

A peek into former Bihar deputy chief minister Tejaswini Yadav's official bungalow shows his disregard for rules and love for a flashy lifestyle, writes Satyavrat Mishra

On February 12, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad Yadav's younger son and heir apparent, Tejaswini Yadav, finally shifted out of 5, Deshratna Marg bungalow in Patna. The young RJD scion fought a one-and-a-half-year-long court battle to retain it, but lost it earlier this month when the Supreme Court dismissed his petition and ordered him to check out within a week. It was vacated at night, apparently to escape media glare.

However, that was not meant to be. The government bungalow is once again in the news after Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi took possession of it last week and invited media persons for a tour of the property.

They were stunned by the extravagant decoration and furnishing of the bungalow. "I am speechless. It's nothing short of a seven-star hotel. Those, who have been to the 1, Anne Marg (the official residence of Bihar chief minister) and Raj Bhawan (the governor's house), would agree that it's way fancier than both. There has been a splurge as if it was meant for some raja-maharaja," said Modi.

The bungalow, which is a stone's throw from the chief minister's residence, was allotted to Tejaswini in 2015, just days after the Grand Alliance government was sworn into power in the state. The young RJD leader became the deputy CM in accordance with the power-sharing agreement between Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav. Tejaswini was also given the additional charge of the road construction and building construction department.

Renovation work on the bungalow began in January 2016. The engineers, to keep their minister happy, let go of all rules and regulations and constructed a beautiful abode for the deputy chief minister within a year.

However, Kumar snapped ties with Yadav after the RJD chief, his wife and ex-CM, Rabri Devi, and son Tejaswini were named in the FIR filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection with the IRCTC Hotel scam. Kumar resigned on 26 July 2017, and within hours stitched an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and formed the government on July 27.

The tussle over the bungalow began in August 2017, when the government served eviction notice to Tejaswini. He was allotted 1, Polo Road instead as the leader of Opposition in the state Assembly. The young RJD leader, however, refused to vacate the bungalow and challenged the notice in the Patna High Court. He argued the 1, Polo Road bungalow was "not matching his status".

The high court quashed his

A house fit for a deputy CM



(Clockwise from top) The facade of the bungalow; one of the bedrooms; the bathroom with imported tiles; and the reception area of the house

petition twice and ordered him to vacate the bungalow. However, Tejaswini kept pushing and challenged the decision in the Supreme Court. The apex court threw out his petition in the very first hearing on February 7, and even fined him ₹50,000 for wasting valuable judicial time.

Although Tejaswini maintained that he would continue to live with his parents in their nearby 10, Circular Road Residence, money was used without any check to redecorate the place.

Expensive curtains and luxurious leather sofas fill the rooms and high-end fixtures can be found everywhere from the living room to the bathroom. Plus, Yadav Junior, who is a former IPL player for the Delhi Daredevils, incorporated a special room with a pool table for amusement in the design. The modular kitchen is

equipped with a fancy six-door fridge and an automatic five-burner stove, which, however, was never used as the labels were still on.

The luxury bungalow comes with three bathrooms; one at the ground floor and two on the first floor. Each of them is fitted with shower panels, tough-end glass curtains and toiletry fittings from leading international brands. Even the wall tiles in bathrooms were specially imported. "It must have cost no less than ₹10 lakh per bathroom," exclaimed a staff at the bungalow.

The bedrooms are also beautifully designed. They open into the front courtyard of the house and the manicured garden can be viewed from the room. The floors are made of Marbonite tiles and king-size beds and leather sofas fill up the space. An adjacent room was turned into a walk-in closet for the young leader.

There is a meditation room and a puja room with wooden flooring; RJD sources inform that Yadav Junior is a devout person. The first floor has a second drawing room between the bedrooms, and a small Astroturf lawn.

The double storey house itself is nestled in a beautifully designed two-acre garden that has a jogging track

and an illuminated pathway. There are three small ponds in the garden as well. Sources say there was a plan to construct a swimming pool, but it went awry when its resident lost his portfolio in 2017.

A total of 35 air conditioners (ACs) have been installed in the three-bedroom house and the office area is fitted with 11 ACs. To keep water tanks cool in the summer months, shades with heat-resistant materials have been constructed over them.

Only a handful of people were ever allowed inside the house and photography was strictly banned. No journalist was ever invited inside the house. A few days ago, the young leader organised an online chat with his social media followers at his bungalow's garden. To stop media cameras from wandering off, a special stage was constructed to hide the house and its features.

The bungalow also comes with living quarters for staff members and security personnel. These, however, are not as glamorous as the bungalow itself. In fact, they are very basic in their design and lack even air coolers.

Most people were allowed only up to the official wing of the bungalow. However, it doesn't mean that the office has no goodies. The office space is also artistically constructed with a big chamber and an ante-room for the deputy chief minister, a couple of cabins for his personal assistants, a conference room and a working space for a small group of junior staff. There is also a recliner sofa in the ante-room for a quick power nap.

"Now I know why, Tejaswini Yadav was so adamant on keeping the bungalow," quipped Modi.

Modi, who is now the deputy chief minister, puts the remodelling cost for the bungalow at ₹4-5 crore. However, the government, has no clue where the money came from. "We don't know about it," said Building Construction Minister Maheshwar Hazari, "we have ordered an enquiry into the matter."

According to the minister, members of the state cabinet are allowed to spend only ₹3 lakh in five years and that too only on infrastructure. "All the furnishing was done when Yadav had the charge of road construction as well as building construction portfolios. If he has spent more than the limit, then either he used his own money or misused department funds. Either way, it's a punishable offence," Hazari said.

Since the media tour, the bungalow has snowballed into a major political controversy. The ruling Janata Dal (United) and BJP alliance has been attacking Tejaswini and RJD over the issue. "He wasted public money in making it a lavish place. It's sheer misuse of money and power," said Modi.

While the RJD has been quiet over the matter, it was quick to accuse Chief Minister Kumar of incurring more expenditure than Tejaswini on housing. "Nitish Kumar has three bungalows in Patna. In Delhi, he has been allotted a bungalow and there is also a suite in the Bihar Bhawan," said RJD spokesman and lawmaker Bhai Virendra.

Tejaswini has been in Delhi ever since he vacated the bungalow. He maintains that his fight was against the "spiteful and partisan attitude" of the state government. "My fight was against the arbitrary, spiteful and partisan attitude of the Nitish government. My democratic fight would continue. Nitish Kumar himself is occupying two residences by clubbing together as many as six bungalows," he said after the apex court verdict. He also alleged that at least 10 MLAs and former ministers were in illegal occupation of ministerial bungalows in Patna.

Meanwhile, despite the grandeur of the bungalow, its new occupant has no intention of living there. "In its current shape, living here would be like maintaining an elephant," he said. Instead, Modi would continue to live in his ancestral house in Patna. However, he accepted that he would use the plush office quite often as it is equipped with the latest technology.

The awards show that didn't lock out women directors

None of the major awards-giving bodies nominated a female director for a feature film this year

CARA BUCKLEY
23 February

This Saturday, on the beach in Santa Monica, California, inside a tent filled with glamorous people drinking, something aberrant could go down. A woman could win a directing award.

At the Independent Spirit Awards, which are held every year on Oscars eve, three of the five nominees for best director are women: Debra Granik for *Leave No Trace*, Tamara Jenkins for *Private Life* and Lynne Ramsay for *You Were Never Really Here*.

This is a record for the Indie Spirits, and especially notable because none of the other major — and very few of the minor — awards-giving bodies nominated a female director for a feature film this year. Not the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which doles out the Golden Globes; or the Broadcast Film Critics Association, which hands out the Critics' Choice Awards; or the Baftas, the British equivalent of the Oscars or the Directors Guild; and, lastly, not the motion picture academy.

In the Oscars' 91-year history, only five women have received best director nominations, and just one has triumphed — Kathryn Bigelow, for *The Hurt Locker*, in 2010. The significance of Bigelow's achievement cannot be overstated, yet it has had a curious distorting effect on the perceptions some show business people have about the number of female directors working on major films.

Until recently, whenever I asked Hollywood insiders — and not just male ones — why they thought so few female directors ascended the industry ranks, let alone won awards, they usually replied, often triumphantly, "There's Kathryn Bigelow!" It was as if her win made up for the rafts of women who have been sys-



Director Debra Granik (left) and cast members of the film *Leave No Trace*

temically kept out the directors' chair, and awards contention, for nearly a century. I encountered similar reactions from academy old-timers during the #OscarsSoWhite controversy a few years back. More than one longtime member patiently explained to me that academy voters did not have a problem with or history of racial exclusion in the least. Hadn't they awarded an Oscar to Sidney Poitier? Well, yes. Yes, they had. In 1964.

The outlook has become brighter for female directors. In 2017, Patty Jenkins broke multiple box office records with *Wonder Woman*, and last year Greta Gerwig became the first woman of the decade to land an Oscar directing nomination, for *Lady Bird*. And thanks to the more intense scrutiny on studios and pressure from organisations like Time's Up, hiring female directors is slowly becoming something of a badge of hon-

our. At Sundance, after the actress Tessa Thompson announced her commitment to work with a female director in the next 18 months, more than 100 producers and actors, as well as seven studios, echoed her promise. They called it the 4 Percent Challenge, after the finding by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative that just 4 percent of the top 1,200 films of the last decade were directed by a woman.

Researchers in this field have long said that shifting the default assumption that directors are men is crucial. A few years ago, in a study for the Sundance Institute and Women in Film Los Angeles, dozens of film industry buyers and sellers were asked to name female directors that would be on the consideration lists for movie projects. They listed an average of three names; most listed zero names. That is changing, thanks to the successes of Jenkins, Gerwig and

Ava DuVernay, and newer names like Chloé Zhao, who directed the critically cherished indie *The Rider*, and Marielle Heller, who directed the Melissa McCarthy and Richard E Grant to Oscar nominations in *Can You Ever Forgive Me?* despite being locked out of the nominations herself.

Change can also be gauged by looking at the ways many journalists described female directors, in particular Bigelow, just a decade ago. While there were notable exceptions, including The Times' Manohla Dargis, who wrote a profile extolling Bigelow's talent, a lot of writers could not seem to get their heads around the facts that she was attractive and directed action films.

In the run-up to her Oscar win, Bigelow received an unprecedented amount of media coverage, according to Martha Lauzen, the executive director of the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film and a professor at San Diego State University. Lauzen found that most articles about Bigelow mentioned her age, her brief marriage to the director James Cameron — a Daily News scribe called Bigelow Cameron's "shrinking violet of a former wife" — and, invariably, her appearance. Per the *Washington Post*: "She has big eyes and big hair, and is the sort of woman who looks good in restaurants, on the fantail of a yacht or on the cover of a magazine."

Right. That sort of woman. The Independent Spirit Awards celebrate films made for \$20 million or less; female directors far and away work with much lower budgets than their male counterparts, and it is refreshing to see them honoured in that space. Of the two male nominees, one is Barry Jenkins, who is black, and directed *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and the other is Paul Schrader, who is 72 and directed *First Reformed*.

IMO



Reliance Communication Chairman Anil Ambani

ANIL AMBANI GUILTY OF CONTEMPT OF COURT

Rahul Gandhi@RahulGandhi
The brave are martyred. Their families struggle. 40 Jawans give their lives but are denied the status of "Shaheed". While this man has never given & only taken. He's gifted 30,000Cr of their money & will live happily ever after. Welcome to Modi's NEW INDIA.

Prashant Bhushan@pbhushan1

I am willing to wager that even with the Supreme Court threat of being jailed over Anil Ambani @PMOIndia will still insist on ensuring him the #Rafale offsets. Modi's decision making is extremely questionable

Sunil Jain@thesuniljain

Unprecedented in India's history, to change SC order after it has been given...obviously someone bribed the Supreme Court officials to upload a different order in the Anil Ambani contempt case. While Chief Justice has dismissed the officials, calls for probe, this is really brazen

Swati Chaturvedi@bainjal

I am willing to wager that even with the Supreme Court threat of being jailed over Anil Ambani @PMOIndia will still insist on ensuring him the #Rafale offsets. Modi's decision making is extremely questionable

THE ONGOING KASHMIR CRISIS

Aditya Raj Kaul@AdityaRajKaul
Significant. New Zealand is the very first country to pass a motion in their parliament against the Pulwama terror attack in Kashmir in support of India. Global consensus growing in support of New Delhi. More to come soon.

Dr Ajoy Kumar@drajoykumar

Pulwama attack: BJP admits Modi addressed a political rally hours after the Kashmir incident

Dr David Frawley@davidfrawleyed

Through terrorist Adil Ahmad Dar's video for the Kashmir attack said he was targeting cow urine drinking Hindus, the media doesn't regard it as a religious hate crime. Is this because they don't respect the Hindu religion or they want to hide the religious nature of the crime?

Shekhar Gupta@ShekharGupta

Great of Prime Minister Modi to say that terrorism is the enemy not Kashmiris, and nobody should harm them. So what is he planning to do about Governor Tathagata Roy, who wants them boycotted...

Mehar Tarar@MehTarar

I wrote an article on the Pulwama attack, looking at the situation in Kashmir from all angles. As I was waiting for it to be published, I was emailed by one of the editors (Indian) that their editorial guidelines prevent them from publishing it. I must have written the truth??

AERO INDIA SHOW 2019

Manu Pubby@manupubby
Disastrous ending too for the Aero India show. Started with an air crash, ending with over a 100 cars being gutted after dry grass caught fire in the parking lot. Flying suspended.

Sanjayvikram@sanjayvikram10

Aero show fire! It's logistically unviable to have such a mega show now in yelahanka! It's surrounded by hundreds of high rise apartments