

THE TRUTH ABOUT
'LOVE JIHAD'

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
GENERAL BIPIN RAWAT

SOUTHERN CONQUEST
THE BJP'S LONG GAME

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WHY OUR BANKS ARE TIMEBOMBS

MASSIVE FRAUD, MISGOVERNANCE, NPAs OF Rs 9.4 LAKH CRORE AND MORE IN THE OFFING. **INDIA'S BANKING SYSTEM IS HEADING FOR A CATASTROPHE. HOW TO AVERT IT**

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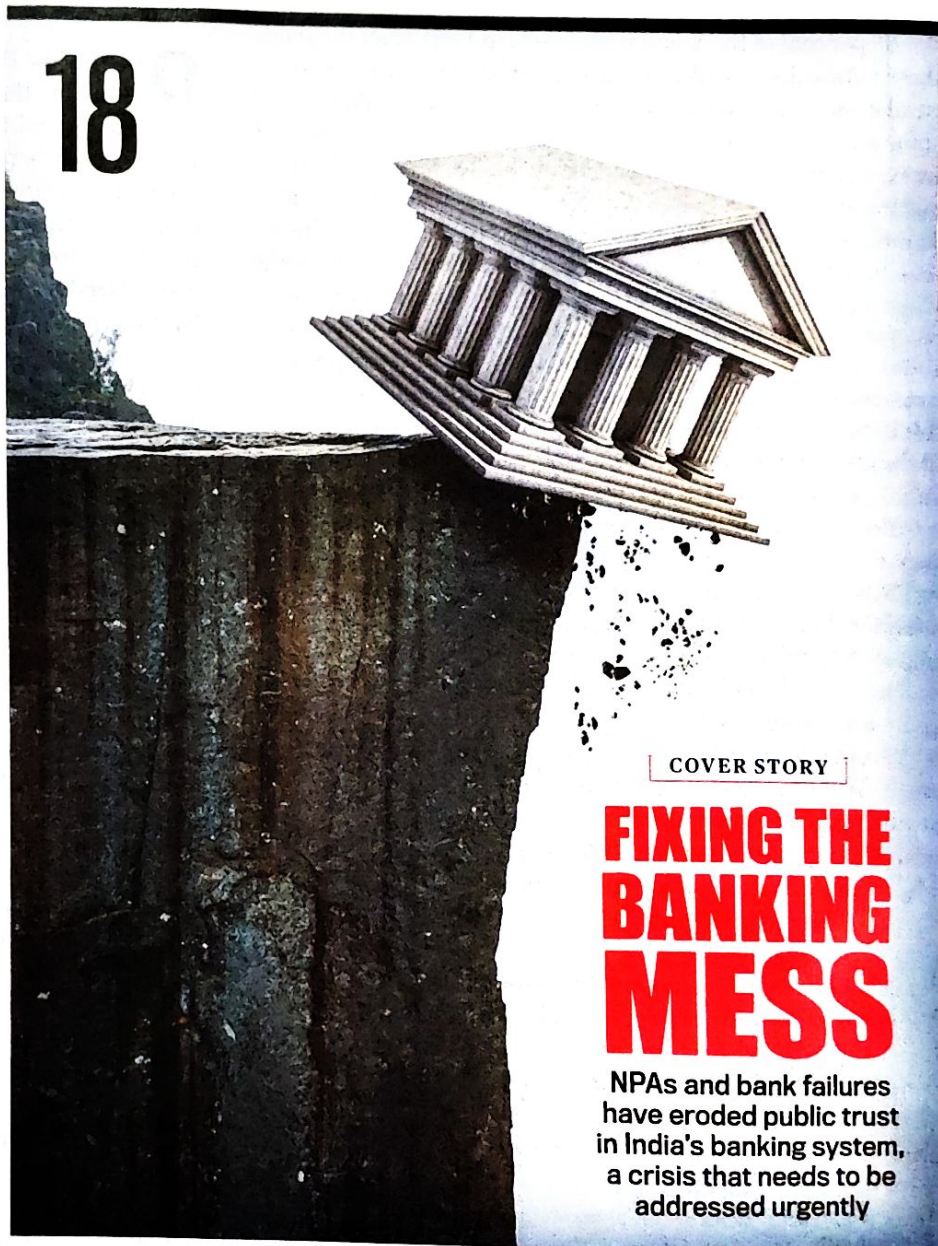
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TAMAL SHEE/GETTY IMAGES

WEST BENGAL

THE ART. 356 DARE

By Romita Datta

Three attacks in three days, two of them fatal. BJP president J.P. Nadda's convoy is attacked by stone pelters in South 24 Parganas; a BJP booth president is beaten to death in North 24 Parganas; another party activist is murdered in East Burdwan—all in a span of three days (December 10-12). If the news stories were playing up the possible imposition of President's rule in Bengal, invoking Article 356 of the Constitution, it was by no means beyond the pale.

But what beggars the imagination

is a popular hypothesis that it's not just BJP leaders clamouring for Art. 356; the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) may even be willing such an eventuality in the hope of garnering sympathy. A clutch of ruling party MLAs, unwilling to be identified for reasons all too obvious, confided that the lumpen elements in the party were out of control and that the imposition of President's rule may be inevitable. "There's a certain laxity among a section of the police, which is why the hooligans are running amok. Even the chief minister has no control over them...

we are playing into the BJP's hands," says a minister in the state cabinet.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's been zealous in flagging the "violence against BJP workers", but the party itself appears divided on the wisdom of demanding President's rule. Nadda maintained, even after the attack on his convoy, that "the central leadership does not want President's rule", but Bengal unit leaders Kailash Vijayvargiya, Mukul Roy, Babul Supriyo and others were crying themselves hoarse demanding central action. "We have lost 136 people since 2015. I person-