

INDIA'S JOBS CRISIS

Any nation that aspires to be a superpower must be backed by its youth that is meaningfully employed and has a positive mindset. Indeed, India is one of the youngest nation of the world has a sizable youthful energy. But if it is not engaged in constructive work there is a high chance of it going wayward. In keeping with his commitment to provide jobs, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presided over the 19th edition of the Rozgar Mela, distributing appointment letters to over 51,000 freshly recruited government employees across 47 locations nationwide. The ceremony was warm. The intent, no doubt, is genuine. But the arithmetic is brutal. India adds roughly a million young people to its workforce every single month. Fifty-one thousand government posts, distributed once every few months, is a gesture — not a solution. Youth unemployment in India stood at 15.2 per cent as of March 2026, up from lows of 13.8 per cent just a year earlier, with young women faring far worse at nearly 18 per cent. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), an independent body, has consistently placed unemployment between 7–8 per cent — more than double the government's own survey figures — reflecting a chasm between how joblessness is measured and how it is experienced. Behind every statistic is a graduate sending out hundreds of applications, a young person cycling between gig stints, a family waiting on one steady income that never seems to arrive. Over 30 lakh vacancies remain unfilled in central government departments alone — even as Rozgar Melas distribute letters in the tens of thousands. The PM's original 2014 promise of two crore jobs a year now reads as a stark reminder of the distance between ambition and delivery. None of this is to say the Rozgar Mela is without value. For the 51,000 individuals who received their letters on Friday, this is life-changing. A government job in India remains a rare, coveted thing — stable, pensioned, insulated from the chaos of informal work that employs the vast majority of Indians. Every vacancy filled is a family's circumstances altered. That matters.

But the deeper crisis is structural, and ceremonial hiring drives cannot fix it. India's private sector — particularly manufacturing — has failed to absorb the demographic dividend at scale. The Production Linked Incentive scheme holds promise, and PM Modi's recent agreements with the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Italy in semiconductors, AI, and advanced manufacturing could, over time, seed high-quality employment. The keyword is time. Youth cannot wait a decade. The way forward demands three urgent shifts. First, a serious and transparent accounting of vacancies — not as political ammunition, but as a national obligation. If 30 lakh posts are empty in central government, they must be filled. Second, invest massively in quality skilling under PMKVY and allied programmes so that the millions outside government employment can compete in formal private sector jobs. Third, make it genuinely easier for small and medium enterprises to hire, expand, and formalise — because that is where the bulk of India's employment must ultimately come from.

Can Vijay follow NTR's political script?

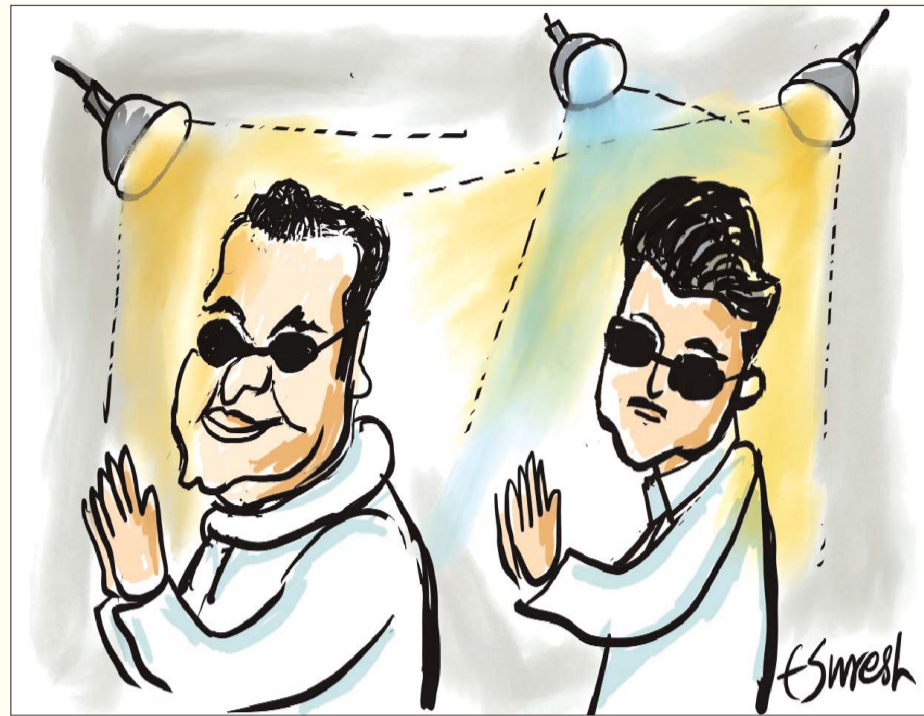
Kalyani Shanikar

In the vibrant South Indian political landscape, movies have often been intertwined with politics. Few personalities exemplify this connection better than two film superstars, Vijay and NT Rama Rao (NTR). They both share a common link: they became chief ministers shortly after launching their parties. As a leading Tamil superstar, comparisons with MG Ramachandran (MGR) are common for Vijay, but a more fitting parallel might be Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR) of Andhra Pradesh. Vijay, like NTR, entered politics at the peak of his fame and quickly found success. As he is still new to politics, it is important to be patient and give him time to demonstrate his leadership potential.

Both matinee idols leveraged their on-screen fame to become Chief Ministers in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, transforming their fan clubs into political support. NTR said he wanted to serve the people after completing all his duties. Vijay said that he would leave the film industry to help people. He said, "For the fans who gave up everything for me, I'm stepping away from cinema altogether."

After he started the party, NTR toured the state in an old Chevrolet car that looked like a chariot, named Chaitanya Ratham (chariot of awakening). He travelled around the state, even though elections were still a year away, showing himself as an alternative to the Congress, the ruling party in Andhra Pradesh. NTR became Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh just nine months after founding the Telugu Desam Party, demonstrating how quickly film stars can influence politics.

In Tamil Nadu, important political figures include CN Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi from the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and film



stars MG Ramachandran (MGR) and J. Jayalalithaa from the AIADMK. MGR, a former film star, left the DMK due to internal conflicts and founded his own party, the AIADMK. His transition from cinema to politics was emblematic of how film stars became central to Tamil regional identity and political power, with MGR serving as Chief Minister from 1977 to 1987. Their careers exemplify the deep intertwining of cinema and regional political leadership in Tamil Nadu, illustrating the cultural significance of film stars in shaping local politics.

MGR's tenure was marked by grassroots welfare initiatives, such as the "Two Rupees a kg rice" program and mid-day meals for schoolchildren, which fostered a sense of trust and respect for his commitment to the common people.

Each leader represents the hopes and needs of their time. NTR faced the social and economic challenges of the past,

while Vijay faces the rapid changes of today. Their stories show how cinema continues to shape public life and influence politics. life.

NT Rama Rao (NTR) was a prominent leader in Telugu and Tamil cinema, best known for playing mythological characters. In 1982, he started the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) to promote pride and welfare for Telugu people. His simple message focused on food, shelter, and clothing, leading to important programs like the Rs 2 per kilogram rice scheme. His career exemplifies how film stars can leverage regional identity to influence politics and mobilise support among local communities.

NTR was elected three times with large majorities, but his governments never completed their full terms. He was a charismatic leader who understood the struggles of poor people. He made a lasting impact on politics through his initiatives and connections with grassroots movements. He was also a strong

public speaker. He starred in over 300 films, primarily in Telugu cinema, and was known as "Viswa Vikhyatha Nata Sarvabhooma."

He acted in over 300 films in his career from 1949 to 1982.

NTR focused on regional identity and welfare during his political career. In contrast, Vijay tackles economic issues and concerns of young people in his approach. NTR died in a state of sadness, while Vijay is still building his political legacy in a difficult environment.

NTR was seen as a kind leader who worked closely with local communities to provide direct benefits. In contrast, Vijay positions himself as a forward-thinking reformer, addressing today's youth's needs with a modern approach and adapting quickly to change.

Vijay ended the long-standing Dravidian dominance in South Indian politics. He gained significant political support just two years after founding his party, offering hope for new leadership in the region. Meanwhile, NTR ended Congress rule in Andhra Pradesh.

Vijay's initial style as Chief Minister was distinctly corporate, prioritising transparency and centralised financial reporting to tackle debt, illustrating his focus on managing a modern economy.

Vijay's approach differs from NTR's. While NTR focused on fighting corruption and promoting rural welfare, Vijay targets the aspirations of today's youth. He portrays himself as relatable and often plays the underdog in his films. By connecting with young voters through strong social media campaigns, Vijay emphasises transparency and modern economic policies. By incorporating anti-corruption themes, he builds his political identity and gains loyalty from young fans.

Now that Vijay is in power, without any administrative experience, we must give him his honeymoon period of six months and see how he performs.

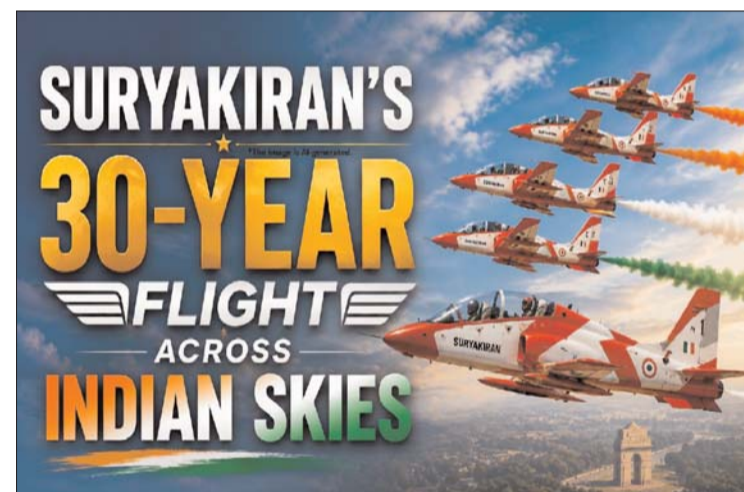
SURYAKIRAN'S 30-YEAR FLIGHT ACROSS INDIAN SKIES

Sayan Chatterjee

Formed in 1996 at Air Force Station Bidar in Karnataka, Suryakiran was established as the Indian Air Force's dedicated aerobatic display team. The unit originally flew the HJT-16 Kiran trainer aircraft, from which it derived its name. Over time, the team's striking red-and-white jets became synonymous with Indian aviation displays, drawing huge crowds wherever they performed.

For the last three decades, the red-and-white aircraft of the Suryakiran Aerobatic Team have remained one of the most recognisable sights in Indian and international skies (through participation). Known for their sharp formations, colourful smoke trails, and breathtaking precision, the team has become the public face of the Indian Air Force at air shows and national celebrations across the country.

What separates Suryakiran from ordinary flying is the level of precision involved. Pilots fly at high speeds while maintaining extremely close distances between aircraft during loops, barrel rolls, mirror passes, and synchronised formations. In many manoeuvres, aircraft fly only a few metres apart, demanding extraordinary concentra-



tion and trust between pilots. At its peak, Suryakiran operated with a formidable nine aircraft flying together, making it one of the largest aerobatic teams in Asia. Every pilot selected into the team is first a trained Indian Air Force officer. Aerobatic flying is considered among the toughest forms of aviation because it combines high-speed manoeuvring with split-second decision-making under intense physical pressure. Selection into Suryakiran has long been viewed as both prestigious and demanding within the Air Force.

Over the years, the team has performed

at Republic Day celebrations.

Aero India exhibitions in Bengaluru, and air displays across India, becoming a major attraction for aviation enthusiasts and the public alike. For many young Indians, watching

Suryakiran was often their first close glimpse of military aviation. The team's journey, however, was not without setbacks. In 2011, Suryakiran was temporarily disbanded due to aircraft shortages and operational priorities within the Indian Air Force. The decision disappointed aviation followers across the country, many of whom believed the famous display team might never return. But four years later, in 2015, Suryakiran returned with a new identity and a new aircraft platform — the Hawk Mk132 Advanced Jet Trainer. The induction of the Hawk significantly modernised the team,

offering improved performance capability, avionics, and safety standards.

The team has also faced moments of tragedy. In 2019, two pilots lost their lives in a crash during a practice sortie ahead of Aero India in Bengaluru, underlining the risks associated with formation aerobatic flying, where margins for error remain extremely small. Yet, despite losses and interruptions, Suryakiran endured. Today, the team represents more than aerial entertainment. It has become a symbol of precision, discipline, professionalism, and the softer side of military aviation diplomacy — one that connects directly with civilians, within and across borders, through skill and spectacle rather than conflict. As Suryakiran completes thirty years, the team continues to evolve while retaining the spirit that made it iconic. During its latest public performance, the formation once again painted the sky with its signature tricolour smoke trails before breaking into a perfectly synchronised manoeuvre that drew applause from thousands watching below.

It was a familiar sight — fast jets, perfect timing, and silence turning into awe. Three decades later, Suryakiran still does what it has always done best: reminding India that flying, at its highest level, is as much about trust and precision as it is about speed.

Rubio in India: Did he succeed in repairing the India-US partnership?

Ambassador Ashok Sajjanhar

The US Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited India for four days from May 23-26, 2026. It was his first visit to India after assuming office in January 2025.

Relations between India and the US have grown progressively over the last quarter of a century. The two countries started on a positive note in Trump's second term with an early and substantive stand-alone visit by PM Narendra Modi to the White House on 13th February, 2025.

In a surprising move, however, the US slapped 25 per cent tariffs on imports from India on April 3rd, 2025. This was followed on 10th May, 2025, by President Trump's announcement about the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the Op Sindoar conflict, even before India had made the announcement. India never accepted Trump's claim of having mediated the ceasefire. Matters deteriorated further with the imposition of an additional 25 per cent penalty tariff on Indian goods

due to the purchase of Russian oil. Other importers, including China, which imported more Russian oil and gas than India, were left untouched.

The last year also witnessed several derogatory remarks emanating from the right-wing Trump support base and senior officials of the US administration. Trump's frequent compliments to PM Modi in recent months, amidst such remarks against India and Indians, have been viewed as patronising in India.

It was against this background that Rubio undertook his visit. He called on PM Modi, held bilateral discussions with EAM Jaishankar and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, and participated in the Quad foreign ministers' meeting.

In addition to New Delhi, he travelled to Kolkata, Agra and Jaipur. Recent months have also witnessed the US cosy up to Pakistan and China, the two avowed adversaries of India.

Bilateral discussions

Rubio had announced before his departure for India that he would encour-



age India to buy more energy from the US and possibly also from Venezuela. On the economic front, Rubio and Jaishankar spoke about the value of concluding the interim agreement regarding reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade. Energy formed a significant aspect of the discussions, as ensuring the

discussed nuclear energy cooperation in the backdrop of the recent visit by an American delegation.

On defence and security, a comprehensive underwater domain awareness roadmap was signed. Cooperation in critical minerals and Pax Silica received

accessibility and affordability of energy for India's 1.4 billion people remains India's prime objective. The ministers also

special mention. A bilateral agreement to promote partnership and ensure trusted, reliable supply chains in this crucial field was inked. Jaishankar raised the problems faced by legitimate Indian travellers in the issuance of visas by the US and expressed India's expectation that legal mobility from India would not be hampered. The necessity of continued strong cooperation and zero tolerance towards terrorism was highlighted.

The Quad deliberations The Quad foreign ministers' meeting took place on May 26, 2026. This was the third such meeting since Trump assumed office in January 2025. There has been considerable disquiet in Indian political and academic circles as the Quad Summit, to be hosted by India in 2025, was not held, and there is no indication of where and when it might take place.

Observers see this as evidence of the US losing interest in the Quad. In Trump's first term, the Quad was revived in 2017 after a decade of hibernation. Trump had then identified China

as a systemic threat with the capacity and intent to dislodge the US from its pre-eminent global position. In his second term, after facing pushback from China through export controls on critical minerals, Trump termed China not a strategic threat but a commercial competitor.

The Quad foreign ministers' meeting was therefore a welcome opportunity to revitalise the forum. It is widely recognised that China is perceived as a security threat in the Indo-Pacific. All Quad members seek active US engagement to ensure peace, security, and a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific. The Quad decided to expand cooperation under the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA). It launched the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration (IPMSC) to strengthen coordination in maritime surveillance. The ministers strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms, including cross-border terrorism, and condemned the terrorist attack in Pahalgam in April 2025.