

sunday pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The pioneer

As the CM is saying there was no mention of the word Telangana in the Union Budget, can the state government reveal whether they are spending the revenue generated in the GHMC area only in GHMC limits. The state government has been constructing CC roads with Central funds. How can the Chief Minister say that the Centre is not giving funds when many Central projects are being executed in the state?

-Katipally Venkatramana Reddy, BJP MLA, Kamareddy, Telangana

DON'T MISS...

GENCO to develop 1,350 MW ...

In a virtual meeting on Saturday, KVN Chakradhar Babu, Managing Director of APGENCO, directed officials to devise a comprehensive action plan for the swift implementation of a 1,350 MW (9X150 MW) pumped storage project. This initiative, valued at approximately Rs 7,380 crore, is part of the Prime Minister's 100-day programme and aims to meet the State's increasing energy demand by providing 10 million units per day during peak hours. Chakradhar Babu ...

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Focus on promoting ...

Union Minister Ramnath Thakur said on Saturday that the Centre is focusing on limiting the use of chemical fertilisers in agriculture and promoting organic farming, especially in the northeastern states. He maintained that budgetary allocation for the agriculture sector has increased manifold under the BJP-led NDA government, with special attention on minimising problems faced by farmers. Addressing a press conference on the provisions of Union Budget 2024-25 ...

-NATION

BSNL subscribers on rise, homegrown ...

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Saturday claimed that the subscriber base for the government-run BSNL has been increasing, while a homegrown 4G network is also ready and work is on to convert it to 5G. Talking to reporters here, the Union minister for communications said under Atmanirbhar Bharat, a 4G network with indigenous technology is ready and, in a few months, its services will be available across the country through the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited ...

-MONEY

Watch, savour & indulge ...

TG's The Oriental Grill at the Hyatt Hyderabad Gachibowli is more than just a restaurant; it's an immersive culinary theatre. The moment one steps into this elegant space, a harmonious blend of contemporary sophistication and traditional charm envelops you. The restaurant's signature "Eat what you see" philosophy is brought to life at the Teppanyaki counter, where skilled chefs transform the art of cooking into a captivating performance. Teppanyaki, also known as teppanyaki, is a captivating Japanese dining experience where a chef transforms fresh ingredients into a sizzling masterpiece on a sizzling iron griddle. The term derives from 'Teppan' (iron plate) and 'Yaki' (grilling), ...

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'END OF AN ERA' Bharatanatyam doyenne Yamini pass away

Awards

- Received Padma Shri at the young age of 28 in 1968
- Conferred the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1977
- Padma Bhushan in 2001
- Padma Vibhushan in 2016

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi veteran Yamini Krishnamurti died at the Apollo hospital here on Saturday. She was 84. "She was suffering from age-related issues and was in the ICU for the last seven months," Krishnamurti's manager and secretary Ganesh said. Krishnamurti's mortal remains will be brought to her institute -- Yamini School of Dance at Hauz Khas -- at 9 am on Sunday. The details of her last rites are yet to be finalised. Krishnamurti is survived by two sisters. *Continued on Page 2*



CM ADDRESSES PUBLIC GRIEVANCES Wave of donations amid plaints

Many people request help with illegal cases filed by the previous govt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday addressed grievances from the public at the TDP central office in Mangalagiri, prioritising their resolution. A significant number of complaints were directed at the revenue department. Many attendees appealed to the Chief Minister to intervene in illegal cases filed against them by the previous government. Others sought help in reclaiming lands allegedly seized by YSRCP leaders over the past five years. Several people donated funds for the construction of Amaravati and the reopening of Anna Canteens. Notably, an elderly woman from Vijayawada, Manikamma, donated her gold bangles for the rebuilding of Amaravati. With a large crowd from across the state, Chandrababu Naidu spent over three hours meeting with people and receiving their appeals. Villagers from Bonthu and Mahasingi in Saravakota mandal, Srikakulam district, complained about 47 acres of their land being forcibly occupied by YSRCP leaders from Bonthu village. *Continued on Page 2*



- A large number of complaints were directed at the Revenue Department.
- Appeals were made for reclaiming lands allegedly seized by YSRCP leaders.
- An elderly woman from Vijayawada, Manikamma, donated her gold bangles for Amaravati.
- Villagers from Srikakulam district complained about land forcibly occupied by YSRCP leaders.
- Several donors contributed significant amounts for Amaravati and Anna Canteens.

Chandrababu Naidu expressed gratitude for the donations.

Naidu promises overhaul of Revenue dept

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has issued a stern warning to officials engaged in irregularities, promising severe action against them. Speaking on Saturday, Naidu highlighted that the majority of public complaints are directed at the Revenue Department and assured that a major overhaul would be completed within 100 days. Addressing concerns at the TDP central office in Mangalagiri, Naidu emphasised his administration's commitment to resolving all public grievances, particularly those related to revenue issues. He vowed that officials responsible for these problems would be held accountable. Naidu also criticised the previous YSRCP government, alleging that land scandals and tampering with revenue records have become prevalent across the state. *Continued on Page 2*

CM announces Rs 10L ex gratia to survivor of house collapse

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced a Rs 10 lakh ex gratia payment to the lone survivor of a tragic house collapse in Chinnu Vangali village, Chagalamarri mandal, Nandyal district. The incident occurred two days ago, claiming the lives of four family members. T. Gurusekhar, his wife, and their two daughters perished in the collapse. Fortunately, their other daughter, 15-year-old Guru Prasanna, was away at her hostel in Proddatur, where she is studying in the 10th grade. Currently, Guru Prasanna is under the care of her 70-year-old paternal grandmother, Nagamma. Moved by the girl's plight, the Chief Minister announced the ex gratia payment and an additional Rs 2 lakh in financial assistance for Nagamma. CM has instructed the Nandyal District Collector to offer support and assure Guru Prasanna that the government will continue to assist her. Furthermore, the Chief Minister stated that the Telugu Desam Party will provide the necessary support for the girl's education and future.

Sreedhar appointed as TTDCV & SO

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

S Sreedhar was appointed as the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer (CV & SO), Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Saturday. Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad appointed Sreedhar, who was waiting for posting, through GO Rt No 1342 on Saturday as the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, in the existing vacancy.

Centre's nod for new flyover & bypass road in Vijayawada

Eastern bypass to be developed with Rs 2,500 cr, says MP Chinni

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath has announced that the Ministry of National Highways has approved plans for a six-lane flyover extending from Mahanadu Road to the Nidamanuru Railway Bridge, as well as the Eastern Bypass, thanks to the efforts of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. Addressing a media conference at NTR Bhavan in Vijayawada on Saturday, the MP revealed that work on the flyover will soon commence. He explained that within the next month, National Highway authorities will coordinate with relevant departments to finalize the flyover's design. Although a Detailed Project Report (DPR) is already prepared, a revised version must be submitted within the same timeframe. The tendering process is expected to start in two months, with construction slated to begin around February or March 2025. The project is projected to be completed in two years. Additionally, radial roads from Ramavarappadu to Gannavaram will be constructed before the flyover work begins. An allocation of approximately Rs 800 crore has been designated for this flyover. *Continued on Page 2*



NDA govt to implement new Tenant Act

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Cooperative, Marketing, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, and Fisheries, K. Atchannaidu, has announced the implementation of a new Tenant Act, set to replace the 2019 legislation with the previous 2016 Act. This move aims to enhance support for tenant farmers (Koulu Rythulu) by integrating them into Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) and facilitating access to crop loans. During a review meeting with the Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank Limited (APCOB) on Saturday, Minister Atchannaidu emphasised the NDA government's commitment to revitalising the cooperative sector and improving agricultural support. The new Act is designed to address the challenges tenant farmers have faced under the previous administration's regulations, particularly concerning the issuance of agricultural cards. To ensure transparency and efficiency, the government will implement an e-KYC system for tenant farmers and work to avoid past mistakes. Minister Atchannaidu called for enhanced services from APCOB officials and urged them to extend their support to farmers effectively. Special Chief Secretary B. Rajasekhar, APCOB MD R.S. Reddy, Chairman A. Babu, and other officials were present at the meeting.



CASCADE OF WATER

Thousands flock to Srisaalam Dam; traffic hit

PNS ■ KURNOOL

The Srisaalam Dam has become a major tourist attraction following the lifting of 10 radium crest gates to release over 400,000 cusecs of water downstream to the Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP). With such a rare event occurring infrequently, thousands of visitors have gathered to witness the impressive cascade of water flowing from the crest gates. The Srisaalam Dam, one of the largest projects in the country, is currently experiencing a heavy inflow of water from upstream sources. The lifting of the crest gates began a couple of days ago due to the substantial inflow. As a result, traffic has been heavily impacted, with hundreds of vehicles getting stuck for about 4 km on the road leading to the dam. Despite the congestion, many cars continued to head towards the site. Tourists, eager to capture the moment, were seen taking selfies from the hilltop, enjoying the panoramic view of the water cascading from the gates. Most visitors have come from nearby areas including Kurnool, Nandyal, Tirupati, Hyderabad, and Bangalore. Many also visited the renowned Mallikharjuna Swamy temple at Srisaalam. According to Srisaalam project engineers, the 10 radium crest gates were lifted on Saturday to release 464,740 cusecs of water downstream to the Nagarjuna Sagar project. *Continued on Page 2*



CRDA cracks down on illegal layouts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) is cracking down on unauthorised layouts in the Amaravati region. Recently, CRDA officials took action against several plots in Tadikonda village that had been illegally converted from agricultural land into real estate ventures. Unauthorised fences and boundary stones were removed, and internal roads within these unlicensed layouts were dismantled. The CRDA warns that purchasing plots from such unapproved developments could lead to future complications and advises potential buyers to exercise caution and ensure proper permits are in place.

Working to find solutions to global food security: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India has become a food surplus country and is also working to provide solutions for global food and nutritional security. The Prime Minister said agriculture is at the centre of India's economic policies, and the Union Budget 2024-25 has given a big push to sustainable and climate-resilient farming and developing a complete ecosystem to support Indian farmers, which is being organised in India after 65 years. Recalling the last International Conference of Agricultural Economists, Modi mentioned that India was then a newly Independent nation, and it was a challenging time for the country's agriculture and food security. "Now, India is a food surplus country," he said, adding that the country is the number one producer of milk, pulses and spices in the world. Also, the country has become the second-largest producer of food-grains, fruits, vegetables, cotton, sugar and tea. "There was a time when India's food security was a concern for the world. Now, India is working to provide solutions for global food security and global nutritional security," he said at the conference, attended by about 1,000 delegates from around 70 countries. Therefore, Modi said, India's experience is valuable for discussions on food system transformation and will benefit the global south. The Prime Minister reiterated India's commitment to global welfare as a 'Vishwa Bandhu'. He highlighted various mantras put forward by India on various fora, including 'One Earth, One Family and One Future', 'Mission LiFE' and 'One Earth One Health'. He underlined India's approach of not viewing the health of humans, plants and animals in silos. "Challenges before sustainable agriculture and food systems can only be tackled under the holistic approach of One Earth, One Family and One Future," he said. *Continued on Page 2*



He was addressing the 32nd International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAIE),

LIVING IT UP IN JAIPUR

Jaipur, a bustling hub of commerce and culture in North India, is famed for its grand palaces, majestic forts, and exquisite crafts. Known globally for its intricate artwork and stunning jewellery, the Pink City exudes charm with its vibrant colours and rich artistic heritage. Alongside its historical grandeur, contemporary spaces reflecting local elegance have emerged as the city continues to evolve and thrive

BY **AKANKSHA DEAN**

JAIPUR, is a delightful place to visit with its colourful palaces, historic forts, lively markets showcasing local crafts, and diverse food options. It's a city that offers something for everyone. The pink city is also home to luxurious hotels and unique restaurants. Stroll along streets lined with palaces, temples, and the occasional cow. Indulge in royal culinary delights, explore exquisite jewellery shops, and discover a weekend of tranquillity amidst the bustling vibrancy.

TRADITION MEETS CONTEMPORARY

Nestled near Amber fort off Delhi-Jaipur highway, The Leela Palace Jaipur sits with the backdrop of Aravalli hills amidst 8 acres of gardens. This hotel aims to impress guests with luxury while maintaining a cosy atmosphere. Royal opulence can be felt in the wood panels, windows, and artwork, yet there's a touch of modernity. The design reflects local artistry, from ancient Thikri mirror engraving to Shekhawati canvases on the walls. Traditional meets contemporary in a blend of comfort and grandeur at this splendid hotel. Stepping into the Leela Palace Jaipur feels like entering a world of extravagance and refinement

deeply rooted in history. This stunning hotel offers a range of accommodation options, including rooms, suites, and villas - all meticulously designed to provide a lavish experience. The Royal Plunge Pool villa is a highlight of my stay, radiating a sense of lightness and luxury. The spacious layout, complete with cosy armchairs, indulgent day beds, and a private pool, makes me feel like royalty. The attention to detail was exquisite, from the walk-in wardrobe to the marble-trimmed bathroom with a tub, not to mention the plush robes and organic toiletries provided. And for those seeking the epitome of luxury, the Maharaja suite exceeds all expectations with its grand living spaces, luxurious bathrooms, and stunning Palace views. One of the standout aspects of my experience at Leela Palace Jaipur is the warm and welcoming presence of Sharad Puri, the General Manager. His humble approach and dedication to ensuring guests feel at home set the tone for the genuinely gracious service throughout the hotel. The meticulous butler service, provided by a dedicated team of footmen in true Leela Palace style, adds an extra touch of luxury to my stay. In terms of relaxation amenities, the expansive spa and well-equipped



INDIA'S ONLY CANDLE LIT RESTAURANT AND MORE

From its impressive design and stylish interiors to the refined culinary offerings and carefully curated immersive experiences, Leela Palace Jaipur epitomizes authentic Indian luxury. As my eyes wander through the architectural marvels of the Sheesh Mahal, I find myself at Mohan Mahal, the Indian specialty restaurant glowing softly with candlelight. The ambiance is crafted with 350,000 pieces of Thikri mirror, meticulously assembled by artisans over three years, creating an aura of refined elegance. Being India's only candle-

lit restaurant, it is truly a delight for the senses. The royal cuisine from Rajasthan and Awadh served at Mohan Mahal is a blend of simplicity and artistry, with standout dishes like the Seekh kebab dressed with barley. Breakfast is equally splendid, presented on beautiful tableware and featuring a selection of à la carte favourites. In the afternoons, I enjoy a delightful tea service at the Jharokha bar, where expertly crafted cocktails are served till late. I am particularly impressed by the Martini concocted by the talented mixologist, who

shares stories of mixing drinks for royalty. For a more intimate dining experience, Hawa Mahal offers a private rooftop setting where both the views and flavours are rich with captivating charm. Truly The hotel creates memorable moments that capture the essence of Indian indulgence, blending traditional rituals with modern hospitality seamlessly. **ALL VEGETARIAN** Burrowed discreetly within the vibrant Johri Bazaar, known for its jeweller's market, the intimate Johri Restaurant seamlessly blends into

the bustling surroundings. Tucked away on a tranquil lane just off the main colonnaded street, which played a pivotal role in securing the city's spot on the UNESCO World Heritage list, this hidden gem welcomes all guests. Attached to a charming five-suite boutique hotel, The Johri, the restaurant offers a unique dining experience that harmoniously intertwines with the heritage and allure of the historic marketplace. Savouring Jaipur's iconic zero-sized peas here is a revelation. Despite its fame that stretches as far as Dubai and Japan,

these peas had somehow escaped my taste buds back in Delhi. The petite yet incredibly sweet and flavourful green peas are beautifully served alongside corn and spinach on a generous plate. Chef Sonu Kumar has expertly crafted a menu that celebrates local and regional flavours with organic, seasonal, and vegetarian ingredients. Signature dishes like paan patta chaat and Dal Johri add a timeless charm to this culinary experience. Indulge in expertly crafted dishes that stay true to their origins, whether presented in a classic style or with a modern twist. The Jackfruit Nihari and truffle cheese kulcha stuffed with mushroom and local cheeses offer a burst of flavours in every bite. Accompanied by Missi roti and palak kofta in cashew gravy, the menu caters to diverse palates. Dietary preferences are accommodated, with gluten-free and Jain-friendly options like sangri ki shammi kebab and mirchi ka halwa.

Akanksha Dean is an independent food & travel writer, a chef and a catalyst and is the first Indian to have trained at Osteria Francescana, in Modena, Italy, rated as the world's best restaurant in the World's 50 Best Restaurants, in 2016 and 2018 and currently in the Best of The Best Category.



Modern Twist on Classic Gastropubs

Embark on a culinary journey with Monkey Bar's latest gastropub sensation, blending contemporary design and inventive dishes for an unparalleled experience

In a city that's no stranger to culinary innovation, the revamped Monkey Bar emerges as a beacon of excitement and fresh perspective. Nestled within the iconic pyramid glass building in Vasant Kunj, this beloved gastropub has returned with a vibrant new look and a promise to elevate the dining experience.

Monkey Bar, which first captured attention in 2012, was instrumental in popularising the gastropub concept in India. Now, it's back with a renewed vision, blending its signature charm with contemporary flair. The space has been transformed into an 'Urban Tropical Dreamscape', reflecting a design ethos that is both inviting and dynamic. The lush greenery and bright, cheerful hues of yellow and sage green infuse the venue with a sense of energy and warmth that's perfect for any time of day. The menu at Monkey Bar is where the true magic happens. It's a celebration of flavours, seamlessly melding the familiar with the innovative. From classic favourites like their renowned burgers to new, exciting dishes such as Methi-spiced Prawns and Jackfruit Tacos, the culinary offerings are designed to surprise and delight. Each dish is crafted with a blend of regional Indian spices and global influences, providing a taste experience that is both unique and accessible.

One of the standout features of the revamped Monkey Bar is its new coffee programme. The introduction of three distinct categories, 'The Usual Suspects', 'You Do Your Brews', and 'The Unusual Suspects', offers something for every coffee lover. Whether you're in the mood for a classic Espresso or something more adventurous like the Nitro



Cold Brew, there's a brew to suit every palate. This thoughtful addition enhances the café's appeal, making it a versatile destination for everything from morning pick-me-ups to evening relaxation. The bar menu, crafted by Lead Mixologist Harish Chhimwal, continues Monkey Bar's tradition of inventive cocktails. By incorporating local ingredients and innovative techniques, the drinks menu offers a refreshing take on both classic and contemporary cocktails. The new creations, such as the Manga Mule and Rasam ki Kasam, provide a unique twist on traditional flavours, demonstrating a commitment to both creativity and quality. The revamped Monkey Bar is more than just a place to eat and drink; it's a space designed for enjoyment and connection. With its lively atmosphere, interactive elements like a pool table and Instagram-worthy spots such as the quirky banana sofa, the venue encourages guests to relax,

socialise and make lasting memories. This thoughtful redesign makes it clear that Monkey Bar is committed to providing a comprehensive, engaging experience for its patrons. The new Monkey Bar offers a delightful fusion of tradition and innovation. Its updated menu, inventive drink options and vibrant atmosphere ensure it remains a top choice for those seeking a memorable dining experience. For anyone looking to explore new flavours, enjoy expertly crafted drinks or simply unwind in a dynamic setting, Monkey Bar's latest incarnation promises to be an exceptional destination. **Wallet Factor:** Meal for two with alcohol: INR 1800 plus taxes | Meal for two without alcohol: INR 3000 plus taxes **Open 7 days a Week:** Sunday to Saturday - 1pm. to 1am. **Address:** Monkey Bar, Local shopping complex, 11 Vasant Kunj, Next to mini cooper-110070 **Instagram:** monkeybarind **Facebook:** monkeybarind

Indulge in Pure Joy

Step into a world of craft brews and culinary delights at BeeYoung Brewgarden, the latest hotspot in South Delhi's vibrant social scene

Delhi's social scene has a new star. The BeeYoung Brewgarden, nestled in the bustling heart of South Delhi at The Panchshila Rendezvous. This lively venue is set to redefine your nights out, offering an unparalleled blend of craft beer, exquisite cuisine and endless entertainment. Whether you're a local or a visitor looking for a memorable night out, BeeYoung Brewgarden promises to deliver an experience that is both dynamic and delightful. As you step inside, you're transported to a European getaway, with chic barn-style ambience and lush, vibrant décor. The carnival-like atmosphere is inviting, with alfresco seating and stylish indoor spaces perfect for both intimate gatherings and spirited weekend celebrations. It's a setting where every detail contributes to a sense of revelry and relaxation. At the heart of BeeYoung Brewgarden is its commitment to craft brewing excellence. The menu takes you on a culinary journey, artfully pairing finely crafted brews with gourmet dishes designed to delight the senses. Each dish reflects an immersive culinary art approach, where flavour and presentation come together to create unforgettable dining experiences. With a global array of flavours, local and seasonal specialties cater to South Delhi's cosmopolitan crowd. The emphasis on quality ingredients and creative recipes ensures that every visit offers something new and exciting for

even the most discerning palates. Entertainment at the Brewgarden is as diverse as its menu. Enjoy a blend of games and nostalgia with options like Bocce Ball, Cornhole and vintage arcade machines, providing endless hours of competitive fun. The venue hosts live sports screenings, vibrant music performances and sets by an in-house DJ, ensuring a dynamic atmosphere that keeps you engaged throughout the evening. Whether you're in the mood for a lively party or a serene escape, BeeYoung Brewgarden caters to all your social needs. The soul of BeeYoung Brewgarden is its namesake beer, India's first crafted strong beer, known for its smooth, citrusy notes and crisp finish. BeeYoung Beer embodies the youthful spirit of India, with every sip reflecting Kimaya Himalayan Beverages' dedication to quality and innovation. For those looking to immerse themselves in a world of craft brewing, vibrant social scenes and exquisite dining, BeeYoung Brewgarden is the place to be. It's where the art of microbrewing meets community and celebration, promising unforgettable experiences with every visit. **Address:** The Panchshila Rendezvous, Panchshila Park, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi, 110017 **Timings:** 11 AM - 12 AM **Instagram:** @beeyoungbrewgarden **Price For Two:** INR 2500/- (Approx) **For Reservations:** +91 9354431386

Redefining Coffee Culture

Discover a fresh take on coffee with First Coffee, blending innovation and indulgence to cater to the modern coffee lover's palate

Step into a revolution in coffee culture with First Coffee, where each cup is more than just a beverage - it's a celebration of bold flavours and innovative experiences. This fresh, dynamic brand is transforming the coffee scene with a blend of artisanal quality and modern flair, setting a new standard for coffee lovers everywhere. Founded by Sohrab Sitaram, a distinguished name in Delhi's food and beverage world; Shiv Dhawan, a serial entrepreneur with a passion for innovation and Chandini D Purnesh, the visionary behind the Harley Estate, First Coffee brings together expertise and enthusiasm to craft the ultimate coffee experience. Their beans, sourced from the renowned Harley Estate in Chikmagalur, promise an exceptional taste journey, reflecting the lush landscapes and rich heritage of the estate. First Coffee's appeal extends beyond its premium blends. The cafés offer a stylish, minimalist setting that caters to both quick stops and relaxed hangouts. The design ethos emphasises clean lines and a vibrant atmosphere, creating a space that feels both contemporary and inviting. The menu showcases First Coffee's dedication to flavour and creativity. Dive into the 'Untamed Espresso' for a bold start or savour the 'Cold Blooded Brew', a daring concoction that combines cascara syrup with a robust coffee base. For a whimsical twist, try the 'Jelly Jolt Affogato', where coffee meets ice cream and jelly in a delightful fusion. Classic offerings like 'The OG Cold Coffee' are given a modern twist, ensuring there's something for every palate. Tea enthusiasts can also rejoice with the unique blends available. The 'Teaminator', a refreshing mix of hibiscus and watermelon syrup and 'Cascara Thunder' offer bold new takes on traditional favourites. The Boba Nova collection is particularly exciting, featuring the 'Mango Boba Bomb' and 'Lychee Loca Bomb' for those who love a playful and fruity twist. First Coffee stands out as a game-



changer in the coffee industry. The brand's focus on combining artisanal quality with innovative offerings makes it a notable player in the market. The variety of options, from bold espressos to playful boba teas, caters to a wide range of tastes and preferences. Moreover, First Coffee's commitment to sustainability adds a layer of ethical responsibility that enhances its appeal. This brand isn't just offering a cup of coffee; it's creating a vibrant, inclusive coffee culture that resonates with modern consumers. It's exciting to see a brand that balances exceptional quality with social consciousness, setting a high bar for others in the industry. In a world where coffee culture is evolving, First Coffee stands out as a beacon of quality and creativity. With its commitment to exceptional brews and a vibrant coffee experience, it's more than just a place for your daily caffeine fix, it's a destination for those who appreciate the art of coffee. Embrace the revolution and make First Coffee a part of your daily routine. Your taste buds and your coffee cravings will thank you. **Instagram:** @yourfirstcoffee **Price for Two:** INR 450/- (only beverages) **Locations:** DLF Cyber Park, Gurugram; Pacific Mall in Pitampura; Pacific Outlet Mall in Jasola.

A RECIPE FOR DISASTER IGNORED WARNINGS AND THE PERILS OF UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



BK SINGH

Despite advice in 2020 to relocate 4000 families from landslide-prone areas, Kerala proceeded with a mega hydro-electric project nearby. Incessant rains led to devastating landslides, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable development and better disaster management

The flooding and landslides in Kerala since 1991 had reportedly claimed several human lives, till the state witnessed the worst disaster of its kind at Mundakkai, Wayanad in the wee hours of 30th July. In 2020 State Disaster Management Authority advised relocation of 4000 families from landslide-prone areas that included Mundakkai. State did not heed the warning and on the contrary, has proposed a mega hydro-electric project involving an underground tunnel barely two km from the site of the current horror. Incessant rains of 572 mm in 48 hours have led to two major landslides, one at 2.00 am at Mundakkal followed by another at 4.00 am at Chooralmala towns trapping hundreds of families. The debris further covered Vellarmala GVH school. The landslide also washed away the bridge connecting Chooralmala town with Mundakkai & Attarmala. So far 126 people have been found killed, 196 injured and more than a hundred missing or marooned in swathes of slush, mud and misery triggered by continuous and heavy rainfalls for two days. Dead bodies have also been found at Pothukal village that were carried by flowing water for 20 km in the Chaliyar River. High Tension lines and transformers of the Mekkadi electrical section have also been damaged and resuming power in the area has been a challenge. Landslides washing away the bridge have posed further challenges for relief and rescue operations, though all state and central agencies are putting up their might to remove debris, find survivors, treat the injured and move the people to safer locations and camps. Rescuers are crossing the river in spite with the help of the ropeways but mist, bad weather and unstable terrain are making it more difficult. Army has rushed to set up Bailey Bridge to the site, which has been moved on the road from Chennai.



This deluge affected adjoining areas of Karnataka and left the Kapila River in the Mysuru district in spate, after 80,000 cusecs of water were let out of the Kabinini dam, severely affecting the traffic between Karnataka and Kerala. Kodagu roads were also flooded and many persons stuck were rescued. Landslides also occurred repeatedly on the Shiradi Ghats section of NH 75 connecting Bengaluru and Mangalore holding the traffic for several hours and eventually re-routing them via Kodagu and Sampaji Ghats. A few weeks earlier a landslide had occurred near Ankola, Uttar Kannada district along the newly widened National Highway burying moving vehicles underneath that claimed a dozen human lives, and many others went missing. Next to the Himalayas, the

Western Ghats have the most fragile ecosystem and despite the disasters striking frequently, we have not mended our ways and continued to engage in unsustainable activities in the name of development. The entire Ghats section from Gujarat to Kerala once had luxuriant tree/forest cover that provided the source and the catchment of several east-flowing and west-flowing rivers – a key lifeline for everyone in peninsular India. With the changes in land use patterns, the integrity of the catchment of the rivers is compromised, resulting in many of the streams and rivers becoming seasonal. People who have enjoyed the perennial flow of water in the streams in the past have now been suffering for their basic needs for drinking, agriculture and plantations.

Western Ghats comprise undulating terrain and diverting lands comprising tree growth for cultivation of tea, coconut, banana, coffee, spices etc is never sustainable. Kerala has lost its natural forests at a very fast pace and individuals, public and private agencies have grown plantations for quick cash. Some areas are also encroached. Proponents of such projects argue that destroying forests and growing bananas, tea, cashew coconut etc provide employment and help in GDP growth. This perception is highly misplaced. Such projects are not evaluated on a long-term basis. There are hardly any methods to work out an economic valuation of forests destroyed in the process. When a heavy downpour occurs for days, it causes landslides, landslips, destroys houses, roads bridges etc. To rebuild the

infrastructure we need to further spend money. The infrastructure destroyed in 2018 and 2019 in the Kerala flood disaster was rebuilt by spending more than 50,000 crores rupees. If the true environmental cost is considered, none of the plantation projects of growing tea etc would be viable. Labourers of tea gardens as well as banana and coconut gardens must be re-skilled and their services can be utilized for manufacturing etc. 2018 floods in Kodagu Karnataka, a district adjoining Wayanad, also played havoc with the life of the people. I have discussed the reasons for flooding and landslides in this region, in my book, "Changing Land Uses - Shrinking Streams and Carbon Sinks". Like Wayanad, Kodagu is again a hilly district covering an area of nearly 4200 sq km. However only 1750 sq km was reserved as forests and

Protected Areas, leaving another 1000 sq km occupied by habitation and agriculture; the remaining 1450 sq km had still quite a luxuriant tree cover until the 1980s. These were wooded areas under the control of the Revenue Department of the state, and the tree felling in such areas was regulated by the Karnataka (Preservation) of Trees Act, where forest officers were empowered to grant/deny permission for the removal of trees. There is evidence on record to suggest that some officers had connived with the timber merchants and granted permission to remove tens of thousands of trees every year. This has resulted in compromising the ecological security of the region leading to frequent disasters of the type we are experiencing. The only solution that comes to everyone's mind is to stop

destroying the natural forests and making any changes in land use. There is a proposal to tag the Western Ghats as Eco sensitive area, but both governments of Kerala and Karnataka have yet not come on board. Unless they mend their ways the disasters would keep on striking more frequently and would be more destructive. Finally, let the column also deal with the reasons why there are heavy downpours for days in this warming world. The world at present including India is faced with heat waves, wildfires and heavy downpours leading to flooding. The uncontrollable wildfires in Canada, California and other parts of Western world are the consequences of global warming. Leh in India, which is located 3 km above the mean Sea level has the airfield at the highest altitude in the country and has been registering 32 degree Celsius temperature for some days in the last week of July. Due to such unusual temperatures, the air at this altitude gets rarefied and engines cannot develop the thrust required for takeoff. For the first time, all flights to and from Leh have remained suspended for these days. Higher downpours are functions of sea rate of evaporation from Sea surfaces. As the Sea surfaces warm, evaporation increases leading to excessive moisture-laden clouds in the atmosphere. Once the conditions are favourable, it leads to heavy downpours. It can have very dangerous consequences in urban centres, as we have recently seen the drowning of three students in the basement of Rau coaching centre, Rajendranagar Delhi. The Civic Agencies must re-model the stormwater drains to take the load of 100 mm of rain per hour. These drains were originally designed for 25 mm of rain per hour. Building bylaws should also change; Basements should have only huge sumps and Parking space for vehicles and nothing else. (The writer is Retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Karnataka; views are personal)

Unveiling the misogyny in fairytales: A feminist critique

In the enchanting world of fairytales, age-old stories have woven themselves into the fabric of our culture, shaping our perceptions and understanding of the world around us. Yet, beneath the guise of magic and fantasy lies a troubling reality: the portrayal of women through archaic tropes that perpetuate harmful stereotypes writes **SULAGNA MOHANTY**

In the enchanting world of fairytales, age-old stories have woven themselves into the fabric of our culture shaping our perceptions and understanding of the world around us. Yet, hidden beneath the guise of magic and fantasy lies a troubling reality; the portrayal of women through archaic tropes that perpetuate harmful stereotypes. If seen from a feminist lens, tropes like the witch, the evil stepmother and the damsel in distress reflect and reinforce harmful stereotypes about women and limit and distort our understanding of women's experiences. The portrayal of witches in fairy tales as powerful but wicked beings reflects society's fear of women who do not conform to traditional gender roles. Witches are often depicted as old, ugly, and dangerous, embodying traits that are seen as undesirable in women. This portrayal reinforces the idea that women who are independent, assertive or different are to be feared and marginalised, perpetuating a culture of misogyny and exclusion. This concept of "witch hunting," born out of fear and prejudice has had devastating consequences throughout history. In medieval Europe, thousands of women were accused of



SULAGNA MOHANTY

It is essential to challenge and dismantle these harmful stereotypes to create a more inclusive and empowering society for women. By portraying women in positions of authority as capable, compassionate and supportive, we can inspire future generations of women to aspire to leadership roles and contribute positively to society

witchcraft and executed in brutal witch hunts. These women were often healers, midwives or other powerful figures in their communities targeted for their knowledge and independence. The fear of witches and the persecution of women accused of witchcraft spread to colonial countries like India where women were often accused of witchcraft and subjected to violence and even death. Even today, women in some parts of India are killed in the name of witch hunts accentuating the lasting impact of this harmful stereotype. This concept of the witch reflects society's discomfort with powerful women and is a reminder of the importance of challenging stereotypes and celebrating women's autonomy and strength. Further, the portrayal of the evil stepmother in fairytales not only vilifies women in positions of authority but also perpetuates a harmful narrative of competition and division among women. By pitting a woman against another woman, society creates a "divide and rule" policy where women are encouraged to fight among themselves rather than unite for their common rights and goals. This stereotype undermines the credibility of women in leadership roles by painting them as inherently



dangerous and untrustworthy. It diminishes the achievements of women by suggesting that their success comes at the expense of others developing a culture of suspicion and mistrust among women. Moreover, the depiction of the evil stepmother discourages young girls from aspiring to leadership roles as it reinforces the idea that women in power are to be feared and avoided. Instead of inspiring girls to pursue their ambitions and dreams, this stereotype instils fear and self-doubt, limiting their

potential and opportunities for growth. It is essential to challenge and dismantle these harmful stereotypes to create a more inclusive and empowering society for women. By portraying women in positions of authority as capable, compassionate and supportive, we can inspire future generations of women to aspire to leadership roles and contribute positively to society. The damsel in distress trope exemplified by characters like Cinderella, Rapunzel and Sleeping Beauty portrays women as

helpless victims in need of rescue by a male saviour. This narrative diminishes women's agency by suggesting that they are incapable of taking care of themselves and solving their problems. It also underpins the idea that a woman's ultimate goal in life is to find a man to rescue and protect her. In Cinderella, the titular character is rescued from her life of servitude by Prince Charming who saves her from her oppressive stepfamily and offers her a life of luxury and love. Similarly, Rapunzel is locked

away in a tower by a wicked witch until she is rescued by a prince who climbs up her hair. Sleeping Beauty is cursed to sleep for a hundred years until she is awakened by true love's kiss. These stories send a harmful message to audiences particularly young girls by implying that women are incomplete without a man to rescue them. They fail to acknowledge women's strength and ability to overcome challenges on their own. By perpetuating this trope, these stories emphasize outdated gender

roles and limit the potential of women to be seen as capable and independent individuals. Hence, it is time to challenge these harmful tropes and create new narratives that empower young girls and women and celebrate their diversity and strength. Instead of portraying women as either wicked witches, evil stepmothers or helpless damsels, fairytales must depict women as complex, multifaceted individuals with agency and autonomy. By telling stories that reflect the diverse experiences and identities of women, we can create a more inclusive and empowering narrative for future generations. One must realise that the witch, evil stepmother and damsel in distress tropes in old fairy tales are not harmless storytelling devices; they are powerful tools that shape our perceptions of women and their place in society. By examining these tropes through a feminist lens, we can begin to challenge and dismantle the stereotypes they perpetuate paving the way for a more inclusive and empowering narrative for women everywhere. It is time to tell new stories to our kids; stories that empower and inspire women to embrace their true selves and rewrite their destinies.

Watch, savour & indulge 'Teppanyaki' magic!

AARTI SREENATH

TG's The Oriental Grill at the Hyatt Hyderabad Gachibowli is more than just a restaurant; it's an immersive culinary theatre. The moment one steps into this elegant space, a harmonious blend of contemporary sophistication and traditional charm envelopes you. The restaurant's signature "Eat what you see" philosophy is brought to life at the Teppanyaki counter, where skilled chefs transform the art of cooking into a captivating performance.

Teppanyaki, also known as teppanyaki, is a captivating Japanese dining experience where a chef transforms fresh ingredients into a culinary masterpiece on a sizzling iron griddle. The term derives from "Teppan" (iron plate) and "Yaki" (grilling), highlighting the simplicity and skill involved. Diners are treated to a multisensory spectacle as the chef slices, dices and cooks with precision and flair, creating a communal and interactive atmosphere. This culinary performance blends traditional Japanese techniques with modern influences, resulting in a delightful and memorable feast that celebrates both flavor and showmanship.

yellow curry sauce. These tender, succulent prawns were immersed in a fragrant, creamy curry that tantalised the taste buds with every bite. The rich, aromatic sauce was perfectly balanced, neither too spicy nor too mild, making it utterly irresistible. The prawns were paired with a generous serving of stir-fried rice, artfully studded with fresh vegetables and additional shrimp. This combination offered a delightful explosion of flavours and textures, with each ingredient harmoniously complementing the other. The chef's expert use of spices and fresh ingredients took this culinary creation to new heights, showcasing their talent and dedication to quality.

What truly sets TG's apart, however, is the exceptional dining experience it provides. The atmosphere is not just about the food, but about the entire journey from kitchen to table. The chefs at TG's are more than just culinary experts; they are entertainers and hosts who bring their vibrant personalities to the forefront. Their eagerness to engage with guests and customise dishes to individual preferences creates a warm, inviting, and memorable atmosphere that goes beyond a typical dining experience.

One dish that exemplified the chefs' culinary prowess was the shredded chicken in black bean sauce. The chicken was cooked to perfection, tender and flavourful and the black bean sauce added a depth of flavour that was both rich and satisfying. At TG's, every bite tells a story, from the prawns swimming in golden curry sauce to the shredded chicken mingling with bold black bean sauce. The chefs here aren't just cooking; they're creating magic with spices and fresh ingredients. To conclude this

gastronomic adventure, we indulged in a *Spicy Negitoro Roll*, a burst of flavour featuring melt-in-your-mouth tuna and a spicy kick. The *banana leaf-wrapped Kochi sea bass* was another highlight, transporting my taste buds to the vibrant spice palette of Kerala. TG's The Oriental Grill is a must-visit for food enthusiasts seeking an extraordinary dining experience in Hyderabad. The impeccable food, coupled with the energetic ambiance created by the talented chefs, makes it a truly unforgettable culinary journey.



FOOD
Spicy Negitoro Roll, Prawns in Yellow Curry Sauce



DECOR
Back in the warm white lighting, where a royal and spacious setting enhances the Teppanyaki experience.



PRICE
₹4000 (approx for two)



VERDICT
★★★★



WEEKLY HOROSCOPE AUGUST 4 - 10



ARIES

You will reveal your heart to someone easily. Show the patience to accept advice. Despite career stability, a deep-seated insecurity may cause pain. Stay focused.

TAURUS

Proceed with long-term plans. Maintain patience with siblings and avoid emotional blowups. Your generous nature will bring love. Responsibilities will restrict you.

GEMINI

Embrace unexpected attractions and new projects. Family may be hard to please. Your practical approach ensures career success. Ensure emotional stability.

CANCER

Your supportive, confident nature benefits you and others. Avoid vicarious experiences. Focus on clear goals, new challenges, and effective communication.

LEO

Experiment with new project ideas. Hard work and meditation will improve your social skills. Focus on personal goals and offer guidance effectively.

VIRGO

Supportive siblings will help you realise your dreams. Deal with influential people to overcome bad traits. Focus on shared interests and be open to others' ideas.

LIBRA

Your talent and creativity will win accolades. Despite delays in ventures, success is near. Peculiarities benefit you socially. Avoid self-indulgence; seek advice wisely.

SCORPIO

You'll organise your work and health better. Supportive relationships bring joy. Rely on your philosophy for decisions. Avoid overworking and revive your mind.

SAGITTARIUS

Embrace new ideas and experiment wisely. Avoid clashes with siblings and seek their support. Stay open to novelties and challenges. Enjoy newfound thrills.

CAPRICORN

Experimenting helps you sort budgets and win praise. Peculiarities bring advantages. Implement changes, seek support, and embrace your artistic talents.

AQUARIUS

Nervousness may hinder experimentation. Your vibrant energy will attract people. Seek co-worker support for new ideas. Evaluate your romantic interests carefully.

PISCES

Amidst the chaos, relax and reflect—it's not as bad as it seems. Be gentle with yourself and your loved ones. Organise health and work. Stay focused on growth.

WHAT'S NEW

BFF STYLE CHRONICLES: TRENDY TOKENS OF FRIENDSHIP FOR YOUR FASHIONABLE BESTIE

Who knows us better than our best friends? They're there through our gossip sessions and tears over heartaches, laughing at our lame jokes and sharing late-night conversations. From cooking mishaps to planning trips that never quite materialise, these shared moments create the fabric of our friendships. Remember saving that one special friendship band for that special person? Now is the perfect time to celebrate these cherished bonds with a thoughtful gift, showing just how much we value and appreciate them. Here are some of the gifting options to gift your besties on Friendship Day!



VICTORIA'S SECRET

For a friend who is obsessed with skincare, elevate their skincare routine by giving them a Victoria's Secret Coconut Milk Rose Natural Kit.

Price: INR 6499



Tribe Amrapali

A pendant from a close friend is something that will make a lasting impression and add one more souvenir to your friendship tale.

Price: INR 5047

MAC DUGGAL

For your friend who loves fairytales and doesn't set for anything less, a ruffled mini dress should definitely be on your gifting list!

Price: INR 45,999

GAP

An oversized jacket makes a wardrobe staple and remind them of this jacket for when they say 'I don't have anything to wear!'

Price: INR 4499



India Couture Week 2024 was the talk of the nation this week, with elegance sweeping down the ramp and glitz and glamour adorning every area. Every haute couture show had unveiled a new chapter of extravagance and grandeur, causing excitement among the fashion industry. The fashion show this year promised an enticing fusion of innovation and tradition, with designers exhibiting their most exquisite works against an unmatched backdrop of splendour. A really remarkable week began with the start of an exciting eight-day fashion extravaganza with 14 amazing shows! As the lights lit the ramp walk, fashion aficionados were treated to a dazzling exhibition of creativity and craftsmanship.

LOOKBOOK



"This journey of education and breaking stigma around HIV is something that will have a legacy everlasting"
— Gareth Thomas



OVERCOMING HIV STIGMA

YOUTH BREAKING BARRIERS

In the face of deep-seated stigma and discrimination, young people living with HIV in Goa, are finding hope and resilience through the Human Touch Foundation. **SHOBHA SHUKLA** explores their personal journeys and examines the collective efforts that are transforming their lives and challenging societal norms

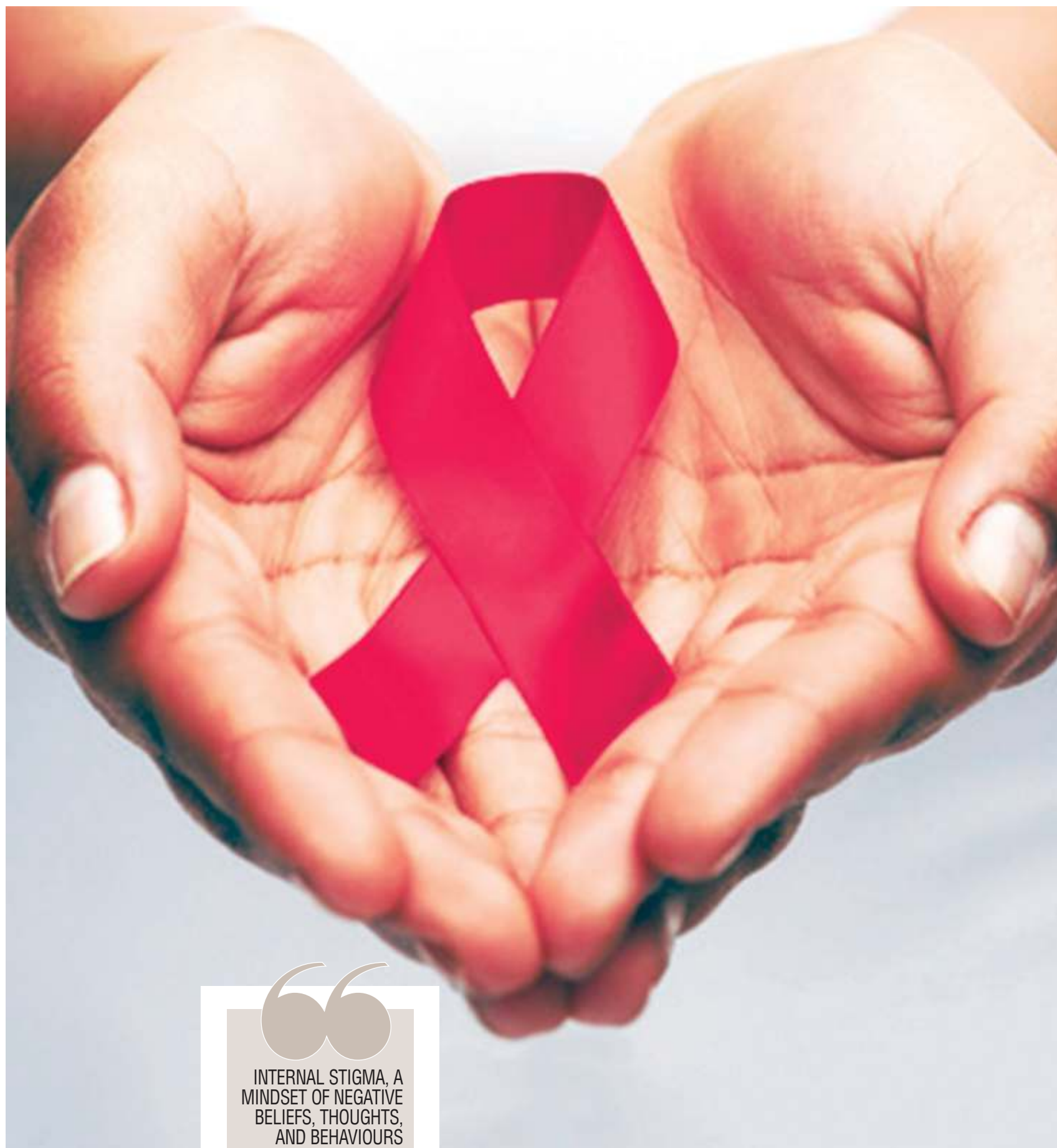


SHOBHA SHUKLA

Living with HIV often comes with a heavy burden of internal and external stigma. For many young people, this fear of discrimination can be paralyzing, affecting their ability to live normal lives. HIV-related misconceptions remain a significant barrier for those living with the virus, impacting their mental health, relationships, and opportunities in life. However, through the dedicated support of the Human Touch Foundation, these youths are not only overcoming their fears but also becoming advocates for change in their communities.

THE WEIGHT OF STIGMA

A young person living with HIV shared, "As a young person living with HIV, I had self-stigmatised myself due to the fear of discrimination... fear of discrimination if I dare disclose my HIV positive status to others... this fear had stopped me from living life like a normal person." This sentiment, echoed by many, underscores the profound impact of internal stigma. Internal stigma, a mindset of negative beliefs, thoughts, and behaviours about HIV, manifests as shame, guilt, feelings of contamination, reduced self-efficacy, self-loathing, low self-esteem, and self-rejection. "Internal stigma happens when we internalise external stigma and judgements and believe that they are true. Internal stigma also happens in the absence of external stigma and discrimination," explained Nadine Ferris France, CEO of Beyond Stigma. A youth shared his trauma, "I and my youth peers have confronted HIV-related stigma and discrimination in schools, workplaces, and societal levels. Sometimes, it is the teachers who were not cooperating or discriminating against them. The fear of disclosure – which means sharing our HIV positive status with family members, friends or others in society – the fear of being discriminated, is faced by many... the fear if we would be thrown out of the house or will our friends unfriend us..." The Human Touch Foundation, based in Goa, India, is dedicated to supporting young people living with HIV. The organization provides a comprehensive range of services including mental health counselling, nutritional support, educational and vocational training, and medical assistance. By fostering a supportive community and empowering youth-led initiatives, the foundation addresses stigma and discrimination at multiple levels. Their efforts ensure that those living with HIV can lead healthier, more fulfilling lives while advocating for broader societal change. A young girl living with HIV



INTERNAL STIGMA, A MINDSET OF NEGATIVE BELIEFS, THOUGHTS, AND BEHAVIOURS ABOUT HIV, MANIFESTS AS SHAME, GUILT, FEELINGS OF CONTAMINATION, REDUCED SELF-EFFICACY, SELF-LOATHING, LOW SELF-ESTEEM, AND SELF-REJECTION. "INTERNAL STIGMA HAPPENS WHEN WE INTERNALISE EXTERNAL STIGMA AND JUDGEMENTS AND BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE TRUE. INTERNAL STIGMA ALSO HAPPENS IN THE ABSENCE OF EXTERNAL STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION," EXPLAINED NADINE FERRIS FRANCE, CEO OF BEYOND STIGMA

shared how the Human Touch Foundation helped her overcome her fears of stigma and discrimination: "From my childhood I have been touched by Human Touch Foundation which helped me overcome my fears of stigma and discrimination related to disclosure – and helped me in various ways." She added, "As I am living with HIV, I faced a lot of stigma and discrimination from my own family as well as from society. People in the society told the family to not let me come out otherwise I will spread the virus to their children. I even faced it in my relationship with one guy. I knew him for one year and had shared everything with him but still he blamed me that I got infected because I have been sleeping with others." Despite these challenges, she found a supportive community within the Human Touch Foundation, which provides a range of services including nutritional counselling, mental

health support, and job opportunities.

PERSONAL TRIUMPHS AND COLLECTIVE SUPPORT

Another young person recounted their journey: "I got to know my HIV status at the age of 13. I was with my relatives because I had lost my parents. That is when I first felt being stigmatised and discriminated against by my own family. For example, I was told not to use the common family nail cutter because if any blood comes out while cutting my nails then it can put others at risk. Or sometimes there were separate utensils for eating food. It used to hurt me." Finding support through the Human Touch Foundation, this individual connected with peers facing similar challenges and received guidance from Peter Borges, the foundation's CEO. "Peter Sir helped me a lot from the very beginning. He helped me with my documents too. We used to

have residential camps back then too, with adolescents living with HIV. I learnt a lot from these camps. Doctors were involved in these camps where we learnt a lot about HIV and how can we overcome problems we face."

THE POWER OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The Human Touch Foundation emphasizes the importance of youth-led initiatives in the HIV response. "Youth are the best equipped to lead the response to HIV," said a young intern at the foundation. Sandhya Chavan, Lead for Adolescent Health and Wellbeing, highlighted the comprehensive support provided: "We at Human Touch Foundation provide a range of youth-led services, such as mental health counselling, psychosocial support, help them avail a range of social protection schemes, nutritional packages, medical help, or treatment adherence support, among others." Masooma Sheikh, a

counselling psychologist at the foundation, stressed the need for proper mental health services in HIV care centres and a holistic approach to support young people living with HIV.

A BEACON OF HOPE AND RESILIENCE

As the Human Touch Foundation celebrates its 15th anniversary, its impact is evident in the lives it has touched. Peter Borges reflected on the journey: "Human Touch always had something different to offer when it came to support system or ecosystem which surrounded HIV care and support. For example, young people themselves speaking at different conferences including AIDS 2024 is so important. Lately, the realisation has grown over us about the importance of resilience: we must focus more on building the resilience of the young people. Issues like relationships or livelihoods cannot be missed while young counsellors themselves provide

mental health services." The foundation continues to address various needs, including relationships, sexual and reproductive health, substance abuse, TB and HIV co-infection, and child sexual abuse. Their commitment to non-institutional care and resilience-building for families and communities remains steadfast.

The Human Touch Foundation has also been instrumental in initiating viral load monitoring in Goa and ensuring the uninterrupted supply of antiretroviral therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic. They offer free vocational training for young people with HIV, helping them build skills and secure employment.

Dr. Kashyap Bhandokar, a volunteer with the foundation, emphasized the importance of humane and holistic care: "Usually patients appear as a 'number or statistic' in a report. But experiences (like Human Touch) tell us the life story behind those numbers or statistics. This helps us – doctors – provide better care because I believe that humane and holistic care is so key."

The Human Touch Foundation's journey and the stories of those it supports underscore the importance of tackling HIV-related stigma and discrimination through empathy, education, and comprehensive support. Their work serves as a beacon of hope and a model for other organizations worldwide. Despite significant advancements in the treatment of HIV, societal stigma continues to pose a major challenge for those living with the virus. The personal stories shared by young people in Goa highlight the persistent fear of discrimination that can prevent individuals from living their lives to the fullest. Internal stigma, which manifests as self-loathing and low self-esteem, often results from the external judgments and prejudices of society.

Organizations like the Human Touch Foundation are making remarkable strides in addressing these issues. By providing comprehensive support services, fostering youth-led initiatives, and promoting resilience, the foundation is helping to dismantle the barriers that stigma creates. Their work emphasizes the importance of empathy, understanding, and community in overcoming the challenges faced by people living with HIV.

However, the fight against stigma requires collective effort. It is crucial that society as a whole becomes more informed and compassionate towards those affected by HIV. We must reject discriminatory attitudes and instead offer support and acceptance. By doing so, we can create an environment where individuals living with HIV can thrive without fear of prejudice. Only through such a unified approach can we hope to eradicate the stigma associated with HIV and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy, fulfilling life.

(Shobha Shukla is Managing Editor and Executive Director of Citizen News Service (CNS) and a health and development justice advocate. She is Coordinator of Asia Pacific Regional Media Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT Media) and Global AMR Media Alliance; views are personal)

Driven by purpose



Bharatiya Janata Party floor Leader in the Telangana Legislative Assembly Alleti Maheshwar Reddy, in an interview with Naveena Ghanate of *The Pioneer*, shares insights into his baptism in student politics as well as the significant roles that he progressively played in the Praja Rajyam Party, the Congress and the BJP. Maheshwar Reddy's journey reflects his dedication to the uplift of the underprivileged and driving meaningful change, making him a respected and influential figure in Nirmal.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

I spend most of my childhood in Nirmal. My grandfather was a freedom-fighter and advocate. He was the first chairman of the Nirmal Municipal Council, serving for around 11 years. My father, Padmanabha Reddy, was also a politician and served as municipal chairman. He was also a social activist. I have two brothers; Satish Reddy, who is married to Sravani, and Rajeshwar Reddy, who is married to Arpita. Both are into business. I have a sister, Uma, who got married to Parigi MLA Ram Mohan Reddy in 1995. My mother, late Lakshmi, was a homemaker. Unfortunately, she suffered from breast cancer and passed away in 1990. We had taken her to the Mumbai Tata Memorial Cancer Hospital for treatment, but she succumbed to the illness within a year. My mother's passing had a profound impact on me. I wanted to do something in her memory; so, I started a trust to help the poor, support marriages and encourage education.



JOB IN CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

During this time, I worked as a preventive officer and inspector in the Customs and Excise Department, having been selected through the Staff Selection Commission. However, after a year, I realised that I did not like the hierarchy and wanted to pursue something more impactful and be in a position to employ people. So, I resigned from my job. Sensing an opportunity to make a difference in the field of education, in 1998 I started an engineering college in Adilabad, named Jathi Pita Engineering College, followed by another college in 1999 in Nirmal. I then expanded engineering colleges to Hyderabad, Patancheru and Rangareddy districts.

MAHESWARA TRUST

My mother's passing had a profound impact on me. I wanted to honour her memory by doing something meaningful. So I established Maheshwara Trust, which provides support for the poor, assists members from marginalised communities in marriages and encourages education. We are staunch believers in Lord Shiva of Vemulawada; so, the name Maheshwara Trust. We provide financial assistance to poor patients who need medical treatment but cannot afford it. We also support marriages for those who lack the resources to conduct wedding ceremonies. Additionally, we offer scholarships and financial aid to students from low-income families to help them pursue higher education.

TRAINING CONSTABLES AND TEACHERS

I also recognised the dire need for providing quality education in Adilabad, where students did not have access to higher education. At one point, they did not know what to do after tenth; they were either doing B Ed or TTC. To address this issue, we started job coaching and training programs through our trust. These programs were designed to prepare candidates for various competitive exams, particularly for government jobs. We offered comprehensive training, including physical training, study materials and conducted mock tests. In the first year alone, we saw remarkable success, with around 100 constables being selected following our training program. Then I did teachers training program and again another 100 got selected. Then everyone in my area started realising that it was not difficult to get a job.

SCHOOLING AND YOUTH POLITICS

As a child, I was quite focused and dedicated to studies. I was not particularly naughty; rather, I was diligent and serious about my tasks. Whenever I was given a responsibility, I made sure to complete it to the best of my abilities. I began my schooling in Hyderabad at Saint Paul's School, where I studied from fifth to ninth class. After that, I started my Intermediate education at Nrupatunga but went back to Nirmal as my mother was not well. I pursued a degree in Pune at Symbiosis, where I studied law. During my college days, I wanted to be an entrepreneur and had political ambition. Even my childhood was heavily influenced by the political environment at home. There were always discussions about politics, social issues and community service, which deeply shaped my interests and aspirations. Politics has always been a part of my life, given my family's background. I was actively involved in student politics as a member of the National Students Union of India and later the Youth Congress. During my student life, I managed campaign activities for my uncle P Narsareddy, who was a Member of Parliament.



12 YEARS IN CONGRESS

Those 12 of 13 years in the Congress, I worked so hard in the party, right from, you know, grassroots level to all-party activities. I was the DCC president of the erstwhile district and then I was appointed as AICC programs implementation committee chairman. Rahul Gandhi's *Padayatra* and the first visit to Telangana after Telangana was separated, was handled by me with my money, with my resources. During *Bus Yatra*, we organised 36 public meetings. I co-ordinated seriously so closely monitoring, coordinating with the leaders and I worked like anything. Still, I had a dispute with Uttam Kumar Reddy. I never had a dispute with Revanth. When he became PCC president, the first program in the state was in my own constituency which was very successful. Then immediately after that, there was small dispute that he has announced another program without my notice. Then I questioned him and there was a quarrel. I was always struggling, struggling, struggling. Then in the meantime, the Bharatiya Janata Party was also pursuing me. Revanth tried his best to stop me, but Uttam did not. When I came out of the party, the Congress lost its momentum.



WORKING IN BJP

My experience with BJP has been very positive. The party welcomed me with open arms. The party president himself welcomed me into party and I was given significant responsibilities. They gave me election expenses. I contested and won the election with a substantial margin. The BJP leadership has been supportive and approachable and they gave floor leader position and respected me. Party will always have challenges and the All-India high command members are reachable, take advice and take along us. Despite the challenges of being in the Opposition, I feel that the BJP provides a robust structure and a clear vision that aligns with my goals for my constituency and the state. In my six months as BJLP leader, I think I delivered what can be.



POLITICAL ENTRY

There was a particularly challenging incident involving a local opposition leader who could not stomach our charitable activities. He was not pleased with the goodwill our initiatives were generating among people. One day, he used his political influence to level false charges of atrocities against me. It was campaign for Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency (MPTC); one fellow called our people and we went there. We spoke to him for 1-2 hours. Then the police came to home and said there is a case against me. This led to a police investigation and I had to go into hiding for about a week to avoid immediate arrest. During this time, I sought legal counsel and managed to secure bail. I was to join politics five years later, but this incident made me join immediately. This motivated me to enter politics more actively. I decided to contest in the MLA elections in 2009. My family pushed me into politics.

PRAJA RAJYAM PARTY

Initially, I filed my nomination as an independent candidate with a large following of 30,000 people. However, I was later approached by Allu Arvind of Praja Rajyam Party who convinced and I agreed and filed my nomination under their banner just two days before nomination. I asked them to send the B-form, which was sent through bus courier. Just a day before nomination, I was discussing about this with my friend. Then my cook said there was a letter that came. We went on bike at 3:00 pm and filed nomination. I won the elections and met then party chief Chiranjeevi. During the campaign, he came to the Mudhole constituency but not mine. I was among the two MLAs of PRP to win from Telangana. Chiranjeevi was a genuinely nice person. As a leader, he was soft-spoken and approachable, but not politician. However, he faced difficulties in making decisive political moves. Definitely, had Chiranjeevi sustained, he would have been the Chief Minister. But Pawan Kalyan struggled his way up. Politics needs confidence, fighting spirit and strong determination to stand by people.

BEING MLA FROM TELANGANA

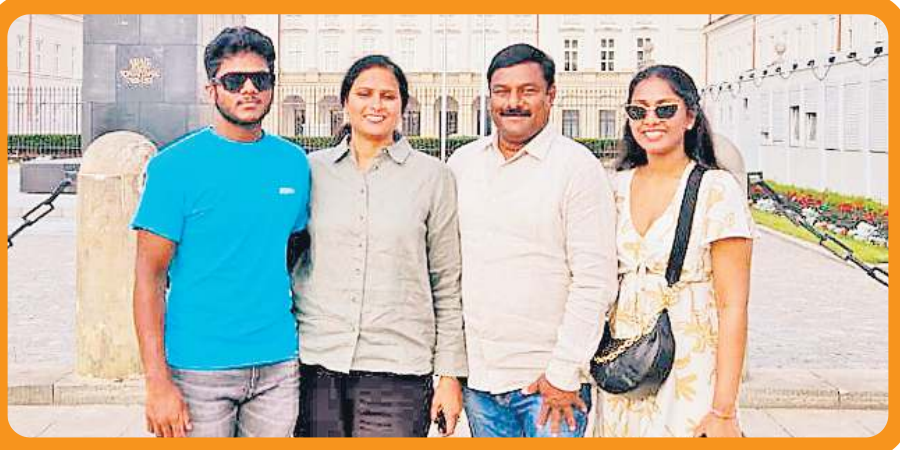
Chiranjeevi took a U-turn and advocated for Samikyandhra. However, as the agitation for Telangana statehood intensified, it became apparent that the party needed to take a definite stance. So, I threatened to resign as Telangana MLAs and demanded that we should be given opportunity, as several PRP members, including myself, felt that our voices were not being adequately represented. There was a small dispute and I threatened to come out of the party. At the same time, he spoke to the high command of the Congress to merge the party. At that time TRS legislators resigned for the cause of Telangana and I was also planning to resign. Then Ahmed Patel, a senior Congress leader, reached out to me and said there was no point in resigning now as the Congress will anyhow give Telangana. Even if I contest, there is 50% chance of winning and I would be MLA for another three years. He said that Sonia Gandhi Madam was keen and willing to give Telangana, provided I remained patience. Such senior person won't lie for one MLA. On his assurance, I did not resign.

LOST ELECTIONS

After the merger, I continued to work with the Congress party for several years. It was a period of intense political activity, especially with the ongoing Telangana agitation. Balancing development and addressing the demands of the agitation was challenging. Agitation was open and there was an undercurrent sentiment that we could not gauge properly. We thought development would pacify the sentiment as the Congress had announced the state and we felt like champions. Fighter became hero and I lost. Even after I lost, I was always with people. Except for protocol and gunman, everything was as usual. In 2018, I was candidate for the Congress, everyone told me that I was winning but poll management of Telangana Rashtra Samithi was so good and I even managed a few people from my side. I lost.

ARRANGED MARRIAGE AND THREE KIDS

Family is very important to me. It was arranged marriage to Kavitha in 1997 and we have three children. My two daughters completed their education in London. My son is an aspiring cricketer. My elder daughter Shanvitha completed her PG from London, younger daughter Shunitha also did here UG from London. My son Shrurjit played under-14, under-16, under-19 and is now at 17 years old. He is preparing for the Ranji trophy. Despite my busy schedule, I always make time for my family and ensure we spend quality time together. I am friendly father but expect discipline. We maintain traditional customs and values at home. We do *puja* every day.



QUICK BYTES

Favorite colour : My favorite colours are light blue, light pink and light orange. I generally prefer mild, warm colours that are soothing and not too gaudy.
Favourite food : Non-vegetarian food, especially traditional dishes from our region.
Do you listen to music : Not very frequently these days. During my childhood, I used to listen to songs more often. Nowadays, my schedule is quite packed and if I get some free time, I usually spend it engaging in political discussions or spending time with my family.
Any hobbies or interests : I enjoy spending time with my family and discussing current affairs.
Sports : In my childhood, I used to play table tennis
Happiest moment : There have been many happy moments in my life. The birth of my children, my marriage and winning my first election were all significant and joyous occasions. I try to find happiness in everyday moments, whether it is spending time with my family or seeing the positive impact of my work on the community.
Saddest moment : Passing of my mother was undoubtedly the saddest moment in my life. It was a difficult time for our family and her absence is deeply felt even today.
Bad habit : My tendency to speak the truth bluntly can be seen as a bad habit. In politics, this can sometimes create challenges.
Your strength : My greatest strength is my commitment to truth and integrity.
How do you prepare for your speeches : I take speech preparation very seriously. I study various books, consult with friends and professionals and focus on current affairs. Being well-prepared with facts and relevant examples is crucial for delivering effective speeches. I always aim to connect with my audience and address their concerns directly.