided by a deep understanding of the Indian market and a strong focus on quality, he built Bodyline from scratch, establishing it as one of the country's most trusted brands in fitness and sports equipment.

Gagan, tell us about your journey and the working style that defines Bodyline.

I founded Bodyline over three decades ago with a simple belief: fitness should be both aspirational and accessible. The industry was still nascent back then, but I sensed the potential for growth and the need for quality fitness solutions tailored to Indian users. My approach has always been deeply hands-on. I believe in collaborating closely with every client, whether it's a large gym, an institution, or an individual athlete. This not only builds trust but ensures we deliver truly customised solutions. The philosophy that guides us is simple: make fitness sustainable without compromising on quality.

What role does sustainability play in the fitness equipment sector, and how does Bodyline incorporate it?

Sustainability is no longer optional; it is a shared responsibility. As fitness becomes a lifestyle, customers are more mindful of environmental impact. At Bodyline, we design high-durability, low-maintenance

equipment that lasts longer and reduces waste. Our modular maintenance approach lets clients replace parts instead of entire machines, while our in-house service teams help lower carbon footprints overall.

What are some of the current trends shaping the fitness equipment industry, and how does Bodyline keep up?

The industry is moving fast, and we are seeing several strong trends emerge. Smart integration is a big one. People now expect their machines to sync with apps, track performance, and offer personalised feedback. Compact design is also in demand, especially with the rise in home fitness. Users are looking for foldable and space-saving options that do not compromise on quality. Additionally, we are seeing a push towards inclusive fitness, with machines designed for all age groups, and a surge in equipment that supports functional training. At Bodyline, we stay ahead by attending international expos, working closely with global partners, and listening to customer feedback. We also design custom gym layouts for institutions, residential societies, and corporates, bringing global standards to the local market.

How is the fitness industry integrating technologies like AI and machine learning into its products?

Technology is transforming fitness in meaningful ways. AI is now being used to track user progress, recommend personalised workouts, and automatically adjust resistance based on real-time performance. Some machines even provide form correction and injury prevention alerts. There are developments around AI coaches and virtual reality environments, offering immersive training experiences. At Bodyline, we partner with manufacturers who embed these advanced features into our premium treadmills, bikes, and strength machines. Our tech-forward clients expect this level of sophistication, and we are committed to meeting those expectations.

How has the rise of home workouts impacted the demand for fitness equipment?

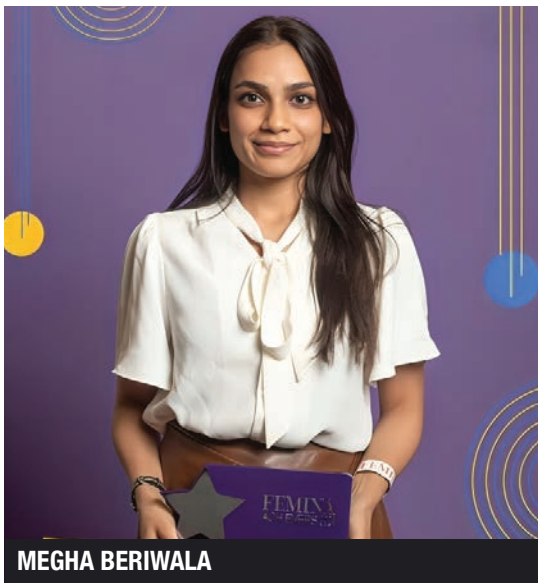
Home fitness has seen a remarkable surge, especially since the pandemic. Even today, a hybrid model dominates; people like having the option to train at home while accessing online classes and virtual coaching. We have seen a growing demand for compact and smart equipment like foldable treadmills, adjustable benches, and multi-purpose gyms. We are also working with real estate developers and housing societies to build in-house fitness spaces. Having access to quality equipment at home or within your residential complex has become a necessity rather than a luxury.

Could you share some key successes that Bodyline has achieved recently?

We are proud of several milestones. Our integration of custom-designed gyms in large residential complexes across East and North-East India has been especially impactful. These are thoughtfully planned to optimise space and cater to a wide range of fitness needs. We also supply equipment to defence forces, police academies, and educational institutions, settings where performance and reliability matter the most. One of the most satisfying outcomes has been our client loyalty. Many of our customers, including gyms, have stayed with us for more than a decade, relying on Bodyline for upgrades and expansions. These long-term partnerships speak to the trust we have built over the years. ●

Forging the Future: Shyam Steel's Journey from Legacy to Leadership

Shyam Steel's seven-decade journey reflects Eastern India's resilience, blending industrial growth, community empowerment, and inclusive leadership to strengthen the nation's future with a vision rooted in pride, purpose, and progress.



Shyam Steel, one of India's leading integrated steel producers, carries the weight of a seventy-year-old legacy while steering the promise of shaping the nation's future from the country's eastern heartland. Every beam, bar, and ton of steel it produces is driven by a purpose that has defined its journey since inception—strengthening India for generations to come.

Founded in 1953 in Howrah by Late Shri Shyam Sunder Beriwal Ji and Late Shriram Beriwal Ji, the company has expanded from a modest facility into a network of integrated plants across Howrah, Durgapur, Mejia, Bamunara, and now Purulia. This growth has been deeply tied to the rise of Eastern India, reflecting resilience, innovation, and regional pride.

As Director, Mrs. Megha Beriwal explains, “Seventy years isn't just a number—it's the measure of our service to India's progress and our region's pride.”

Expanding Capacity, Strengthening Commitments

Shyam Steel continues to invest heavily in capacity and infrastructure as part of its national growth agenda. Its ₹1,000 crore brownfield expansion in Mejia enhanced production to one million tonnes by April 2023. Alongside this, a ₹1,500 crore greenfield plant in Purulia is set to add another 0.35 million tonnes by September 2025.

These projects are designed not only to increase output but also to boost self-reliance, accelerate employment generation, and contribute to India's infrastructure demands. As Mrs. Beriwal emphasises, “Steel is our material, and contributing to nation building is our commitment.”

The company also anchors the ambitious Jangal Sundari Karmanagari Industrial Township in Purulia. Spread across 2,843 acres, with Shyam Steel holding 600 acres, this initiative is expected to create 150,000 jobs and attract significant investments in urban infrastructure and industrial productivity. In the Director's words, “Here, we are not just shaping factories; we are shaping futures.”

Empowering Women, Inspiring Youth

The company's progress is built on the strength of its people, particularly women and youth who are reshaping Eastern India's identity. India's literacy rate stands at 80.9 percent, with encouraging improvements in narrowing the gender gap. Tripura, for instance, has reached a 93.7 percent literacy rate, where the difference between men and women is only about four percentage points.

Shyam Steel reflects this positive change in its own workforce. At the company's head office, more than forty women hold roles in diverse functions such as business analysis, branding, HR, and sales coordination. In a sector traditionally dominated by men, this representation underscores resilience and progress.

“The true strength of Eastern India lies in its people—educated, ambitious, and unafraid to lead,” Mrs. Beriwal remarks, noting how gender diversity and youth leadership are increasingly driving the region's future.

Building Beyond Business

Shyam Steel's role goes far beyond industry, with a strong focus on strengthening communities, particularly in the Northeast. From its ₹1,000 crore investment in inland waterways to projects like the ₹188 crore Regional Centre of Excellence in Dibrugarh, the region is steadily evolving into a vital economic corridor. As Mrs. Beriwal notes, “The Northeast doesn't just use our steel—they trust it to hold up their dreams,” a reflection of the deep and enduring confidence the people of the region place in Shyam Steel.

The company's CSR initiatives also reflect its wider commitment to nation-building. From creating children's parks and supporting health drives to distributing essential items such as sanitary napkins and providing flood relief, Shyam Steel invests in strengthening the social fabric.

An Unshakable Vision

For Shyam Steel, business is inseparable from a larger national mission. Eastern India is rising, the Northeast is opening new corridors of growth, and young leaders are stepping forward with ambition. These shifts shape the company's vision for the future.

Mrs. Beriwal often draws on a guiding principle that reflects her personal philosophy: “सर्वं स्वधर्मं स्वं कर्म (sarvam svadharmam svam karma)—Everything thrives when you fulfill your own duty with dedication.” For her, leading Shyam Steel is both a responsibility and a promise—“This is my dharma, my pride, and my promise: to keep India strong, always.” ●

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