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**CHANDA KOCHHAR, 49**  
CEO & MD, ICICI Bank**Banking Glory**

Her's has been a consistent presence in *Fortune's* power list for women for five years. Not surprising, given that she was the indisputable frontrunner for the top job at ICICI, the country's largest private bank, for years. Her standing has been such that even during her years as a deputy, no board meeting would reach a decision till she had voiced her opinion. She had a meteoric rise after she joined the organisation in 1984 as management trainee. She might have been helped by ICICI's strong policy of promoting women, but she proved her worth by weathering the storm during the recent slowdown.

**NITA AMBANI, 46**

Educationist and Co-owner, Mumbai Indians

**Fortune's Favourite**

Like many women married into great wealth, she stayed away from its obvious accoutrements, dedicating herself to philanthropy. But then IPL happened and she was suddenly pitchforked into the limelight. She is the chairperson of Dhirubhai Ambani International School and head of the NGO, Dhirubhai Ambani Foundation, but it is as co-owner of Mumbai Indians that she is the most visible today. She is the driving force behind the team, and accompanies it to every match. She's now sitting back, letting skipper Sachin Tendulkar and prize catcher Kieron Pollard do the groundwork.



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**SHEILA DIKSHIT, 71**  
Chief Minister, Delhi**Helmswoman**

She is in her third consecutive term as chief minister of the country's most prestigious state. Soft-spoken and calm, she lets her remarkable administrative skills do the talking. She has changed the face of the national capital, which has probably seen the greatest burst of development work during her reign. In the dog-eat-dog world of politics, she has survived the machinations of a section of her own party to unseat her as well as thwarted attempts by the opposition to defeat her at the hustings. Full of verve, she has also brought class to the sometimes cross world of Delhi politics.

**ASHA BHOSLE, 76**

Singer

**Reigning Diva**

Her sensuous voice enticed the adventurous with discreet hints of the forbidden before the age of in-your-face entertainment. A younger sibling of Lata Mangeshkar, she very greatly risked a life in the shadow of her sister's eminence. But her trademark style saw her through with a cult fan following. One of the most versatile singers to have emerged from the Hindi film scene, her repertoire extends to ghazals, bhajans, folk and classical. Add to that a singing proficiency in 14 languages, and you have an artiste who is a hard act to follow.



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**MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI, 56**

Spiritual Leader

**The Hugging Saint**

She stands out in a nation of godmen, and not just for reasons bearing on faith. Amma — mother — to her followers, she commands greater respect for her social work and humanitarianism. Born in unspectacular surroundings, she has come up with such influence that her eponymous *math* runs numerous schools, temples, community kitchens and a super-speciality hospital. Internationally, her credibility rests on her being a propagator of peace. Recipient of prestigious interfaith awards, she delivered the keynote address of the Millennium Peace Summit at the UN General Assembly in 2000.



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**KATRINA KAIF, 25**

Actor

**Queen of Hits**

She has been destiny's child. In the era of box office over-hype, she has delivered legitimate hits: *Maine Pyar Kyun Kiya*, *Welcome*, *Partner*, *Apne*, *Namaste London*, *Race...* Setting male hearts aflutter, causing leading ladies heartburn, she has found her way to superstardom. Her rise has been meteoric; memories are fresh of this pretty face flying down to Bollywood from Britain just the other day: who can forget Katrina learning the ropes in *Boom*, a film that spectacularly went bust? She has already started giving back by helping her mother, a social worker, make life easier for orphans.



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**SAINA NEHWAL, 19**

Badminton Player

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**Ace of Base**

She continues to be the country's brightest spark in badminton. More so, after her playing a crucial role in the entry of the women's team to the Uber Cup finals. One of the most recognisable faces on the international circuit, she is a veritable celebrity, but has remained grounded and free from controversy. At the same time, she hasn't shied away from speaking her mind on various issues. Though she didn't excel at the two big events in India, she did brilliantly at the Indonesian Open. She has remained in the top-10, and along with the Chinese is the future of World badminton.

**MAMATA BANERJEE, 55**

Railway Minister

**Right on Track**

Time was when she was the only MP from the Trinamool Congress in the Lok Sabha. Today, she is the government's most significant ally with 19 MPs, and is aiming to uproot the Left from its bastion of West Bengal. She is being cautious, waiting patiently for the state assembly elections. Time was when she would quit coalitions on a whim and then find herself pinned to a corner. Not any more. That she didn't cross the decibel limit in decrying the Centre's fuel price hike speaks volumes of her developing political maturity.



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**NIRUPAMA RAO, 59**

Foreign Secretary

**Top Diplomat**

It is her job to guide the country as it negotiates the perilous straits of international relations. That she would one day lead the diplomatic corps was not in doubt since the moment she topped the Civil Services Examination in 1973. She went on to add a string of firsts to her credentials, among them being the first woman spokesperson of the external affairs ministry (2003; a tough job, but she handled the NDA regime's disastrous Agra summit with aplomb), and India's first woman ambassador to China (2006). She takes time off penning poetry or strumming jazz notes on the guitar.



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**KAREENA KAPOOR, 29**

Actor

**Bollywood Czarina**

Her smart *3 Idiots* act follows in the wake of a string of successes like *Jab We Met*, *Omkara*, *Chameli*, *Yuva*, *Dev*, *Fida* and *Hulchul*, which seals her reputation as a beauty with brains. The actor had to wait long to stop being considered Karisma's kid sister, but her resolute refusal to play bit roles paid off in the end as meatier roles started coming her way. Today, she has the big movies and the big endorsements in her kitty. In short, the world.

**FARAH KHAN, 45**

Choreographer-turned-Director-turned-Producer

**Dance Dance**

Her career graph has gone in just one direction — north. She started as a choreographer, quickly becoming number one in the business. She started directing and belted out two back-to-back hits. Now she has opened a production company with husband Shirish Kunder. Of course, talent and hard work have paid off, so has attitude. She goes about the industry breaking the rules, obeying her heart's dictates. And she is almost always right. Why else would her kitschy spoof *Om Shanti Om* have ringed in over Rs100 crore at the cash register, leaving big banners ferreting around for explanations?



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**BARKHA DUTT, 38**

Managing Editor, NDTV 24x7

**Guts and Glitter**

She is a role model for many serious-minded schoolgirls. Whether in conservative small towns or cosmopolitan big cities, gritty television images of her in the army's frontline bunkers, riot-razed localities and within close range of terrorists' bullets have inspired a generation to take up her calling. Her own inspiration comes from her mother, Prabha Dutt, a pioneering woman journalist who was chief of bureau at the *Hindustan Times* before she died of brain haemorrhage in 1984, when Barkha was 13. Her idea of taking a break? An occasional Brad Pitt or Shah Rukh Khan interview.

**SUDHA MURTHY, 59**

Founder-Trustee &amp; Chairperson, Infosys Foundation

**Spark of Brilliance**

The first lady of India's IT industry is not one to bask in the reflected glory of husband NR Narayana Murthy. An engineer herself, Sudha Murthy has carved a niche in philanthropy and education: sometime ago, she took up an initiative to equip government schools in Karnataka with computers and libraries. Her influence is born of deep respect for her refined demeanour and the dignity with which she has straddled the worlds of fame and money, and simple living. It is now well-documented that her savings of Rs10,000 were the first funds for the founding of Infosys.



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**AISHWARYA RAI BACHCHAN, 36**

Actor

**Miss World**

Though there is constant debate over who is the number one actor in Bollywood, many are of the opinion that Aishwarya holds her position as the best in the business. She commands enviable global appeal, having associated with the best in Hollywood, and is probably the only Indian actor to figure in *Time* magazine's list of the World's 100 most influential people (2004). The true mascot of Indian cinema in the West, the passing years haven't dented her popularity or demand. Reportedly the highest-paid actor in Bollywood today, she's also the face of most of the leading international luxury brands.



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**PRIYANKA CHOPRA, 27**

Actor

**Hot Hot Hot**

She is among the few actors in India to have experimented with their looks. She has also taken on a variety of roles with equal ease and success. Despite having no godfather in the industry, she, through sheer grit, has had a meteoric rise in popularity and star appeal. The year 2009 was phenomenal for her as she raced ahead of other celebrities to become the current favourite of marketing gurus. The versatile diva is a force to reckon with, for how many can shoulder a woman-centric film like *Fashion* to box office glory?



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