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Autocratic!

The sweeping book ban by the Jammu and Kashmir administration, directly run by the Narendra Modi government through the Lieutenant Governor is not surprising given the kind of censorship the region has been facing post 2019 dismantling of the State.

The 25 books banned and forfeited by the administration include works by A. G. Noorani, Sumantra Bose, Arundhati Roy and Anuradha Basin. Some of the proscribed books are in circulation for decades and the authors are both foreign and domestic, some of them long dead.

It is ironic that the ban order came when the Jammu and Kashmir administration was celebrating Chinar Book Festival in the valley. The government alleges that the books were propagating false narrative and secessionism in Jammu and Kashmir. It was not long ago that the Union Home Minister Amit Shah claimed near normalcy in the historically troubled State. Now, this ban belies that claim and betrays the insecurity of the Centre.

In the last six years after the abrogation of Article 370, which bestowed special status to Jammu and Kashmir, government's handling of the State did not include any measures that can bridge the gulf between New Delhi and people of the State. Instead, the government resorted to coercive methods and tried to suppress the public opinion by press censorship and arrests of journalists. But, even in the aftermath of Pahalgam attack people of Jammu and Kashmir stood with rest of the country and sent a strong message of unity and peace.

The recent successful elections are also a message that the people want normalcy and representational administration. When the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who now have a legislature and an elected government, are looking forward to the restoration of statehood, a promise made by the Centre, the government imposed this draconian order of a sweeping ban of books. This measure is sure to further alienate the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The ban is a clear violation of the fundamental right to freedom of expression. Surely, this is not the way to win over people. To do that one should engage with them in a democratic way, not autocratic.

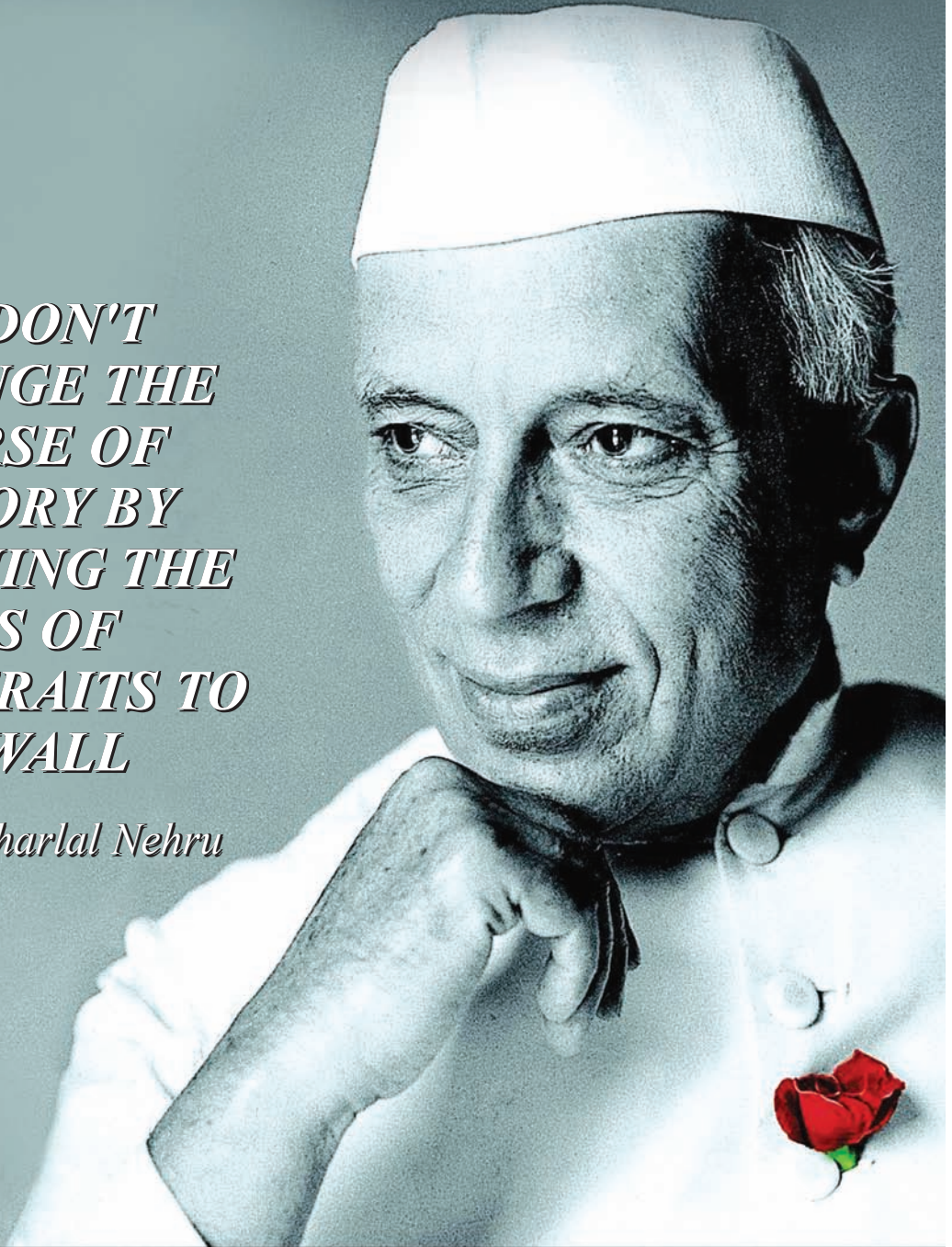
Fearless
Frank
Free



“

*YOU DON'T
CHANGE THE
COURSE OF
HISTORY BY
TURNING THE
FACES OF
PORTRAITS TO
THE WALL*

— Jawaharlal Nehru



Space donated by a well wisher

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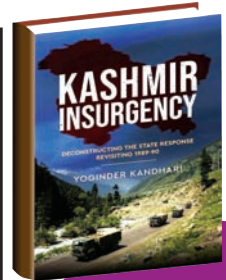
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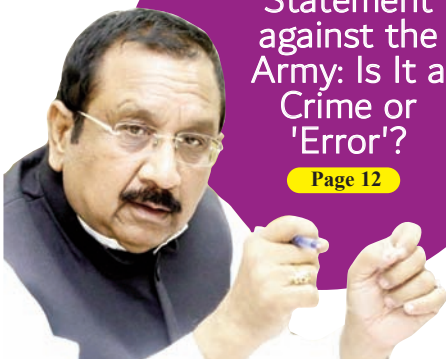
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The Quiet Persistence of Sanskrit in India's Newsrooms

I



Rahul Devulapalli

Editor, Scribes News

n the first week of July this year, the Press Registrar General of India (PRGI), formerly the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), registered a Sanskrit periodical titled Dharma Jijnasa. Its owner, publisher, and editor is Madhav Janardan Ratate, a professor of Mimamsa and Dharmashastra at Banaras Hindu University (BHU). A resident of Varanasi, he plans to bring out the magazine annually.

At a time when news dissemination is increasingly dominated by English and mainstream regional languages, and when almost every news outlet is going digital, someone attempting to publish a printed Sanskrit magazine, tabloid, or broadsheet is making a brave attempt. The practical challenge lies in finding a

team of sub-editors or writers in Sanskrit. Also, who exactly is reading it? Madhav holds a PhD and was conferred the Young Scholar Award in Sanskrit by then-President Pranab Mukherjee in 2016. But whatever his personal motivation, he is not an isolated example.

A look at the PRGI website shows that over the last seven decades, 144 Sanskrit periodicals have been registered. In May this year, Narasimhacharya Bheemacharya Varakhedakar from Solapur, Maharashtra, registered a title called Vaidikee Samskrutihi. In 2024 alone, three new titles were registered in the ancient language. One was a fortnightly started by Somdutt Tripathi in New Delhi. Another was titled Ramayan Varta and was registered by the Ramayana Research Council, also based in Delhi. The third was a daily titled Ahnik Varta Patram, registered to be published out of Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, with Anand Narayan Shukla listed as the owner and publisher. This new daily joins earlier registrations of the same



One of the most intriguing entries goes back to 1953, when the first-ever title in Sanskrit was registered. That year, the Directorate of Public Relations of the Government of Bihar registered a Sanskrit weekly titled Horsombad.

title from other parts of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. Its digital version may be one of the few active Sanskrit news websites today.

A closer look at the trend reveals something striking. The world of Sanskrit media seems to exist in a zone of its own, unaffected by political change. Between 2004 and 2014, when the Congress-led government was in power at the Centre, around 30 Sanskrit titles were registered. From 2014 to 2025, under the Modi-led BJP government, the number has remained nearly the same. In 2017, Surat-based Yusuf Mehmood Saiyad, a member of the minority community, registered a Sanskrit daily titled Badalta Bharat, though the current website shows content only in Gujarati.

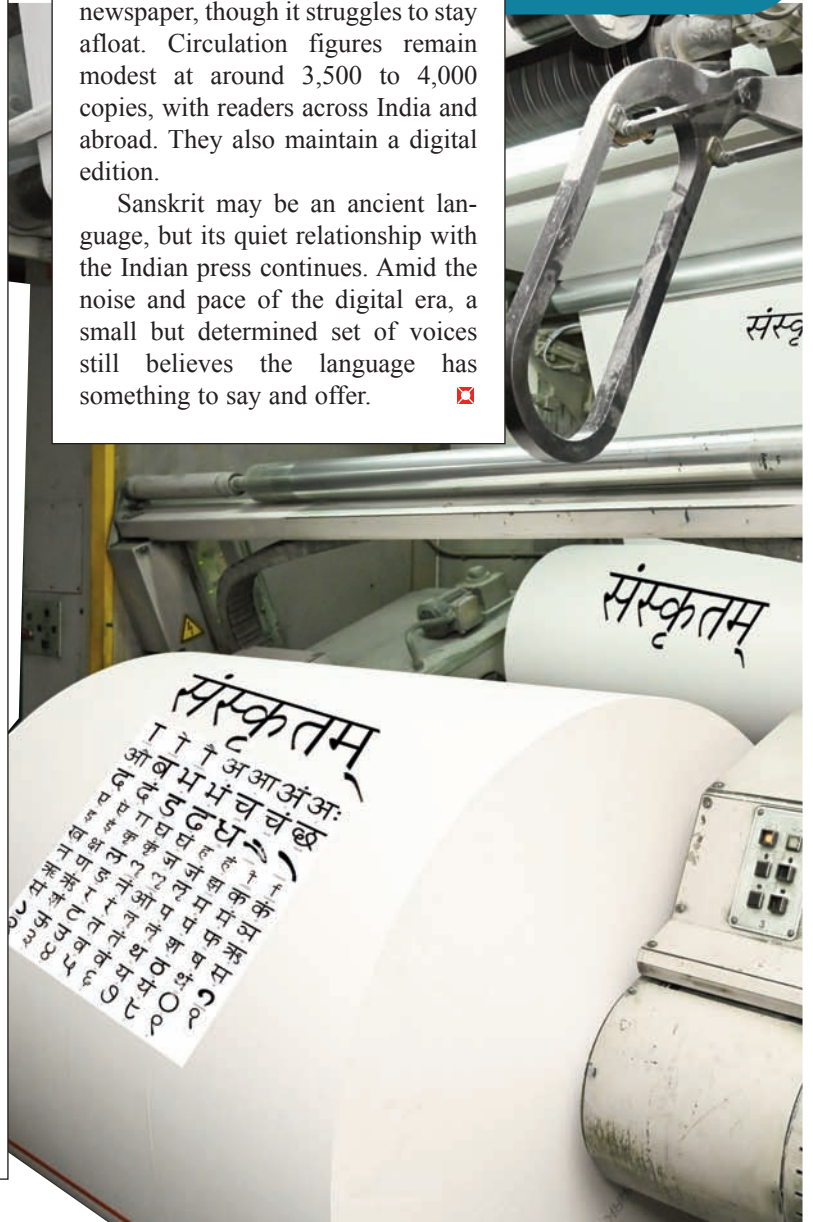
One of the most intriguing entries goes back to 1953, when the first-ever title in Sanskrit was registered. That year, the Directorate of Public Relations of the Government of Bihar registered a Sanskrit weekly titled Horsombad. However, over the years, Horsombad came to be known as a prominent journal in the Santali language and was published from the Deogarh region. It was edited by Doman Sahu Samir, a respected Santali scholar. The current Indian President, Droupadi Murmu, belongs to the same community. The Santal tribe is concentrated in various parts of eastern India, including Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. This raises a curious question: why was it registered under Sanskrit? Was Santali not recognised as a distinct language at the time?

No article on Sanskrit journalism is complete without Sudharma - the only Sanskrit newspaper that has been in continuous publication for

over five decades. Founded in Mysuru in 1970 by Varadaraja Iyengar, Sudharma recently celebrated its golden jubilee by hosting 50 cultural events. After his passing, the responsibility fell to his son Sampath Kumar and daughter-in-law Jayalakshmi. Both were honoured with a Padma Shri in 2020, shortly before Sampath's death. Today, Jayalakshmi continues to run the newspaper, though it struggles to stay afloat. Circulation figures remain modest at around 3,500 to 4,000 copies, with readers across India and abroad. They also maintain a digital edition.

Sanskrit may be an ancient language, but its quiet relationship with the Indian press continues. Amid the noise and pace of the digital era, a small but determined set of voices still believes the language has something to say and offer. 

Sanskrit may be an ancient language, but its quiet relationship with the Indian press continues.





APUWJ Protests for New Accreditation Cards, Govt Accepts Demand

Journalists from all 26 districts of Andhra Pradesh join Demands Day programme at 337 centres on August 5

T



D. Soma Sundar

Secretary, IJU

he Demands Day programme organised by the APUWJ on August 5 in Andhra Pradesh received a tremendous response from media persons. Responding to the call given by the Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ), thousands of journalists joined the Demands Day programme at more than 337 centres in all 26 districts of the state. Journalists took part in protest demonstrations, motorbike rallies, and dharnas in front of government offices across the state.

Union leaders submitted memorandums at different locations demanding the immediate resolution of problems faced by media persons in the state.

The issuing of new accreditation cards to eligible working journalists was the main demand of the APUWJ. The accreditation policy of the previous government created unrest among the media fraternity.

G.O. number 38, issued by the previous government, imposed restrictions on extending accreditation to journalists.

Payment of GST by the management was made a condition for issuing accreditation to journalists working in that particular organisation. Another rule in the G.O. required journalists to submit a circulation certificate obtained from the concerned Tahsildar of the area where the journalist was working.

The G.O. also did away with the age-old practice of giving representation to working journalists' unions on the media accreditation committees at various levels. The number of accreditations issued in Andhra Pradesh stood at 23,000 in January 2019. After five years, the number had reduced to 9,000 in January 2024.

Welfare measures like the Working Journalists Health Scheme, accident insurance policy for journalists, and allocation of house sites were linked with accreditation. The union fought for five years against G.O. 38 to secure the accreditation facility for all working journalists.

During the 2024 general elections



APUWJ members participate in a protest programme and hand over memorandums to Cabinet ministers listing their demands.

campaign, the APUWJ prepared a Journalist Manifesto with a charter of 15 demands and submitted it to all political party leaders. The NDA alliance government headed by Nara Chandrababu Naidu promised to scrap G.O. 38 and bring a new order so that every eligible working journalist would get accreditation.

The APUWJ leadership met both the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister and demanded that G.O. 38 be scrapped and a new accreditation policy drafted. But no progress was made in this regard over the last year. The expiry date of old accreditation cards was extended three times. This inaction by the government provoked anger in the media community. The APUWJ leadership met the Minister for I&PR, K. Pardhasaradhi, and demanded the issuance of new accreditation cards immediately instead of extending the expiry date of old cards. Other demands included strengthening the Working Journalists Health Scheme, allotment of house sites to eligible journalists, and introduction of a pension scheme for retired journalists. On this occasion, APUWJ leaders met more than half a dozen Cabinet Ministers and many MLAs

to explain the problems faced by journalists and submit memorandums.

A delegation led by APUWJ President I.V. Subba Rao met Social Welfare Minister D. Bala Veeranjaneey Swamy in Ongole city, while a delegation headed by APUWJ General Secretary K. Jayaraj and APEMJA President Shiva Yechuri met K. Pardha Saradhi, Minister for I&PR, V. Subhash, Minister for Labour and Satya Kumar Yadav, Minister for Health at the Amaravathi Secretariat.

Another delegation headed by Mandela Sri Rama Murthy met Kandula Durgesh, Minister for Cultural Affairs at Rajamahendravaram in East Godavari district and Bapatla District unit leaders, headed by Ch. Rambabu met the Minister for Power, Gottipati Ravikumar in Addanki.

A delegation of the West Godavari district unit headed by Mutyala Srinivas and V.V. Ramana met Nimmala Rama Nayudu, Minister for Water Resources at Palakollu and in Visakhapatnam, a delegation of the APUWJ headed by K. Ramu and R. Rama Chandra Rao met Nadendla Manohar, Minister for

Civil Supplies.

In Tadepalligudem town, a dharna was held in front of the RDO office and was addressed by D. Soma Sundar, Secretary of the IJU.

In Srikakulam, Nalli Dharma Rao, and in Tirupati, Dr. M. Prasad, members of the IJU NEC and members of the State EC, led agitations in their respective towns. In Vijayawada, a large rally was organised. Huge rallies and dharnas were also held in towns like Kurnool, Nandyal, Puttaparthi, Macherla, Atmakur, Anantapur, and Amalapuram.

A.P. Cabinet Approves New Accreditation Rules

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet, which met on 6 August, approved the "Media Accreditation Rules 2025." The Cabinet decided to scrap G.O. 38, paving the way for a new accreditation policy.

Minister for I&PR, K. Pardha Saradhi, in his press briefing after the Cabinet meeting, said that all media persons working in Andhra Pradesh would get accreditation. He also said that representatives of recognised journalist unions would be given a place in the media accreditation committees. 

Ensuring Media Safety in Election-Bound Bangladesh

A



Nava Thakuria

*The writer is a
Guwahati-based
independent journalist.*

Addressing the nation on live television on 5 August 2025, Bangladesh's interim government head Dr Muhammad Yunus announced that the South Asian nation will go for the 13th Jatiya Sansad polls by the first half of February next year (the Bangladesh election authority later specified the first week of February for the national event), where he also opined that a key condition for a thriving democracy is the freedom of the press. Marking the anniversary of the 2024 July-August mass uprising (that paved the way for installing the lone Bangladeshi Nobel laureate as chief adviser of the caretaker government after dethroning Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina), Dr Yunus exclaimed that, looking at the past, it becomes clear that the biggest and earliest obstacle to free journalism was the government itself. Delivered in native Bengali, the well-known 'banker to the poor' reminded how 5 August last year witnessed the culmination of a massive uprising of students and common Bangladeshi nationals in the Muslim-dominated country of 170 million people against the fascist regime in Dhaka.

Disclosing various initiatives for reforms in sectors affecting the lives of Bangladeshi citizens, Dr Yunus stated that his government had taken a number of steps to remove all obstacles and open up space for criticism. Now, anyone, whether through mainstream or social media, can

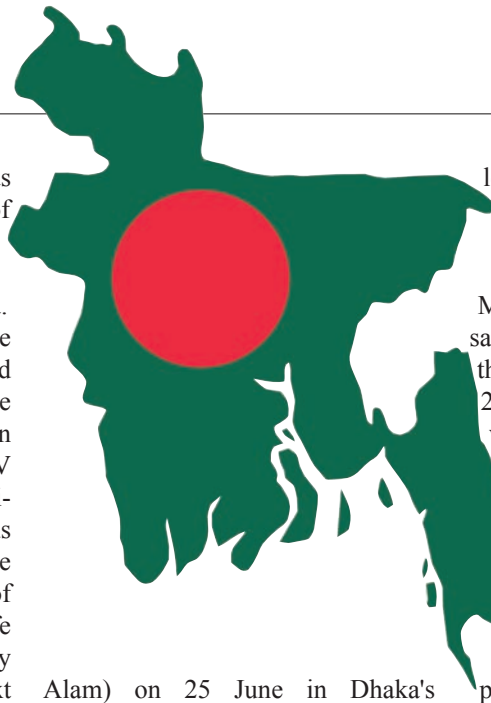


*Murdered Bangladeshi journalists
Alam and Tuhin*

freely criticize the government. Even state-run media can now openly criticize the authorities, something that was unthinkable in the recent past. To ensure accountability among journalists, the government has restructured the Press Council of Bangladesh and initiated various types of training to empower journalists so that they can counter disinformation. Mentioning the Digital Security Act (later replaced by the Cyber Security Act), which was eventually weaponised by the past autocratic regime against media persons, Dr Yunus pronounced its repeal and declared that all cases filed against journalists under this law were withdrawn. However, the ground situation in the populous country remains disturbing when considering the legal and social safety of media persons. The recent murder of Md Asaduzzaman Tuhin, who was associated with the Mymensingh-based newspaper Dainik Pratidiner Kagoj, reflected the gory picture of media freedom and safety

in Bangladesh. Tuhin (40) was hacked to death by a group of assailants on the evening of 7 August at a local tea stall in the Gazipur locality near Dhaka. According to preliminary police findings, the scribe was targeted solely because of his filming a crime in progress relating to an extortion bid by some goons. Captured CCTV footage from a nearby building indicated that Tuhin sustained serious injuries and died on the spot. The police later recovered the body of Tuhin, who left behind his wife Mukta Akhter, two sons, and many other close relatives. The next evening, the police arrested four individuals (Md Ketu Mizan, his wife Parul Akhter alias Golapi, Md Swadhin, Sumon, and Al-Amin) in connection with the murder of Tuhin, who was popular for reporting on public interest issues. Later, two more (Shah Jalal and Foysal Hassan) were arrested.

Gazipur also witnessed another incident of a journo attack on 6 August, when Anwar Hossain of Dainik Bangladesher Alo newspaper was physically assaulted by a group of miscreants in broad daylight. Hossain was reportedly investigating an extortion bid by some individuals from local vendors and auto-rickshaw drivers in his locality. Lately, a young journalist along with his mother was attacked by a group of miscreants on 9 August at Mokra Dhodhogachh village under Lalmonirhat locality. Currently, both Helal Hossain Kabir, who is associated with Alormoni newsweekly, and his mother are recovering from wounds in the hospital. The police have arrested the mastermind (Sohrab Hossain) from the same village and continue hunting for the other accused. Bangladesh lost another journalist (Khandaker Shah



Alam) on 25 June in Dhaka's Nabinagar locality, where he was attacked by a released prisoner who believed Alam's reporting in Dainik Matrijagat was responsible for his imprisonment.

"Attacks on journalists are not limited to physical harm in Bangladesh. According to a recent Transparency International Bangladesh report, from August 2024 to July 2025, as many as 496 journalists were harassed, 266 were implicated in murder cases related to the July Uprising, and three were killed while on duty. During the same period, eight newspaper editors and 11 news chiefs from private television channels were dismissed, and at least 150 journalists were terminated," said an editorial of The Daily Star, a prominent English newspaper published from Dhaka. It also added that following the fall of Hasina's autocratic regime, public expectations were high for a freer, less politically influenced media, but the current administration has yet to take visible steps to ensure press freedom.

Days back, the New Delhi-based Rights and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG) released a report claiming that a dramatic escalation in attacks,

legal harassment, and official intimidation of journalists and media houses has been recorded in Bangladesh since August 2024.

Made public on the first anniversary of Hasina's ouster from Dhaka, the report added that until July 2025, no fewer than 878 journalists were targeted (431 scribes faced physical attacks or criminal threats) under the reign of the Dr Yunus-led interim government.

RRAG director Suhas Chakma also revealed that nearly 195 criminal cases were filed against journalists over the past year. State institutions like the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit, which was not earlier misused against media personalities, had issued notices to 107 journalists over the past year, stated Chakma, adding that at least 167 journalists were also denied press accreditation, many of whom allegedly maintained affiliations with the Hasina regime.

Besides homegrown media organizations, the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) also called on the authorities "to bring to justice as soon as possible those responsible for these heinous crimes (the murder of Tuhin and the assault on Hossain), presumed members of armed gangs, and to take measures to guarantee the safety of journalists." The Geneva-based Press Emblem Campaign (PEC) also demanded swift action from the government in Dhaka to apprehend the perpetrators. PEC president Blaise Lempen, while condemning the crimes, exclaimed that "it was pathetic how a journalist had to lose his life for journalistic work to expose the criminals." He urged the interim regime to ensure the safety of journalists as Bangladesh prepares for national elections early next year.





Narrative Journalism Workshop at UoH Offers New Lens to Old Truths



Mahi Sharma

*MA Communication
(Media Studies) for
UoH Herald.*

A two-day workshop on narrative journalism, *News in Tales*, was held on July 29 and 30 at the University of Hyderabad. Organised by Newsreel Asia in partnership with the High Commission of Canada, and hosted by the Department of Communication, the workshop brought together working journalists, students, and media professionals to explore storytelling in journalism as well how facts can be told with feeling, and how stories can go beyond headlines.

The workshop opened with brief remarks by faculty coordinators Prof. Vinod Pavarala and Prof. Anjali Lal Gupta, followed by a welcome address by Mr. Geoffrey Dean, Acting Deputy High Commissioner of Canada to India. Former CEO and Editor of The Hans India and HMTV Ramachandra Murthy was the chief guest at the inaugural session. In his

special address, Mr. Geoffrey Dean highlighted the importance of the freedom of press in the country.

Vishal Arora, Founder and Director of Newsreel Asia, led the sessions alongside co-founders Surabhi Singh and Harshita Rathore. Through a mix of presentations, discussions, and hands-on exercises, the workshop took participants through the basics of visual storytelling, narrative structure, and field techniques. From camera settings like ISO, aperture, and shutter speed to concepts like framing, focus, and sequencing shots—everything was broken down in a way that connected visuals to emotions.

One of the main takeaways was understanding the shift from simply reporting events to telling deeper, human stories. The workshop introduced the four-shot sequence method, which helps journalists answer key



viewer questions while building emotional depth. It also looked at examples from the ground-like stories of drug abuse in Punjab-where visuals did more than just support the text; they became the story.

For many senior journalists in the room, it wasn't just a refresher-it was a wake-up call.

Satyavati, a veteran journalist and independent documentary filmmaker, said, "I've been in the media for over three decades, but I'd never heard the term 'narrative journalism' before. And suddenly it hit me-this is how journalism should've always been. For too long, we've reported from the perspective of politicians and the powerful. But in a democracy, journalism should be for those who don't have a voice. This workshop reminded me why I became a journalist in the first place."

Another participant, Ram Mohan, editor at The News, shared, "I studied journalism 35 years ago. There was no Google or internet then. Whatever new tools I learnt, I learnt on my own. But in other professions, there's something called continuing education-doctors, engineers all have it. Journalists don't. This workshop gave me that chance. It helped me understand how to



adapt journalism for a younger, digital-first audience. And narrative storytelling is one of the ways forward."

There were also discussions around building trust with subjects, how to shoot portraits that tell a story, and how to look at interviews not just as Q&A sessions but as conversations that reveal deeper truths. Participants were given short assignments, including photographing human subjects and capturing emotion through stills.

The workshop wrapped up with a small ceremony where certificates were distributed. Dr. Satya Prakash, Head, Department of

Communication delivered the vote of thanks, acknowledging the efforts of the High Commission of Canada, the Newsreel Asia team, faculty coordinators, technical support staff, and all participants for making the event a success.

More than just learning new tools, the workshop helped people reflect on their role as journalists-who they write for, and why. And that, perhaps, was its biggest takeaway.

Prof. Vinod Pavarala and Prof. Anjali Lal Gupta were the co-coordinators of the workshop on behalf of the department of Communication. ❏

Vijay Shah's Statement against the Army: Is It a Crime or 'Error'?



Prof Madabhushi Sridhar Acharyulu

Academician and former Information Commissioner



Unfortunately, he was "the Madhya Pradesh Minister" Kunwar Vijay Shah. He now says it was just a linguistic error with a second apology. It was an unnecessary controversy with insulting remarks on Colonel Sofiya Qureshi. An apology was tendered.

Criminal Charge

This so-called BJP Minister of MP was charged with a crime prima facie liable for offences under relevant sections of the

Bharatiya Nayaya Sanhita (BNS), including Section 196, which deals with actions that promote enmity between different groups. The High Court observed that this statement of the minister,

"[...] encourages feelings of separatist

activities by imputing separatist feelings to anyone who is Muslim, which thereby endangers the sovereignty or unity and integrity of India".

The High Court further said:

"[...] Colonel Sofiya Qureshi is an adherent of the Muslim faith and deriding her by referring to her as the sister of terrorists may be prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different religious groups, as it has the propensity to fuel an impression that, irrespective of the selfless duties of a person towards India, such a person could still be derided only because that person belongs to the Muslim faith."

The High Court called the minister's remarks "disparaging and dangerous, not only to the officer in question but also to the armed forces themselves." It was not merely a reckless remark. *A day after a viral clip showed Shah making insulting remarks against Qureshi, who was among the officials representing the armed forces during the briefing on Operation Sindoor, it caused a huge uproar.* While speaking at a government event on Tuesday, Shah had said that the Prime Minister had sent a "sister from the same community" as those in Pakistan to avenge the April 22 terror attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam.

In a video message on 23 May 2025, Vijay Shah said:

"Jai Hind, I was deeply sad-



dened and disturbed by the gruesome massacre that took place in Pahalgam a few days ago. I have always had immense love for my nation and respect for the Indian Army. The words spoken by me have hurt the community, religion, and countrymen. It was a linguistic error by me."

It was not the first term of the legislature; he continued to get elected in Madhya Pradesh eight times. He says he "[...] did not intend to hurt the sentiments of any religion, caste or community". However, it was after he received flak from Opposition parties, the Madhya Pradesh High Court, and the Supreme Court. The judiciary had to respond to this kind of vocabulary used by a politician from the BJP of the NDA. The Supreme Court reprimanded Vijay Shah, calling his previous apologies insincere and "crocodile tears", and pointed out that his remarks were "completely thoughtless", "the most unfortunate statement", and said that being a minister, he should have maintained a standard much above others.

The Supreme Court Questions

It was so serious that the Supreme Court needed to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) comprising three senior IPS officers to probe the FIR against the Madhya Pradesh Minister, specifying that at least one of them should be a woman. The SIT was asked to submit its report by May 28.

Colonel Sofiya Qureshi was one of the spearheads of India's Operation Sindoor precision strikes against Pakistani terror infrastructure. A case has also been registered against Shah in Indore under relevant sections of the BNS. The case was registered in compliance with a high court order.

The Constitutional 'Crime'

The citizens of India should have called on the Governor to dismiss this Minister. It's a clear violation of the oath made before God, this Minister that he abides by the Constitution of India.

The President, under Article 60, and the

Governor Article 159, will swear to say he will

"[...] swear in the name of God, (or if you don't believe in God, s/he should) solemnly affirm that I will faithfully execute the office of President (or discharge the functions of the President) of India and will do the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law and that I will devote myself to the service and well-being of the people of India."

This article of the Indian Constitution outlines the oath or affirmation requirement for every Governor and any person discharging the functions of the Governor.

"I, A. B., do swear in the name of God that I will faithfully execute the solemnly affirm office of Governor (or discharge the functions of the Governor) of(name of the State) and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law and that I will devote myself to the service and well-being of the people of(in this case, this minister administered oath by the Governor of Madhya Pradesh).

Oath of the PM, the Chief Minister, and Ministers should be in according with the Constitution."

"[...] bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, that I uphold the sovereign and integrity of India (this phrase was added after the Sixteenth Amendment Act 1963), that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge my duties as a Minister for the Union and that I will do right to all manner of people in accordance with the Constitution and the law, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will."

Hence, the President and Governor should protect the Constitution, which is an onerous duty to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. If a minister does not function as a public official, a citizen should at least request to dismiss such Ministers be dismissed who violate this constitutional oath, followed by disqualification to elect at least for one term. 

“

Jai Hind, I was deeply saddened and disturbed by the gruesome massacre that took place in Pahalgam a few days ago. I have always had immense love for my nation and respect for the Indian Army. The words spoken by me have hurt the community, religion, and countrymen. It was a linguistic error by me.

**— Kunwar
Vijay Shah.
Madhya
Pradesh
Minister**

REEL TO REAL LIFE

EXPERIENCE OF A JOURNALIST INFLUENCER



I

can almost hear the question marks! Many of us associate "influencer" with the vibrant worlds of fashion and lifestyle, and rightly so. So, when someone like me, a journalist, steps into that space, the natural question arises: "You influence, what, exactly?"



Jisha Elizabeth

*Multiple awards
including Ramnath
Goenka award winning
Investigative &
Environmental
Journalist*

The morning I met Shivanandan, a 56-year-old clam collector on Kerala's Punnamada Lake, offered a powerful lesson. Despite heavy rain and a fever, he was diligently boiling and shucking clams by the shore, his wife Leela sifting shells and meat. He'd been out since before sunrise in his engine-powered canoe, returning at noon for Leela to help with the boiling. His resilience, even in the face of hardship, deeply resonated with me.

My traditional journalistic approach involves listening to people, documenting their traditional knowledge, gathering insights on their challenges, and then crafting in-depth features or investigative stories. These narratives are meticulously researched, cross-referencing facts and findings from scientists, politicians, environmentalists, and anthropologists.

For years, my investigative and environmental write-ups primarily appeared in intellectual magazines. While these publications reached a dedicated few, including policymakers, I observed a consistent pattern: serious, in-depth issues often had fewer readers compared to lighter, entertainment-focused content. This reality sparked a profound curiosity in me.

My journey

I've always been drawn to visual storytelling, and this realization fueled my desire to learn new techniques. In 2013, I tentatively began a YouTube channel, initially as a hobby. I also explored platforms like Orkut and Blogger. Initially, I shared amateur personal vlogs whenever I found time. Over time, I transitioned to posting vlogs on social issues. My colleagues were skeptical, even mocking me, and my superiors issued memos. At that time, many conventional media professionals believed journalists should avoid social media and maintain a strictly serious demeanor.

Despite this, as a sub-editor in print media, I experimented relentlessly with new social media platforms and techniques - using them to discover news sources and amplify published content. Later, while mainstream media houses launched their own websites, they largely adhered to traditional storytelling formats.

The landscape has dramatically shifted. Over the past 7-8 years, social media has become a dominant force in news dissemination. New roles like "social media content creators" and "digital heads" have emerged. Today, politicians routinely circulate statements via social media, with news outlets closely monitoring every handle. Even ministers, Members of Parliament, and Members of Legislative Assembly now have dedicated social media teams.

Challenges we face

However, a divide persists. Many tradi-

tional journalists still limit their social media engagement to status updates and discussions. The bulk of social media content creation is often assigned to younger, new-generation journalists, rather than leveraging the wisdom of seasoned professionals.

This leads to a critical challenge: the primary audience for traditional storytelling is typically aged 40 and above. Younger readers and viewers, accustomed to digital natives, find traditional news formats less engaging. They seek to "visually celebrate" life in a cinematic, often seconds-long format. This presents a significant hurdle for traditional media houses striving to retain a broader audience. While some are experimenting with shorts, reels, and social media-style editing, there's still a gap.

After 20 years as a full-time correspondent and sub-editor, including 14 years with one firm, I made a pivotal decision to leave due to a toxic work environment. This transition allowed me to turn my "hobby" into a full-time profession: a journalist coupled with a social media influencer.

As the term "journalist influencer" gained traction in the early 2020s, I embraced it fully. By 2024, I proudly branded myself as a news influencer, significantly increasing my digital content focused on environmental stories.

Pros and cons

Compared to traditional media, the life of a journalist-influencer can be incredibly demanding. It often involves a hectic! In the world of social media content creation, a single individual often wears many hats. This usually includes source finding, field trips, driving, videography,



raphy, recording voiceovers, visual editing, publishing, SEO optimization, comment moderation and then actively circulating links across multiple platforms- essentially, everything!

In contrast, traditional media houses benefit from specialized teams - reporters, videographers, editors, marketing personnel, and output teams - allowing for more divided work and less individual pressure. Crucially, a management

team also handles the significant production expenses.

This extensive workload means the production cycle for digital content can be slower than that of large organizations. It also places a greater financial burden on the journalist-influencer. Many freelance journalists in this space grapple with low income, fewer opportunities, a lack of mentorship, and no superiors to cross-check their content, leading to more exhaustion than traditional storytelling.

Our hopes

Despite these challenges, the media industry is evolving, increasingly favoring journalist-influencers. Various media reports highlight a growing need for more "journalist-influencers" to combat the widespread disinformation and misinformation on social media, especially concerning critical environmental issues.

Returning to Shivanandan: I recently posted a video of him singing. It went viral on Instagram, reaching an audience predominantly aged 18-25. Strategically, I embedded titles describing critical environmental issues: plastic waste in the backwater, ecosystem destruction, climate change factors, the harsh reality of his work, traditional knowledge, and his distressed life.

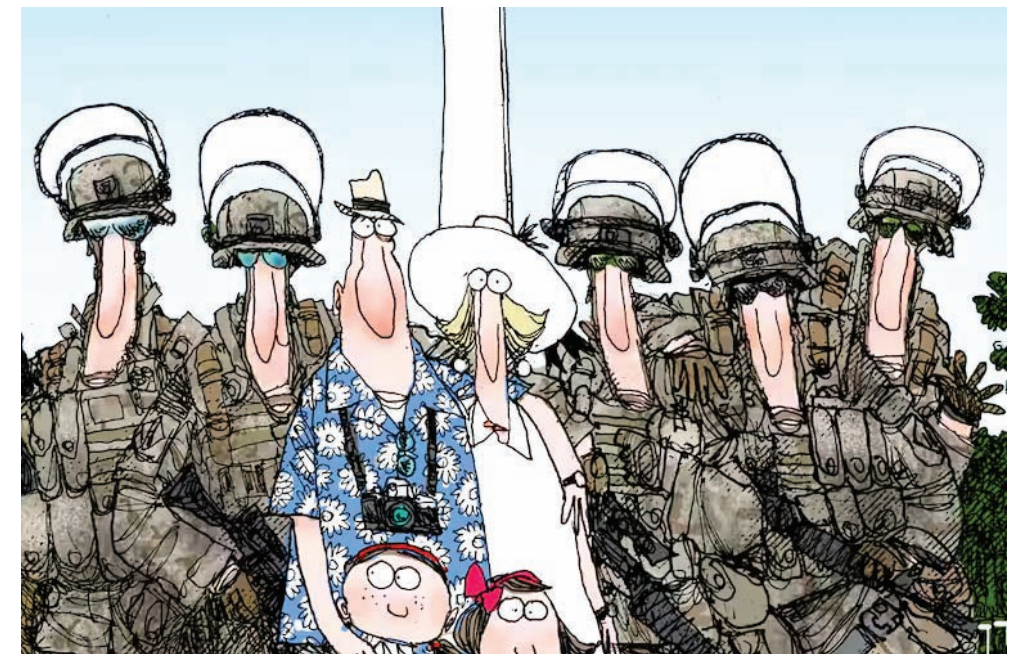
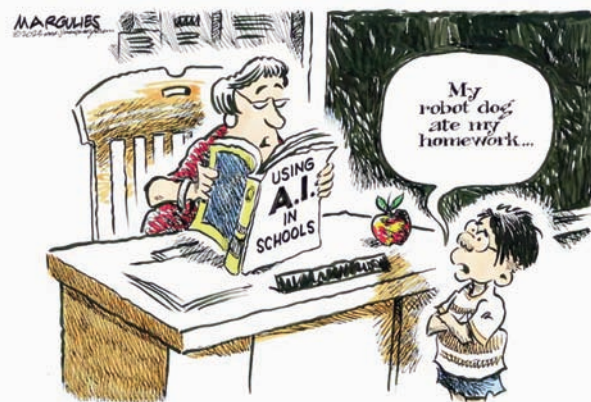
When this video, with its undeniable entertainment value, exploded, mainstream media quickly picked it up. Suddenly, the very environmental messages I'd subtly woven into the lower thirds of my video reached millions of people. Miraculously, Shivanandan's beautiful singing led to his selection for famous TV reality shows, transforming his life overnight. And yes, he is incredibly happy!



CARTOONS OF THE MONTH



(Image credit: Michael de Adder / Copyright 2025 Cagle Cartoons, Inc.)





TV News Turns Tariff Regime on Its head



Shaukat H. Mohammed

The writer is a senior journalist based at Hyderabad

day after the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, emphatically denied that any foreign country had had a role to play in the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the middle of Operation Sindoor in May, US President Donald Trump announced a 25 per cent tariff on all exports from India, plus further tariffs for the purchase of Russian weapons and energy.

The TV news channels lost no time to launch shrill "rashtravadi" (nationalist) programmes which ran down the US economy, the world's largest at USD 29.18 trillion in 2024. TV news anchors adopted mendacious tricks to talk up the Indian economy. The most mendacious of the lot was Arnab Goswami of Republic TV.

Per Goswami, India's GDP, on Purchasing Power Parity terms, at USD 15 trillion, is "more than half of the US GDP of about USD 30 trillion, so Trump cannot ignore

India". His declamation was followed by full-throated applause from his panellists led by one Sushant Sareen, who is probably making a nice living by nodding approvingly at everything Arnab and others like him screech on their "debates". Goswami then brings in a guest, an economist, who he tries to browbeat into submission when the economist tries to put in his two bits' worth.

The same dog-and-pony show played on most TV news channels as Trump's pique against India appeared to be turn into a personal animus against Modi. The nastiest claim by Trump is that India's economy is "dead" along with that of Russia. The TV news media simply ignored what Trump had said about India

on his SM, but latched on to the news that Rahul Gandhi, leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, had seconded Trump's baseless claim about the state of India's economy.

Most channels took to



denouncing Gandhi, calling him in an "anti-national" because he said that Trump was right in his pusillanimous claim. Each TV news anchor tried to outdo each other in saying the most vicious things about Rahul Gandhi, with their panellists, who were clearly chosen with great care to ensure that they echoed the anchor's own positions.

None of the channels had the moral courage to ask the BJP spokespersons why the Indian government was keeping silent about every barb thrown at the government, including the one about the "dead" economy. The target was only Rahul Gandhi and the Congress Party.

Some of the debates descended into outright humiliation of the guests who had the temerity to challenge the anchor's line that everything was hunky-dory with the economy. One guest was heckled about his age, while another's love of country was questioned. Debates on TV have descended into vaudeville acts of the worst kind, in a desperate bid to burnish the image of Modi and shore up their TRPs at the same time.

Before his "dead" economy barb, Trump imposed a 25 per cent tariff on all exports from India to the US. But rather than discussing how the tariff will impact India's exports and its nearly USD 40 billion trade surplus with the US, the channels got busy trying to convince their viewers that India will survive the tariff and come out stronger. As usual, guests who contributed to the channel's echo chambers were invited to blivate on the short-sightedness of the US policy and how, under the leadership of Modi, India could beat the US at its own game. This at a time when the government took great care to ensure that it did not say anything in the public domain that could annoy Trump, and probably goad him into increasing the tariff.

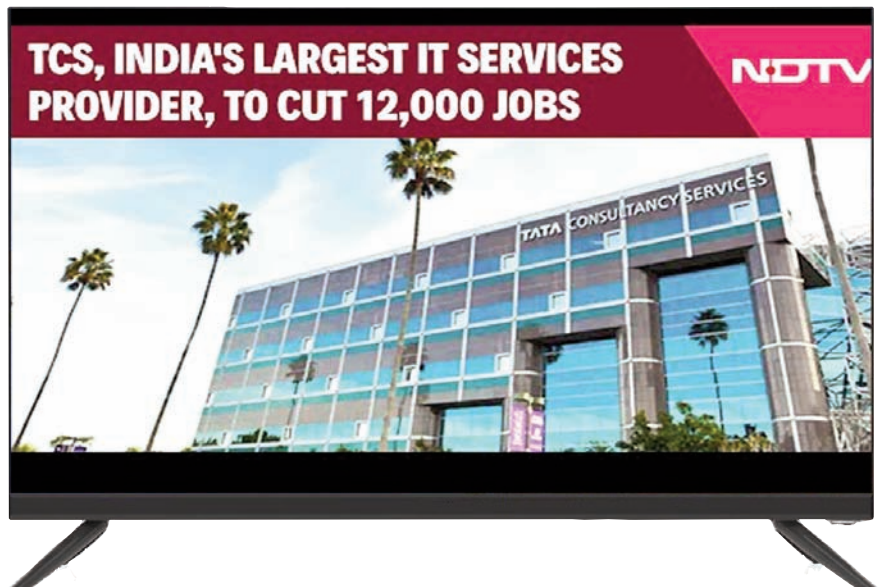
The TV news media also did NOT make the effort to interview any official from the US embassy in New Delhi or a spokesperson from the US State Department in Washington, DC, about what gave the US the right to impose a penalty on India for doing business with a third country, in this case, Russia. Russia has emerged as the biggest

supplier of energy to India in recent years, and sells its oil and gas to India at discounted prices. This could have been the biggest news story of the day, but the media chose to turn its eyes away from such a vital matter.

Another major development that came to the fore in recent weeks was the official announcement by Tata Consultancy Services, TCS, that it would be letting 12,000, or 2 per cent of its total workforce of 6,13,000 workers, go because of changing business dynamics.

TCS is the largest software services provider in the country, and the biggest employer of young IT engineers. The development indicated a tectonic shift in the IT sector, but the media chose to dismiss it as an issue restricted to TCS alone. Holding debates on the layoffs would have raised uncomfortable questions about the government and its laissez faire policies, questions it probably knew would find no "nationalist" answers. So, they ignored it. That's the way the cookie crumbles now in the Indian TV news media ecosystem. 

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CPJ: ISRAEL IS STARVING GAZAN JOURNALISTS INTO SILENCE

The Committee to Protect Journalists added its voice to Wednesday's urgent appeal from more than 100 aid agencies to end to Israel's starvation of journalists and other civilians in Gaza, as they called on states to "save lives before there are none left to save."

Israel is starving Gazan journalists into silence. They are not just reporters, they are frontline witnesses, abandoned as international media were pulled out and denied entry," said CPJ Regional Director Sara Qudah. "The world must act now: protect them, feed them, and allow them to recover while other journalists step in to help report. Our response to their courageous 650 plus-days of war reporting cannot simply be to let

them starve to death."

On Tuesday, CPJ launched its Voices From Gaza video series of Palestinian journalists describing their challenges working in Gaza. In the first video, Moath al Kahlout said his cousin was shot dead while waiting for humanitarian aid.

As Israel partially eased its 11-week total blockade of Gaza in May, CPJ published the testimony of six journalists who described how starvation, dizziness, brain fog, and sickness threatened their ability to report.

Since then, more than 1,000

Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, while trying to get food aid, the majority near sites where Israel and the United States' controversial, militarized Gaza Humanitarian Foundation was delivering supplies.

'Gaza is dying'

In recent days, numerous Palestinian journalists have spoken out about their desperation:

On June 20, Al Jazeera correspondent Anas Al Sharif posted online, "I am drowning in hunger, trembling in exhaustion, and resisting the fainting that follows me every moment... Gaza is dying. And we die with it."

Sally Thabet, correspondent for Al-Kofiya satellite channel, told CPJ that she fainted consciousness after doing a live broadcast on July 20 because she had not eaten all day. She regained consciousness in Al-Shifa hospital, where doctors gave her an intravenous drip for rehydration and nutrition. In an online video, she described how she and her three daughters were starving.

Another Palestinian journalist, Shuruq As'ad said Thabet was the third journalist to collapse on air from starvation that week, and posted a photograph of Thabet with the drip in her hand. During a live broadcast on July 20, Al-Araby TV correspondent Saleh Al-Natour said,

"We have no choice but to write and speak; otherwise, we will all die. At some point, journalists will collapse too, and they will fall to the ground in front of you, in front of the cameras, and on air ... Today, the feeling of fainting came again, and to prevent that from happening, I ate some sugar that I had been saving for a while."

On July 21, CPJ International Press Freedom Awardee Shrouq Al Aila told CPJ that she was continu-



A Palestinian woman carries a five-year-old child at Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis in April 2025. (Photo: Reuters/Hatem Khaled)

ously losing weight due to lack of food and experiences severe weakness, fatigue, and dizziness.

On July 21, Agence France-Presse's union said that the news agency's 10 freelance journalists reporting from Gaza were all threatened by famine, gunfire, and disease. "Without immediate intervention, the last reporters in Gaza will die," it said.

APF and France's foreign minister Jean-Noël Barrot later said that they hoped Israel would allow the journalists to be evacuated.

On July 22, a photo and video of Algerian state TV correspondent Wesam Abu Zaid taking part in a protest denouncing starvation of Gaza went viral online. Zaid held up a sign saying, "A hungry journalist reporting on hunger."

"We have all suffered from weight loss, dizziness, and an inability to stand or walk as a result of not eating," Zaid told CPJ, adding that it was hard for him to keep working.

On July 23, Al Jazeera Media Network called for an end to "this forced starvation that does not spare journalists who are the bearers of truth."

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) told CPJ via email that, "Despite the false claims that are being spread, the State of Israel does not limit the number of humanitarian aid trucks entering the Gaza Strip." It said that delays in the collection of aid from crossing points into Gaza by international aid organizations "harm the situation and the food security of Gaza's residents." COGAT, the Israeli unit responsible for humanitarian initiatives, told CPJ via email that, "Despite Hamas's false propaganda campaign, the IDF, through COGAT, continues to work in coordination with international actors to allow and facilitate the continued entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, in accordance with international law."



— Courtesy CPJ

Israel targets and kills Al Jazeera correspondent Anas al-Sharif in Gaza as journalist toll grows



**Sam Metz &
Samy Magdy**

Israel's military targeted and killed an Al Jazeera correspondent and others with an airstrike late Sunday in Gaza, after press advocates said an Israeli "smear campaign" stepped up when Anas al-Sharif cried on air over starvation in the territory. Both Israel and hospital officials in Gaza City confirmed the deaths of al-Sharif and colleagues, which the Committee to Protect Journalists and others described as retribution against those documenting the war in Gaza. Israel's military asserted that al-Sharif had led a Hamas cell — an allegation that Al Jazeera and al-Sharif previously dismissed as baseless. The military has previously said it targeted individuals it described as Hamas militants posing as reporters. Observers have called this the deadliest conflict for journalists in modern times. Officials at Shifa Hospital said those killed while sheltering outside Gaza City's largest hospital complex also included Al Jazeera correspondent Mohamed Qreiqeh, plus four other journalists and two other people. Four of the six slain journalists were Al Jazeera staffers. The strike damaged the entrance to the complex's emergency building. The airstrike occurred hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defended a planned military offensive into some of Gaza's most populated areas, including Gaza City, and said he directed the military to "bring in more foreign journalists" to Gaza. The strike came less than a year after Israeli army officials first accused al-Sharif and other Al Jazeera journalists of being members of the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In a July 24 video, Israel's army spokesperson Avichay Adraee attacked Al Jazeera and accused al-Sharif of being part of Hamas' military wing. Al-Sharif and his employer denied the allegations as baseless. Al Jazeera calls strike an 'assassination' Condemnation has poured in from the U.N. human rights office, the Foreign Press Association, the Committee to

Protect Journalists, the International Press Institute and Amnesty International, among others. Al Jazeera called the strike a "targeted assassination" and accused Israeli officials of incitement, connecting al-Sharif's death to the allegations that both the network and correspondent had denied. "Anas and his colleagues were among the last remaining voices from within Gaza, providing the world with unfiltered, on-the-ground coverage of the devastating realities endured by its people," the Qatari network said in a statement. Apart from rare invitations to observe Israeli military operations, international media have been barred from entering Gaza for the duration of the war. Al Jazeera is among the few outlets still fielding a big team of reporters inside the besieged strip, chronicling daily life amid airstrikes, hunger and the rubble of destroyed neighborhoods. Al Jazeera is blocked in Israel and soldiers raided its offices in the occupied West Bank last year. Israel at the time ordered the closure of its local offices, while preventing the broadcast of its reports and blocking its websites. The network has suffered heavy losses during the war, including 27-year-old correspondent Ismail al-Ghoul and cameraman Rami al-Rifi, killed last summer, and freelancer Hossam Shabat, killed in an Israeli airstrike in March. Like al-Sharif, Shabat was among the six that Israel accused of being members of militant groups last October. "Only a journalist that is a Hamas fighter or that is, at the time of attack, directly participating in hostilities can be intentionally targeted. Alerting the world to the starvation of civilians, reporting on Israel's military conduct in Gaza, even disseminating pro-Hamas propaganda, none of this would count as direct participation in hostilities," said Janina Dill, a professor of global security at the University of Oxford. She added that evidence is mounting that Israel considers anyone who it believes is a Hamas member to be a legitimate target.



Fresh threats to Pune Journalist Sneha Barve

Three weeks after the heinous attack on her, journalist Sneha Barve, resumed duty in her office on July 24, 2025. She was greeted by this threat: "Next

time, we'll finish this matter off for good." The words, uttered within her earshot by Prashant Morde, son of the prime accused Pandurang Morde, who had beaten her unconscious with a wooden rod on July 4, 2025, are a chilling indication of the near-total impunity that shrouds the attack on her. Pandurang Morde, the prime accused, is yet to be arrested. But that is just one part of the horror of the attack, that went viral after a video showed how she was beaten while she was doing a piece-to-camera about his alleged illegal construction activity on the Godh riverbed in Nigotwadi village in Manchar in Pune district.

Barve, talking to FSC, said that she was very apprehensive that the Morde family was planning something more serious against her, her family and her colleagues.

"I immediately told the police that if anything happens to us, they will be responsible." But till date, they have done nothing, she said.

Morde's sons, Prashant and Nilesh, had been arrested by police but given the nature of the minor charges of rioting, unlawful assembly and injury (Sections 118(1),



115(2), 189(2), 191(2), 190 and 351(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita), they were released on bail three days later. Morde himself escaped arrest as he claimed to be undergoing treatment for a fractured leg.

Twice, since then, she has received threats. On July 17, Morde's son Prashant, went to her village and made enquiries about her residence and her family members. He also allegedly tried to find out about the other witnesses and the complainants in the attack. She immediately called the police, and the Senior Police Inspector Shrikant Kankare assured her that Prashant Morde would be summoned and warned.

On July 24, Barve, who is still under treatment for injuries to her head and spine, had decided to resume office. She was on her way out when she spotted Prashant Morde lurking around at the entrance with a local builder Ramdas Jadhav. Jadhav was inimical towards her and had tried to attack her in 2015 as he

suspected her of complaining against him for electricity theft.

The police investigation into the attack of July 4 has not proceeded at all. Asked why the prime accused is still to be arrested, police said he is undergoing medical treatment. Morde was yet to be taken to a government hospital even for the cursory medical examination.

Inspector Kankare told FSC that the police had forwarded an application for the cancellation of the bail granted to Prashant Morde as he had clearly violated bail conditions by his threatening behaviour with witnesses and the complainant.

Barve, in the meantime, is keen on getting back to work. "I consciously did not take up any corporate job as I have always been keen on journalism. I have done a lot of work in this area for the last eight years and reported on so many issues. But these people who I have written or reported against are all banding together to silence me."

— Courtesy FSC

When journalism disappears, so does democracy

Some outlets report being approached by authoritarian governments offering funding with strings attached: favourable coverage in exchange for survival.



Meera Selva

CEO of Internews
Europe

On a bitingly cold day in January this year, a decision was announced in Washington that quietly triggered a global emergency. On that day, the US government suspended almost all its foreign assistance, including much of its funding for independent journalism abroad.

The impact was immediate and devastating. In South Sudan, the only national, independent FM radio station cut its staff by 75%. In Afghanistan, where journalists already risk their lives under Taliban rule, outlets have gone dark, and exiled reporters face deportation back to Kabul. In Latin America, dozens of newsrooms have closed or are on the brink. And in countries like

Myanmar, Sudan, and Venezuela, the loss of funding hasn't just meant fewer headlines - it has meant fewer protections against propaganda, censorship, and state violence.

If this sounds like a niche issue, think again. When journalism disappears, so does accountability. So does access to lifesaving information. So does the public's ability to make informed decisions in moments of crisis, be it an election, a health emergency, or a war.

Of course, there are many countries and many foundations, philanthropists, and individuals who have supported journalism in myriad ways and continue to do so. But the sudden, chaotic, and

Independent journalism is one of the strongest defences we have against polarisation, extremism, and authoritarianism. But in many parts of the world, it simply cannot survive without support.

unpredictable nature of the US foreign assistance cuts hit hard.

Independent journalism is one of the strongest defences we have against polarisation, extremism, and authoritarianism. But in many parts of the world, it simply cannot survive without support. Advertising doesn't work in conflict zones. Subscription models don't sustain outlets serving rural, low-income communities. That's why donor funding, especially from the US and Europe, has been so essential. And it's why its sudden removal has caused such deep harm.

Over the past decade, US funding for independent media didn't just keep outlets open - it supported legal protections for journalists, built infrastructure for fact-checking, and trained reporters to investigate everything from corruption to climate change. Crucially, it came with guardrails to protect editorial independence. That meant these media could serve the public interest, not the agenda of any one government.

Now, those guardrails are gone, and bad actors are moving in. Some outlets report being approached by authoritarian governments offering funding with strings attached: favourable coverage in exchange for survival. This is how information gets captured. This is how democracies wither.

Yet despite the hardship, many of Internews' media partners refuse to give up. They've downsized, fundraised, and pivoted. In some cases, they've kept reporting even without pay. Their dedication is astonishing, but it's not enough. If we don't act now, we will lose them. And with them, we will lose something far more valuable: the public's right to know.

The good news? This crisis is still solvable. Even small, well-targeted investments can go a long way. Emergency funding can keep journalists safe. Core support can preserve trusted



outlets in fragile states. Training and legal aid can ensure that media workers can do their jobs without fear. And with better coordination, donors can maximise the impact of every euro, pound, or dollar.

This is not about rescuing an industry. It's about protecting a principle: that people, everywhere, deserve access to accurate, independent, and reliable information; that honesty still matters; that journalism still matters.

At Internews, we've seen time and again how resilient independent media can be when given even the slimmest lifeline. Now, we need to ensure that the lifeline doesn't disappear altogether. Because if we allow the lights to go out in the world's most vulnerable media landscapes, we won't just be losing stories: We'll be losing voices, freedoms, and the very foundations of democracy. 

— Courtesy The New Humanitarian

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How Indian State Failed Kashmiris

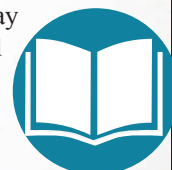
Overall, the discussion in the book is about the failure of the Indian state as a deliberate enterprise, not just on account of inefficiencies, corruption and an insufficient grasp



Anand K. Sahay

his book by a retired officer of the Indian Army, who served in counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir, is unusual in many respects. It is based in a considerable way on interviews with retired high - level military and civilian officers and right to information data. That offers a somewhat different dimension compared to journalistic and bureaucratic "histories". Insofar as Col Yoginder Kandhari's portrayal of the extremely violent years of the late 1980s and the early 1990s goes, the general impression is confirmed that the Indian state practically keeled over in the face of the Pakistan-inspired "insurgency", an expression whose definition or meaning has attracted discussion in the literature alongside expressions like "militancy" or "terrorism".

The author happens to be a Kashmiri Pandit, whose community, the minuscule minority of the Kashmir Valley, had to flee en masse in those terrible years in a modern-day exodus, but that fact has not coloured the writing. This is remarkable for our times when extremely



BOOK REVIEW

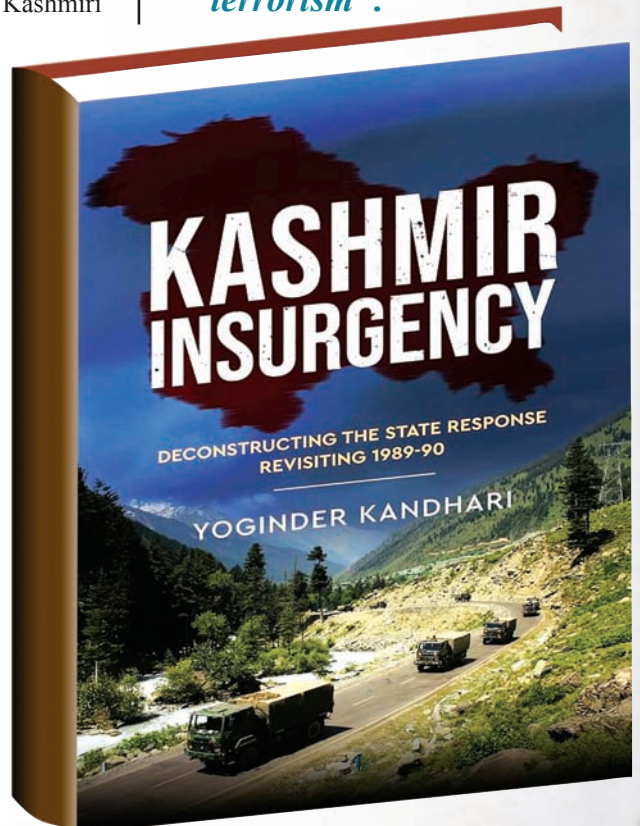
communal films and interpretations have been officially promoted. In a rudimentary sense the book seeks to trace the rough history of Kashmir, with focus on the post-1947 period where it is said the communalisation of state government policies to the detriment of the minority was dominant. It was also noteworthy that the Centre looked away from its support funds being diverted to line the pockets of the influential, instead of seeking to shape the course of a post-monarchy state on Pakistan's border. This probably significantly contributed to its cluelessness when militancy arose.

The communalisation question perhaps needs to be assessed in the light of the era of post-monarchy attempt at democracy in a state where the bulk of the Muslim population were indistinguishable from a state of semi-serfdom earlier. This is akin to reservations for SC/ST categories today raising hackles among the gainers. In a parallel attempt, the book seeks to suggest that the Kashmiri Hindus were left to their own devices because India wanted to erase their Kashmiri identity and place it in the larger pattern of Indian nationalism. These are strong positions which deal with complex ideas and can be a separate study.

Overall, the discussion in the book is about the failure of the Indian state as a deliberate enterprise, not just on account of inefficiencies, corruption and an insufficient grasp. A good deal of this hangs on interpretation. Elaboration might have placed the matter in clearer light. Journalist accounts, which can offer a feel of the times, and the reflections of retired bureaucrats and lapsed militants, are useful up to a point. This book seeks to raise complex questions through everyday happenings in a time of turmoil. 

— Courtesy Deccan Chronicle

Insofar as Col Yoginder Kandhari's portrayal of the extremely violent years of the late 1980s and the early 1990s goes, the general impression is confirmed that the Indian state practically keeled over in the face of the Pakistan-inspired "insurgency", an expression whose definition or meaning has attracted discussion in the literature alongside expressions like "militancy" or "terrorism".





(L-R) Bagavathi Perumal, Amit Sial, Sahil Vaid and Danish Iqbal in *The Hunt – The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case* (2025)

THE RAJIV GANDHI ASSASSINATION CASE REVIEW:

A balancing act between fact and drama

T

**Nandini
Ramnath**

he Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case takes a while to find its tone. The show's prosaic title is the first indication of a balancing act between well-publicised facts and dramatisation, subtext and context, the thin line between justice and retribution.

The Sony LIV series follows the Central government's investigation into Rajiv Gandhi's horrific death on May 21, 1991, in a suicide bombing carried out by a Liberation Tigers of Tamil

Eelam member. Gandhi was campaigning in Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu for the Lok Sabha election. His Congress party had been voted out of power, and he was aiming to return as the head of state.

Gandhi's gruesome demise was blamed on a misguided policy decision during his prime ministership: sending the Indian Peacekeeping Force military unit to aid Sri Lanka in its civil war with the LTTE. The Tamil

OTT REVIEW

Amit Sial embodies the show's carefully calibrated approach. Sial's Kaarthikeyan is methodical, cool-headed, resigned even, whether firefighting with his bosses or facing the prospect that Sivarasan may never be caught. There are solid turns from Bagavathi Perumal, Sahil Vaid and Vidyut Garg as government officials bound by rules but not always contained by them.

Tigers, led by Velupillai Prabhakaran, sought to avenge alleged abuses by the IPKF, identifying Gandhi as a high-value target of their rage.

The True Story of the Hunt for Rajiv Gandhi's Assassins, begins on Gandhi's last day. Gandhi (Rajiv Kumar) arrives in Sriperumbudur late into the night. A group of Tamil Tigers, led by the one-eyed Sivarasan (Shafeeq Mustafa), is patiently waiting for him. In the first of several miracles for the inquiry led by Kaarthikeyan (Amit Sial), a still camera containing photographs of the perpetrators survives the blast even though the photographer Haribabu doesn't. Haribabu (Vishnu G Warrier) is one of many local LTTE sympathisers, instructed to capture the impact of the suicide attack for propaganda purposes.

The contours of Sivarasan's plot soon comes into view. Kaarthikeyan and his core teammates - Amit (Sahil Vaid), Ragothaman (Bagavathi Perumal), Amod Kant (Danish Iqbal), Radhavinod (Girish Sharma) and Ravindran (Vidyut Garg) - assiduously track down and interrogate the plotters.

Sivarasan and his hardened aides manage to evade capture. Mounting pressure leads to the deployment of custodial beatings and even the threat of rape.

The early episodes of The Hunt have a rough time setting up the conspiracy without boring viewers. The dialogue switches between Tamil and Hindi, with Kaarthikeyan - a Tamilian in real life - bizarrely shown as a Hindi speaker.

(Some aspects of Sivarasan's dastardly scheme and the manhunt have already inspired plot points in The Family Man's second season, in which an ex-LTTE operative tries to carry out one last mission.)

After its initial clumsiness, The Hunt gets down to business. The screenplay

by Nagesh Kukunoor, Rohit Banawlikar and Sriram Rajan gradually attains the rigour of an engaging police procedural. Pedestrian lines such as "The Gandhi family is very unlucky" and "Rajiv Gandhi must go!" (attributed to Prabhakaran, played by Jyothish MG) make way for the dogged pursuit of a formidable adversary.

There are just about enough details of the larger political backdrop to satisfy the mildly curious viewer. The events explored over seven episodes remain sensitive, with unverified theories about the assassination still floating around. The show's creators sidestep the minefields presented by pro-LTTE sentiment within Tamil Nadu, or the role, if any, played by politicians in delaying the capture of the fugitives. This welcome lack of sensationalism does dilute the absurdity of the circumstances surrounding Sivarasan's end game.

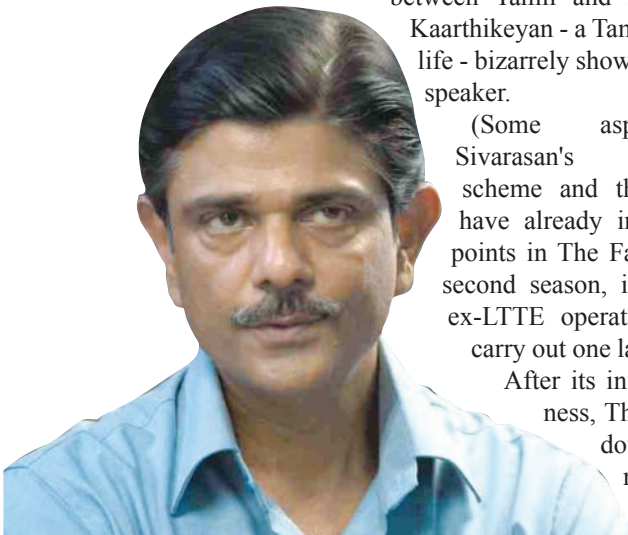
The absence of finger-pointing does not preclude attempts to understand the ideology of the Tigers. A character observes that "One man's hero is another man's terrorist" - a reworking of an oft-quoted line from Gerald Seymour's novel Harry's Game.

Although Sivarasan is portrayed as a comic book villain, his commitment to his cause, which is matched by the other Tigers, is unmistakeable. Parallels are drawn between the camaraderie within Kaarthikeyan's group and the solidarity between Sivarasan and his comrades.

Amit Sial embodies the show's carefully calibrated approach. Sial's Kaarthikeyan is methodical, cool-headed, resigned even, whether firefighting with his bosses or facing the prospect that Sivarasan may never be caught. There are solid turns from Bagavathi Perumal, Sahil Vaid and Vidyut Garg as government officials bound by rules but not always contained by them.

The overall feeling is of a job well done, despite the hiccups and the meddling. The motives behind the political double-dealing and Indian links to the storied separatist movement are left to other, more ambitious creators.

— Courtesy Scroll.in



DPDP Act, 2023: A Direct Threat to Press Freedom in India



The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 will suppress the journalistic freedom of the oldest and largest democracy in the world. We all know how the media was controlled and how policies were made to strangle independent journalism. We have witnessed in the last decade the way a plethora of journalists were sent to jail on the pretext of fake cases for doing their job. Most of these cases have not stood up to judicial scrutiny, but journalists suffered years in prison for doing their fundamental duties. Our ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has also gone down as several journalists were murdered or had cases filed against them.

The Indian Journalists Union, along with 20 other media bodies, has submitted a joint memorandum signed by more than one thousand journalists to the Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology. The media bodies, in consultation with legal and personal data experts, conducted exhaustive discussions on various definitions and provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and found that the Act directly violates the constitutional right to work guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a). The memorandum highlighted two major issues: the removal of exemptions from data protection obligations for journalistic work and the dilution of the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Earlier DPDP Bill drafts in 2018, 2019, and 2021 had exempted journalistic work from certain data protection obligations, but the 2022 Bill and the subsequent Act removed that exemption. This creates concerns that news publishers could be classified as data fiduciaries, imposing additional obligations. If so, it would require obtaining consent from subjects of stories, including critical ones, and could categorize publishers as significant data fiduciaries. Under Section 28, the Data Protection Board is granted civil court powers to "summon and enforce the attendance of any person" and "inspect any data, book, document, register, books of account, or any other document." Similarly, Section 36 empowers the central

government to require the DPB or any data fiduciary or intermediary to furnish "any" information. Depending on how these powers are interpreted and wielded, journalists could be forced to reveal their sources, given the lack of protection for whistleblowers in India.

The DPDP Act, combined with recent amendments to the RTI Act, limits journalists' ability to access crucial information in public records and significantly impacts investigative work. The Ministry is finalising the rules of the DPDP Act, essential for implementing the law notified in August 2023. In Parliament, the Ministry said it had received 6,915 submissions on the draft rules released for public consultation in January 2025.

The DPDP Act amended Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act, allowing public information officers to withhold any information "which relates to personal information." Previously, only personal information unrelated to public activity could be denied. Disclosure was allowed if the central PIO, state PIO, or appellate authority determined it was justified by a larger public interest. RTI activists argue that the amendment undermines a major transparency measure and severely affects public interest journalism. MeitY has stated that the amendment would not have an impact because Section 8(2) remains intact, allowing public authorities to disclose information in the larger public interest. However, invoking Section 8(2) requires appeals to PIOs and the Central Information Commission, making the transparency-seeking process lengthy and burdensome.

We demand that the government hold broader consultations with all signatory media bodies, as earlier drafts explicitly exempted journalistic activities and their removal in the final Act appears intentional rather than an oversight. If the government's intentions are sincere, as conveyed in the last meeting, it should address these concerns by explicitly exempting journalistic work across print, electronic, and digital media from the purview of the Act.

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సుపరిపాలనకు ఏడాది




పేదల సేవలో...



రాష్ట్రవ్యాప్తంగా 204 అన్నీ క్యాంపేన్ పునరుద్ధరణ



దీపం-2 పథకం ఏడాదికి 3 వంట గ్యాస్ సిలిండర్లు ఉచితం



ఎన్టీఆర్ భరోసా పంపన దేశంలో ఎక్కడా లేని విధంగా నెలకు రూ.4000 పెంపను లబ్ధిదారులకు ఏటా రూ.34,000 కోట్లు పంపిణీ



ఒకటి నుండి ఇంటర్ వరకు చదివే ప్రతి విద్యార్థికి ఏడాదికి రూ. 15,000 సాయం



తల్లుల ఖాతాల్లో రూ.8,745 కోట్లు జమ



ఒక ఇంట్లో ఎంతమంది పిల్లలుంటే అంతమందికి వర్తింపు



రాష్ట్ర వ్యాప్తంగా 67 లక్షల మంది విద్యార్థులకు ఈ పథకం ద్వారా లబ్ధి

యువత కోసం పరిశ్రమలు - ఉద్యోగాలు



రూ.9.34 లక్షల కోట్లు పెట్టుబడులకు ఒప్పందాలు



16,347 ఉపాధ్యాయ పోస్టులతో మేగా డిఎస్సీ



మొత్తం 8,50,000 పారిశ్రామిక ఉద్యోగావకాశాలు

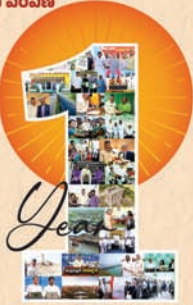
సామాజిక సంక్షేమం



బీసీ సంక్షేమానికి రూ.47,456 కోట్లు ఏటా రూ.1000 కోట్లతో అదరణ-3 పథకం



30 ఏళ్ళ కల... ఏపిలో ఎస్సీ వర్గీకరణ అమలు



సుపరిపాలనలో

చొలి అడుగు

4.1

ఉత్తరాంధ్ర నుండి రాయలసీమ వరకు అభివృద్ధి



రాజధాని అమరావతి పునర్నిర్మాణ పనులు ప్రారంభం



జెట్ స్కీడ్ తో భోగాపురం ఎయిర్ పోర్ట్ పనులు



మల్లవల్లిలో అశోక్ లే ల్యాండ్ పరిశ్రమ ప్రారంభం



బీసీసీఎల్ ఆయిల్ రిఫైనరీ & పెట్రో కెమికల్ కాంప్లెక్స్



విశాఖ కేంద్రంగా సౌత్ కోస్ట్ రైల్వే జోన్



కర్నూలు జిల్లాలో ఓర్వకల్లు పారిశ్రామిక నోడ్



కడప జిల్లాలో కొవ్వర్తి పారిశ్రామిక నోడ్



విశాఖ స్టీల్ కేంద్రం రూ.11,400 కోట్ల రివైవల్ ప్యాకేజీ

సంవత్సరంలో రాష్ట్రానికి తెచ్చిన కంపెనీలు


















“ ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్ లో ప్రతి ఇంటికి ప్రగతిని, సంక్షేమాన్ని అందించాలని... అలాగే ఉత్తరాంధ్ర నుంచి రాయలసీమ వరకు ప్రతి జిల్లాలో సమగ్రాభివృద్ధిని సాధించి... రాష్ట్రాన్ని దేశంలో కిల్లా ప్రగతి పూర్వక రాష్ట్రంగా తీర్చిదిద్దాలన్నది కూటమి ప్రభుత్వ సంకల్పం. అందుకోసం ప్రజల ఆశీర్వాదం, మరిన్ని పథకాలు, ప్రణాళికలతో నిరంతరం శ్రమించేందుకు మే మంచి ప్రభుత్వం కట్టుబడి ఉంది.”

