

UNION TERRITORY INDEPENDENT

₹20

JANUARY 01-15 2024

VOL . 33

ISSUE 13

NEW DELHI

PAGES 20

www.utindependentnews.in

US 50c UK p50



WORLD 2024

**UNION TERRITORY
 INDEPENDENT
 WORLD PEACE
 MUST FOR PROGRESS**

There comes 2024. Bygones are Bygones. Let's leave behind the unpleasant of 2023 and look forward to the New Year with dreams filled with bettered lifestyle. World is expecting to move forward with development and technological advancement to better their lives.

Development and people welfare are directly connected to World Peace. 2023 witnessed one of the worst conflicts that threw the world peace off the dictionaries. The continuing Russia-Ukraine conflict, the ferocious Israel on war with unrelenting Hamas, expansionism posture of some countries to gain dominance, the non-Islamic-Islamic divide, internal and external disturbances by terror groups have all cumulatively eroded the peace processes across the globe. Development and people livelihood have been the worst casualties.

It is time all understand that we are all humans. No caste, creed, status or religious faiths can disprove that we are not. Neither should they divide humanity. A life lost, whether civilian, soldier or a so called terrorist, all are human. It is all about losing a human life. World should work and act as one family, where differences are natural, but should not afflict pain or affect the peace of others.

Injustice and inequalities fuel conflicts and antagonisms. With conflicts and wars escalating around the globe and world peace becoming the worst causality, it is time the world came together with one mind and one objective, Peace for all. There is an urgent need for all new approach to fine lasting solutions to plaguing issues leading to lasting peace.

Technological advancements is key to development. Developments across sectors create jobs. Jobs ensure regular income. Regular income improves the lifestyle of people leading to lasting peace. Satisfied people, aged, youth, men and women, would all focus on national development with one heart. This leads eventually to world peace.

Contrary to misread fear, technology will not eat away jobs. In fact it would only make human efforts more efficient, faster and also create more meaningful jobs, plugging loopholes of repletion saving soaring operational costs leading to healthy profitability. This means more jobs and better income to employees.

Planned and secure artificial intelligence is creating sensations across the world. Technology marvels are for human benefit, not human divide or inflicting pains. Extensive scientific research has substantiated that technologies create a measurable influence of peace throughout society. Focusing solely on the practical applications of proven technologies of consciousness would radiate a coherence-creating influence of peace throughout the world.

The need of the hour is for individuals of all capacities and age groups be proactive, positive societal agents imparting the benefits of lasting peace in the society that will reflect in the Nation and world peace that will ensure fast-paced development.

All said the foremost is United Nation needs to be strengthened. UN has unfortunately has become a puppet of some powerful funding nations that steers its policies and nations. UN should come out of these unsound clutches. UN is for the world and not for select few nations. Undoubtedly, in the current scenario of wildly spreading conflicts, expansionism postures UN is losing its objectives for which the world came together to be an integral part of this organization whose prime role is to administer lasting peace across the world. Moreover, finding pathways to peace has indeed become a challenging endeavour for the UN with the deep polarisation of the current world order. A strong impartial UN to which all the countries are dedicated and committed to would guarantee lasting peace in the world.

World is tired of conflicts. Wars only bring mass destructions and loss of life and trigger more wars. This blocks the smooth road to lasting peace. Wars should stop and move towards development for bettering the life of people leading to lasting peace.

India is one of the most favoured country with best of relations. With a strong leadership and bouncing economy with all round development could be a key messenger of peace across the world, setting developmental and peace models for the world to admire and follow.

S H A Badshah

**DUBAI ZEROES IN ON
 MAHADEV SCAM**

The Mahadev Betting App scam running into several hundred thousand crores of rupees created sensation few months ago when a huge financial fraud of duping innocent people using UPI payment system was unearthed by chance when the promoters hosted a extra lavish marriage party in Dubai which saw top celebrities in attendance. It was alleged that the top celebrities were paid huge amounts in hard cash.

The Mahadev app case is a high-profile scandal involving an online betting platform that enabled illegal gambling on various games, such as poker, card games, badminton, tennis, football and cricket and the promoters were making illicit money of over Rs 200 crore per day collected from innocent people, all using the UPI payment system.

Enforcement Directorate (ED) is investigating this scam that saw at least Rs 6000 crore siphoned out of India illegally and the agency had filed a case of Money Laundering against the promoters Sourabh Chandrakar and his partner Ravi Uppal who had already been detained in Dubai.

Sourabh Chandrakar, the promoter of the online betting platform, is under a money laundering probe by the central probe agency based on a case before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Chhattisgarh's Raipur in October.

According to the probe agency, Sourabh Chandrakar and another promoter, Ravi Uppal were involved in money laundering and hawala transactions using the Mahadev betting platform, from a central head office in the UAE, and the projected proceeds of the crime in this case is about Rs 6,000 crore, per the investigations done so far and the evidences in hand with ED.

Uppal was detained earlier in Dubai by local authorities. At the time, the anti-money laundering agency said that officials were in touch with the Arab country to deport Uppal to India. Now the Dubai authorities have zeroed in on the key fraudster Sourabh Chandrakar, the Mahadev Betting app promoter, in Dubai after India's Red Corner Notice.

The authorities in the UAE have locked in on the location of Sourabh Chandrakar, the

key fraudster and promoter of the Mahadev Book App Betting platform, in Dubai. Chandrakar is not being allowed to move out as he is a flight risk as the foreign authorities are presently keeping vigil over him.

The authorities in the Middle East Asian country were acting on a Red Corner Notice issued at the request of the Enforcement Directorate through Interpol. They are awaiting the Indian authorities to start the process of his extradition to India.

During the investigation into this money laundering case, several Bollywood celebrities, including Ranbir Kapoor, Shradha Kapoor, Huma Qureshi, Kapil Sharma, Boman Irani and Hina Khan were summoned by the Enforcement Directorate. The probe agency suspects them of having accepted substantial sums of cash as payment for their participation or performances at events organised by Uppal and Chandrakar. With both the fraudsters in the ED net and with both being brought back to India soon, this high profile case holds huge interest as several more interesting revelations could come to light.

**FLOATING & UNDER SEA
 POWER GENERATION**

China has done it. World's first ever, proving its technology prowess in power generation. No dams, no flowing water for hydro power. It is all from just water pressure of the undersea currents to generate power, all at low costs.

China has built undersea power stations that are located two kilometers below the seabed. These power stations use the kinetic energy from the rise and fall of seawater to generate electricity.

China's undersea power stations are different from traditional tidal power stations, which use floating devices on the surface of the sea. China's technology allows the power stations to operate in a place that is inaccessible to most people, except for advanced deep sea research submarines.

China is a world leader in hydropower, with an exploitable capacity ranging from 400-700 GW. In 2022,

China's hydropower generation reached 1,352.2 billion kilowatt-hours, accounting for 15.3 percent of the country's total power generation. China also has four of the world's six largest dams, including the world's biggest, the Three Gorges Dam.

In another breakthrough, it achieved success in first floating ocean thermal energy power generation.

China's first floating ocean thermal energy conversion device for generating electricity has successfully completed offshore testing under actual marine conditions.

The 20-kilowatt device was carried by the Haiyang Dizhi 2 (Ocean Geology 2) ship, which successfully completed an offshore trial in the South China Sea and returned to Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong Province, said the project developer.

Ocean thermal energy

refers to the heat energy formed by the temperature difference between the surface waters of the ocean and the colder deep waters. This temperature difference can be used to generate electricity through the ocean thermal energy conversion device.

China also has overcome issues related to some core key technologies such as deep-sea thermal insulation water intake, and cold water pipeline installation. The device achieves a 100 percent localization rate, with low cost and strong maneuverability, according to its developer.

The project represents a certain level of technological breakthrough, but there is still a long way to go for large-scale commercial application, Lin Boqiang, director of the China Center for Energy Economics Research at Xiamen University, told the Global Times on Tuesday.

Printed, Published and owned by S.H.A. Badshah, Published at Union Territory Independent, 2997 Kucha Neel kanth, Dariya Ganj, New Delhi-110002 Printed at Pushpak Press Pvt. Ltd.
 OIA, Phase-I, New Delhi - 20 **EDITOR** : S.H.A. Badshah,
E-MAIL : editor@utindependentindia.com,
TEL : 011-43721468,
MARKETING : +91-9213947445
WEBSITE : www.utindependentnews.in
E-MAIL : utindependentindia@gmail.com
ADVERTISEMENT E-MAIL : utindependentindia@gmail.com
SUBSCRIPTION E-MAIL : utindependentindia@hotmail.com
 All disputed matters in Delhi Jurisdiction only.
 Outside Delhi Air/Railways surcharge ₹30 per copy

RAHUL READY

Rahul Gandhi kickstarted the Congress 2024 Lok Sabha elections campaign starting with the 'Hain Tayyar Hum' (We are ready) rally in Nagpur, Maharashtra on the occasion of the 139th Foundation Day of the grand old party.

This election launch rally comes two weeks ahead of Rahul Gandhi's planned 6000 KMs Bharat Jodo Yatra 2.0, termed 'Bharat Nyay Yatra', starting from the disturbed North Eastern State of Manipur to Mumbai. With this yatra 2.0, that would focus on social, economic and political justice, the Congress hopes that it can counter BJP's temple politics post Ram Mandir inauguration at Ayodhya.

Rahul described the polls as a battle of two ideologies, meaning thereby, the one that builds and the other that destroys. He exuded confidence saying that the newly formed opposition grouping I.N.D.I. alliance would win the 2024 polls and the Congress ideology is to hand over the reign of the country to the common man.

The rally witnessed unprecedented crowd of over a lakh that thronged the venue, were battling to have a glimpse of the Congress scion. Huge crowd attendance at the Rahul 2024 general elections campaign launch rally was overwhelming and appeared even beyond the expectations of the party. The overheated crowd chanted Rahul's name in a fit of fervor.

The party specifically chose Nagpur to sound the bugle for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections as Nagpur is home to Deekshabhoomi, where Dr Ambedkar converted to Buddhism along with his followers and more so is also the city that houses the Headquarters of the RSS, BJP's mentor, to whom it wanted to hit the election battle siren.

This apart, Nagpur is located in the heart of the Vidarbha region and it holds a significant place in the history of Congress. In December 1920, the Congress party under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership launched the non-cooperation movement against the British during its Nagpur session. Hence, Rahul and Congress chose Nagpur to launch its 2024 election campaign.

Terming the BJP government as one of "slavery" under a dictatorial rule, Raul said that this is not a battle of just politics or tussle for power, but a battle of two different ideologies.

Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress, which is clearly on the backfoot after losing three Assembly elections in the Hindi heartland, has been making concerted attempts to take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP-NDA combine through the I.N.D.I. alliance, despite sever-

al cracks within. However, the Nagpur rally is a big step forward for the party.

Expressing his confidence in the newly formed opposition grouping I.N.D.I. alliance, Rahul said, "Together, we will fight with our heart and soul. Hindustan mein hum chunav jitenge."

Taking a jibe at the BJP, Rahul Gandhi said, "Unlike in BJP, even a junior Congress worker can question and disagree with top party leaders". Accusing the BJP government as one of dictatorial, he said in comparison "In the Congress the voice comes from the grassroots. Party workers can walk up to me and say that they don't endorse what I did or said. I give them full audience and they can speak freely. At times I tell them I may not agree with their views," he said.

He also attacked what he called misuse of Central agencies CBI and ED by the Centre against the Opposition and Equating the Modi-led BJP to an era when there was rule of Kings.

Rahul added, "Before Independence there were 500 to 600 kings. There was British rule. It was the Congress party which gave people voice and dignity through the Constitution, which was drafted by Dr B R Ambedkar. Every citizen of the country was given the right to vote. It was done for the first time in Hindustan. There was no discrimination between Dalits, tribals and general category. There was no discrimination between Tamils, Bengalis or people in UP."

Rahul slammed the Modi government over failure to address employment and farmers' issues.

Raising the OBC plank, Rahul said OBCs, Dalits and tribals do not have enough representation in many sectors in the country and reiterated that a caste census will be conducted if the I.N.D.I. alliance came to power and they would be given adequate representation.

Describing Maharashtra as a special land, Rahul said, "Maharashtra is Congress' land. Everybody here understands Congress ideology without having to explain. Our battle started in Maharashtra. Therefore, we chose to hold the rally in Nagpur. The Congress workers here is 'Babbar Sher'. Don't fear anybody."

Maharashtra Congress Chief Nana Patole had said that the party will give a message of change to defeat the BJP.

Rahul has started the 2024 campaign. He has shown the way forward. He also has indicated the tone of the campaign. It is now for his team to take this forward to ensure his efforts are translated into votes. Will the leaders take the cue? Wait and watch!



KEJRI DOWN AND OUT?

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal appears getting deeper into the whirlpool of problems amidst the Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigations into the storm of several high profile cases of scams and money laundering that has implicated even his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as one of the beneficiaries of the illicit transactions arising from these scams. Three of his colleagues, two of his ministers, already are languishing in jail related to these scams and money laundering cases.

This is the third notice to Arvind Kejriwal, the National Convenor of the AAP, after he refused to appear before the federal agency on two earlier summons for November 2 and December 21 in the Liquor policy case and the related money laundering of the illicit proceeds.

Previous excuses for skipping the summons were frivolous, making him a laughing stock in the eyes of the people and the other political parties. His first summon excuse was that

the summon was "vague, motivated and unsustainable in law" and more over he was busy campaigning in the 5 State elections. His second summon skip excuse was that he was going on 10 days 'Vipassana' meditation program. The wait is to see his third summon skip excuse. This should be interesting.

ED has sent Delhi CM Kejriwal a third summon to appear in person. Delhi CM has been avoiding the summons, having skipped the earlier two on flimsy grounds and piling mindless questions against the validity of such summons by ED. Earlier, the ED sources had themselves opined that Kejriwal possibly does not have a good advisory team who have been wrongly advising him to skip the summons amounting to him confirming his fear of getting caught in the scams.

The latest of the scams that he is accused of is the Corruption In Delhi Flood Department and its Payment To the Contractors. The allegations are that "corruption" in the award

of tenders by the flood and irrigation department and payments to contractors without any work being done on the ground. Virendra Sachdeva, the BJP's Delhi unit chief, and Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Bidhuri during a recent joint press conference showed copies of purported documents and also interacted with party workers present on the spots where the work was tendered by the department.

Going by the string of allegations of scams and illicit transactions and the ED investigations pont to rampant Corruption that appears to have spread to every department of the Kejriwal government. In the last few weeks alone, there have been exposures of tender and other scams of the Delhi Jal Board and now this new scam.

One of the biggest issue the Kejriwal faces is that his own hand-picked officers do not listen to him and his instructions. All the revenue earning departments are running in losses, daily losses. Kejriwal's



earlier complaint was that he is unable to implement plans because the MCD was under BJP. But now this having changed in the past one year, the current excuse is that the officers are not working as a team with him and are averse to implementing his populist schemes and programs.

Arvind Kejriwal's fall from grace is truly pathetic for a man who had no political experience but claimed and touted himself to be the cleanest politician in the world, is now em-

broiled a huge line up corruption, scams and money laundering. In the current scenario it is not just a simple fall from grace but the very purpose and existence of his party, AAP, especially when the all crucial 2024 elections are just round the corner. But all said when it comes to choosing between a devil and a bigger devil, the smaller one just might scrape through with the economically unsound freebies politics he germinated in the Indian politics.

Garbage Loot Continues!

THAMBI MARIMUTHU

There appears no end to corruption and scams in the UT of Puducherry. Government officials and private contractors nexus to siphon out exchequer money collected from the taxpayer hard money, appears to be a never ending woe. There are newer revelations of corruption triggering huge transactions bypassing the government prescribed norms and processes. All these happening uncontrolled and fearlessly under the nose of the government and the top local administration officials who all claim to be working towards a transparent and clean administration.

Not mindful of earlier revelations there are some who continue to abate corruption triggering illicit transactions at the cost of the government money. Waste collection is one such sector where several of the prescribed norms and guidelines are allegedly being flouted. Waste collection is one of the most important functions of the local municipal corporation, aimed at keeping the environment clean for sound health of the people, devoid of diseases.

It is alleged that Hyderabad-based HR Square that is said to have bagged a 10-year garbage collection and disposal contract



in Puducherry, covering Puducherry, Karaikal, Ynam areas, municipal and commune Panchayat boundaries, continues to flout norms to extract its payments without performing the job per prescribed process.

The contracted company is to collect the daily waste from home, on door-to-door basis through its deployed workforce, applying safety guidelines to safeguard them from getting injured or contacting disease inducing viruses. Once collected, such wastes are to be sorted per basic categories of dry waste, solid wastes like wood, iron, glass, etc, organic waste, hazardous waste, medical waste, sand from drainage and other community cleanup wastes, etc. The collected and duly sorted waste, garbage, should be weighed and dumped in the municipality-owned garbage dumps, after and in front of desig-

nated officials who would inspect and certify the job done and the level satisfaction, per guidelines and in prescribed format. The soil should be separated from the segregated waste to prepare vermi-compost and compost.

After sorting per norms, it should show '0' remains and value for having sorted the entire garbage. Once this done, the designated officials from departments like Engineers, Health Officer, Revenue Officer, among others, are to inspect, check the satisfactory level of contracted job done and issue a certificate on daily basis, the contracted garbage collections creates its bill on the administration to collect its dues, again on the contracted payment cycle. The Municipal Commissioner then authorizes the bill supported but mandatory annexures including the daily satisfactory collec-

tion and sorting certificate, to be paid per agreed payment cycle.

It is being alleged that majority of prescribed norms are being flouted as the Karaikal Director, Shaktivel, passes these bills as presented, those majority of times, does not have the mandatory enclosures. The allegations are also that the contracted company in nexus with the unscrupulous officials gets its bills passed flouting all the rules, allegedly, paying hefty illicit consideration amounts. It is said Shaktivel always keeps blaming the public of littering the city all over, but allegedly he flouts rules to pass garbage collection bills.

The allegations are also rife that the contracted company dumps the wastes without sorting, including sewage and sand, wastes are weighted highest rate category and gets its daily job performance completion certificate applying both pressure tactics and illicit payments.

It is alleged that when complaints were filed with A Kulothungan the District Collector and District Magistrate of Karaikal, he issued instructions that daily 0 remains and 0 value of sorted wastes dumped and also compost and vermicompost productions details be sent to him on daily basis and no payments are

to be made to any contractor without his review. Even this high official order was flouted by the contractor and the Karaikal Director Shaktivel continued to get and approve the bills for payment to the contractor without any hinderance.

People of Karaikal are openly accusing the local government department of passing the monthly bill of over Rs 5 Crore to the contractor against a huge illicit consideration. It is also alleged that yet another contractor, Sujata Corporation in Puducherry is also receiving money from the local government department without separating of over 300 tons of garbage daily, thanks to the continuing interference and clout of the District Collector Vallavan.

It appears that one could make lots of illicit money in this UT of Puducherry against bribe to unscrupulous officials. It is not the amount that matters, but the very act of corruption and illicit siphoning of government money to corrupt contractors supported by the mafia and the goons. These only are damaging the name of the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary of this UT. People want them to intervene to check and halt these and book the culprits including erring officials and punish them to ensure these do not happen ever in the future.

Dalit Messiah

There currently is a big vacuum in the Dalit leadership in the country, since the demise of the popular Dalit leader Ram Vilas Paswan, who was considered the 'voice of Dalits' in India. None, even his own sons or popular leaders from his own and also other political parties, could so far been able to fill this vacuum left behind by Ram Vilas Paswan. Paswan's cordial relations with almost all political parties served the best interests, as he always voiced against the violence and atrocities against Dalits across the country. He undoubtedly was a very powerful and popular leaders championing the cause of the SCs, STs, OBCs, downtrodden and the underprivileged, especially the Dalits.

Dalit voters are crucial for all mainstream parties. Dalits, including both SCs and STs, constitute 25 per cent of the Indian population per the latest available census statistics. Despite their numbers and strength, Dalits have still not been politically empowered yet, though the situation has changed a lot in the past one decade.

Around 80% of Dalits live in rural areas. Economic exploitation remains their most acute problem. Majority of them are almost all marginal farmers or landless labourers. Many are in debt and are obliged to work off their debts as bonded labourers, despite the fact that this practice was abolished by law in 1976. This is really pathetic when we the country has progressed and become so advanced in every sector and we are talking about a 'New India' that is emerging to be one of the global super powers. But the vacuum appears soon being filled by a leader from Tamil Nadu, who is fast emerging as one of the most powerful Dalit leader in the country who has risen to capacities to sway voters.

Dr. Tholkappiyan

Thirumavalavan, better known as Thol Thirumavalavan, the scholar, author, actor and activist from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu is well considered as the current voice of Dalits. A Member of Parliament from Chidambaram constituency is the Founder and President of the political outfit Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi, (VCK). Formally entering politics in 1999, he rose to prominence in the 1990s as an aggressive and voracious firebrand Dalit leader championing the cause of the Dalits.

A doctorate in Religious Conversions, Thirumavalavan is particularly popular for his aggressive postures which has gained him significant recognition. Against the background of increasing Dalit assertiveness, he has emerged as one of major Dalit leaders in Tamil Nadu, with a large base of grassroots support, not only in Tamil Nadu, but even across the State borders.

Dr Thirumalavan's politics are grounded in Ambedkarite and Dravidian philosophies and desists casteism based politics that he

thinks is the root cause of oppressions against the always deprived dalit community.

His easy accessibility and his ever willing to support and help the suppressed and oppressed has earned him a name of high respect among all communities, not just the dalits. His cordial relations with all the political parties and the administration enables him resolve issues quickly to the hearty welcome of the people of his area and the community as whole across India.

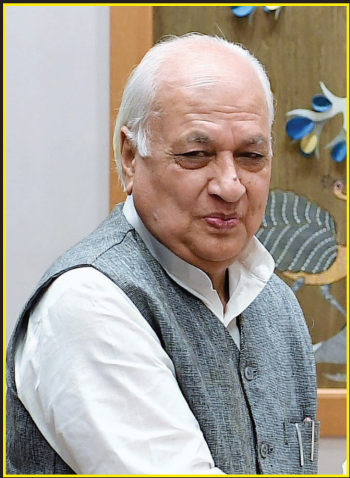
Over the years Dr Thirumavalavan has become a messiah of not only the Dalits but also several other communities, the SCs, STs, OBCs and more so the Minorities including all the constituents of this classified community. He is popular among not just the Muslim minorities but also among other minorities like Christians and Sikhs.

After the demise of Ram Vilas Paswan several other party leaders tried their best to fit into the vacuum left behind by Paswan including Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati and also Samajwadi Party (SP), now of Akhilesh Yadav, who all tried their best. But all of them were projecting as champions of the cause of the Dalit community only for political advantage not for their real upliftment. Dr Thirumalavan, however, is soon becoming a power politician of high stature and a Dalit Icon, championing the cause of the Dalits in the country including those of the OBCs, STs and minority communities. The void created in the Dalit leadership in the country is appearing to be soon getting filled by him making him the real Dalit Leader of the New Age New India, a New India Paswan!



Governor's Row Intensifies

The row between the Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan and the Kerala government still drags on increasing the feud between the two. To find quick solution to the ongoing feud the Kerala Chief Minister has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing Governor of neglecting duties.



Amidst the dragging row with Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu, alleging that Khan was not fulfilling his constitutional duties and often violates protocol and has accused the Governor of neglecting constitutional duties. Kerala CM Vijayan and Governor Khan have been at loggerheads since the latter accused the Chief Minister of 'conspiring' to hurt him physically.

Earlier, Chief Minister Vijayan had alleged Khan's behaviour was not in accordance with the

etiquette that should be followed by a Governor and added that the Centre should examine this. Kerala CM Vijayan also accused Governor Khan of deliberately 'attempting to destroy' the peace by making provocative statements.

Khan's scathing accusation came after his vehicle was allegedly hit by activists of the Students Federation of India (SFI), the student wing of the CPI(M), while he was on his way to the Thiruvananthapuram International

Airport to leave for Delhi. A visibly furious Governor got out of his car and told the media that it was Chief Minister Vijayan who 'conspired' to send people to hurt him physically.

He further contended that if the Chief Minister disagrees with him on something, that does not mean the Marxist veteran should "hatch conspiracies" to hurt him physically. According to a Raj Bhavan source, black flags were waved at Khan at three places.

It is imperative for the smooth functioning of the State governments to dispense its duties the Governors and the Chief Ministers work together as a team as all are related to the welfare and good of the States and the people of the States. Any doubts and reservations should be amicably resolved maintaining cordial relationships and one-to-one dialogues instead of flaring this up for the media to generate stories to increase their TRPs.

Expands Ministry

New Ministers To Take Oath On December 29 In Big Kerala Cabinet Reshuffle When the second Left Democratic Front government came to power in Kerala in 2021, alliance partners reached an understanding to allocate cabinet berths to four single-MLA parties on a "sharing the term" basis. When the second Left Democratic Front government came to power in the state in May 2021, partners in the CPI(M)-led alliance reached an understanding to allocate cabinet berths to four single-MLA parties on a "sharing the term" basis. The Left Democratic Front then took the decision to share the term, citing constitutional clauses that restrict the cabinet to 21 members. Honouring the commitment made to all coalition partners, Kerala's ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) has announced a cabinet reshuffle with induction of new ministers. Left Democratic Front convenor EP Jayarajan said Transport Minister Antony Raju of the Democratic Kerala Congress and Ports Minister Ahammad Devarkovil of the Indian National League have tendered their resignations to make way for the induction of new ministers in Kerala CM Vijayan's cabinet. Ramachandran Kadannappally of Congress (S) and KB Ganesh Kumar of Kerala Congress (B) have been inducted as ministers for the rest of the term. Transport Minister Antony Raju said that he was happy to resign as the Transport Minister after clearing all the salary dues to the KSRTC staff. Ports Minister Ahammad Devarkovil said he was fully satisfied with his role as a minister for the past two-and-a-half years.

Brinda Blasts CONGRESS

In Kerala, Congress aligns with BJP and RSS against CPI(M) said Communist Party of India (Marxist) senior leader Brinda Karat. Hitting out at the Congress, CPI (M) senior leader Brinda Karat said that in Kerala, the grand old party is aligning with the RSS and the BJP against the ruling CPI (M).



"What the BJP and RSS say in the morning, the Congress says in the evening. This is the politics in Kerala adopted by the Congress, and it is a shame that the national party, which claims to be mentally fighting against Prime Minister Naredra Modi, should be in a state like Kerala, an oasis of communal harmony, an oasis for pro-people policies, is using the most wild tactics to destabilise the state government," Brinda Karat said.

Earlier Congress General Secretary Organisation ,K C Venugopal claimed that Congress workers were brutally attacked by CPI(M) goons and the police. He further claimed that Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was treating the opposition the same way the BJP does with opposition parties. "Everywhere, our boys were brutally attacked by the police and CPI (M) goons. We are fighting against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the dictatorial government and their attitude at the national level, but unfortunately, Kerala CPI (M) leader Pinarayi Vijayan is doing the same thing to attack the opposition parties, basically Congress and the UDF. This is condemnable, said Venugopal.

The Politbureau member of the CPI (M) was responding to Congress leader KC Venugopal's allegations. In response, Brinda Karat said that the Congress speaks the same language as the Bharatiya Janata Party and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. "In Kerala, the Congress is clearly with the RSS and the BJP against the CPI(M). At the national level, they talk about fighting against Modi, but in Kerala, where there is a government with alternative policies and a pro-people stance, the Congress cannot tolerate it," Karat said.

The war of words goes on among the two newly formed opposition grouping allies. Trust this changes as the 2024 general elections nears and all put up a united fight to win at least decent number of seats, if not beat the BJP-NDA combine. However, left parties combine are confident and determined to garner minimum 25-30 LS seats in the forthcoming 2024 general elections. It should be interesting election fight to watch.

TRANSGENDERS SEEK RESERVATION

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is to examine demand for 2% job reservation for transgenders. Kerala CM Vijayan said that his government will carefully examine the transgender community's request for two per cent reservation in government jobs in the southern state.



The Chief Minister, in a note prepared after his meeting with a cross-section of people during the ongoing outreach programme "Nava Kerala Sadas" in Kollam, acknowledged the demand put forth by Kalpana, a representative of the transgender community.

During the meeting, the transgender representative informed the Chief Minister about various issues faced by the community and requested the implementation of a two per cent reservation for them in government jobs.

Kalpana also urged for measures to be taken to update the voters' list, specifically requesting a change from the use of "third gender" to describing them as "transgender." "These matters will be examined in detail," Kerala CM Vijayan said in the note.

Will Sweep Kerala Polls Talking on the prospects of 2024 general elections, "the people are with us and we'll sweep Lok Sabha polls in Kerala" said Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in an exclusive interview with a media house during the final leg of his month-long statewide tour, the Navakerala Sadas.

Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan's month-long tour of Kerala, the Navakerala Sadas, is on a roll as it crisscrosses the state, covering 10 of the 14 districts so far. Discussions were on what the Kerala CM Vijayan thinks are the big takeaways from this grand public outreach in the run-up to the Lok

Sabha election.

Kerala CM said that the Navakerala Sadas has become a people's movement and evoked great response across political and religious affiliations or age. More and more people are sharing their developmental dreams about a new Kerala he has been trying to project. "I'm touched by their enthusiasm, and it turns me more responsible to make Kerala a developed state. The cheering crowds at every nook and corner indicate support for our development agenda and governance by the Left Democratic Front (LDF). It energises my cabinet to deliver better, said the Kerala CM during the interview.

YECHURY ON FUTURE ACTION PLANS



are deciding, and it was their pressure that pushed all the Opposition parties to come together. There is a growing discontent among the people. The CPI (M) is committed to further strengthening the new opposition grouping bloc, Mr. Yechury said.

In the elections to the UNESCO executive, the Asian representative chosen was Pakistan with 38 votes while India got only 18 votes. "If we are leaders of the global south, why is this happening? This must be answered," he pointed out. Addressing the issue of seat adjustments among the new opposition bloc he said it would be State-specific. On the caste census, he said, "We want a caste census to be done along with the general census. It is long overdue."

CPI (M) State Secretary K. Balakrishnan challenged BJP's Tamil Nadu State president K. Annamalai to an open debate on which party had contributed more for the growth of Tamil Nadu, the BJP or the Communist parties. The CPI (M) had taken up with the government, the power issue faced by the MSMEs and it would continue to do so, he added.

Amidst apparent cracks showing up in the newly for opposition grouping I.N.D.I. alliance, Communist Party of India (Marxist) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury has said that the bloc would meet soon to work out the future course of actions. CPI-M Leader Yechury said there was a growing discontent among people in India, and the need for a better government to safeguard the country would be the pre-eminent issue in the forthcoming 2024 general elections. "The recent 5 State elections were a closely-contested election and therefore it was not an easy run for the BJP and Prime Minister Modi despite the hectic campaign by the

Prime Minister, Home Minister and the entire Cabinet," Yechury said.

Issues that will reflect in the elections would include the unemployment rates which are high, and the fact that last year, more than 40,000 corporates went out of the Income Tax net, he said, adding that the net Foreign Direct Investment inflows between April and September this year compared with the same period last year, were down 77%.

The need and desire for a better government for the sake of safeguarding India as declared by the Constitution would be the pre-eminent issue in the 2024 Parliamentary election, he said. People

End Of BJP Misrule

The Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar recently met CPI General Secretary D Raja, yet another constituent of the Left front. Raja said he had a meeting with JD(U) Leader & Bihar CM Nitish Kumar and discussed broad issues of opposition unity against RSS-BJP. Raja added that the country is in turmoil and all sections of society are vocal against BJP misrule. Unity of secular-democratic forces is must to protect our democracy and people," said Raja in a tweet after the meeting with Bihar CM Kumar. BJP will be defeated in 2024 said CPI's D Raja. CPI's D Raja made a fervent appeal to public to dislodge the BJP government at the Centre, as it is "anti-poor and working to benefit only a few corporate houses in the country", besides "compromising with the Constitution and democracy".

"We are confident that the BJP would be defeated in the 2024 parliamentary elections, and a pro-people government would be formed at the Centre, since popular anger against the present central government is visible ev-



erywhere," Raja said while addressing his party's state-level rally recently.

Raja upheld the caste-based headcount done in Bihar by the Nitish Kumar-led Grand Alliance (GA) government, and demanded holding a similar census across the country.

Raja said Bihar provided the lead for the opposition unity by forming the GA government. "The I.N.D.I. alliance bloc is also strong, despite some local or state-level complexities, which will be resolved soon. Our political vision

is clear that the BJP government at the Centre has to be removed," Raja said, adding that the Left parties have been telling the Congress to develop mutual trust and accommodation.

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Prasad Yadav, who also attended the rally, said apprehending what it was doing, Bihar dumped the BJP in August last year when the GA government, led by Nitish Kumar was formed. "Since then the government has been working on fulfilling its poll promises of giving 10 lakh government jobs and creating another 10 lakh employment opportunities," Tejashwi Yadav said on a day the Bihar government distributed appointment letters to more than 1.20 lakh newly recruited teachers.

Coming hard on the BJP and other Sangh affiliated bodies, Tejashwi added, "Some people are interested in distributing swords, but we are distributing pens among youth. They (BJP and sangh) are creating social and family-level differences on the basis of religion and caste."

ANNIE ROARS Dalits Right Denied

Democratic rights denied in the name of Sanatana Dharma: Annie Raja Democratic rights are being denied in the name of Sanatana Dharma, Communist Party of India (CPI) leader Annie Raja said reacting to the ongoing controversy over Sanatana Dharma by DMK leader Udayanidhi Stalin who compared the Hindu religion to mosquitoes and dengue.

Reacting to the ongoing controversy over Sanatana Dharma, Ms. Annie Raja said that organisations that lacked any association with the principle seem to be now reacting to the issue. Dalits have equal rights as others to live in this country, she said at a media interaction held at the Thrissur Press Club recently.

She said that India had reported the highest number of attacks against women among the G-20 nations. The attempts to portray such attacks as isolated incidents cannot be accepted. The G-20 nations should ensure equal rights to women, she said. The CPI leader was in town to attend a State meet of the Kerala Mahila Sangham.

Sara Joseph, author, who inaugurated a cultural meet held as part of the event said changes



cannot be ensured without eradicating male hegemonies. Women have not been able to enjoy the equal rights enshrined in the Constitution. We have not yet been able to end the caste system, she said. The writer urged women to fight for their rights at a time when discussions are progressing as to whether the name of the country should be Bharat or India. If we do not fight for our rights, nothing will change, she said.

'SAVE INDIA'

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) General Secretary, Sitaram Yechury, said efforts for opposition unity have picked up ahead of 2014 Lok Sabha polls, with seat adjustments set to be made at the state level. Yechury indicated a third front was a possibility, stating that an opposition coalition would be formed.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has been meeting with opposition party leaders with the aim of putting together a united alliance. CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Thursday said efforts for opposition unity have picked up the pace ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and seat adjustments will be made at the state level. Speaking to the media after meeting Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar here, Yechury indicated that a third front was a possibility. "Efforts for opposition unity have picked up the pace. An opposition coalition will be formed and seat adjustments will be done at the state level," the CPI(M) General Secretary said. "In Kerala, Congress and our party are arch rivals. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is not in a fight there," he said. He further said that the third front that is going to be formed will always be after the elections.

In India, fronts are formed post polls such as United Front in 1996, in 1998 NDA was formed after elections, UPA formed post polls in 2004," Yechury said. Earlier, Bihar CM Kumar, who met Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi as part of his initiative to forge an alliance of opposition parties also met Yechury recently. Defeat the BJP in order to save India & people's livelihoods added Yechury.

CO-OP BANKS IN FAKE GOLD SCAM

A shocking gold jewellery pawning scam has to light whose value could run into several hundred thousand cores. In fact if the whole country is taken into account the fraud amount could be even beyond one's wildest of imaginations. The scam spans the full length and breadth of the country.

Shocking information has come to light that in various states of India fake Gold jewelries are being used to advance loans and also steal original and replace with fake jewelry from lockers of banks, majorly cooperative banks in rural areas.

Revelations points to gold plated jewelry made of copper metal are being used to swindle hundreds of thousands of crores from cooperative banks, and also some nationalized banks, and pawnshops with the connivance of banks approved unscrupulous Gold jewelry appraisers, loan sanctioning officials and Bank Managers.

It is not just the question of banks money being looted, but unwary innocent customers are also being cheated as they are returned with fake jewelry in place of the original pure gold jewelry, which they come to know only after some time, as they are not experts in checking the originality or purity of gold.

It is known that the interest rates on gold loans are high and vary from bank to bank. Customers in urgent need pawn their gold for instant loan. This Gold item fraud is allegedly rampant majorly in Cooperative banks as they are mostly located in rural areas, are subjected to lesser checks by the central bank and other agencies and as most of their customers are majorly less educated with lesser knowledge of intricacies of banking. The cooperative and other banks in country's remote areas like the UTs of Lakhshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar.

String of Revelations of this original to fake converted gold scam revelations are many and shocking and point to a larger all-India operation, or say illicit practice siphoning off bank money, those are the hard earned life saving money of innocent customers who had deposited them in utter good faith of the banks. Here is a select list of some of the frauds those



have been unearthed.

In an audit by officials at five HDFC Bank branches in Jabalpur they were shocked to note Rs 2 crore worth loan had been sanctioned and transacted in the identified bank branches against gold-plated fake jewellery.

On November 9, counterfeit jewelry were found in the bank accounts of 19 people from the State Bank of India located on Maiduguru Road, Protur, Kadapa District, Andhra Pradesh.

There are dealers and manufacturers in Chidambaram and Coimbatore who make fake jewelry. Allegedly, a police sub-inspector from Puducherry along with his women consort, Bhubaneswari, keep buying fake jewelry in kilos from one Senthil alias Senthilkumar who manufactures fake jewelry in Coimbatore. These fake jewelries were being mortgaged in banks in Karaikal, Tiruvarur, Kumbakonam, Mayiladuthurai and more such areas in connivance with greedy and corrupt officials. Brokers and jewelers knew that this scam was based on huge commissions on advanced loans by banks. Puducherry police arrested more than 15 people including Bhubaneswari, Jerome, Rifat Kamil, among several others.

However, it is alleged that the Puducherry police have not arrested the Coimbatore-based fake jewelry manufacturer Senthil Kumar after taking a multi-crore bribe.

In another incidence, the police arrested 2 cons for defrauding Rs 69 lakh by pawning 2 Kg of fake jewelry in a state-owned bank in Amma Pettai, Tanjore district, Tamil Nadu. It has been revealed that all the seized jewelry gold plated on copper jewelry fakes. It was also found that banks and pawnshops were being cheated regularly pawning fake jewelry, made through conniving jewelers in areas like Coimbatore, Kumbakonam and Chidambaram.

Murali, a jewelry appraiser at Syndicate Bank in Nandanam, Chennai, pawned fake jewelry in the name of his relatives and friends and got a huge loan running into over a core. In another instance, they got a loan of Rs 50 lakh by mortgaging the fake yellow metal in the Central Bank of India branch in Balasore district, Odisha. The investigations revealed that the fraud had been going on for the past 14 years with the help of the bank's jewelry appraiser, some bank officials.

These shocking loan

against fake gold jewelry revelations apart, it is the Co-operative banks along with state-owned banks are at the fore in this fake jewelry scam.

These fraud transactions involving fake gold jewelry are being orchestrated smartly, smoothly, fearlessly and continuously by unscrupulous bank officials, approved jewelry appraisers, brokers, and fake gold jewelry manufacturers. Chains, bangles and necklaces are the top 3 fake gold jewelry items types pawned for an instant loan by innocent customers in urgent need of money. These jewelry models are ideal for completing formalities in lesser time to get the loan against gold. This is more predominant in rural areas as the customers are lesser educated and overly innocent are prone to having faith anyone better than them.

The fakes are not just normal fakes one gets in TehBazars. Gold appraisers know how they tested inside a bank. They are all professionally made. Gold plating is applied to fake jewelry made from copper metal. Maximum 6 layers are applied to escape immediate superficial detection. The key reason for 6+ layers is that if these jewelry are placed in a jewelry assay

machine, they will show that they are original 916 gold items. This is where fake jewelry becomes convenient for fraudsters. Low-level employees in banks and jewelers use this technique to convince the conniving officials that the fake jewel is a real 916 jewelry.

Fraud Agents who have fraudulent leads first open a savings account in banks with Aadhaar card. In this bank account the fake gold jewelry is mortgaged and get the loan disbursed. More shockingly, the fraud agents in nexus with bank officials even use the existing accounts of their customers without their knowledge to get these gold loans. The booty is split among the fraudsters. The initial payment goes to the jeweler. About 30% goes to the agents. Rest goes to the conniving bank officials.

These agents are well versed with banking system and have pre-identified cooperative bank officials lined up for executing the scam. Many bank customers may not even be aware of the conspiracies those are being woven around them. Agents manipulate the scam, get the money, pay to the fake jewelry dealers and bank officials and walk away with their commission.

At some point, when the banks are being audited, this case of fake jewelry gets caught. By then the agents and fake jewelry makers all gone, vanished in thin air.

These are just edited information. The scam goes on. Revelations come only when audited and get caught. Experts say if the CBI and other enforcement agencies get to serious work checking banks across India, this fake gold jewelry loan racket would run into several lakhs of crores that will shake the earth in shock. Banks will end up tons and tons of fake gold. Mind would go blank if one would imagine the mammoth number of cooperative banks in rural areas in addition to the public sector banks. The amount could possibly fund the whole country for several coming years.

It is very imperative that the government acts quickly, order country-wide forensic audit to both unearth and also halt this gold loan fraud to save the innocent customer who are being duped.



Rejig Jugglery

S.H.A BADSHAH

Congress rejig, reshuffle, is nothing but a jugglery. It is all about the same old wine in a newer bottle. The century old party does not seem to learn, either on its own nor from its foes or even from its own mistakes. Decisions and actions of the grand old party are only making BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's confident 3rd term march easier and simpler.

Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), the main opposition to congress, is overly proactive in every way in every area across the country. BJP will not leave anything to chance or leave loopholes for the opponent to take advantage of. It is always ready with counter moves to short-circuit the opposition. It not only watches its own every step, but also closely and intensely watches those of the opposition parties and leaders. Its leaders do not indulge in loose talks. They believe in action. For them no area or constituency is weak or strong. They are working to make whole of the country their strong bastion.

Under such a scenario, one only expects the congress party with most experienced leaders to devise plans to take the party ahead of others. Dreams are good, but they are not matching their actions on the ground.

The mega rejig has not enthused the party workers or leaders down the lane, as it is the same old legacy of influential and those hovering around Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Sonia Gandhi, termed Gandhi loyalists, who stealing the limelight in the high decision making body.

Earlier the party used to have great mass leaders from the Brahmin, Dalit, Tribal, Minority Commu-

nity, especially Muslims, Rajputs, Thakurs, Sikhs and the OBC communities, among others. They were all powerful leaders who attracted the masses with their great oratory prowess and total commitment to the party and Nation's good. The party leadership then used to take along all the communities with them without bias. The Dal, Youth Congress, Mahila Congress and Student Union leaders received due regard and respect in the decision making. The party workers were happy and used to work tirelessly for the party good as a united, strong and coherent team.

Now, all these have changed in this century old party. The rejig, though wanted at this point, does not reflect that all needed killer winning streak talented leaders are lined up in the new team. It is those who are the favored few of Gandhi family who got key roles to play, irrespective of their usefulness and skills. Mass popularity and the abilities of the person, and more so their strong connect with the grass root, have been totally compromised, per the loyal workers of the party.

Naming Mallikarju Kharge as the President did break the tradition of naming someone without the Gandhi surname. But this does not ensure any magic or victory for the party. Now it looks like a ploy to hoodwink the people that the party has changed. But it has not. An active party President is not expected to wave hands from his residence for the magic to happen. It has named a President who never visit even his own party office within the vicinity of his house nor anyone appear to have seen him interacting with the workers or the supporters.

Kharge is a respected

senior leader with a vast experience. Having risen from the grass root level one expected him to re-establish that connect, that did not happen thus far. Being loyal to party bosses is different and proving on the ground making party perform to gain loyalty of great respect is different.

New & State-wise Appointments

Joint Treasurers: The very appointment, few months ago, of Ajay Maken, who is said to have several health issues, as Treasurer had raised eyebrows as to his capacity to raise and manage funds for the party. This, for any party, is a very sensitive position where the incumbent has a huge responsibility to raise and manage funds for the party. Earlier stalwarts like Sitaram Kesari and Ahmed Patel were very powerful mass following leaders who also were shrewd and tactful in managing the business, corporate, industries and the cash-rich to swoop them to over their camp and raise huge funds and also ably manage them for the party. The question is if Maken has this high caliber? When his appointment itself was being questioned by the party loyalists, the party has created a new post of Joint Treasurer and not one but appointed two to team up with Maken. Gandhi family loyalists and Former UPA minister Milind Deora, who didn't have any all India Congress committee responsibilities in the past few years, was made joint treasurer along with Vijay Inder Singla. What the 2+1 will do for the party fund raising, would be interesting to wait and watch.

Kerala & Lakshadweep: Deepa Dasmunshi, wife of former late congress senior leader Priyaranjan Das Mun-

shi takes over as State in-charge of Kerala and Lakshadweep, taking over from Tariq Anwar, and also have additional charge of Telengana. One wonders if the party did not have anyone else other than this West Bengal reject to handle the all important Kerala and Telengana, aske the worried loyal party workders.

Goa, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli: Manikrao Thakare, the man who brought warring factions of the party and catapulted Telengana win for the party now is the new in-charge of Goa, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. An easily accessible leader with cordial relationship with all and who listens to the workers and the leaders patiently, shold be a great inspiration for the party workers in these states and UTs. Strikingly, he would also have no language barriers as all the areas have Marathi as major spoken language and his aggressive and meticulous plan implementation should greatly help the party.

Odisha, Tamil Nadu & Puducherry: Dr Ajoy Kumar, an ex-IPS, a tough but popular leader, has these three regions to guide through. An hard working party workers supportive and accessible leader of the party had been crossed over to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) but returned to congress. Hailing from Karnataka cadre of the party he has to face the undying popularity of Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patail who is ably supported by the ex-IAS Pandiayan. While he faces an ally in Tamil Nadu, has a tough task in BJP ally rule in Puducherry.

Delhi & Haryana: Deepak Babaria, yet another controversial leader who has allegations of having met BJP leaders earlier and is supportive to BJP also carries allegations of aligning with people with criminal record like that of Tunda. Known more to be accessible to businessmen, surely has an uphill task in Haryana

that has rampant in-fighting and Delhi too where AAP would bargain for more.

Chandigarh & Himachal Pradesh: Rajiv Shukla the new HP in-charge has more jobs in hand than he thinks. He has to deal with a popular and tough HP Chief Minister Sukhu. A constant party affiliation crossover specialist is an old expert politician who enjoys special status with the Gandhi family and is powerful in the Congress party.

Andaman & Nicobar & Andhra Pradesh: Manickam Thakur is the new in-charge and is very good organizer and has developed closer relations with the workers owing to his easy accessibility.

Public want the congress to return. But the leaders are all engrossed in their own self-promotion using the party banner. None appear committed to party good. All are busy promoting their own cronies to make more and more money. Leaders have become lethargic and do not go out to mingle with the workers and public to motivate them. No efforts to sway them to their camp. There is no effort to strengthen the party cadre at any level by any leader. They should all understand that unlike PM Modi, congress cannot afford or sail to victory path with just the face of the Gandhi pariwar. Rahul Gandhi's hard work cannot translate into votes automatically. He needs a solid seamless support system to cash in. The new age westernized system of autocracy and promoting those with bureaucratic mindset will not work for the party. Party has to go back to the old system of having mass-attracting leaders in the front.

It is time that President Kharge and his team become a seamless support system to Rahul Gandhi and his efforts to up the party prospects. With the mega reshuffle having happened already, loyal workers only are hoping that some magic would happen to see the party bounce back.



MOTHER OF ELECTION YEARS

World is to witness an unprecedented vote-fest in 2024. It is going to be a multinational, multiparty and multi democracy country elections Super Bowl. From India to USA and Russia to South Africa the 2024 political extravaganzas will thrill the world revitalizing democracies, making dictators stronger. Over 40 countries are to go into polls creating a political election year history, making 2024 Mother of All Election Years.

2024 is going to be very eventful, as the world would watch with bated breaths the top three great world powers, India, United States of America (USA) and Russia going to polls in the New Year. Over one third of world population will decide their most favorite and strong leaders to steer their country to new heights of economic prosperity to fulfill their aspirations.

All these would be amidst the economic recession looming in Europe and USA and the devastating Russia-Ukraine conflict and Israel's war on Hamas continuing with no quick end in sight, those are having devastating effects on world economies.

In addition to these top 3, there are other 30 countries to watch keenly who are going into poll mode in 2024: Taiwan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Mexico, South Africa, Indonesia, European Parliament, Belgium and of course United Kingdom (UK) where UK Premier Rishi Sunak has said he would advance the elections to 2024, instead of 2025. Bangladesh would be interesting where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is seeking a record fourth-term in office. With Nawaz Sherif back in news, Pakistan elections also evoke some interest.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi seems almost certain to extend his rule to 2029, despite strong challenges from the opposition who are touting to be united now to take on Modi; Russia's Vladimir Putin looks set to remain in power until at least 2030, meaning Ukraine conflict will continue; and Donald Trump just might return to the White House despite charges of subverting U.S. democracy and the line of legal proceedings against him.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Challenger to Biden, Donald Trump of USA are set to dominate world arena in 2024, as these key elections are destined to decide

the shape of future of democracies and economies, in short the world order.

In all, counting only the 3 top players, the governance of more than a quarter of the world's population will be at stake in 2024 elections, Taiwan in January, Russia in March, India by May, and the United States in November.

India

As 1.4 Billion Indian voters gear up for the all crucial general elections in 2024, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi appears to be sitting almost comfortably in pole position as the opposition, claiming to be united and ready to take on PM Modi, struggles to play catch up game.

In India, PM Modi, the master politician and strongman, is scaling with absolute confidence towards re-election as Prime Minister, who has nurtured an uncompromising leadership style that plays well to majority Indian voters and foreign investors. For PM Modi, the economy remains his main focus. He is committed to making India one of the top 3 world economies that will dictate terms to the world, with India being one of the ever growing and most potential, and more so extremely congenial, world markets. The significant character of PM Modi is his always exuding confidence for the 3rd term and he has never let this dwindle anytime.

The state elections in the Indian Hindi Heartlands won and BJP's vote shares having increased drastically in Southern and Eastern States, expanding its footprints that would count a lot in the coming general election, Modi is already in battle mode for the 2024 general election in May. Modi's unparalleled popularity ratings continuing to soar, rare for a leader serving his 10th consecutive year as Prime Minister, PM Modi is a clear confident frontrunner for a possible hat-trick in 2024. His popularity is naturally continuing to fuel the dominance of his party, BJP.

PM Modi continues to be the most popular Indian Leader clocking 72+% in the popularity ranking among both domestic and world leaders, he already appears to be in top election gear mode. It is even more remarkable that Modi's approval rating has been remarkably consistent, in fact soaring, since 2019 elections. Domestic opinion polls

confirm that PM Modi's popularity remains intact even per data as recent as August 2023, that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would handily capture a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha, even if its majority reduces compared to its 2019 tally, when it notched 353 seats. However, elections are popular demonstrations of the will of the electorate and they do not go by conventional wisdom.

As the road to 2024 begins, five key factors would be worth watching: the fading predictive power of state elections, the challenge for united opposition coordination starting with seat sharing and naming a face for the top post in an alliance where every leader of the party in the group aspiring for the PM post, the battle of and for castes, especially OBCs (Other Backward Castes) further split into EBCs (Extremely Backward Class) and LOBCs (Lower OBC), the mindless freebies warfare that BJP has so far been avoiding, which instead has been offering well thought of, planned and duly budgeted people welfare schemes on a national basis, developmental issues and the emergence of foreign policy as a mass issue and above all absolute commitment to Nationalism.

Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) crucial wins in three heartland states, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan naturally has largely deflated the Congress challenge, terribly weakened the touted Opposition unity, making Modi's victory march towards 3rd term much easier. Not that he has won, but thorny challenges and other issues have greatly dwarfed.

As the battle for 2024 begins in earnest, the incumbent BJP undeniably maintains the upper hand. It is home to India's most popular leader, most formidable political organization, and most savvy marketing machinery. After disappointing state election results, the opposition is forced to regroup, but is full of cracks and selfish-motivated leaderships. The opposition has a steep hill to climb, and time is not working in its favor to take on PM Modi full throttled, who is nevertheless marching with confidence into his 3rd term.

United States of America

All eyes will turn to the US, whose presidential

showdown between two old men, Joe Biden the current President and Donald Trump, ex-President and the challenger, described as the most important of modern times, will be held in November 2024. No election in 2024 will be more consequential than the U.S. general election. Up for grabs are the presidency, one-third of the seats in the Senate, and all the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. The presidential race is setting up to be a rerun of the 2020, with Joe Biden squaring off against Donald Trump, who in any case is embroiled in a host of court cases whose outcome just might dampen his prospects to fight the US elections.

Former President Donald Trump is currently favored to become the next president of the United States. While incumbent President Joe Biden, a Democrat leader, has filed his candidature seeking a second term as the head of the United States, the Republicans have also upped the ante with impeached former President of US Donald Trump with their yet another candidate Indian-origin businessman Vivek Ramasawmy who is already high on his campaign winning several of the prelims.

The Republicans rule the Houses in the US, however, the Republicans has seen a major crisis when they were unable to retain a House speaker owing to internal conflicts. Reports of outright Donald Trump supporters marginalizing other republican candidates, fueled by an inherent lack of coherence within the party has also cast aspersions on the future of Republicans in the White House. Under the scenario incumbent President Joe Biden has a tough challenge to address for his 2nd term.

In all, next November 2024 voting may be the one election to live up to the claim of being the most electrifying election of our times deciding the US's posture to the world for the decade.

Russia

Russian elections are a foregone conclusion. Vladimir Putin will continue at least until 2030. In the absence of an Opposition and incumbent President Vladimir Putin declaring his candidature for a sixth term, people of Russia are left with no choice. Opposition leader and Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny has been imprisoned, and his latest whereabouts are unknown.

However, Russia will be seen more active in the elections of other countries especially the European and more so USA where it wants Donald Trump back in saddle. Vladimir Putin understands the dynamics of western elections and how to play with their economies through its oil exports to influence candidates of its choice. Consequently, Kremlin will certainly support Trump's candidacy once again, due to the chaos another Trump presidency will wreak in its main adversary, the damage it will inflict on NATO and the U.S. alliance system, and the very real prospect that a Trump White House will deliver victory for Russian forces in Ukraine.

United Kingdom

With the chain of resignations that began with then Conservative Party member and Chancellor of the Exchequer in the ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson's cabinet, Rishi Sunak, saw the political turmoil come a full circle, when Rishi Sunak assumed office as the Tory's choice for the PM post. Rishi Sunak has confirmed he would advance the elections to 2024 instead of 2025. UK PM Sunak's Tory party remain shattered with infighting dominating. Experts feel that Tory might face worst ever result, but Sunak is determined to advance the elections. But the state of the opposition Conservatives is nothing better. They want the elections to be delayed as they trail behind in popularity polls. Sunak possibly knows these and might want to take a chance to capitalize on the losing popularity. But Sunak's popularity isn't good either, but he just might scrape through.

World would watch the most powerful and wealthiest states (the US, India, the UK), some of the weakest (South Sudan), the most despotic (Russia, Iran) and the most stressed (Taiwan, Ukraine) going for the elections. Some elections will be open, free and fair, many less so. Some will not be free at all. Nevertheless the 2024 election results will decide the world order course for this decade.

Who says democracy is dying? A record-breaking 40-plus countries, representing more than 40% of the world's population and an outsized chunk of global GDP, are going for national elections in 2024. The results, viewed separately and together, will help determine who controls and directs the next decade in the world.



MODI BLESSES



UT of Daman & Diu district of late has been capturing the attention of the people for various reasons, after decades of neglect. A Union Territory district now is getting the attention of both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the local Administration.

Lalubhai Patel, the 3 times Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Lok Sabha Member of Parliament has been the sole face of this UT district whom the people fall upon for all their issues and area development. His cordial relations with the local administration, the sole avenue for resolving peoples' issues and all parties, be it an BJP-NDA ally or opposition. A widely travelled parliamentarian, Lalubhai is known for his people-oriented programs that makes him popular among the district.

MP Lalubhai exemplifies excellence. A sports enthusiast, his dedication, precision and passion make him not just a champion but a symbol of unparalleled excellence in the all fields of public domain. His easy accessibility, humble nature and open mind connects him well with the people of the constituency. His ever cordial relations with the local administrations helps solve peoples issues quickly.

The recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Daman and the neighboring Dadra & Nagar Haveli has brought these two districts back in the Indian map, after decades of total neglect despite big stalwarts having been the parliament members of these two UT districts. Announcement of several developmental works in this UT by PM Modi has boosted the popularity of the MP Patel that the people extend credence to his proactive initiatives for their area.

PM Modi during his special visit to this UT territory announced several key developmental works and emphasized the public representatives to percolate the benefit of central schemes to the people. PM Modi during the visit dedicated to the nation, Namo Path, Devka Seafront in Daman, a project that would benefit the local people with jobs and also make it a tourist destination.

The 5.45 km Devka Seafront built at a cost of around Rs 165 crores is a one-of-its-kind coastal promenade in the country which is expected to boost the local economy, create more jobs and attract more tourists to the region while making it a hub for leisure and recreation activities. The Seafront has been transformed into a world-class tourist destination including smart

Manikrao On Mission

The grand century old Congress Party was once a formidable political in the UT districts of Daman & Diu (D&D) and Dadra & Nagar Haveli (DNH). But over the past decades the once congress bastion has been reduced a non-existence party in these districts owing to apathy shown by the Congress bosses and not having any strong leader in these two districts to challenge the BJP or other opposition parties.

The situation of the party's already dwarfed footprints is so pathetic that the party does not even have an office in Daman, a party board to tell people that the party is still alive or the people have seen any congress party activity nor have seen local leader anytime in the past several years. Sadly, while the D&D does not have even a leader of credence who could sway public, while in DNH none have seen any activity of the party. Since he demise of Mohan S Delkar there has been no congress presence in DNH.

Appointment of Manikrao Thakare as the in-charge has come as a soothing song of melody to the loyal party workers of these two small but important UT districts that returns 2 MPs, increasing the number count to any winning political party,



BJP or Congress.

Thakare, after guiding the Telengana victory for the Congress, is expected to imbibe the lost confidence in the congress party workers. He has an uphill task in these two UT districts as the congress presence has been reduced to non-existence and he has work overtime all over again to revive and imbibe dwarfed confidence in the party cadre and its prospects in the forthcoming 2024 general elections.

The congress party has to really work hard to face the challenge of two formidable sitting MPs, 3 Times MP Lalubhai Patel in D&D and Kalaben Delkar, the wife of the territory strongman late Mohanbhai Delkar of Shiv Sena (Udhav) in DNH. These are no small tasks

for Manikrao, especially for a party whose footprints have been drastically reduced.

It is not that these territories to not have good prospective candidates. There are, but they hardly have any support from the party making their efforts go unnoticed. People hardly know if there is a party called congress in these territories.

Umesh Patel in Daman is a young active congress leader who commands peoples' respect and regard and has been working even without a party office board, leave alone an office. Ketan Patel the earlier congress chief of the territory had reduced the party and finished its prospects. But Umesh Patel has been making efforts to nullify the effects. In DNH there is Prabhu Tokia an honest and hard working congress leader whose efforts have also been nullified owing to lack of support from the party.

People want the congress party to return, but the party has been neglecting these two territories. Loyal party workers are looking upon Manikrao Thakare with lots of expectations and confidence. The political green pasture territories are wide open for him to rejuvenate and enhance its prospects.

lighting, parking facilities, gardens, food stalls, recreational areas and provision for luxury tent cities in future.

With Gujarat BJP leader Purnesh Modi

overseeing the party affairs in this UT, these district is get the all needed additional boost to enhance its prospects in the coming general elections. All these have enhanced

the popularity of the local BJP MP Lalubhai Patel and people consider him as their true representative championing their cause after decades of neglect of the territory.

SHAH FOR HUGE VICTORY MARGINS

BJP appears upbeat, naturally. They are already on pole mode. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for sure would not leave anything to chances nor would it allow loopholes for the opposition to take advantage of. The recent marathon meeting held at the BJP Head Quarters attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP National President J P Nadda along with several senior leaders is proof to their aggressive pole mode for the upcoming 2024 general elections.

The directives originating from the meeting are pointers to their

proactive thrust in motivating their cadre and sending stern messages to the office bearers and leaders at all levels from bloc, village, district levels and upwards. BJP sure also will attempt to take maximum mileage from the Ram Temple Consecration Ceremony, conducted with unmatched extravaganza in full glare. BJP will employ its vast machinery to tell people how it achieved this feat despite severe opposition and its movement fighting all odds for the past several decades. BJP pledging to engage itself in all the events organised by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

(RSS) and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) related to the Ram Temple, is yet another election masterstroke in their 2024 campaign master plan to woo even the soft touch Hindu voters to their camp, cutting across caste barriers.

BJP wants its office bearers, leaders at all levels and cadre to take each LS seat seriously and work to win all of them with huge margins. Amit Shah's strong message that they should start the campaign right now, organize mass public outreach programs and door-to-door campaigns and ensure BJP goes past their targeted 60%+ vote share and that each, every

and all Lok Sabha (LS) seats are won with huge margins. He has also directed them not to wait for announcement of candidates and that there are no weak or strong areas of BJP and make sure whole of India becomes BJP's bastion.

HM Shah's emphasis that the party workers and leaders focus on every seat, leaving nothing to mend is BJP's strategic aggressive campaign tone that is to become formidable and build to the peak before the eventful day of elections in May 2024. All these go out to set the BJP and PM Modi in the pole position way ahead of the actual day.



Turning tough tasks into long-term opportunities for himself and his Party is all about Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Modi brand of Science of Politics. There's no match to his astute thinking process which starts where others' end. He undoubtedly is a master politician, whose decisions and actions take all off-guard. Thinking politics and beyond is Modi Science of Politics. He is a great Political Scientist.

Smart and shrewd politics is a science in itself, and that too without compromising on firm nationalism is beyond the political science codes that stun even those who claim to be great political pundits, experts. Modi's science of politics is beyond compare, and in the current scenario is unique and has no match.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, like any successful political leaders, has a comprehensive futuristic vision that helps him see everything around him instantly, a panoptic vision. This guides him identify key battles for which he draws up deft strategies of attack, strikes at the most opportune moment, even leading from the front, to crush any opposition he may encounter. These qualities demonstrated in full measure in the recently-concluded assembly elections. The stakes were high both for Modi and the ruling BJP, since this was the final round of assembly polls before the all-important 2024 General Election.

BJP's target 2024 is to garner vote shares beyond 50%, along with its allies, BJP-NDA (National Democratic Alliance) combine. Modi's foremost challenge to address is not really the newly formed opposition grouping's touted unity, but its new narrative of caste census and reservation for OBC which is a direct threat to its Hindutva platform and BJP brand New India secularism of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas" for Atma Nirbhar Bharat, that the BJP has so diligently crafted over the years and which had yielded them rich spectacular dividends.

Absolutely conscious of this hydra-headed challenge coming their way, PM Modi, along with his master strategist, the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and BJP National President J P Nadda, and of course UP CM Yogi Adityanath to act as the Hindutva arsenal, that has got down to work. They aptly crafted a battle plan that would, in one swoop, destroy all threats standing in the way of the saffron party's quest for greatness. BJP had learnt

MASTER MODI

from their earlier mistakes in Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh. The quick and long-term action was two pronged: Mass People's Outreach and "Modi Guarantee".

Modi the master strategist started with the concept of exerting combined might, presenting voters with a collective leadership that included both state heavyweights and central leaders, including Union ministers and sitting MPs. This was combined with their strategy of promoting aggressively the central scheme benefits and newer additional State-based cash incentive scheme for the farm and women segments and focused wooing of socio-economic groups, especially women and youth and the SCs and STs. Added to this was strategy to field winnable candidates as against loyalists. Most important was PM Modi himself campaigning from the front. This worked. Outcome was spectacular.

The triad of wins has successfully and undoubtedly put Modi and the BJP in a 2024 winning position. But it is not a done deal. This is not going to easy or a cake walk at all. The opposition would do all to create bottlenecks on his 3rd term march. But Modi's amazing chemistry with the electorate has all the potential to deliver BJP-NDA's expectation. All said, It's all challenges galore all over again.

He knows any complacency and or arrogance has all the potential to halt his 3rd term victory march. PM Modi and his formidable team are not taking anything to chance or granted.

Modi has to counter another bothering issue, the Freebies politics of the opposition to hoodwink voters. The frenzy around freebies during elections was evidence that people have begun relying on doles for sustenance, an indication that all will not be well with the economy in the near future, something that worries the BJP. That's why Modi, despite his aversion to giving freebies, may be forced to open government coffers to woo the voters.

Modi has more plans to bypass this issue to enunciate a vision that invokes hope and aspiration among various sections of society.

There comes the dream of "Viksit Bharat", a developed India, by 2047. The 25-year plan allows Modi to be a statesman with a long-term vision without having to commit to anything in the short run.

He has started the 2024 winning streak already. The Chief Ministers and Deputy Chief Ministers picks in the three won states do not just reveal the party's 2024 battle plan but send out strong messages too. The picks are more strategic than a surprise. The purposes and messages go well beyond the respective state's politics. In short, the BJP's choice of the three chief ministers is not just limited to caste balance in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan or cementing tribal votes in Chhattisgarh. It is much beyond these.

If winning a state election is a difficult task, picking a chief minister from among several frontrunners is an act of fine balance. The tightrope walk is made tougher when a party hasn't presented a chief minister face to voters. PM Modi, has turned this tough task into an opportunity for him and BJP. It is long term vision, excellence unparallel thus far in Indian politics. In the three states, the BJP has a tribal, a Yadav and a Brahmin as chief ministers. It has two Brahmins, two Dalits, an OBC and Rajput as deputy chief ministers. Every single seat counts. And a party like the BJP would not like to leave any electoral factor untouched.

BJP successfully attracted Other Backward Classes (OBC) votes with PM Modi projecting himself as a leader of the OBCs. But Yadavs, a dominant community among the OBCs, have mostly sided with the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in Bihar. With the pick of Mohan Yadav as the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, the BJP has cemented its OBC voter base within the State and also has largely softened the blow from the Yadavs in UP and Bihar in the 2024 polls. With the party picking Jagdish Devda, a dalit, and Rajendra Shukla, a Brahmin, as Deputy Chief Ministers and Narendra Singh Tomar, a former Union minister, a Thakur, as the Speaker of



the Assembly, BJP's caste engineering is on full display.

There are 47 Lok Sabha seats reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. Forty of them are outside the North-east states. The choice of a tribal Chief Minister for Chhattisgarh is an absolute masterstroke. BJP won 22 of the 26 seats in Chhattisgarh's tribal belt of Surguja and Bastar, revealing how the tribals massively voted for the saffron party. It shares its border with tribal districts of seven other states. Therefore, what happens in Chhattisgarh, reverberates across borders. With Vishnu Deo Sai now the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, the BJP has built upon its projection of tribal empowerment, which started with President Droupadi Murmu moving into the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Rs 40,000 crore tribal package that he unveiled two months ago. BJP has also brought in Arun Sao, an OBC and Vijay Sharma, a Brahmin, as deputy Chief Ministers. Social Engineering complete here too.

In the case of Rajasthan, the selection of Bhajan Lal Sharma, a Brahmin, goes beyond trying to soothe the frayed nerves of the community who have loyally backed for decades. Brahmins are a small community in Rajasthan, but are a sizeable voter base in some of the neighbouring states. But the chief ministerial choice isn't limited to the caste factor. Bhajan Lal Sharma, is a first-time MLA, and doesn't belong to any of the camps in a state that has seen divided loyalties. Nor does anyone belong to Sharma's camp. His selection is a clear indication by the BJP bosses that in-fighting wouldn't be rewarded and has to end ahead of the crucial 2024 Lok Sabha election.

While sending the mes-

sages across, the BJP has kept caste politics in mind with its Rajasthan deputy chief minister picks. BJP brought in Diya Kumari, a Rajput from an erstwhile royal family in Jaipur, and Premchand Bairwa, a Dalit, as Rajasthan deputy Chief Ministers.

Problems continue for BJP. Despite the accepted good work done by PM Modi and UP CM Yogi Adityanath, the Jat community did not support BJP in Toto. They are split in their support. In yet another master move UP CM Yogi unveiled the statue of the Jat and Kissan Leader former Prime Minister late Chaudhary Charan Singh on his birth anniversary on December 23 and also declared this day a holiday. This is one effort by BJP' to woo the Jat community that makes up for BJP's numerical disadvantage among the OBC bloc by their consolidated presence in western UP.

The BJP, which has always tried to counter caste politics with the poll planks of Hindutva, development and nationalism, has been forced to resort to a fine act of caste balancing, much against their wish though, but at the same time not compromising on their ideologies and pure core nationalism. BJP has taken to acts of 2024 poll mode and appears fully charged and in top gear already for amore aggressive 2024 campaign to thwart all attempts by the opposition. There are still several months to go. More surprises are bound to spring. But the opposition is no small challenge. How the BJP and PM Modi with his amazing team would strategise their assault on challenges and translate their actions into votes should be very interesting to watch and a lot to learn from Modi Science of Politics!

HELPING HAND

Cyclone Mishaung wreaked havoc in Chennai and its adjacent regions recently, resulting in severe flooding that trapped numerous residents. The nature's fury does not differentiate between common man and celebrities.

ery possible way providing space for hundreds of them along with food and every other necessity and essentials. He later also provided them with travel arrangements for them to move out once the situation was getting under control.



Cyclone Michaung has killed several people and over 65,000 people have been relocated to relief camps. Several areas were inundated with flood water entering homes of even villas in posh localities. Large parts of Tamil Nadu was battling floods triggered by Cyclone Michaung, Thousands of people were suffering without water and food and without adequate basic facilities as the flooding water snapped off the connectivity with the markets. Delivery logistics was totally shattered.

As the flooding water created havoc and chaos all around, leading Tamil celebrities had come forward to help stranded victims and many made arrangement to join the government relief measures. Actor Ajith was the one who acted first to help stranded victims. Looking at the chaos all around actor Ajith called out on his fan club members to volunteer for relief works and also join the relief work organised by government agencies. AJith himself got into action.

Actor Ajith kumar was to respond to relief calls from the affected. He extended help in ev-

Actor Ajith Kumar was also among the first to extend help to actor Vishnu Vishal and Bollywood star Aamir Khan as well as for their villa community members whose homes were inundated in Chennai floods. Vishnu raised alarm that the rapidly rising floods had left him and his neighbourhood in the lurch without electricity and other basic necessities. Bollywood actor Aamir Khan, who also resides currently there after temporarily moving to Chennai for his mother's medical treatment, faced the same fate.

Actor Ajith made instant arrangement for rescue. After rescue workers escorted them to safety, Vishnu said Ajith promptly made travel arrangements for both the actors and also the other stranded residents in their vicinity. Actor Ajith is always known for lending helping hand to the needy.

Such acts of magnanimity are something that comes from one's inner self. There were also several other celebrities who has offered their help. Small or big, the very gesture adds to life and proves humanity is still alive.

VELUMANI TASK

Political heat is up as the 2024 general elections are nearing, just a few months away. Tamil Nadu political parties are regrouping to take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in an attempt to curb the number count for BJP from the State. As BJP-NDA combine started looking for more allies in the State, their key ally AIADMK parted ways. BJP would not rest as it explores more ways to group smaller regional parties to align with them.

S P Velumani is one of the stronger leader of AIADMK having a huge support from the Gounder community to which he hails from that BJP is trying to woo him to join their camp in the forthcoming general elections. This only speaks of the strong peoples' support he commands.

S P Velumani, is a four times Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Member (MLA) from Thondamuthur state assembly constituency. He is a prominent leader of of AIADMK He was previously the Minister for Municipal Administration, Rural Development, Law and Implementation of Special Programme in the earlier AIADM government. He currently is the Headquarters Secretary of AIADMK.

Gounder (also transliterated as Gavundar, Kaamindan, kavundan) is an administrative caste who were protectors and rulers. It means "Noble protector of the country". Originally, they belong to the "Kshatriya" varna and the dynastic lineage (Surya Vamsa and

Chandra Vamsa). They were chieftains and warriors from the Chola empire who later migrated to the Kongu Nadu, due to a conflict with the Imperial Cholas.

Gounders, mainly used as a caste name, are land owning feudal caste like modern day rajputs of North India, with vast majority of people belonging to the community owning large tracts of land. They form a sizeable 22% of Tamil Nadu population that includes the Kongu Vellar and Vaniyar who all once were of the same community.

Vellumani commands a vast majority support from the Gounder community. He being more accessible and cordial he is more popular and considered stronger among the AIADMK leaders. Riding on Vellumani popularity and support in the Coimbatore city area too, over 10 MLAs had won from his bastion. AIADMK a party outfit founded by former Chief Minister late MGR who is still highly respected and highly popular in the Kongu belt of Tamil Nadu to which Vellumani belongs. Vellumani's strength also is derived from this popularity among his Gounder community.

He was one of the most active AIADMK leaders owing very important responsibility during the last 2019 general elections. He ensured victory of AIADMK ally BJP's Vanathi Srinivasn from the parliamentary constituency where peoples support to him is absolute. As on today he commands support of over 40 AIAD-



MK MLAs that puts him in a stronger bargaining position within the party. It is for this reason even now BJP is trying to woo him as they know his strength and what advantages he could bring on board for the BJP-NDA alliance.

AIADMK still is confused as to how they would fight the forthcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections, they having severed their electoral tie-up with BJP Here would come the role of Vellumani who just might act as one of the strong deciding factors as to the direction the party should take in the coming election.



JYOTHI SPIRIT

engaged in several social service activities in her belt that has earned her the name and popularity among the people. A dedicated, committed and hard-working Congress party activist, she was elected to the Lok Sabha from Karur, Tamil Nadu in 2019. Having joined politics at a young age, Jothimani served separate terms as the General Secretary of Indian Youth Congress and Vice President of Tamil Nadu Youth Congress.

Said to be close to Congress Gandhi scion Rahul Gandhi, owing to her dedicated hard work and her popularity in her area, Jothimani had entered the field of politics at a very young age of 22. A very vocal and fearless student union activist she, during her college days, was elected as Chair of College Students Union. She was an active participant in the NSS Camps in college and

engaged herself in several social service activities.

Jyothimani has represented the Indian Youth Congress at international forums like American Council for Young Political Leaders, Asian Young Leader's Summit 2009 in Malaysia and also selected for Vital-Voice of Asia Asian Women Leaders Meet in her competitively early years in politics.

She is also very vocal about raising several issues of people in the Parliament and has been one of the most active parliamentarians in the current Lok Sabha. She is one of the budding Leaders from Tamil Nadu destined to reach new heights in the coming years. She undoubtedly is one strong young gen leader of Congress from Tamil Nadu who is a able crowd puller. Her oratory skills echo in her bastion and the parliament and makes sure her presence is felt.

Congress has an aggressive voice in Jyothimani, the young Parliament Member from Karur, Tamil Nadu. She has been vocal about the BJP and its Tamil Nadu State chief Annamalai and has been spearheading the tirade against BJP in her area.

Jothimani Sennimalai, also a writer, is an active socio-political activist,

ON HER OWN TERMS

When all thought the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is down and out, she sprang a surprise by naming a successor and also stated that BSP would not be a part the newly formed opposition grouping.

Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) chief Mayawati declared her nephew, Akash Anand, as her successor declaring him the 'uttaradhikari (heir)'. The announcement came as Mayawati chaired a meeting of the party workers recently at the party's state office in Lucknow.

Akash Anand, 28 and son of Mayawati's brother Anand Kumar, has been given the responsibility to strengthen the BSP's organisation all over the country and Mayawati to continue monitoring the developments and overall party functioning.

Akash, a MBA graduate from London, has been the national coordinator of the BSP since 2019, having entered political arena in 2017.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, Akash Anand managed the election campaign strategy of the BSP chief. He addressed his first rally in Uttar Pradesh's Agra in 2019. In the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly election, he handled the social media of the party during the campaign. Earlier, Akash Anand launched a 14-day 'Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay' Sankalp Yatra. This was reportedly seen as the repositioning of the BSP's strategy ahead of the crucial Lok Sabha polls in 2024.



Mayawati cannot be discounted. She springs surprises. She follows her own rules. Her alignment with other parties have always been on her own terms. Despite pressure from other parties she refused to be a part of the newly formed opposition grouping I.N.D.I. alliance.

But now again she has sprung a surprise. The BSP has demanded Mayawati's nomination as the prime ministerial candidate in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, as a condition for the party to enter the INDIA opposition bloc. The new block is now in a fix, though none have responded. All know that BSP has its own loyal vote bank in Uttar Pradesh. If she fights the 2024 elections alone, BSP would only split the votes of congress and BSP. But none would want Mayawati to be the PM face at any cost. It is a smart googy that BSP has thrown at the opposition.

HUNTING DANISH

Kunwar Danish Ali, who has been vocal favouring Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra against her expulsion, is the first time BSP MP from Amroha parliamentary constituency. Starting his political stint with Janata Dal (Secular) had walked out of the party to join BSP in 2019. It is said that he joined BSP after taking consent from his JD-S party leader H D Kumaraswamy. He was the Leader of BSP in Lok Sabha.

Risking its West Uttar Pradesh prospects, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) National President Mayawati suspended Amroha MP Kunwar Danish Ali, stating that he was not following the party line and was indulging in anti-party activities. This suspension comes close on the heels of the BSP earlier expelling Imran Masood who wields significant influence in Sa-

haranpur district and a day after Danish spoke out in support of Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Mahua Moitra in the cash-for-query case. Masood since then has joined Congress.

The move comes a day after Danish Ali walked out of Lok Sabha proceedings along with other Opposition members to protest against the decision to expel TMC member Mahua Moitra for "unethical conduct", while other Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) members remained seated in the House.

Mayawati's decision comes even as BSP knows this could possibly dent the party's prospects in west UP in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Ali, one of the five Opposition MPs on the Lok Sabha Ethics Committee, is a fierce critic of the BJP on issues concerning the minority community.



With Masood on board and Ali in "close proximity" to the Congress and the Opposition INDIA bloc, as per a BSP leader, the Congress is likely to get a shot in the arm in the region. Congress feels that landing of Ali, the Amroha MP, will strengthen the hand of the grand old party in the Western UP regions.

However, there are already sparks in the Trinamool Congress that they would want Ali too to strengthen their expansions plans outside West Bengal.

Strange are the ways in politics. It is true that loss for one gain for the other, in this case many!

VIJAYKANTH REMEMBERED

Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) Founder and General Secretary Vijayakanth, a legendary Tamil actor, who was on ventilator support, died on 28 Dec, after a prolonged illness.

Actor-politician, a charismatic performer capturing hearts of millions, the iconic Tamil actor from yesteryears, affectionately called "Captain" for his memorable portrayals of military characters on screen, had encountered health challenges and was suspected of Coronavirus infection.

Earlier in the month owing to Vijayakanth's long health issues that kept him



away from active politics, his wife Premalatha Vijayakanth, took over the role of the Gen-

eral Secretary of DMDK.

Vijayakanth, who was deeply committed to public service, made a foray into the realm of politics by founding DMDK in 2005. His political venture aimed to create an alternative political platform within Tamil Nadu, challenging the long-established Dravidian parties such as the DMK and AIADMK.

The formation of the DMDK marked a significant departure in the state's political landscape, introducing a new contender and providing voters with an alternative choice beyond the dominant Dravidian political entities.

Here is one parliamentarian who is in the habit of setting trends for everyone else to follow. In Venkatesan, Madurai in Tamil Nadu boasts of a proactive Parliament Member from CPI(M). He is proactive and several of his people welfare-oriented actions have set them as a Model for other parliamentarians and MLAs to follow to garner mass support.

S. Venkatesan, a Tamil writer and novelist is the State Committee member of CPI(M). His literary orientation saw him being the editor of the Semmalar, the literary magazine of CPI(M). He is also the Honorary President of Tamil Nadu Progressive Writers and Artists Association.

S. Venkatesan joined the communist party CPI(M) and is a Member of Parliament from Madurai, Tamil Nadu. So popular in his area that he became

Setting Models



Lok Sabha MP from his constituency defeating his nearest AIADMK rival with a huge margin, of over 1.39 Lakh votes.

A good orator and a champion of people's issues, is one leaders who is liked by all in the society and polity. Being accessible and quick action-oriented has

been his mantra that has brought him laurels and mass public support.

Venkatesan's 'meet the people' camp initiative set a model for other MPs in Tamil Nadu to follow. He came up with a unique initiative 'meet the people' across his constituency that helped solve several long-pending issues in

a swift manner. The MP kicked off the programme from Thumbaipatti near Melur, the birthplace of stalwart leader Kakkan. For the 14 months, the camps were held across the constituency covering 124 village panchayats, one municipality, two town panchayats and one corporation. During the camps, the MP ensured that officials from multiple departments were present and actions taken on the spot in many petitions. This program received overwhelming response from the people of the area, receiving over 10,000 petitions of which 40% were addressed on the spot with the assistance of the administration officials from as many as 33 departments. Others were resolved in a quick

time frame.

Mostly, the petitions were on jobs, seeking pattas, pension-related grievances, issues in MGNREGA, (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) dwellings for homeless people under Union and State government schemes, transport facilities and basic infrastructure. The MP created a milestone that the number of job beneficiaries stood at 84,000 under different schemes. Like the 'meet the people' camp, Mr. Venkatesan was instrumental in organising 'education loan mela' for students by roping in public and private sector banks where a total ₹130 crore was disbursed.

All these initiatives have catapulted Venkatesan as one of the most popular CPI-M leaders in the State. No one wonder he wins with such huge margins!

KULDEEP SPORTS

The good work of UT of Andaman & Nicobar (A&N) islands cluster Member of Parliament Kuldeep Rai Sharma continues. A&N MP has allocated Rs 75 Lakh for Sports Infrastructure development and Rs 90 Lakh for building Community Toilets in 15 villages of Car Nicobar islands from his Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLAD) funds.

Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) is a scheme formulated by Government of India on 23 December 1993 that enables the members of parliaments (MP) to recommend developmental work in their constituencies with an emphasis on creating durable community assets based on locally felt needs. Each MP is allocated Rs. 5 crore per year since 2011-12 which has been increased from Rs. 5 lakh in 1993-94 and Rs. 2 crore in 1998-99. MoSPI disburses funds to district authorities, not directly to MPs. This annual entitlement is released conditionally in two installments of Rs. 2.5 crore each.

Sports Infra

A&N MP Kuldeep Rai Sharma has Allocated Rs. 75 Lakhs from MPLADS Fund for Sports Infrastructure Development aimed at fostering sports development in fifteen identified villages across Car Nicobar Island.

The sanctioned funds are specifically designated for the construction of Volleyball and Badminton courts, along with the installation of floodlights. This initiative seeks to encourage sports engagement among the tribal youths residing in Car Nicobar Island. This would offer an opportunity to the budding youth of the island to develop sports skills and participate with more confidence and competitive skills in national international events in the coming times.

The utilisation of these funds, sourced from the MPLAD scheme, is slated for various villages including Mus, Small Lapathi, Tapoiming, Big Lapathy, Chuckchucha, Tamaloo, Malacca, Kakana, Kimius, Teetop, Perka, Sawai, Kinyuka, Kinmai, and Arong of Car Nicobar island cluster. Highlighting the sporting prowess of

the Andaman and Nicobar Islands' youths, particularly those hailing from the Nicobar District, numerous accolades have been secured both nationally and internationally in various sporting arenas.

The sanctioned infrastructure development aims not only to further promote sports within Car Nicobar Island but also to provide a conducive environment for the youth to engage in activities like Volleyball and Badminton well into the late evening hours under floodlit conditions. This initiative is expected to contribute significantly to the youths' physical well-being while diverting their focus from societal challenges such as addiction, ultimately fostering a healthier lifestyle among the youth population in Car Nicobar.

Community Toilets

A&N MP Kuldeep Sharma has further allocated Rs. 90 Lakhs from MPLADS Fund for building Community Toilets in 15 identified Villages of Car Nicobar Island, which is urgently needed in these areas to improve the cleanliness and general hygiene of the island



areas.

In a move geared towards improving sanitation and promoting health, MP Sharma has allocated a substantial sum of Rs. 90 lakhs for the construction of community toilet facilities in 15 villages across Car Nicobar Island. The sanctioned funds aim to establish two community toilet blocks each for both males and females in these villages. This initiative comes as a response to the pressing need for improved sanitation infrastructure in the region, particularly voiced by the Tribal Community of Car Nicobar.

The identified villages set to benefit from this development initiative include Mus village, Small

Lapathi, Tapoiming village, Big Lapathy village, Chuckchucha village, Tamaloo village, Malacca village, Kakana village, Kimius village, Teetop village, Perka village, Sawai village, Kinyuka village, Kinmai village, and Arong village. Highlighting the urgency and necessity of this project, Kuldeep Sharma emphasised the absence of community toilet facilities in Car Nicobar Islands cluster, making this initiative a pivotal step towards fulfilling the demands of the local community and improving overall hygiene standards.

These initiatives are set to further boost the image and popularity of Sharma in the islands cluster.

Dadra and Nagar Haveli (DNH) Member of Parliament Kalaben Delkar recently met Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with her family, her daughter and also her son Abhinav Delkar. This meeting that comes just few months ahead of the crucial 2024 general elections, has triggered speculations and heated up the political air around this UT.

Kalaben Delkar, wife of 7 Times LS MP Mohanbhai S Delkar, had won this UT of DNH in the bye-elections consequent to the demise of her husband. She won this LS seat on Shiv Sena (Udhav) ticket defeating her closest BJP rival Mahesh Gavit.

Any MP can meet the PM. But Kalaben Delkar's meeting with PM Modi comes at a time when the political circles are over charged and heating up gearing for the forthcoming elections and that last month BJP made Gujarat's leader Purnesh Modi in-charge of Dadra Nagar Haveli. In such a situation, Kalaben Delkar's meeting

KALA DELKAR BJP TILT



with the PM has created a speculation and being seen as a new political equation as for BJP every LS seat counts and would not leave anything to imaginations.

With Shiv Sena losing its sheen with the infighting and the split that occurred with two warring factions of Udhav Thak-

ery and the ruling Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde claiming to be the original Shiv Sena, the meeting naturally has kindled speculations that Kalaben Delkar just might be toying with the idea of shifting her camp to BJP. It is also speculated that she is more keen on her son

Abhishek Delkar to fight the elections, who also earlier joined Shiv Sena when his mother fought the DNH bye-elections two years ago.

However, sources said that her meeting with Prime Minister Modi was just a courtesy call. It is said that more of issues with the local DNH ad-

ministrations were the key points of discussions and there was nothing political was discussed in this meeting. It is possible that she wanted to project her son taking this opportunity to meet PM Modi as an MP from DNH.

All said, no smoke without sparks!

WILL HUNT CORRUPT



Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar vowed to eradicate corruption in Malaysia as one of his key priorities when he is installed as the 17th Yang di-Pertuan Agong in 2024 January. He also said that ensuring unity in the country would also be among his greatest challenges.

Sultan Ibrahim will assume the role of the 17th Yang di-Pertuan Agong for a five-year term starting Jan 31, 2024.

His Majesty emphasized need for a stable government and must have consistent, sustainable policies to improve the country's economy.

According to the Malaysian King designate corruption starts with country's elections. He also opined that the country's political instability is triggered by 'saboteurs' or certain groups who lose in the general elections, as they spend hundreds and thousands of millions before the elections to entice the public in their attempts to win. The money flows from contributions from their favoured business houses.

"How do you pay them back? By giving them mega projects? That will not happen when I become the King, said his Majesty Sultan Ibrahim.

"From my great-grandfather, we were great hunters. I make sure when I go hunting, I bring back nice returns. But when I'm in Kuala Lumpur, it's a concrete jungle, so what do I hunt? I'm going to hunt all the corrupt people. I make sure I bring results," he was quoted as saying. Sultan Ibrahim also suggested that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission report should be submitted directly to the Agong, instead of to the Parliament as practiced now.

"If it comes to the Agong, it means you are

not under the influence of anybody from the executive, even Petronas shouldn't be under Parliament, report directly to the King." He further opined that the judicial appointments must "be separated from the executive, they must be independent."

Sultan Ibrahim was appointed as the 17th Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Oct 27, 2023. The Keeper of the Rulers' Seal Tan Sri Syed Danial Syed Ahmad said that his Majesty's appointment for a five-year term will take effect on Jan 31, 2024.

Sultan Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah was also re-elected as the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong for a five-year term starting from the same date. Sultan Ibrahim replaces Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah of Pahang, who served as the 16th Yang di-Pertuan Agong. His Majesty ascended the throne as Yang di-Pertuan Agong for a five-year term, commencing on Jan 31, 2019.

China has built undersea power stations that are located two kilometers below the seabed. These power stations use the kinetic energy from the rise and fall of seawater to generate electricity.

China's undersea power stations are different from traditional tidal power stations, which use floating devices on the surface of the sea. China's technology allows the power stations to operate in a place that is inaccessible to most people, except for advanced deep sea research submarines.

China is a world leader in hydropower, with an exploitable capacity ranging from 400-700 GW. In 2022, China's hydropower generation reached 1,352.2 billion kilowatt-hours, accounting for 15.3 percent of the country's total power generation.

TRUMP WINS MICHIGAN LAWSUIT

There have been a series of bids by Trump-haters through lawsuits filed in different States in an attempt to block former USA President Donald Trump from contesting the American Presidential elections again, especially the one in 2024.

The Michigan Supreme Court recently rejected a bid to remove Donald Trump from the crucial swing state's primary ballot next year over his role in the 2021 storming of the U.S. Capitol.

Opponents of the Republican former president wanted judges to force election officials to determine whether Mr. Trump's efforts to overturn his defeat in 2020 and the riot in Washington should make him ineligible to run again.



The Michigan Court recently rejected a bid to remove Donald Trump from the crucial swing state's primary ballot next year over his role in the 2021 storming of the U.S. Capitol. The Michigan High Court said in

a brief ruling it was "not persuaded that the questions presented should be reviewed by this court" ahead of Michigan's February 27 presidential primary.

This decision contrasts with the recent ruling from the Colorado Supreme Court, which halted Trump off the state's primary ballot over his role in the Capitol riot, which he is accused of inciting.

Michigan's lower courts dismissed the case on procedural grounds early in the process, a decision upheld on appeal, meaning the question of whether Mr. Trump engaged in insurrection was never addressed.

Donald Trump's Presidential rerun gets a boost, amidst a series of lawsuits filed against him.

HASINA'S "SMART BANGLADESH"



Bangladesh ruling Awami League announces "Smart Bangladesh" as key promise in its election manifesto. Bangladesh Prime Minister and ruling party Awami League's president Sheikh Hasina launched her party's poll manifesto, pledging to build a "Smart Bangladesh".

The Awami League

coined "Smart Bangladesh: Development is visible, now employment will enhance" as the theme for the manifesto.

"Come; once again allow us to serve you by voting for the 'boat', the election symbol of the Awami League," Ms. Hasina, along with senior party leaders and sympathisers, said while unveiling her party's poll manifesto in a crowded press conference.

"You vote for us; we will give you development, peace, and prosperity," Ms. Hasina, 76, said, adding that her party does not believe in rhetoric, but implements whatever it promises.

The Awami League coined "Smart Bangladesh: Development is

visible, now employment will enhance" as the theme for the manifesto, setting 11 priorities for building a modern, technology-oriented country, and pledges to modernise the healthcare sector with a "universal health system".

Meanwhile, ailing former Premier Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is carrying out an anti-election street campaign, calling for intermittent strikes and transport blockades, saying no election under the incumbent government would be fair or neutral.

Bangladesh would be interesting where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is seeking a record fourth-term in office.

QATAR REDUCES SENTENCE

In the first major breakthrough in the case against eight former Indian naval personnel sentenced to death in Qatar, the Court of Appeals in Doha has commuted their sentences, the Ministry of External Affairs confirmed.

Vipul, India's Ambassador to Qatar, was in the court along with other officials and family members of the former naval officers as the verdict was handed down, the Ministry said. All eight arrested last year were employees of the Dahra Global defence services company. They were accused of espionage, spying, for Israel authorities.

A Qatar court has reduced the sentences of 8 former Navy officers convicted in the Dahra Global case, the Ministry of External Affairs said. The verdict reduces the death penalty of former Navy officers to jail term. The MEA added that the Indian government will continue to extend all consular and legal assistance to the Indian citizens and also continue to take up the matter with the Qatari authorities.

MEA also added that they will also continue to take up the matter further with the Qatari authorities on the verdict in the Dahra Global case in

Qatar. Last week, during a press conference MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi, outlined India's approach to the case and said that the government is focusing on bringing our people back.

Since the death penalty to the 8 ex-Indian Navy officers were pronounced, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been monitoring this case and had been in touch with the Amir of Qatar. India's friendly relations with Qatar would come handy in further reducing the terms pronounced on the ex-Indian Navy officers and eventually bring them back to India.

CORPORATE

BUSINESS

Warner Discovery Paramount Merger



Media giants Warner Bros Discovery and Paramount Global are to merge as the CEOs of both the media conglomerates meet in private triggering speculation of an imminent merger of the two media giants.

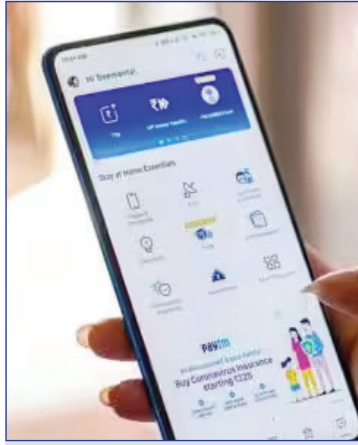
Warner Bros Discovery CEO David Zaslav met with Paramount Global CEO Bob Bakish recently to discuss a potential deal between the two companies. The meeting is said to have gone for several hours. The talks have been on for a long time now. Zaslav is said to have already spoken to Shari Redstone, who owns Paramount's parent company National Amusements Inc (NAI) discussing about this mega deal.

It is unclear whether

Warner Bros would buy Paramount Global or its parent company NAI, with both the options placed on the table. Paramount is controlled by the Shari Redstone-led media company that owns 77% of Paramount's Class A voting shares. Talks between Warner Bros and Paramount are still in fetus stage, and may not ultimately result in a deal should the terms not suit the suitors.

In April last year, AT&T's Warner Media unit and Discovery merged to become Warner Bros Discovery, with a portfolio that included Discovery Channel, Warner Bros Entertainment, CNN, HBO, Cartoon Network; streaming services Discovery+ and HBO Max; and franchises such as "Batman" and "Harry Potter".

Earlier there were reports that Paramount was in talks to sell its Black Entertainment Television network to a management-led investor group. The merger if and when happens would make Paramount stronger media conglomerate with greater bargaining powers.



One97 Communications Ltd, the parent company of digital payments firm Paytm, is said to have fired over 1,000 employees as Artificial Intelligence (AI) eliminates repetitive roles of employees and based on regular review of cases of non-performance. Commenting on reports of mass layoffs at the company, Paytm sources confirmed that there has been a reduction in its workforce in the operations and marketing teams to cut down on employee costs that is eroding its overall revenue and profitability. Sources also added that hiring process for several roles are also on and that AI has nothing to do with retrenchments.

PayTm is aiming to transform its operations by incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and

PayTm AI Replaces Employees

eliminating "repetitive tasks and roles" making unmindful staffing redundant. However, the source said that plans are underway to increase manpower by 15,000 in its core payments business in the coming year.

PayTm lay-offs comes just a few weeks after the company announced that it would be scaling back on small-ticket loans up to Rs 50,000 under its BNPL offering, Paytm Postpaid, and focus on high-ticket loans. Following the announcement, the company's shares tanked sharply by 20 per cent after the negative impact of the move.

PayTm is transforming its operations with AI-powered automation. This is to drive efficiency, eliminating repetitive tasks and roles, to drive efficiency across growth and costs. This is bound to result in a slight 10-15% reduction in the current workforce in operations and marketing, but would drive more re-

quirements in other disciplines, the source said.

The company also highlighted that it "With a dominant position in the payments platform and a proven profitable business model, it will continue to innovate for India, adding that it intends to expand business verticals like insurance and wealth. Therefore, while the company is trimming repetitive roles and non-performers, it is also hiring fresh talent to drive growth across new business segments.

It is to be noted that the layoffs at Paytm are not an isolated incident and similar measures have been taken by several new-age companies to cut costs and optimise tasks using AI-powered technologies. It may also be noted that a significant number of employees in the new-age financial companies segment have lost their jobs in the first three quarters of the ongoing year.

Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a Money Laundering case in connection with oxygen plant fraud, holding and booking few BMC officials solely responsible for the exchequer loss and favoring a private contractor with no prior experience in the awarded jobs.

According to the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), the fraud took place between April 2021 and January 2022 at the municipal workshop in By-culla and the oxygen plants on the premises of civic-run hospitals, V N Desai, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, GTB, Kasturba, BYL Nair, R N Cooper, K B Bhabha, KEM and ATMG Sion.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a case of money laundering concerning the alleged fraud in setting up oxygen plants in hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mumbai Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) had in November arrested contractor Romil Chheda of M/s Highway Construction Company for allegedly causing the Brihanmumbai Municipal

ED Books BMC OFFICIALS

Corporation (BMC) a loss of Rs 6 crore. Consequently, ED on has registered a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in connection with the said fraud in the Oxygen Plant setup in BMC run hospitals.

Chheda was awarded a contract to set up oxygen plants in nine BMC-run hospitals and two jumbo COVID-19 Centres, despite allegedly the contractor not having any prior experience in executing such works.

A preliminary probe by ED has revealed that the concerned civic officials had intentionally overlooked the eligibility and had twisted the rules while awarding the contract, and the Oxygen Plants were not set up within the stipulated timeline, causing a loss of Rs 6 crore to the BMC,

sources said.

As per the contract, the work had to be completed in 30 days and that the contractor had to be fined 1 per cent of the contract amount for every week of delay. While Chheda was fined Rs 3.16 crore for the delays, investigations revealed that the civic officials had bypassed the rules and not collected another Rs 6 crore as a penalty from the contractor. It is said crores of rupees had been paid as bribes to the BMC officials by the contractor to tweak the rules and overlook issues and delays caused by the contractor.

The EOW has registered a case against Chheda and some BMC officials under the Indian Penal Code sections for cheating, forgery, causing wrongful loss, framing incorrect record to save someone from punish-

ment and other offences.

This is not just a fraud and money laundering. This is a serious heinous crime committed by unscrupulous officials and the private contractor who were playing with the lives of helpless patients. That was the time when the Corona Covid-19 was at its peak causing havoc. Thousands of lives were being lost owing to lack of proper and effective health infrastructure across the country. The Oxygen Plants were to save lives. These plants were to produce the life saving oxygen to almost dying patients. Several thousand people lost their lives owing to lack of oxygen facility. It is of great concern that the BMC officials committed this fraud at a time when these Oxygen Plants were in very urgent need to provide life saving oxy-

gen to dying patients in the City, who were rushing in waves to the hospitals. How could any human commit such a crime and that too by BMC officials whom the people look upon to save their lives? All the involved culprits should get stern punishment holding them responsible for the loss of several hundred lives. This is not about committing financial fraud but causing death to patients.

This is a serious offence and not lapse on the part of identified and booked BMC officials and they all should immediately be terminated from their services, say the people and the honest officers. This fraud happened during the Congress-NCP-Siv Sena (Udhav) Maharashtra Aghadi Gathbandhan government of Udhav Thakeray then. How will the current Maharashtra government now under BJP-Sena coalition with NC entering the government through Ajit Pawar react and deal with. Will they act or this case also would slip the eyes of all and the culprits let free to commit more such frauds in the future?

DOUBLING MONEY PONZI SCAM

Here is yet another peoples' greed triggering fraud. The same old scamsters time-tested money doubling scam. The scam came to light after the "investors" staged a protest against the company and appealed to police to get their hard earned money back.

Thousands of innocent people have lost their hard earned money to a scamster company in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. A Ponzi scheme scam has looted several crores of rupees of innocent poor people. UT of J&K Police have booked the firm officials and raided multiple locations. This is yet another case where people greed to make quick money giving way to loss of their hard earned money. All the scamsters are on the run and are absconding since this ponzy scheme scam came to light. Cyber Police of Kashmir received information that victims were being deceived by a fraudulent company, enticing them to invest their hard-earned money with false promises of substantial returns, doubling their invested money in a short span of 15 days to a month. Preliminary investigations have revealed that the said company exhorted the common public to register on its website inviting them to invest and become a partner in surveys it was undertaking and double their invested money in less than a month. The registered individuals were promised payment for undertaking those surveys.

Kashmir Cyber Police sleuths team carried out raids at five locations in Srinagar city in connection with a "money doubling scam" involving an alleged bogus company which has scammed the local residents. The scam runs into several hundreds of crores rupees. In the raids the Cyber Police team have seized several indiscriminating documents and electronic gadgets. Kashmir Police said the exact amount which people had invested across the valley is still under investigation. Following the raids and unearthing of the financial scam, the team of cyber police along with a magistrate has sealed the office of the alleged bogus company located in Srinagar city.



The Kashmir police have registered an FIR and raided multiple places and offices of a company 'Curative Survey Private Limited' for allegedly scamming thousands of people of their money by promising huge returns on their investments within months. It has been revealed that subscribers which mostly include students and housewives have been cheated by the said company after making them to invest their hard earned money against the fake and false promises of returns. The protestors said that they were lured to invest in the company as they were promised that the money will get doubled within 15 days. "In the first few months we received the money as promised, but when we invested again after sometime they didn't get any response from the firm, which created doubts in their minds and made them mass protest against the fraud company.

After misrepresenting and cheating the public, the said company had left the subscribers in dark and the company had suddenly turned unresponsive that led to chaos, anguish and protests by the people who had been cheated.

The police said their investigations and details from some victims indicated that the company had allegedly promised payments to people who were registering on their website and carrying out daily survey activities. All the purported directors and promoters of the company have gone absconding.

People said the fraud company, which worked like an alleged ponzi scheme, was advertised by some social media influencers of the Union territory in summer this year enticing people to register, invest their money and get involved with some sur-

veys of cosmetic products 'yet to be launched'. The social media influencers have denied any wrongdoing saying they did the promotion in good faith.

"We are investigating and action will be taken so that people get their money back soon," said Kashmir divisional commissioner Vijay Kumar Bidhuri. The Kashmir police have registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC and IT Act.

Searches were conducted at multiple locations and registered offices of company and same stands sealed as well. During searches incriminating materials including electronic devices and documents were seized.

The police urged the general public to be cautious of online scams and urged them to verify the credentials of online schemes before investing their hard-earned money. They are perfectly right.

People have to be cautious of the claims of doubling money in seven or 15 days or say in a very short time frame of even in few weeks and months. It is the modus operandi of these scammers. They will do the things for a few people and then siphon off the money of the majority.

Every scheme promising enormous growth of money in unacceptable time frame are all frauds. Money grows only in a certain phase and slowly. If banks with such huge infrastructure, trillions in their safe for investments and loans and having millions of mega interest paying clients cannot double the money in a short time frame, how could these fraudsters do this? People should use their minds. People should use their wisdom, desist from falling prey to such fraudster traps and also should not be greedy for quick money.

CBI TEAMS WITH AMAZON-MICROSOFT

Online frauds and scams have become a part of daily routine business of scamsters across India. However, the Call Centres enticing customers in USA and Europe has been taken seriously by the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) as complaints pile up from American authorities. Indian government also has started serious discussions with concerned department and agencies to plug the loopholes to check online financial frauds.

CBI recently conducted raids around 76 locations across 12 Indian states in India as part of a crackdown on phony tech support scam calls, cracking down on tech support scam calls. India has been cracking down on tech support scammers in an effort to "combat and dismantle" finance-related cyber crime.

Law enforcement agency seized 32 phones, 48 laptops and hard discs, and 33 SIM cards and froze several bank accounts amid the raid of the 76 locations, according to CBI. The locations were in Indian states including Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

To understand and make the investigations easier to unearth and evolve lasting solutions to combat scammers, India's CBI has teamed up with online global megastore Amazon and software giant Microsoft.

CBI sleuths raided around 76 suspected illegal call center locations across India, in several different states, according to a press release from India's Central Bureau of Investigations. These raids were part of a police operation called "Chakra-II". It is known that these scammers often pretend to work for reputable companies like Microsoft and Amazon.

Now, Amazon and Microsoft are teaming up with CBI and international law enforcement in an effort to cut down on the calls. Many of these scammers target Americans, with over 2,000 people being impacted, according to

Amazon. Countries like Canada, Australia, the UK, Germany, and Spain have also been affected.

The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), USA estimates that in 2022, over 32,000 people were targeted by tech and customer support scams, with over \$800 million in losses. Amazon said it has a "zero tolerance" policy for scammers pretending to be part of the company. It has taken down over 20,000 phishing websites and 10,000 phone numbers associated with fraud scams.

Scammers generally target elderly victims, with 69% of victims being 60 or older, according to the FBI. Ensuring that you and your loved ones are aware of the warning signs of a scam call or phishing email or text can help them avoid being tricked into handing away sensitive information.

It is to be noted that Amazon, Microsoft and or other reputable companies will never contact customers via phone call, email, or text to tell you that there's a problem with your device, Microsoft Security's Doug Thomas said in a YouTube video. He also said that pop-up messages from reputable companies won't include a phone number that you need to call to get help. Amazon recommends that anyone who suspects they're being scammed report the activity to amazon at their given numbers and or eMail.

Meanwhile, the Government of India also has got into aggressive mode to check such online frauds. The Ministry of Finance, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and National Payments Corporation (NPCI) of India have also teamed up together and are examining mandatory filters above a certain monetary threshold, including one-time passwords (OTP) for digital payments. Indian government has started discussions on building new filters and safeguards for digital financial transactions amid rising concern over burgeoning cases of online frauds.

CORRUPTION GALORE IN DPSS!

Delhi Public School Society (DPSS) is a 'No Loss, No Profit' organization per its registration under the Society Act. With hundreds of its schools, owned and several Franchise schools, offering quality education to the budding young minds in India and overseas, one only expects this mega society to be transparent, following all the prescribed norms of a registered society and boast a clean and commendable administration as they manage such a huge chain of schools.

All know that the Delhi Public School Society that manages all DPS schools has been in the grip of factional feuds within the society for a long time now and alleged corruption in top management has plagued the society managing the schools chain. There have been serious allegations that the commercialization of education, majorly, the Franchise system in the DPSS has divided the society management among the corrupt and the honest.

Education commercialization never has done good either for the society or the Nation. Education commercialization leads to greed driven corruption, especially where there is huge unending money flow, greed and corruption are inseparable pals. DPSS cannot be any different, especially when some greed-driven ex-government officials are at the helm of affairs.

The reputation of DPSS has taken a huge drubbing in the last two decades. Alas, DPSS is slowly losing its reputation with allegedly corrupt having entered and eroded the society board with controlling roles and the society flouting all the prescribed norms for society run organisations.

It is alleged that there has been no open and fair elections to the highest posts in the society nor any fair general body meeting convened in the past several years. It is further alleged that all the so called elections and meetings have all been stage-managed by few powerful on the top on the society board. In a not so funny way, after a string of complaints



and allegations, DPSS flouting all norms, interchanged the position of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to avoid public glare and possibly to hoodwink the law enforcement authorities. Chairman Shunglu became Vice-Chairman and Chaturvedi became Chairman!

The DPS Society is one the best Educational Society that has been serving the nation by facilitating quality education to students not only in the country but abroad too. The schools run by the Society across the country have produced well-known personalities in different disciplines. It is needles to add that Delhi Public School (DPS) has earned such an envying reputation that whenever a child gets admission in any of the Delhi Public School, it is the proudest moment for their parents.

DPS is now a big iconic brand and it is a dream for students to study in the DPS. The parents spend their hard-earned money to pay to the school year after year for 12 years, hoping that the money will be utilized in shaping their children's career and their brightest future.

It all appears to have totally changed now. DPS Society allegedly is under Seize by few corrupt in the top management portfolio! There is hue and cry from the honest in the management and administration to save this 75+ years old globally reputed society from the clutches of its current Chairman & Vice-Chairman duo B.K.Chaturvedi and V P Shunglu (formerly Chairman till few month ago!), both top ex-government officials, who allegedly together with the alleged connivance of few other greedy, have managed

and manipulated cleverly to elect themselves for the past 10 consecutive years! Strange are the ways of high-profile men conducting themselves to glue to power!

Until few years ago, there used to be transparency in the financial dealings of the DPS Society but from the time, it is alleged, V K Shunglu barged into the DPSS, its image started going downward as they started encouraging corruption, in the name of expanding the operations to cover more areas and systemizing the Franchise system under DPSS.

How huge extra money is generated? Cancelling franchises is one safe and easy route? Recently, sources allege, Shunglu cancelled the affiliation of more than 20 franchise schools quoting one reason or the other. The idea was to pressurize the franchises to extract money unofficially for reinstatement or face cancellation, so that new school allotment or approval could be given charging more hefty franchise affiliate fee. There are also several other alleged suspicious and controversial transactions those have happened after the alleged duo have taken over the management of DPSS. It is being alleged that under regime of V K Shunglu, the DPS Society has become hub of rampant corruption.

It is to be noted that DPS Society is a 'No Loss, No Profit' organization per its registration under the Society Act. If so, the surprising part is the alleged Rs 700+ Crores transaction that had become storm of one of the many controversies. It is being alleged that Shunglu has been encouraging corruption while granting affiliation and franchise approvals to the

schools in the country as well as overseas. Sources allege, the DPS Society has given affiliation and or franchise to nearly 250+ schools, collecting hefty franchise fees, running into several hundred crores.

It is also being alleged that under the regime of V K Shunglu and his alleged cronies, the DPS Society has become hub of corruption and that Shunglu has been using his powers as well as his special discretionary powers to provide lucrative facilities for his trusted men and granting allegedly unwarranted, funds to chosen and favored relatives so that he would always be voted in favor. It is alleged these are done openly but smartly to continue mismanaging funds of DPSS. It is also alleged that DPS affiliation and franchise system is generating huge black money.

These are just to list a few, say sources. There are a number of allegations against Shunglu but has not cleared himself off these charges by providing satisfactory answers. It is learnt that he is yet to answer his beneficiary interest in The Safe Deposit Company Ltd. (SDCL) which is a registered NBFC, that has other co-beneficiaries Indrajit Seth and Ravi Vira Gupta, who all are accused of equally misusing and peeing on the financial resources of DPSS over a period of time. It is interesting to note that they all got associated with this NBFC, allegedly flouting CCS Conduct rules.

Shunglu is yet to answer on what grounds his wife Madhu Shunglu received huge ex-gratia payment and also why was made eligible to enjoy the alleged India Habitat Centre member-

ship and by which provision of law liquor, luxury foods costs are borne by an educational society?

It should also be interesting to note that few of the top ex-staff of DPS are facing criminal and financial embezzlement cases & FIRs in respect of serious offences of murder, abetting rape and also outraging the modesty of a woman, as filed in different courts of different jurisdictions.

It is also to be noted that the legal team of Shunglu has been defending him freely using the funds of the children, which should be used for the welfare of the children and the schools chain, but it is being spent in and as courtrooms, legal and consultants fees.

These allegations clearly show that instead of money being spent on Education dissemination and development of world class infra right across the chain of schools managed by the DPSSs, an Educational Society, they are, allegedly, painfully being diverted elsewhere under various pretexts and as Tax and Legal Consultancy.

All these cannot be just allegations or rumours. If they are, it is imperative for the management to clarify immediately and come clean off these allegations.

Meanwhile the DPSS should be subjected to close forensic audit to unearth facts. Central Investigation agencies should investigate the alleged financial frauds and amassing of disproportionate wealth of the involved, book them, cease all their assets and sternly punish them per appropriate laws of the land.

All these are happening in the wide open glare of the public and Delhi government under which the Delhi society outfits fall. The Delhi government knows that a serious feud and in-fighting is going on in the society for long time. Why then the Delhi government is not checking on these and monitoring the affairs of DPSS to check on the allegations and set things right in this otherwise reputed society management? Is there anything more than that meets the eye?