

TG govt should curb drug menace with iron fist

In a shocking incident, Putta Mahesh Kumar and 'Pilot' Rohith Reddy tested positive for drugs. They are not ordinary men on the street. One of them is a lawmaker in Parliament while the other is a former lawmaker from Telangana. And they are nouveau riche as well. Mahesh Kumar is a member of Lok Sabha from Eluru in Andhra Pradesh. Representing Telugu Desam Party (TDP), he became an MP in 2024, at the young age of 36 years. His father Putta Sudhakar Yadav is a legislator from Mydukur in YSR Kadapa district. Sudhakar Yadav also served as the chairman of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) between April 28, 2018, and June 19, 2019. As an MP, Mahesh Kumar's primary role is to take part in enacting laws that govern the

country. Rohith Reddy, who calls himself 'Pilot' Rohith Reddy, was also a lawmaker in the past, albeit at the state-level. In 2018, he won on a Congress ticket as an MLA from Tandur, now in Vikarabad district, but shifted loyalties to Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) which was in power then. However, he lost elections from the same Assembly segment in 2023 on the BRS ticket.

Today, the two have been found consuming drugs! Does this incident show the callous attitude of these two politicians? Or are they not afraid of law enforcement agencies in Telangana?

Incidentally, the duo was allegedly caught red-handed when a team from Elite Action Group for Drug Law Enforcement (EAGLE), on a tip-off, raided a farm-

house owned by Rohith Reddy in Moinabad area. While a liquor party was underway, one of the accused even opened fire at the police team when it entered the farmhouse. A drug test was conducted on 11 people and five of them, including the MP and the ex-MLA, tested positive. Surprisingly, the MP was given a station bail, a police action which is likely to kick up a row nationally, while Rohith Reddy and others were remanded to judicial custody. This incident clearly indicates how fast drug menace is spreading in and around Hyderabad. Drug usage has reached menacing proportions, primarily due to ever-growing pub culture and widespread growth of farmhouses. It is said that there are over 2,000 farmhouses around Aziznagar in

Moinabad mandal alone. Incidentally, the same Rohith Reddy's farmhouse was the place where a plot to buy four BRS MLAs was uncovered in 2022. That incident also rocked Telangana politics as did the Sunday's drug bust.

Nevertheless, strict vigilance on pubs, farmhouses and colleges will reduce the drug threat significantly. Besides, stringent punishment for both drug peddlers and consumers can be a strong deterrent. Coming back to the latest drug bust, it is good that TDP, which is in power in Andhra Pradesh, acted swiftly, served a notice on Mahesh Kumar seeking his explanation, and decided to keep him away from party activities till he comes clean on the allegations. AP Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu

also condemned the irresponsible behaviour of the young MP, while ordering for an immediate action. But BRS has remained silent on Rohith Reddy! A few months back, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directed the police to act tough against drug peddlers and consumers. He called for zero-tolerance towards drug usage. He was also instrumental in setting up EAGLE for eliminating the drug menace from the state. The name looks menacing, but EAGLE's action on the ground seems to be lackadaisical. Will this latest sensational drug case spur it into action? Unless the Telangana government acts tough and deals with the narcotics issue with an iron hand, the state will continue to face drug threats day in and day out.

LETTERS

Bring a law on euthanasia

The Hans India reader Datta Prasad Shirodkar has rightly stated that the debate about whether mercy killing is right or wrong, ethical or unethical, is likely to continue in the society (THI March 16). There are many families who have exhausted all medical avenues and resources in the treatment of their ailing family member, whose condition is permanently irreversible. They just pray to God to put an end to the suffering of their loved one quickly. It is time the government takes cognizance of the Supreme Court's landmark verdict and enact a law on euthanasia.

Dinanath Shenolikar, Hyderabad

A touching tribute to Potti Sriramulu

It is a fitting tribute to erect a 58-foot bronze statue of Potti Sriramulu at Shakhamuru in Amaravati as the height of the statue symbolises the number of days he was a fast-unto-death. The statue was unveiled on Friday commemorating his 125th birth anniversary. It is reported that a park is coming up on 6.80 acres of land at an estimated cost of ₹150 crore. His fast-unto-death not only helped create Andhra Pradesh on linguistic lines but also paved the way to forming states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar and Punjab, among others. Though Sriramulu hailed from a humble family, he protested twice before independence for the rights of Dalits and another two times after independence for the same. He sat on a protest for the fifth time for a separate state for Telugu people. His determination and attitude towards public issues made Mahatma Gandhi remark that he would have achieved independence much earlier if had had 10 followers like Sriramulu. The Smrutivanam in his memory will guide future generations.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala, Tiruvuru (AP)

Naidu backing criminals

Hailed as the youngest MP, Putta Mahesh Kumar Yadav, representing TDP in the Lok Sabha, did the unthinkable by consuming cocaine unmindful of the repercussions, if caught. Forgetting his position, he behaved like any other Gen-Z and is now repenting whereas his party boss Nara Chandrababu Naidu, as is his wont, simply issued a show cause notice to the MP seeking a reply within 48 hours. Naidu knows how best to circumvent laws and hush up any case filed against his party leaders, including himself. It is a shame that 'criminals' are masquerading as political 'leaders' in our country and rulers, leaving the people high and dry. Naidu himself is "involved" in several white-collar crimes. A past master in managing the entire system including the judiciary, he "managed" to get an interim bail for himself on medical grounds in the Skill Development Scam case after 53 days in jail as a remand prisoner.

Govardhana Myneedu, Vijayawada

E-waste recycling and safe disposal

This refers to "GHMC collects 15 tonnes of E-waste during mega drive" (March 16). This highlights the urgent need for continuous action. Establishing e-waste collection bins in every residential complex would ensure regular disposal. The collected material can then be recycled, with residues safely handled by GHMC through certified facilities. E-waste recycling recovers valuable metals, plastics, and glass, while safe disposal prevents toxic substances like lead, mercury, and cadmium from contaminating soil and water. The benefits are manifold—conserving resources, reducing pollution, creating green jobs, and supporting a circular economy. It also minimizes landfill waste and lowers the carbon footprint of new electronics production. The challenges include informal recycling practices that expose workers to hazards, limited infrastructure, weak regulation, and rising volumes of e-waste driven by rapid technological change. Stronger policies, global cooperation and consumer responsibility are essential to make e-waste management sustainable.

Dr O Prasada Rao, Hyderabad

Go for a contingency fund

Propos the editorial "Prudent fiscal situation gives govt headroom to tackle crisis" (March 16). The Rs one lakh crore Economic Stabilisation Fund is a wise move to cushion global shocks, but a crisis corpus cannot substitute for fixing structural flaws. The recent Rs 19,230 crore additional fertiliser outlay exposes this reality. Subsidising manufacturers rather than farmers encourages waste, leakages, and soil damage from imbalanced urea use. Genuine fiscal prudence demands shifting to direct benefit transfers, promoting sustainable farming, and diversifying import sources. A contingency fund should address genuine emergencies, not mask the absence of long-overdue reforms. Creating new corpus without tackling old inefficiencies is not consolidation, it is cosmetic comfort.

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BENGALURU ONLINE

Lack of growth strategy impedes globally popular Mysuru silk industry

BENGALURU: Mysore Silk Saree is not just a garment but a symbol of pride for Mysuru and the entire state of Karnataka. Known for its elegance, purity and rich heritage, the saree enjoys enormous demand not only within India but also among buyers abroad. Yet, despite its popularity and economic potential, the industry continues to struggle due to traditional administrative approaches and lack of a progressive growth strategy.

Industry observers say the demand for authentic Mysore silk sarees is so high that influential people in Mysuru often receive calls from customers in other cities and even overseas requesting help in purchasing the premium saree. However, the inability to scale production and modernise the sector has prevented the industry from tapping its full potential.

Read more at
<https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

TG Speaker's order on anti-defection petitions is a tricky constitutional test



PROF. MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU

It seems like the Anti-Defection Law is a defective law or a totally defective conclusion on the judgment of the Speaker of Telangana, Gaddam Prasad Kumar, on March 11. This has intensified a debate on whether the Speaker's decision was based on a strictly legal interpretation or influenced by political considerations.

The controversy surrounding the alleged defection of ten Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Telangana has once again placed India's anti-defection law, legislative ethics, and constitutional accountability under intense public scrutiny. What began as a political dispute has now evolved into a significant constitutional question involving the powers of the Speaker, the limits of judicial review, and the integrity of representative democracy. The recent (March 13) directions of the Supreme Court of India in the matter have not decided the merits of the dispute but have highlighted a critical issue: transparency and procedural fairness in the Speaker's adjudication of disqualification petitions. The matter was heard by a two-judge bench, comprising Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice

Augustine George Masih.

During the proceedings, senior advocates appearing for the Speaker's office and the State government submitted that the Speaker had already completed the inquiry and had passed the final orders in all the disqualification petitions.

The controversy arose after ten MLAs, who were elected to the Telangana Legislative Assembly on the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) ticket, were accused of joining the ruling Congress party. Alleging that these MLAs had voluntarily given up their party membership, BRS leaders, including its working president K T Rama Rao (KTR) and Padi Kaushik Reddy, along with BJP MLA Yelethi Maheshwar Reddy, approached the Supreme Court seeking directions regarding the disqualification petitions.

The petitions challenged the delay and the Speaker's alleged inaction in deciding the disqualification complaints under the anti-defection law.

According to the Speaker's decision, the 10 MLAs had not defected from the BRS, and hence the disqualification petitions were dismissed. However, the petitioners raised a serious objection before the Court: copies of the Speaker's orders and records of the proceedings were not furnished to them.

SC's directions:

Taking note of these concerns, the Supreme Court questioned why the Speaker's office had not supplied the relevant documents to the petitioners, especially when they were parties to the proceedings. The court directed that certified copies of the



When voters elect a candidate based on the platform and ideology of a particular party, they are essentially endorsing that political programme. If the elected representative later switches allegiance, the voters' mandate is arguably compromised. The anti-defection law was meant to protect this mandate

Speaker's orders must be provided within 24 hours, while the depositions, statements, and other documents recorded during the proceedings had to be furnished within four days. At the same time, the court closed the present batch of petitions, observing that since the Speaker had already delivered his decisions, the appropriate remedy available to the petitioners would be to challenge those decisions through judicial review before the High Court. Thus, while the Supreme Court did not examine the correctness of the Speaker's verdict, it ensured that the petitioners would have access to the necessary documents to pursue further legal remedies.

The controversial findings:

The Speaker's ruling that the 10 MLAs had not defected triggered widespread criticism from political opponents and constitutional commentators. Several facts cited in the public domain have raised doubts about this conclusion. For instance, Khairatabad MLA Danam Nagender reportedly contested the Lok

Sabha elections from Secunderabad as a Congress candidate. Meanwhile, records on the Election Commission's website list him as a Congress nominee.

Similarly, Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiyam Srihari had been seen participating in Congress meetings and public programmes. His daughter contested the Warangal Lok Sabha seat as a Congress candidate and won. Given these developments, critics argue that it is difficult to reconcile the Speaker's finding that these MLAs continue to remain members of the BRS.

Constitutional Framework

The issue of defections in India is governed by the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, introduced by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment in 1985. Under the Tenth Schedule, a legislator may be disqualified if:

- They voluntarily give up membership of the political party on whose ticket they were elected;
- They vote or abstain from voting against the party whip without permission;

- An independent member joins a political party after being elected;
- The authority to decide disqualification petitions rests with the Speaker (or Chairman) of the legislature.

Judicial review of the decisions:

The question of whether the Speaker's decisions can be reviewed by courts was settled in the landmark case of Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu. In that judgment, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the anti-defection law but ruled that the Speaker's decisions are subject to judicial review. The court held that judicial intervention may be justified if the Speaker's decision:

- Violates constitutional provisions;
- Breaches the principles of natural justice;
- Is vitiated by mala fides or perversity.

Thus, the Speaker's decision is not beyond scrutiny. This principle is likely to be central if the Telangana matter reaches the High Court. Another recurring problem in anti-defection cases is the delay in deciding disqualification petitions. In the Telangana case, critics argue that not only was there a delay in deciding the petitions, but there was also a reluctance to provide certified copies of the orders, which further obstructed judicial review.

Natural justice:

At the heart of the controversy lies the issue of natural justice. Two core principles govern fair adjudication: Audi alteram partem, both sides must be heard, and reasoned decisions, the par-

ties must know the basis on which a decision has been made.

Democratic mandate:

Beyond legal technicalities, the issue of defections raises deeper questions about democratic morality. The Supreme Court's latest order does not conclude the controversy. Instead, it marks the beginning of the next phase of legal scrutiny. Once the Speaker's orders and related records are obtained, the petitioners are likely to approach the Telangana High Court seeking judicial review.

The High Court may examine several crucial questions:

- Whether the MLAs had effectively given up their party membership;
 - Whether the Speaker's inquiry was fair and impartial;
 - Whether the decision is consistent with the constitutional principles governing defections.
- Depending on the outcome, the matter could eventually return to the Supreme Court.

The Telangana episode also revives a broader institutional debate: Should the power to decide defection cases remain with the Speaker?

Several constitutional scholars have suggested that this responsibility should instead be entrusted to an independent tribunal or the Election Commission of India to ensure impartiality. Until such reforms are undertaken, controversies like the present one are likely to recur.

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The silent thunder: When Vajpayee, the poet-PM, recalibrated the global order

NOMULA SRINIVAS RAO

We have the capacity for a big blast. Ours is not a cry of despair; it is a challenge to the world - Atal Bihari Vajpayee

In the blistering, white-hot heat of the Thar Desert on May 11, 1998, the very sands of Pokhran didn't just shift; they shook the foundations of a geopolitical hierarchy that had long sought to keep India in a state of perpetual "strategic restraint." As the ground buckled and the sensors registered a seismic tremor of 5.3 on the Richter scale, a coded message flashed across the high-security corridors of New Delhi: "The Buddha has smiled again."

It was a moment of supreme audacity, orchestrated by a man who was as much a master of silence as he was of the spoken word. Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the poet-statesman, had just led India across the nuclear Rubicon, transforming a "post-colonial entity" into a "formidable power."

Anatomy of a secret-Defying the eye in the sky:

The 1998 Pokhran-II tests, codenamed 'Operation Shakti', were not merely a scientific achievement; they were a masterclass in clandestine leadership and psychological warfare. Vajpayee understood a chilling reality: the world's superpowers—armed with billion-dollar KH-11 "Keyhole" spy satellites—were watching India's every move from the heavens. The CIA had successfully blocked previous attempts by detecting heat signatures and soil movement. To succeed, Vajpayee knew he didn't just need scientists; he needed shadows.

Under his unwavering direction, the mission was shrouded in a "cloak of invisibility." He empowered the duo of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and Dr R Chidambaram to operate with total autonomy, bypassing the traditional, leak-prone bureaucracy. Scientists wore army fatigues to blend in with the local units, worked only during the brief "black



spots" when satellites were positioned elsewhere, and moved heavy equipment under the cover of swirling sandstorms.

Vajpayee's leadership was the steady, invisible hand on the tiller. He took the ultimate gamble with India's economy, knowing that the fallout—draconian economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation—would be immediate. Yet he remained resolute. While the West slept, a poet was preparing a symphony of fire. He chose the nation's long-term dignity over the world's short-term approval, proving that true sovereignty cannot be requested—it must be taken.

The nuclear paradox-Iron fist, a velvet heart:

Vajpayee was a walking paradox, a leader who authorized the creation of world-ending weapons while penning verses about the fragility of a dewdrop. His decision to "go nuclear" was not born of warmongering or a thirst for conquest, but of a deep-seated, civilisational desire for peace through strength. He famously remarked that weapons are not for war, but to ensure that war never happens.

He believed that a weak India could never be a truly peaceful India but a vulnerable one. By declaring India a nuclear-weapon state, he wasn't seeking a tool for aggression; he was building a "Minimum Credible Deterrent." His strategic foresight was prophetic. He anticipated the two-front threat from neighbours long before it became a staple of modern defense journals.

The "poet's resolve" was visible even as he faced the wrath of the Clinton administration. He remained unfazed in the face of global condemnation, famously stating in Parliament that India would never use these weapons against non-nuclear states—the No First Use (NFU) policy. This was his hallmark: the heart of a poet who wept for the fallen soldier, but the spine of a warrior who ensured that no mother would ever have to weep because her country was defenseless against nuclear blackmail.

From 1998 to a global power: Estimates are that India possesses an arsenal of approximately 180 nuclear warheads. Vajpayee transformed India from a "suppliant" state, constantly asking for

permission, into a "deciding" power. He proved that India could withstand global sanctions and emerge stronger, eventually forcing the world to sign the Civil Nuclear Deal and recognize India as a responsible nuclear state.

He led with a smile that carried the weight of a thousand suns and a voice that could silence a storm. He showed that you could be a man of peace while holding the ultimate deterrent, and that a poet's vision is often clearer than a politician's calculation.

As we look back at the 1998 explosions, we remember not just the fire in the sky, but the calm in the heart of the man who ignited it. He was Bharat's true Ratna—a bridge between the ancient wisdom of the Buddha and the modern necessity of the missile.

My poetry is a declaration of war against defeat, not a song of surrender - Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

(The writer is a former OSD to Union Civil Aviation Minister)