

sure other languages too would have such gems," he says. Roushan, one of the first off the blocks, launched a satirical blog in 2008, which gradually grew into a website.

Karthik and Krishna dispute that there is anything wrong with India's funny bone. "There is a very intelligent audience out there, which is very receptive to reading news satire to get a different perspective on national news. Many of our articles, despite sometimes being quite subtle, have been widely shared and read," says Krishna. He quotes Vine Deloria, Jr's *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, a non-fiction account of the struggle of Native Americans to retain their tribal society and morality that is laced with humour: "Irony and satire provide much keener insights into a group's collective psyche and values than do years of research."

By that yardstick, back home people – particularly Gen Y – should have gathered more than a few razor-sharp insights into politicians, Bollywood stars and cricketers, three groups that are the favourite targets of satirists.

Like Krishna and Laxman, Tanay Sukumar, all of 21, and a final-year student at Delhi College of Engineering who runs News That Matters Not, didn't really plan on getting so far. "I started off very early, in my first semester in college,



public figure. "The more important you are, the more you will be lampooned; that is the thumb rule of political humour. Which is why we now see the disappearance of leaders like Lalu Prasad Yadav from the scene, as they have become less relevant politically," adds Tailang.

The top five leaders on the satire popularity charts in fact reflect the headlines. Therefore it is no surprise that Narendra Modi, Rahul Gandhi and, in recent months, M Karunanidhi are regulars on these sites. Those who have ducked out of sight include Lalu Prasad, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and figures of the previous NDA regime. Some of the rising stars include information and broadcasting minister Manish Tiwari and minister of state for human resource development Shashi Tharoor.

The Money Chain

Most of these sites, including several others run by professional journalists, are small-time operations with the only revenue tie-up being with Google Ads. "I have tied up with Google for ads; we have to cover just maintenance costs since our team is entirely made up of students," says Sukumar.

Rating ★★★★★