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INDIA, AT 59

As a nation, India has never followed the plot. Just when the world is ready to buy into its myth of modernity, it finds itself harking back to medievalism, and just when it is in danger of being written off as a basket case, it stuns with its technological edge. It is a narrative that defies even the most ardent storyteller, an idea that can never be encapsulated by mere numbers. But as someone once said, torture numbers and they'll confess to anything. In the following pages, the numbers don't just talk, they sing—on display is India's absurdity and its adventurism, its progress and certainly its pitfalls. It shows a country in the throes of change, its greatness sometimes diminished by the figures, at other times enhanced by them. Add to that snapshots from across the nation—from a tiny tribal village's first woman graduate to a temple which exports hair for Hollywood extensions—and truly new India can sometimes seem a little too much like old India. But as the nation turns 60 next year, a midnight's child ready for a new beginning, the facts and figures also show us where we stand in the community of nations—a country not afraid to confront, and surmount, its worst truths.



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the number of independent candidates in the 14th Lok Sabha, 69
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women's representation in the 14th Lok Sabha, 8
Muslims in India, 16
14th Lok Sabha members held post-graduate degrees, as compared to 85 in the first.