

UNION TERRITORY INDEPENDENT

₹20

MARCH 15-30 2024

VOL . 33

ISSUE 18

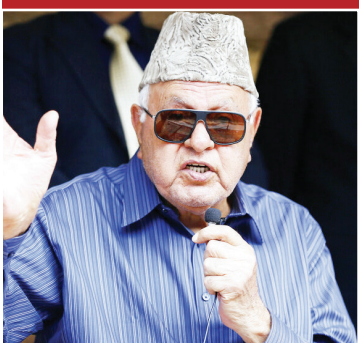
NEW DELHI

PAGES 20

www.utindependentnews.in

US 50c | UK p50

AIMLESS OPPOSITION



UNION TERRITORY
INDEPENDENTDECODING ELECTION
MANIFESTOS

Election fever catches up. High stakes for leaders driven by their personal ambitions. Voters become all important for political parties in their game for numbers who are otherwise ignored post-elections. Political parties are all out to woo voters. Here comes the role of Election Manifestos of parties those kindle voters emotions promising the sky with myriad of welfarisms that hardly sees the day post-elections. Election Manifestos are useful instrument in electoral politics, outlining a political party's promises during an election season and offer a useful entry into understanding such party's intentions. How important are the Elections Manifestos? It is a single document that has gained increasing importance over the years. It is a document that provides the vision of the party on its governance and how it will deal with the issues of the people and the Nation in its five years term. As the Election Manifestos lay the roadmap of the vision of the political party it becomes pertinent to analyse this all important document in terms of its value across sections of the society, nations economy and the monetary value for the people and the country's economy and of course their implications for the future of the people and the Nation. The Election Manifesto helps us understand the reality of common perceptions around issues such as populism and understand the changing political landscape of India in terms of political dynamics, policy priorities, and public sentiment in India, and enables us to predict possibilities post elections. The manifesto that has transformed into a party's promise rather than a policy roadmap lays down its action plans in terms of socio-political guarantees, economic guarantees, Development, Populism appealing to human emotions, Inclusion of vulnerable sections and of course lot of Vagueness on issues left open ended to tailor later based on trends and needs to appease the people. Going by their importance, Election Manifestos should become tools for accountability. Elections lead to change not only in governments but also policies governing the nation and its people. It is also important to consider the sincerity and commitment of political parties to follow through on their promises. If one goes by their past performances, it appears that they have not delivered even half on their commitments in the past. Despite holding power at both Centre and State levels, they have failed to improve the living conditions of the common people. This explains the apathy of the people towards politics in general and elections in particular. With the sound declaration of becoming the third-largest economy in the world by 2030, adding to the aspirations of reclaiming the title of a Vishwaguru and the potential to define the next 1,000 years for India, 2024 becomes a particularly crucial election. The political manifesto thus becomes the single most important document to be released by any party in the next few months. It might as well act as a blueprint for the grand vision of the ruling dispensation. Election Manifestos of late has become a laughing document that is all about mindless freebies those are not mass welfare or development schemes but smartly categorized thus. Freebies costs are chipped out of the government exchequer filled from the harrowing lives of honest tax payers and at the cost of compromising on the overall development and welfare of all in the society and the Nation. The government welfare schemes are those that address the whole of the society without any caste, creed, status, faith and gender bias. Whereas the mindless freebies unfortunately are unbudgeted and mindlessly rolled out just to appease a section of voters. It is time voters started differentiating between the government welfare schemes and the mindless freebies in the Election Manifestos of parties. It is also time the political parties act responsibly with the total good of the Nation and the people in mind. Election of India should take note of all these. Drastic reforms are needed to empower the Election Commission of India to take stringent actions against the political parties from rolling out such mindless freebies intended at vote bank politics. Reforms should be such that the manifestos should get legal validity so that political parties are pinned down total responsibility and absolute accountability one what they list in their manifestos. But voters even from lesser literate rural area are also not fools anymore. They understand what it is all about. Voters need to be educated. ECI should take the onus to initiate. The problems exist in majority of countries across the world. But a beginning has to be made somewhere sometimes to streamline politics. Why can't this be now and from India.

S H A Badshah

Printed, Published and owned by S.H.A. Badshah, Published at Union Territory Independent, 100G, LGF, Milap Niketan, 8A, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, 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

₹820 CR LOSS
TO UCO BANK

A well planned and Tech-wizards frauds gang orchestrated multi-crore financial scam is being coloured as technical glitch?

A whopping Rs 820 Crore clean sweep from UCO Bank's coffers in just 3 days, using IMPS Instant bank to bank online transfer mode. This is being viewed as suspicious mass IMPS (Immediate Payment Service) transaction where the customers were thousands of UCO bank customers who received surprised credits in their accounts, without the senders' accounts being debited. The question is if this is a scam by fraudsters, vengeance, play to test skills to hack and transact by ill-minded hackers or just another technical glitch?

Originally considered a glitch, technical error issue, that occurred in the Inter-bank Mobile or Immediate Payment System (IMPS), a 24/7 instant domestic fund transfer facility accessible through various channels, including internet banking, mobile banking apps, ATMs, and bank branches is now under investigation.

It has been alleged that during November 10-13 2023 a mindboggling 8,53,049 suspicious mass IMPS transactions took place in which an amount totaling Rs 820 crore was wrongfully credited, of varying amounts, to the accounts of over 41,000 UCO Bank account holders. These were against the said suspicious IMPS digital transfers from 14,500 different customer accounts of 7 private bank account holders, without their accounts being debited. These 41,000 UCO bank account holders are said to have received surprise credits of varying amounts in their accounts. As a result Rs 820 crore was lost by UCO Bank.

It is further alleged that this intricate network involved a staggering 8,53,049 IMPS transactions originating from 14,000 account holders across 7 private banks which were all shown as 'failed' transactions in the private bank holder accounts, while they were received as success in UCO bank system and wrongfully credited to 41,000 UCO Bank account holders.

On November 15, UCO Bank filed an FIR with the Central Bureau of Investi-



gation (CBI) against two of its support engineers and other unidentified individuals. CBI took over on the complaint then on.

CBI conducted searches, in connection with Rs 820 crore suspicious IMPS transactions at UCO bank, at 67 locations in seven cities across Rajasthan and Maharashtra focusing on people who received the surprise money, withdrew instantly and used it rather than returning it to the bank. This second round of searches follows the searches those were conducted in December 2023 at 13 locations involving private individuals and UCO Bank officials in Kolkata and Mangalore.

CBI has stated that the search operations targeted the premises of suspected and or accused individuals, including private persons and bank officials, resulting in the recovery of around 130 incriminating documents related to UCO Bank and IDFC, some evidences in the form of 43 digital electronic devices including 40 mobile phones, 2 hard disks, and internet dongles, laptops, computer systems, email archives, and debit/credit cards. Additionally, 30 suspects were also found and examined on the spot. CBI is hopeful that it will get to the bottom of this and almost sure most part of the amount would be recovered.

Numerous account holders have exploited this situation, making wrongful gains by withdrawing funds through various banking channels. Do you expect a guy to call the bank and ask them to take back the wrong credit in his account? No way. This is India!

Is this a technical glitch? This is what is being investigated. A staggering 8.53 lakh IMPS transactions. 14500 different account holders from 7 private banks first

getting debited for an IMPS transactions they never initiated and then instantly the transactions showing as failed. But at the same time UCO bank gets the IMPS transfers and sets 41000 UCO Bank customers to get surprise credits? All these doesn't look like a technical glitch but a well orchestrated scam that has been given the colour of technical error to avoid getting caught instantly. It sounds more likely that just a team of devil technical wizards orchestrated this to benefit the chosen few, but amazingly has given the colour of a glitch by effecting surprise credits to close to a million UCO Bank account holders.

Several questions arise but remain unanswered. How will and how much time will it take the investigating agencies to scan the identity of close to a million account holders to identify the real thief gang? Even though total of 8 banks involved only UCO Bank, a government owned bank is singled out to bear the total loss? Why only UCO bank, that too when this bank's system was not at all involved in initiating the transfers? What would have happened if the customers accounts would also have been debited? Would the banks credit the wrong debits instantly? Unlikely! CBI engaging hundreds of officials on this search operations and investigations sounds an alarm bell signifying a possible scam using technology.

The Finance Ministry and the central and other financial and cyber and other investigations agencies should sit together often, track the modus operandi and find the loopholes those are being often used and evolve solutions right from early detection and stopping such frauds in the future.

Living With Peace

Peaceful coexistence triggers prosperity through unhindered all round development for the Nations and the people across the world. Lasting peace is what all crave for. Countries across the world, either in conflict or trying hard to avoid a conflict but focusing on war preparedness, are all from inside crave for lasting peace, except for the ones whose leaders believe in expansionism, who number very few but phenomenally affecting the world order. None ever would want to hear the rattling sound of battle tanks and dreadfully menacing noise of the swashing air machines. No one ever wants conflicts as they only bring destruction of people to economy, pushing them more towards poverty that they are trying to wriggle out of. Economy first is strained and then is shattered. Thousands of lives are lost spiking the number of families of widows, orphans and the helpless fighting all the time to meet ends meet somehow or the other. People live in fear all the time. India always has believed in peaceful coexistence. India always advocates global peace and strongly believes only dialogues and mature

diplomacy as effective way forward to end to conflicts for lasting peace. India has multiple problems from multiple neighboring countries across its very long borders North to East and West to South. In recent years, Ladakh, an integral part of India, has emerged as a flashpoint for territorial control among India, China and Pakistan.

Nestled in the Himalayas, the region has witnessed heightened tensions and military standoffs, casting a shadow over peace and stability. Amid this backdrop, India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar has reiterated the pressing need for constructive engagement among all stakeholders. He is clear that Tension over Ladakh calls for diplomacy and confrontation will only be detrimental for the region.

He is absolutely correct. The landmass has all the potential of triggering a war among three neighboring nuclear weapon nations and also cannot discount the possible involvement of other superpowers in the garb of helping their chosen allies, but inwardly who nurture interests in the region.

The Galwan Valley military standoff in 2020 highlighted the fragility of status quo and the urgent need for effective mechanisms to manage and de-escalate crises. Dr Jaishankar's remarks underscore the fundamental reality that the ongoing tension in Ladakh serves neither India nor China. Instead, it only perpetuates a cycle of mistrust and escalatory actions that undermine the prospects of peaceful coexistence and regional prosperity.

Central to Dr Jaishankar's statement is that the resolution of tension in Ladakh is not the conventional military posturing but needs a multifaceted approach. While maintaining robust defence preparedness is absolutely essential to safeguard national interests, lasting peace hinges only on cordial dialogues, mature diplomacy and mutual respect for territorial integrity. To put things in perspective, the Ladakh dispute has roots in history, with the main cause being an ill-defined, 2,100-mile-long border. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is the de facto border between India and China, but vaguely defined. Rivers, lakes and snow-caps along the fron-



tier mean the line can shift, bringing military forces face to face at many points, thus sparking a possible confrontation.

In this scenario, it is difficult to resolve the deadlock and ascertain the territorial boundary quickly. India's stance on Ladakh aligns with its broader foreign policy objectives, characterised by a commitment to upholding the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of all disputes.

By emphasising the importance of dialogue and diplomacy, India seeks to create an environment conducive to constructive engagement with all stakeholders. The External Affairs Minister's remarks also highlights the critical role of Pakistan in the regional dynamics. Pakistan's sustained support for cross-border terrorism and

its destabilising activities pose significant challenges to regional peace and security.

Addressing the issue of terrorism is a prerequisite for normalising relations between India and Pakistan. As a responsible member of the international community, India advocates for concerted efforts to completely eradicate terrorism. It will also be a vital step towards promoting continued stability in the whole of the South Asian region.

By advocating constructive dialogues and mutual respect for each other, India seeks to open avenues for a stable and prosperous future for the region and its people. Everyone involved should heed to rational voices for lasting peace that will reverberate across not only the region but across the world.



Non-controversial, soft spoken and popular Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Bhupendra Patel is the 17th Chief Minister of Gujarat taking over the mantle from Vijay Rupani in 2021. He is the Gujarat CM for the 2nd time since 2022, following BJP's record seventh consecutive victory in the state's Legislative Assembly elections, his first term being that in 2021 till date the state went in for the assembly elections in 2022. Gujarat CM Bhupendra Rajnikant Patel rose through the ranks to become the first Chief Minister from Ahmedabad, Gujarat's business capital and its largest city. He fought his first major election in 2010 as a Corporator from the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) and went on to become the standing committee chairperson, before he went on to contest Assembly elections in 2017 in which he

defeated Congress candidate Shashikant Patel by a huge margin of over one lakh votes. He has since retained this seat since then. He was the surprise but unanimous choice of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the legislators, as he has not been embroiled in any major controversy in his career.

Holding a diploma in civil engineering, Patel was in the real-estate and construction business for the last 25 years. His son-in-law runs a construction company. Patel started out by running a shop selling firecrackers in Dariapur in Ahmedabad's walled city area and won elections from the Memnagar Nagarpalika in the 1990s, the area now a part of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation limits. He rose through the ranks to become the first chief minister from Ahmedabad, Gujarat's business capital and its

Patel's Gujarat

largest city. Patel, 60, won the Ghatlodia seat, part of the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency, with the highest margin of 1.92 lakh votes in the 2022 elections. He is popular Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) activist and had been a known face in people welfare activities. He is the trustee of Sardardham Vishwa Patidar Kendra and Chairman of the standing committee of Vishwa Umiya Foundation. He is a follower of Akram Vignan Movement founded by Dada Bhagwan.

A low-profile BJP leader and the first from the Kadva Patidar sub-group to become CM. Patel, who was then a first-time MLA, replaced Vijay Rupani in September 2021 in a surprise move. This was seen as part of the party's larger plan to carry out institutional changes across the different levels of leadership in the state before the 2022 elections. The Patidar community, which forms BJP's core vote bank, was seen as drifting away from it over the last few years. The 2015 Patidar agitation, which led to Hardik Patel becoming a significant leader, was also seen as a sign of the community's dissatisfaction with the BJP. Bhupendra Patel

hence became the fifth Patidar leader to become CM, after Anandiben Patel, Keshubhai Patel, Babubhai Patel and Chimanbhai Patel. In 2022, CM Patel launched a new Gujarat IT/ITeS policy 2022-2027. His government also became the first state to set up a committee to study modalities and implementation of Uniform Civil Code in the state, applying the same to the citizens of the state.

Under his Chief Ministership, Gujarat rose further to become one of most favoured foreign investment-friendly destination. Gujarat now boasts of several mega industries that is boosting not only the State's but also the nations' economy. A cricket enthusiast, Patel has been spearheading the sports infrastructure developmental programs as Gujarat prepares itself to bid for Youth Olympics 2029 and Olympics 2036 which has remained the key focus of the Chief Minister who has been chairing several high-level meetings as he doesn't want anything left to chance as the State bids for these two prestigious global sports events. The CM also has been pushing hard for setting up a 'knowledge and sports corridor' in three different lo-

cations in Ahmedabad.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced in Chennai that the Centre was working on hosting the two Olympics. The Youth Olympic Games are a multi-sports event for athletes from 15 to 18, modelled after the Olympic Games. It is only natural that CM Patel doesn't want to miss this opportunity that will also trigger all round fast-paced development of the State.

The incidental CM has skirted controversy and gained public acceptance with his easy accessibility, cordiality with all including the opposition party leader and his no-nonsense working style. Gujarat CM Patel's working style with strong will to resolve complex problems quickly has made him a very popular leader in the party and among the people of Gujarat. He has also been touring extensively to connect with the people and the party workers ensuring quick solutions even to complex issues.

Patel now has the huge responsibility to shoulder to help BJP garner all of the 26 Lok Sabha seat in the crucial 2024 general election where Prime Minister Modi has set a target of 400+.

KEJARIWAL CAUGHT IN CAA STORM

Kejariwal somehow steals the headlines for all wrong reasons. In an election time when a polity is making all out attempts to woo voters to their camp, Delhi Chief Minister is stealing the limelight hurting the sentiments of some sections in the society owing to his continuing habit of telling lies and making irrelevant and politically incorrect statements. An all out no words barred war has begun between Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders. This time it over the implementation of CAA. The Sikhs, Jains and

Christians, among others, are up in arms against CM Kejariwal over his remarks on the implementation of CAA by the Union Government. The controversy was triggered by CM Kejariwal over his comments in a press recent conference. At a recent press conference, Kejriwal alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wants to settle poor people hailing from minority communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh in the country through the CAA and create a vote bank for itself. He also mindlessly alleged that those com-

ing from Pakistan and Bangladesh and settling here will be given jobs and houses and that, in turn, will affect the local population. The Centre implemented the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, paving the way for grant of citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014.

Hindu and Sikh refugees living in various parts of Delhi staged a protest near Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's Civil Lines residence, demanding an apology from him



over his derogatory statements against the Hindu refugees and the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). The protesters said Kejriwal should withdraw his statements against the CAA and refugees and tender an apology. "The Narendra Modi government is giving us citizenship while Kejriwal is asking who will give us jobs and houses. He does not understand our pain said one of the protesters.

In another development earlier BJP accused Kejariwal of total neglect of the welfare of the Hindu refugees which he or any of his leaders had ever visited the camp to interact with the poor struggling Hindu refugees who were forced out of their countries neighboring India. H

The local BJP unit of Chandni Chowk has been offering support to Pakistan refugees housed in the Delhi Refugee camps who were moved to these camps 13 years ago when Congress government was in power. Surprisingly the local AAP MLA and their party workers were missing from relief works in these camps even during the trying Covid pandemic times, BJP alleges.

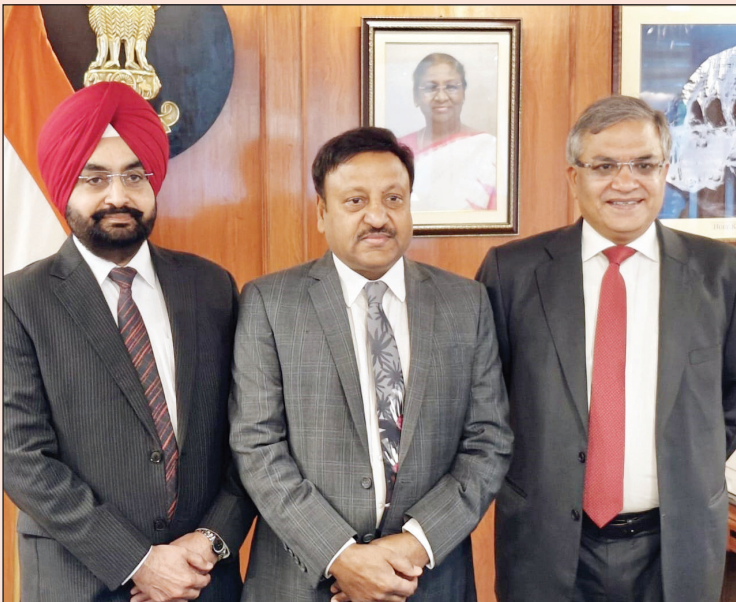
After the Aam Aadmi Party's allegation that the Central Government is trying to bulldoze the houses of Pakistani Hindu refugees in the Na-

tional Capital, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said that it is regrettable to see AAP leaders including Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj indulging in "dirty politics".

"In an order, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had ordered long ago removal of encroachments on the river bank south of Gurdwara Majnu ka Tila but with a humanitarian approach, the concerned wing of DDA delayed it. When removal became inevitable the DDA issued a notice of removal but in the notice, it offered Pakistan refugees temporary alternate accommodation against BJP efforts and intervention of the LG," he said.

However, Kejariwal claims these acts to support the Hindu refugees by the Central government is for vote bank politics. These are damaging statement and shows his anti-Hindu attitude and it is he playing pretentious Hindutva vote bank politics by pretending to be Hindu devotee. BJP accuses that it is Kejariwal who is playing the dirty vote bank politics. All said the foul mouth of Kejariwal, piling heaps of lies in addition, gets into a web of troubles even as he faces imminent arrest that he is cunningly avoiding, in the money laundering case related to the Liquor and other scams.

NEW ELECTION COMMISSIONERS



Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Sandhu, both retired IAS officers, appointed as Election Commissioners in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This announcement came hours after Congress Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said

that the two former IAS officers have been given the positions. Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu have been appointed in the place of Anup Chandra Pandey and Arun Goel. Pandey had demitted office on attaining the age of 65 years, while Goel resigned suddenly in a

move that surprised many and necessitated the expedited appointment of the two new Election Commissioners. It was critical that the Election Commission has all three members in their respective positions, as the Lok Sabha elections are around the corner. The poll panel is headed by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar. Sources said the Commission is likely to announce the dates of the Lok Sabha polls on March 15 or 16.

The appointment of the two new Election Commissioners came after a meeting was held of a three-member high-level selection board led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury was one of the three members of the panel appointed to pick the poll officers. Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu's names were finalised from among six shortlisted candidates of the 236 names suggested, who are all former bureaucrats.



Vallavan Moves Out

The former Pondicherry Collector E Vallavan, a promotee IAS, clinging on to Pondicherry administration flouting even the Home Ministry orders that transferred him out of UT of Pondicherry to Goa, amidst piling up allegations against him of his alleged involvement in rampant corruption and hoodwinking the Puducherry Chief Minister

to favour him, had been catching the headlines in the territory for some time now.

It surprised many that the ex-Collector was seen hanging around in the UT administration even after Union Home Ministry transfer orders and that the new Collector had already taken charge. However, it is learnt that against complaints to the Union

Home Ministry against the flouting even the Home Ministry orders by Vallavan, the Union Home Secretary is said to have instructed the Pondicherry Chief Secretary to ensure that this HM order flouting officials are immediately moved out to Goa per the order. The latest news that finally Vallavan and other officials who were flouting the Union Home Ministry

transfer orders have finally been relieved off their responsibilities and have been ordered to march out of the territory to take up their new roles in the new States.

Several in the bureaucracy and polity now are relieved that allegedly corrupt and arrogant officer finally is off the territory to take on his new charge and role in Goa.

Byju's Shuts Shop

Bangalore: In a surprise and drastic move Byju Raveendran, the founder and former CEO, has shut Byju's chain coaching centres across the country, except for their Head Office at IBC Knowledge Park in Bengaluru, where over 1,000 employees work. All other office premises across the country have been vacated by the EduTech giant. Employees at Bengaluru headquarters and the 300 Byju's tuition centres will continue by working from home.

Byju's said the decision has been taken to address imminent liquidity crisis. The process has been going on for the past few months as the company did not renew several of its contracts for offices across cities as a way to cut costs. The closure of all offices across the country is said to be a decision of Byju's India CEO Arjun Mohan's restructuring strategy endorsed by Byju Raveendran. Byju's has been facing a crisis and has laid off thousands of employees in the past year. It has also defaulted on paying the full salaries of its employees for the month of February 2024. It released a part of the salaries and promised to

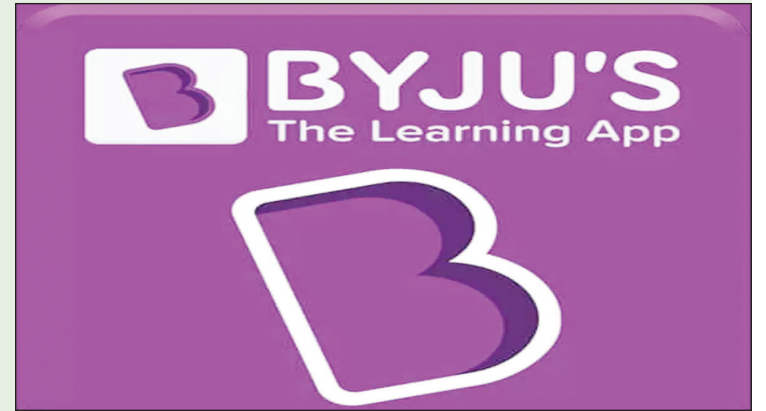
pay the rest once it is able to use the funds from the rights issue.

The EduTech firm, once valued at over US\$20 billion, has been suffering massive losses with over 90% downgrading in valuation. Byju's has lost key investors. Even its auditor Deloitte resigned over concerns regarding corporate governance, as well as a legal dispute with lenders in the United States. Raveendran is locked in legal fights with several of its lenders in the US amounting to over a \$1.2 billion in loans alone. Raveendran, once touted to be the poster boy of India's EduTech start-up ecosystem, who witnessed a meteoric rise before his swift fall owing to the ongoing crisis, has been under fire for the firm's phenomenally dipping fortunes. The EduTech company has been facing financial challenges, including cash-flow issues and several disputes including those with its creditors.

The embattled EduTech company has been in a legal tussle with its investors regarding the legitimacy of funds raised from a recently completed rights issue offering. The company's major stake-

holders recently voted to remove Byju Raveendran from his position as chief executive officer (CEO) and strip him of his authority. Byju Raveendran, the founder and former CEO, has faced a loss of support from key investors following a series of crises.

However, Byju Raveendran has contested this decision, claiming that the resolution was passed during a meeting attended only by a "small cohort of select shareholders" and asserted that the resolutions from the extraordinary general meeting were invalid and ineffective. Raveendran, a former engineer, an Indian entrepreneur, investor and educator who, with his wife Divya Gokulnath, co-founded Byju's against whom the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has been investigating various allegations. He is now facing the heat of an enforced travel restriction outside the country, as the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) seeks a 'look out circular' (LOC) against him, over alleged foreign exchange violations amounting to a whopping loot of ₹9,362.35 crore under FEMA. The move is aimed at prevent-



ing Raveendran, who has been frequently travelling between Delhi and Dubai for the past several years, from leaving the country till the investigations are completed.

In fact these new age coaching institutes have over time become status symbols for the rich students and parents. The exorbitant fees only feed the rich to become richer, unmindful of the aspirations of the youth also from lower strata of the society. The coaching Institutes' fees are sky high making it possible only for the richer to pursue them, as the more and most eligible from the weaker sections are left out to mend on their own with little success. It is just that these Institutes are looting the public.

Commercialization of education should not be allowed any time longer. It is time for the government to intervene putting an end to unjustified exorbitant fees by framing

appropriate laws so that professional coaching becomes affordable to all, even to the weakest sections in the society. Though this is unlikely, with their political lobby so powerful, poor only can hope for pleasant changes in coming times should their destiny change spiking upwards ever.

There are only very few like the famous Khan Sir who appear committed to shaping the career of youth at most affordable prices despite using high-end advanced teaching techniques enabling job avenues even to those from the lowest income groups. But such nationalist minded professional career mentors cannot cover all of the aspiring youth of the country.

It will only be right the greedy and the wrong-doers are punished halting their luxury run at the cost of the poor parents of the students who are wooed by such coaching centres.

NEW HPC CARD EVALUATION

Following the experiments on introducing "Open Book" exams which is still in pilot experiment process, continuing the reforms in the education system per the New Education Policy (NEP), The National Council for Educational and Research Training (NCERT) has introduced a new and revolutionary student assessment system, the Holistic Progress Card (HPC), aiming to transform and provide a comprehensive overall evaluation of students' progress right through the year including their performance at home as follow up of their school class studies.

Through this new 'HPC report card' students won't be evaluated just at the end of the year by teachers, but throughout the year. It will take into account the skills and competencies of students assessing various aspects of their learning including their communication skills, socio-emotional skills, cognitive abilities, and creativity, through

descriptive forms of evaluation instead of only evaluating their academic qualities that is in practice in the current student evaluation system.

The HPC aligns with the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE), aiming to make evaluation more learner-centric. The HPC promotes self awareness and self-esteem as Students would be engaged not in just evaluating not only their own performance but also that of their classmates. It diverges from traditional evaluation methods by incorporating inputs from classmates, and self-assessment by students and more so inputs from parents on their child's ability to do homework, follow lessons, and balance screen time with extracurricular activities at home.

In the new Student's Evaluation system, the Parents will play a crucial role in the assessment process, providing insights into a child's performance at home. Peer evaluation

fosters collaboration and mutual learning among classmates, enhancing the overall learning experience.

Developed by PARAKH, a standard-setting body under the NCERT, the HPC has been already designed for the foundational stage (Classes 1 and 2), the preparatory stage (Classes 3 to 5) and the middle stage (Classes 6 to 8), notes an Indian Express report. Work is currently on to prepare one for the secondary stage.

Following successful pilot studies in select states, NCERT has directed states and UTs to adopt the HPC according to their contextual requirements, to start with. Nearly 15 to 16 states, along with CBSE schools, have embraced this innovative assessment model. Plans are underway to digitise student records through the Vidya Samiksha Kendra platform, streamlining the assessment process. CBSE has adopted the HPC model for the foundational stage, categoris-

ing students into beginner, progressing, or proficient categories.

Workshops and consultations with state and central boards are underway for the development of the HPC for the secondary stage, which will also include board exams.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Government's ambitious NEP reforms thrust is based on the NEP committee formed in 2017 headed by Dr K Kasturirangan who presented their recommendations in 2020. It is too good to see the most needed reforms in the education sector that has only been following what the Britishers left behind as their legacy for the Indian educationists to follow, which was filled with flaws and not conforming to the cultural and mindsets of the majority people of the country.

However, caution has to be followed while proceeding with the NEP recommendations as one has to keep in mind the current school student

mindset and their conduct which in itself needs a lot of reform to fit into the changing needs and global trends. It is good to involve the parents in the student evaluation system and also the student to assess those of their classmates. This may produce misleading inputs as many a students in urban area are unruly and the rural areas are still in the hands of the upper and the affluent. It is possible that the parents on their own give a wrong report or that the unruly ward himself pressurizes the parents to give a wrong report in his favour. There are also chances that unruly students may bully the able and sober students to produce favorable inputs in their favour.

While it is commendable and all should welcome the reforms in this sector, one should also follow caution in introducing the newer reforms keeping in mind the negative impacts on good and able students' community of the country.

Wayanad Fight Of Titans

It's Rahul Gandhi vs Annie Raja in Kerala's Wayanad parliamentary constituency! Strange are Indian political games, 'Friends outside, foes inside'!

Rahul Gandhi, going by latest congress LS seat list, will sweat it out in Wayanad to defeat Annie Raja, the CPI National Executive Member, General Secretary of the National Federation of Indian Women and wife of CPI General Secretary D Raja. Wayanad voted for Rahul in the last 2019 LS elections with an astounding margin.

While it is a compulsion for the CPI to field its strong candidate in Wayanad that it got as its seat share from Left Democratic Front (LDF), for Rahul it is a safe winning seat choice, and now a prestige issue. The LDF candidate Annie Raja has already kick-started her campaign in Wayanad. She is unlikely to give up. Rahul is yet to be seen in the constituency, as the party feels he has already won the seat.

As two big names of the newly formed opposition grouping I.N.D.I. alliance bloc clash in Wayanad, Rahul has again come under fire from the LDF for choosing to pit himself in a seat where his main opponent is an alliance party candidate outside Kerala.

"We have announced our candidates and we are contesting to win seats because we need to be at the forefront of the fight against fascist forces. Now it is for the Congress to decide, they can put any candidate that is their right but we hope that good sense will prevail," Annie Raja said. Unfortunately, it didn't. Who is to blame?

CPI general secretary D Raja said that Gandhi and the Congress must seriously introspect about whom they consider their primary target, the BJP or the Left. Rahul Gandhi's stature is such that he should have fought the LS polls from any other seat, directly confronting the BJP, CPI leader Raja added.

But then, even in 2019,



Rahul had contested against a CPI candidate. The difference this time is, the LDF has fielded a well-known face. Wayanad is largely considered a safe seat for the Congress leader Rahul and it has been a citadel of the Congress party for sometime now. Earlier to Rahul, Wayanad sent Congress leader MI Shanavas to the Lok Sabha twice in 2009 and 2014. The Wayanad parliamentary constituency predominantly comprises of tribals, the marginalized and the minority communities.

In 2019, Rahul Gandhi was elected from the constituency defeating CPI's P P Suneer by a whopping 4,31,770 votes. The BJP-backed BDJS candidate Thushar Vellappally trailed behind to close as third.

IUML bats for Rahul. For the LDF's allegation, Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) leader and ex-MLA C Mammotty says that the LDF should have thought well before fielding a national leader like Annie Raja in a constituency where it is a cakewalk for the Congress. But the Wayanad CPI (M) district secretary P Gagarin contradicts saying the voters here feel let down by Rahul Gandhi.

Annie Raja, a native of Kerala, is a familiar face with the people here with her home nearby and easily accessible. Mammotty counters saying a national leader like Rahul Gandhi has ensured that he visited the constituency during

troubled times of catastrophe or tragedy like the floods or man-animal conflict. CPI(M)'s Gagarin refuses to buy the argument. He says people voted for Rahul last time expecting him to solve the issues faced by the people. But in the last five years, he has failed to intervene effectively to solve the burning issues of the constituency, he added.

The man-animal conflict, night travel ban on Kozhikode-Kollegal National Highway which passes through Bandipur Tiger Reserve, railway connectivity and the livelihood issues of the tribals and farmers have remained unattended.

Significantly, in 2019, Rahul had managed to net an amazing chunk of LDF votes. Gagarin says this is not going to happen this time around as things have changed since then.

There are several other burning issues those could greatly spice up the contest this time. Interestingly, the BJP is yet to announce its candidate. BJP is slowly making inroads expanding its south footprints and no more can be considered insignificant. However, even if BJP is to field a tribal leader like CK Janu, Wayanad is likely to witness a no-holds barred fight basically between the two leaders of the same anti-BJP grouping, with 'coalition dharma' going for a great spin! Interesting would be, who will have the last laugh, Rahul or Raja?

BJP Weakening SECULARISM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan decried 'weakening secularism' in India, raising concerns over the "increasing attacks on secularism and minorities in India" and called the Kerala state a "safe haven" for minorities. Kerala Chief Minister expresses concern over minorities' experiences in India



Pinarayi Vijayan alleges some elements undermining diversity and secularism Says Kerala taking action to ensure equal justice and protection Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan stated that minorities in India are facing bitter experiences, and there is an increasing attack on the nation's sense of secularism. He expressed concerns regarding the "weakening secular nature" of the country and said that Kerala stands apart in this aspect. Condemning the use of religion for political purposes, he expressed concern over the erosion of the separation between politics and religion. The Kerala Chief Minister further accused certain elements of attempting to destroy diversity and asserted that minorities are not receiving their due share of progress.

In a bid to address these concerns, Kerala is actively taking effective action to ensure equal justice and protection for all residents, promoting an environment where living in the country does not pose particular concerns for any community CM Vijayan said during a face-to-face program with minority groups, projecting Kerala as a "safe haven" for mi-

norities. The Chief Minister was interacting with representatives of Muslim organisations, Mutavallis, Mahalla committee officials, Madrasa teachers, and students during the IN-SAF program organised by the Minority Welfare Department in Thiruvananthapuram.

Vijayan further stated it is unfortunate that in various states like Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, and Manipur, minorities face attacks, insecurity, and their places of worship, houses, and commercial establishments are demolished using bulldozers.

CM Vijayan said that Kerala, in contrast, stands as a symbol of unity, bringing together people of different faiths without distinctions. He also alleged that efforts to demonise Muslims and other minorities as fifth-columnists and treacherous extremists are very strong in the country. Kerala CM Vijayan added that Kerala is the only state in India without communal conflict, attributing this harmony not only to the government but also to the people of the state.

Global Standard R&D

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan urged higher education institutions to attain global standards in research. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan stresses the importance of conducting a serious evaluation of Kerala's research standards to achieve global excellence. Rightly, the government's significant investment in the research

sector over the past three years is viewed not as an expense but as an investment for the future. The government aims for thorough reforms in the higher education sector, with a focus on efficiency and student-centric approaches, including the introduction of a four-year degree course. Kerala CM Vijayan emphasised the need for a

serious evaluation of the state's performance in achieving global standards in research. CM Vijayan noted Kerala's distinction as the state with the highest expenditure on student scholarships. He urged a critical examination of the state's inability to reach world-class research standards, emphasising the importance of internal excel-

lence. He called for serious consideration and suggestions for addressing this issue. Kerala CM emphasised the need for comprehensive reforms to align with changing times. He mentioned the upcoming introduction of a four-year degree course, which aims to make the education system at arts and science colleges more efficient and

student-centric. CM Vijayan highlighted the global trend towards a multidisciplinary approach in higher education and stated that the government is actively working to prepare the youth for future challenges. He expressed a vision for Kerala to become a recognised hub of higher education nationally and internationally.

BJP RUINED Indian Economy

The leaders of the left parties, CPI(M) and CPI, in a joint rally at Jind in Haryana, urged the people to oust BJP that has destroyed the Indian economy in its decade of rule. The CPI(M) and the CPI accused the BJP-led governments at the Centre and Haryana of ruining the economy, undermining democracy and threatening the age-old socio-cultural fabric of the country.

Addressing a gathering at the 'Badlav Sandesh Rally' in Jind in Haryana, which was jointly organised by the Left parties and attended by CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury and CPI leader Amarjeet Kaur urged people to vote out the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha and Haryana Assembly elections.

The CPI(M) and the CPI on Saturday accused the BJP-led governments at the Centre and Haryana of ruining the economy, undermining democracy and threatening the age-old socio-cultural fabric of the country.

Addressing a gathering at the 'Badlav Sandesh Rally' in Jind, which was jointly organised by the Left parties and attended by a large number of people, including women, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury and Amarjeet Kaur, CPI National Secretary and AITUC leader, urged people to



vote out the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha and Haryana Assembly elections.

CPI(M)'s Yechury cited the enactment of electoral bonds as a "shameless" example of legalising corruption through corporate funding quid pro quo. He wondered how the State Bank of India was made to withhold the details of donor companies defying the Supreme Court order. Yechury said the electoral bond "misdemeanour" was only one in a series of several other scandals, including demonetisation, Rafale deal and Hindenburg revelations. He added that the country needed alternative policies and not change of leaders alone.

CPI's Amarjeet Kaur made a scathing attack on the Modi government for "making the farmers and workers suffer with unprecedented unemployment, poverty and mounting miseries". She said 25% of suicides last year were by daily wage

workers. Even workers of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme were starved of their rightful job days. She emphasised the need for workers and peasants' alliance to oust the "corporate communal alliance" from power.

The two leaders exhorted the people of Haryana to give a crushing defeat to the ruling BJP-JJP in the State in tune with the I.N.D.I. alliance call to "defeat BJP and save the country". They hoped that all secular and democratic parties, forces and individuals would come together and ensure that anti-BJP votes were not divided in the ensuing Lok Sabha election.

The Haryana State unit Secretaries of the CPI(M) Surender Singh and CPI's Daryao Singh Kashyap, accused the Khattar government of mindless privatisation of education, health, electricity and other public sectors leading to the highest-ever unemployment.

Kerala's Own OTT

Kerala government has launched India's first state-owned OTT platform Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan launched India's first government-owned OTT (Over-The-Top) platform 'CSpace' terming it as a decisive step in the onward journey of Malayalam Cinema. Inaugurating CSpace, managed by the Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC). The Chief Minister said that this is a pioneering initiative that gives prominence to films with artistic and cultural value without hurting the mainstream film industry. Kerala CM detailing on the initiative noted that earning profit is the prime motive of the private-sector OTT platforms that mostly go for commercial movies whereas the priority of CSpace, on the other hand, is to onboard and stream contents with artistic and cultural values and is set to make a mark as a medium that brings home quality films. This will also help the promotion of the Malayalam language and culture CM Vijayan said. The decision that CSpace will only stream films that are already released in theatres signifies that this is not a move that will harm the interests of the film industry. Its aim is to promote good cinema without hurting the interests of the producers and exhibitors, the CM said. Another distinctive feature of CSpace is transparency in its operations and the overall earnings, the profits from revenue share. KSFDC Chairman and eminent film Director Shaji N Karun said CSpace is a novel initiative that seeks to help producers to get back their investment through crowd-funding route. KSFDC is a state-owned company entrusted with the promotion of Malayalam Cinema and industry, under the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Kerala. For selection of the content, KSFDC has constituted a 60-member curator panel including eminent cultural and film personalities. Every content that is submitted will be evaluated by the curators considering its artistic, cultural and infotainment merit, before showcasing it on the platform. A total of 42 films have already been selected in the first phase for streaming on CSpace, including 35 feature films, six documentaries, and one short film. Films that have won national or state awards and those exhibited at major film festivals will also be streamed. As such, the films that win state, national and international awards are to be streamed on the platform. The CSpace OTT platform, which operates on a pay per view basis, allows viewers to watch a feature film for Rs 75 and shorter contents for a much lesser price. Exactly half of the amount charged goes to the content provider. Viewers can download the CSpace app from the PlayStore and the App Store.

CAA Challenge To Humanity

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan slammed Centre for notifying the rules of CAA, an open challenge to humanity and said that the law won't be implemented in the state.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the decision by the BJP-led union government to implement the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) weeks ahead of the Lok Sabha elections is aimed at 'dividing people, inciting communal sentiments and undermining the very basic principles of the Constitution' and declared that Kerala government will not implement them.

The Centre on Monday evening issued a notification of the rules of the CAA, paving the way for its implementation across the country. The law aims to give citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who came to India before December 31, 2014. Warning that the Centre's move will unsettle the nation, the Kerala CM called for united opposition to the decision to stratify Indian citizens who have equal rights. "This can only be seen as part of the Hindutva communal agenda of the Sangh Parivar and the ruling BJP. It is a blatant viola-



tion of the Constitution to grant citizenship to non-Muslims who immigrated to India from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014 and to deny citizenship only to Muslims. Indian citizenship is being defined in terms of religion. It

is an open challenge to humanity, the country's traditions and its people," the Kerala CM said.

Similar to Kerala several other States also are up in arms against the CAA legislation. But there is nothing they can do. According to the Indian Constitution, states cannot refuse to implement the CAA as citizenship falls under the jurisdiction of the Centre and not the state. Also, speaking to India Today TV, legal experts affirmed that the implementation cannot be blocked by the state governments, and they would be left with "no option" but to implement the CAA in their

states. As such this is a central subject and the era of digital communication. Those who are eligible will have to apply in the prescribed format online and upload all the mandatory documents, again online. It is all digitized. Verifications are first based on online submissions. There is no State intervention in applying by the eligible per the CAA legislation.

This being so it looks like the Kerala government would again knock the doors of the apex court. This being passed legislation by the Parliament, it is to be seen how the apex court would handle the grievances of the states.

SP-Congress Tie-up



The Samajwadi Party and the Congress finally sealed a seat-sharing deal in Uttar Pradesh for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections ending weeks of suspense and bickering. As per the deal, Samajwadi Party (SP) and other SP allies in UP will contest on 63 seats while the Congress gets 17 seats, a climb down on Akhilesh part who originally offered 11 seats to Congress and refused to climb down then.

This marked the end of bitterness between the two parties which had resulted in Akhilesh Yadav not joining Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in the state. The differences between Akhilesh and Congress is rooted to the 5-State Assembly elections held few months ago. The squirmishes stooped down so much that Congress Leaders in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh called Akhilesh by unparliamentary lingua.

The SP had originally offered 11 seats to the Congress and later had increased the offering to 17 to ease the tensions and literally arrive at a deal, should the Congress be interested. However, the grand old party wanted three more seats and also dillydallied their decisions. Congress leader and Rahul Gandhi's sister Priyanka Gandhi is said to have played a major role in sealing this deal with SP.

There are 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections,

the Samajwadi Party had tied up with the Bahujan Samaj Party and had won 5 seats. The Congress, on the other hand, could win just one seat, Rae Bareilly that was retained by Sonia Gandhi.

In a huge setback, the grand old party lost even in its bastion of Amethi where Rahul Gandhi was defeated by BJP's Smriti Irani. What would also worry the Congress is the further sharp decline in its overall vote share in the state. The Congress vote share in 2019 was 6.31% while in 2014 the party got 7.47% of votes.

The Samajwadi Party also saw its vote share decline to 17.96% in 2019 Lok Sabha elections from 22.18% in 2014. Akhilesh Yadav has already lost a key partner in the state with Jayant Choudhary's Rashtriya Lok Dal all set to join the BJP-led NDA. While the formal announcement has not been made by either side, Jayant had confirmed the move after PM Modi announced Bharat Ratna for Chaudhary Charan Singh.

All well that ends well is the saying. With this poll seat share deal there at least wouldn't be any vote split of these two parties among their own voters at least, as BJP-NDA rides high in their popularity in the State where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and CM Yogi Adityanath popularity are only rising with no anti-incumbency sentiments.

MORE BSP EXODUS

Ahead of the forthcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections due in just two months, more Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leaders are crossing over to greener pastures, apparently leaving BSP supremo in disarray. It is a double whammy of sorts for Mayawati as one more of her MP left her to join BJP and yet another MP ready to leave anytime soon. But BSP supremo Mayawati is not disturbed at the exodus.

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati has once again confirmed that her party would contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections independently on its own strength with complete preparation and strength while refuting rumours of the party forming any electoral alliance. In such a situation, spreading rumours about forming an electoral alliance or third front etc is fake and wrong news she tweeted recently. She further reiterated that in the interest of Bahujan community, BSP's decision to contest the elections alone is firm. It is only natural that the opposition parties to BJP are seriously worried and restless, as Mayawati refused to be wooed by them in their quest to halt Prime Minister Narendra Modi marching to his 3rd straight term and are already morally down as BJP launched its dream run with the opposition shuddering 400+ aggressive campaign.

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MP Ritesh Pandey resigned from the primary membership of the party and joined the BJP recently in the presence of Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak and other senior leaders. Pandey is an MP from the Ambedkar Nagar Lok Sabha constituency.

He was diplomatic while speaking on his cross over. Pandey said he had worked for the BSP for the last 15 years and did not want to comment on the "thinking and activities" of party supremo Mayawati.

Incidentally and interestingly, Pandey was one of the eight MPs with whom Prime Minister Narendra Modi sat down for a 'surprise lunch' in the Parliament canteen earlier this month. The MPs and the Prime Minister ate vegetarian thalis and ragi laddus during the surprise lunch during the Lunch meeting.



Pandey has represented the Ambedkar Nagar constituency since 2019. He was also a MLA from Jalalpur between 2017 and 2019 before he was elected as an MP. In a similar development, according to political sources, BSP MP from Jaunpur Shyam Singh Yadav is also likely to cross over, not to BJP but to join the Congress as he is slated to attend the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

The latest developments came almost a week after BSP supremo Mayawati dismissed rumours of forming a coalition ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

She affirmed that her party will contest the upcoming elections independently. BSP Chief Behen Mayawati had already announced that she would have no truck with any of the parties and that BSP would be fighting the Lok Sabha

elections alone across the country wherever it has its presence.

UP is the main bone of contention that returns nation's largest number of LS MPs, 80 LS seats. Worries of the Opposition, especially of Rahul's Congress and Akilesh's Samajwadi Party (SP), on Mayawati deciding to fight the poll battle all alone are natural. They know her vote bank strengths. They also know that BSP would cut across into their vote banks seriously, advantage BJP. They are all restless.

There is no denying that Mayawati has her own dedicated and loyal vote bank who never cross over to other parties ditching her. This is her strength of having built the confidence of her vote bank in her and her policies and of course her capabilities to champion their causes.

ONE MAN ARMY

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar exited the newly formed opposition grouping I.N.D.I. alliance bloc and West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee declared that the TMC will go solo, in the Lok Sabha elections. Then there is the disturbing exodus of senior and experienced leaders from the Congress from different states and central command circles. With leaders switching political parties, and political parties switching alliances, the opposition bloc is already facing a major hit in the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls.

In this scenario, what more could the Congress do to defeat the BJP and become a game-changer in the general elections? Well this is for the political pundits and the media to analyze what next for the Congress, but not for its leader Rahul Gandhi who is going solo unhindered with no signs of any type of concerns in his mind and face to read from. That is all about Rahul Gandhi who literally appears not bothered at all on what's happening in his party and if he is aware that the LS polls are just few weeks away? Yes he is aware, undoubtedly.

Writing about Rahul Gandhi is very tricky. He acts childish and immature sometimes and also as a grown up mature politician. One is still confused about his real original personality. But all said, Rahul Gandhi now is firmly in the saddle of the Congress Party. He calls the shots. He is not ignoring the senior leaders, but at the same he appears to be prioritizing functional positions for the young in the party.

In reality the differences among BJP and Congress are not in politics but in policies. At the same it is also about the vision that should capture the minds of the people, which BJP has done smartly and honestly. Against this backdrop how Rahul Gandhi is navigating amidst criticisms and desertions and more so his seeming lack of concern is amazing. But this also is not true to a large extent. Rahul is moving in a direction that he has chosen and that he thinks is correct and will bring dividends, of not today may be

sometime later.

Rahul Gandhi's greatest strength in a way is his seeming indifference and apathetic to failures. The point to ponder is that Rahul Gandhi is moving forward with no signs of qualms even after several key poll defeats in this full decade. The severe poll drubbings in 2014 and 2019 and several state elections have not unnerved him even a bit. He goes on as a one man army as if nothing happened and that the world waiting to receive him with full honour. That is Rahul, a leader who appears forward thinking and holds the thinking that he is in the right direction if people slander his actions with smear campaigns and oppositions attack him for what he is and what he does. It is hard to fathom the real mind of Rahul as a politician.

Rahul is fearless. In today's political environment there is not a single political figure who could talk so boldly against the ever powerful PM Modi. His tirade against Modi has been solo and fearless. Rahul Gandhi had been challenging the government, with his charge that the prime minister has empowered select few companies over creating a level-playing field for all. He has often invoked the phrase "Ambani-Adani", a substitute for alleged cronyism, in his speeches. He is the only voice to be heard challenging the power of Modi today.

It is surprising for many to see Rahul Gandhi doing things with his yatra-2, all solo, his way with hardly any media glare when he should be on the campaign trail directing his people on the direction and course of actions to take. Sadly, he is never seen at time of trouble in the party. But this is not without reason as he is on his trek navigating complex political web his way with his own strategies.

Rahul had launched the 2024 campaign. He had shown the way forward. He also has set the tone of the campaign. But the party leaders instead the taking the campaign seriously are engaged in brickbats against each other and trying to promote their family member for their

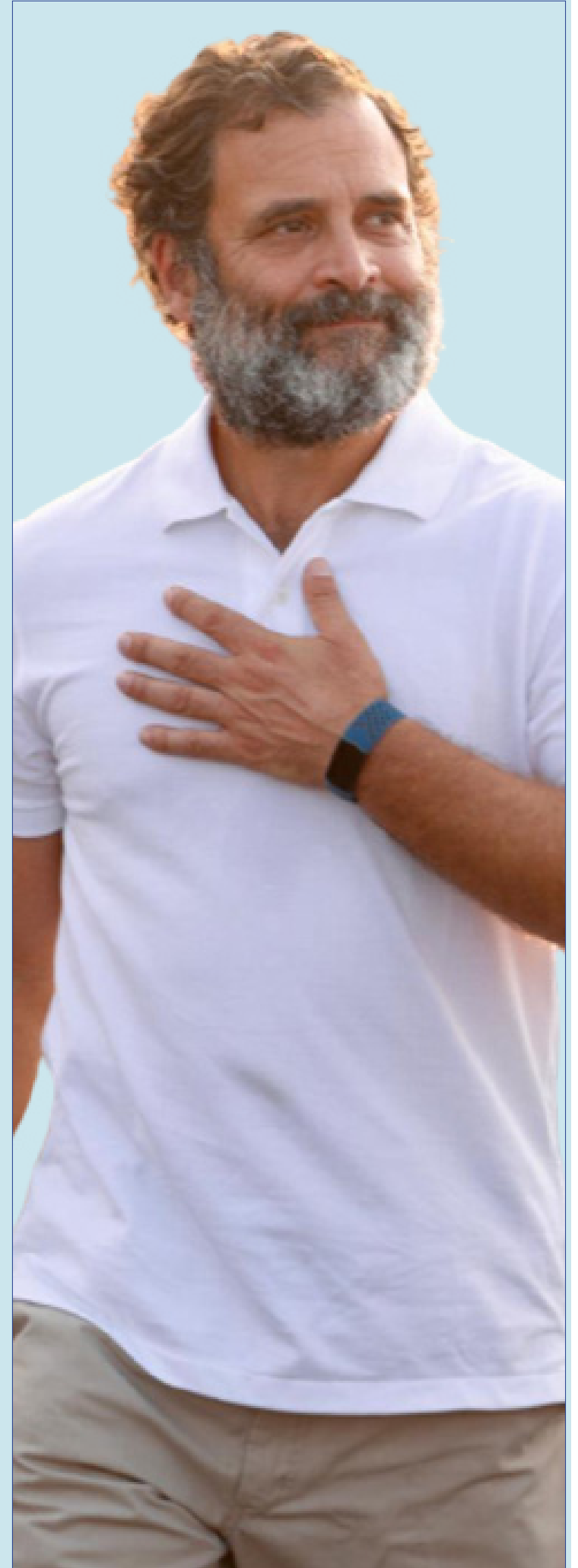
own self interests. If you observe deep, Rahul had been open minded, said what he felt from the depth of his heart, fearless and innocent and humorous too, right from the beginning. It is true his innocence and his uttering irritate and intimidate many, especially the senior politicians in his party. Close observers know that he has always taken criticisms against him with a pinch of salt and in good humour.

Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress, which is clearly on the backfoot after several poll losses, Rahul has been making concerted attempts to take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP-NDA combine through the I.N.D.I. alliance banner, despite several cracks within.

It is beyond debates that Rahul does things his way and gets away with it, without losing his popularity. But being a national leader of a century old party his party admirers, workers and supporters wish to see a more concerning Rahul who understands and talks rather than reading out from what has been written by his cronies. It is also true that while as an individual personality Rahul is so lovable, as a politician he is often described as still immature. For Rahul to benefit from the hard work he does it is imperative that he immediately does away with the type of cronies he is surrounded with.

Rahul Gandhi lacks a seamless support or may be he is not for any support to his efforts. But one feels that the hard work that he does all alone could be cashed to a large extent should he build a meaningful and constructive minded team to follow on what he did and do things that presents a repeat value to what he does and did. But this unfortunately is not happening.

His lack of concern to burning issues, leaving aside the ones he chooses to attend, presents a different picture to the voters. Rahul may be unconcerned, but in politics one should be concerned about what voters think, want and expect from their chosen leaders. Rahul is a nationally known leader of great stature and he



is being watched by millions and millions day in and out and the world is an expert in finding faults rather than appreciating those are good.

Rahul has transformed. He now talks with confidence and there appears to have some substance in what he says. It is New Rahul Gandhi, the Gandhi scion, is now the natural

Commander of the century old Congress Party. It is he who calls the shots now without being its official President. He now has absolute control of the party. It is indeed a great Image Makeover! But where is the team to convert his hard work to votes? Being a one man army is admirable, but does not work in politics.

Shock Waves Shatter Peace

Government of UT of Puducherry has indeed failed to curb the menace of drugs, liquor and tobacco in the territory. The drugs menace not only continues as a flourishing business of the drugs mafia minting several crores every day in the small UT of Puducherry, but has taken serious turns sending shock waves across the territory with the kidnapping, gang rape, murder and discarding the body in the drain of the city of a 9-year old young innocent Class-5 dalit girl child. The gang rape-cum-murder of the class 5 school-girl has triggered outrage across the country.

People accuse that this horrifying incidence and more are the direct evil recurring results of liquor-drugs mafia-officials-politicians nexus that has gone beyond control in the territory.

This is an harrowing incidence of sheer barbarism by the perpetrators of this heinous crime who were all found to be drug addicts. This brutal insane unpardonable act sent shock waves across the territory and the nation triggering mass protests against the ineffectiveness of the government in maintaining law and order in a city that has become totally unsafe for women of all ages to walk around without fear.

Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangaswamy's response was quick in driving the police team into immediate action with stern hands to apprehend the perpetrators of this heinous crime. Puducherry CM Rangasamy also quickly announced a compensation of ₹ 20 lakh to the girl's family and assured that the accused would be charge-sheeted soon and the prosecution would ensure the accused were given maximum punishment by the court. Meanwhile Puducherry Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan also was quick in action. She visited the victim's house and endorsed what the Chief Minister said that the criminals would soon be behind the bars and be pronounced heavier punishment for the unpardonable barbaric crime committed by the rapists gang. This inhuman incident of the kidnapping, gang rape and murder of the school girl from Muthialpet in Pondicherry and thrown

into the city sewer by the evil-minded gang has left parents all over the state in an absolute state of panic. The police have ascribed the reason for this brutally criminal act to drug addiction and abuse of the involved criminals. A SIT team is investigating the incidence and have arrested 7 persons so far connected with this insidiously gang rape and murder of the little innocent primary school going girl child.

The body of the girl was found 3 days after her death. While the confessions of the 7 criminals arrested in the girl's murder could not be obtained, allegedly as the arrested criminals were still under the influence of already consumed drugs even after 4 days being in the police custody. This is more shocking.

In the UT of Puducherry, there are several campaigns creating awareness against alcoholism, smoking, chewing paan and tobacco abuse, drug addiction and related social evils right through the year. Seminars, get-togethers and area based meetings are organised regularly and rallies are conducted involving college and school students through central and state funded programs. Private players and NGOs are engaged in the campaign against drugs, liquor and their misuse resulting in social evil doings by the unscrupulous in the society. Drugs and liquor menace has been on the rise, affecting the life and career of the youth and people of this UT territory, terrorizing the parents on the future of their children. Despite these initiatives, crimes and atrocities against women, girl children, working women, daily wage women workers and also against women entrepreneurs have become very serious in Puducherry. The entire responsibility to prevent these society evils lies with the government, law enforcing departments and politicians, which cannot be denied or disputed. No more the government can wash its hands off these menace stating the children are improperly brought up by their families as a child spends more time outside the house in campuses and travelling to and from their institutions. They are hardly left any quality time with their



families. Both the good or bad moral and criminal environment lay more outside their homes. The disturbing crime triggering items like the drugs, liquor, gutka, tobacco products are only available outside their homes, all under the so called watchful eyes and surveillance systems of the government.

On its part the media, including the digital platforms, also keeps alerting the government on these increasing evils from time to time.

In another horrifying revelation some key drugs and liquor kingpins had taken shelter in key political party umbrellas. They are alleged to have donated huge amounts in crores to be decorated with posts in the parties to help continue doing the illicit businesses, literally with total immunity, under the garb of pretending to be active political and social activists, proving thereby that the officials and politicians nexus with the mafia flourishes.

A shocking revelations has come that the Notorious drugs smuggler Jaffer Sadiq, an ex-DMK functionary, who is on the absconding search list of the anti-drugs agency, The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), allegedly was freely doing the drugs smuggling business with his accomplices network spread across the borders.

Ex-DMK functionary Jaffer Sadiq recently was arrested in drug trafficking case by the NCB that has termed him the mastermind and kingpin of an international drugs trafficking network spread between India, Australia, and New Zealand.

NCB recently confirmed it has arrested Jaffer Sadiq, a Tollywood film producer, and the Tamil Nadu-based alleged dealer of narcotics and a political activist in con-

nection with an international drugs trafficking investigation case. Sadiq, a producer of Tamil films and said to have been marked as 'J' for India by the United States spy agency, was recently expelled by the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) from the party. He was the Chennai West deputy organiser of the DMK's NRI wing. NCB officials revealed that over 45 huge shipments had been sent over past three years, which contained approximately 3,500 kg of pseudoephedrine valued at over ₹2,000 crore in international market.

Last month, the federal anti-narcotics agency had arrested three people and seized 50 kg of narcotics-making chemical pseudoephedrine in a search at a Delhi godown who allegedly revealed the involvement of Jaffer. The NCB since then had been looking for Sadiq and raided his premises linked to him in Tamil Nadu who is alleged to be the drugs mafia don in the UT of Pondicherry too under whose control drugs mafia is allegedly flourishing in this UT.

NCB further claimed that Sadiq has revealed he has earned a huge amount of money from his illicit drug trafficking operations and invested the same in legit businesses in industries like film, construction, hospitality, et al. Jaffer is alleged to have accepted that Trafficking of drugs was carried out via air and sea cargo hidden in food products like health mix powder and desiccated coconut.

Earlier few photographs were released showing Jaffer with his brother Aamir and Snegan from the film industry who are said to be close to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Stalin. It also now has come to light that Jaffer Sadiq's young-

er brother Salim joined the Liberation Tigers of India and created a political identity for himself along with his close friend and filmmaker Eram Rajendran who hails from Puducherry who though being a native of Tamil Nadu, had deliberately settled in Puducherry and presented himself as a social-political worker to hide the illicit business of his brother Jaffer and himself. Interestingly it is alleged that Rajendran and Amir befriended few top functionaries in the Sate Congress party through alleged Jaffer's influence and allegedly donated huge amounts to the party and also organized rallies in Muthialpet, Pondicherry to steal media limelight bypassing the Congress luminaries and leaders. Rajendran was eventually given the position of Muthialpet Congress constituency President in the presence of several UT party leaders like the current party President and MP Vaithilingam, former Pondicherry Chief Minister Narayanswamy, among others. Apart from the huge party donations Rajendran backed by Salim and Jaffer gang allegedly secretly bear the Congress MP election expenses in the forthcoming 2024 elections.

These all cannot be just allegations. No smoke without spark. People of Pondicherry now question the political parties of the territory on their nexus with the evils of the society like the drugs and liquor mafia driven by money greed and how they could lead and set a noble example for the youth of the territory.

There is no denying on the nexus of drug and liquor lords with greedy in politics and bureaucracy. People now demand and hope the Pondicherry Chief Minister N Rangaswamy would personally formulate and oversee operations to weed out from the root of drug menace from the territory. With such an able Chief Secretary the CM should not have issues in wiping the territory totally of these ills and wrong-doings and apprehend the culprits and ensure the Muthialpet type incidences would never occur anywhere in this UT. People of the territory are waiting for the good drugs-free days in the good of the future of the youth of the territory.

KALA INNINGS



Kalaben Mohanbhai Delkar has been nominated by Baratiya Janata Party (BJP) for the Dadra Nagar & Haveli Lok Sabha constituency in the UT of Daman & Diu and Dadra Nagar & Haveli for the forthcoming general election.

Kalaben Delkar after the sad death of her late husband Mohanbhai Delkar, she won this LS seat on a Shiv Sena (Udhav) party ticket. Kalaben was the first woman Lok Sabha MP from this UT district as well as the first Lok Sabha MP from Shiv Sena (Udhav) outside Maharashtra.

Few weeks ago Kalaben was creating a buzz in political circles following her meeting with the Prime Minister recently. All eyes were on her with the speculation she is eyeing to cross over to BJP.

It is only natural for any ambitious politician to look long term. With Shiv Sena in hot spot with tussle be-

tween Shinde and Udhav Thakarey factions she possibly saw no long term political future there. She also wanted to move forward with her political ambitions and to carry forward her late husband's tribal welfare programs. Added to this was the unending problems she possibly was said to be facing with the Administration, a tussle that was in existence for a long time when her late husband Mohan Delkar was the MP.

Kalaben as such is one of the most popular names in the territory owing to the support and love she received from her supporters and party workers and also the popularity of her late husband.

Whichever way one looks at it, except for Kalabe there appears to be no other winning candidate in this UT in the current circumstances and she certainly is on the winning side assured of her own victory in the territory.



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is moving towards bagging this UT district again adding to its set magic number of 400+ by nominating Lalubhai Babubhai Patel for the fourth consecutive term. Lalubhai, a popular mass leader loved by the people of this small UT district had won the previous three Lok Sabha elections in 2009,

Lallubhai 4th Time

2014 and 2019. BJP has fielded Lalubhai, a seasoned mass leader of this territory with the objective of retaining this LS seat to push large scale development of this territory that had largely remained neglected for decades. Lalubhai won the previous elections with comfortable margins defeating his nearest Congress party rival Ketan Patel, son of former two times MP late Dhyabhai Patel.

Lalubhai Patel will be a formidable challenge to the Congress that is trying again its prospects in this small UT district. Lalubhai is a popular leader in the territory. He has the best relations with all in the local administration and also other political

KETAN AGAIN

Election fever is heating up. Congress back to challenge BJP in this small UT district of Daman & Diu. Ketan Patel, son of former MP late Dayabhai Patel bags Congress party nomination for the forthcoming Lok Sabha election from this UT of Daman & Diu.

Ketan has fought the earlier elections on the same congress ticket unsuccessfully losing out to more popular Lalubhai Patel of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Congress has not been in good shape in this territory, though has not been not seen any proactive campaigning yet. Now with Ketan Patel again bagging the nomination, Congress fever has started heating up in this UT district. Ketan a political activist like his two times MP father, having stayed

more outside this small UT district for long pursuing his business interests is back to challenge the BJP in this territory. His long absence though has denied his prospects, he rides on the mass popularity of his late father Dayabhai Patel. His father was a mass leader in this territory and was totally committed to the good of the party and the people.

Though riding low on his personal popularity, Ketan still would be big challenger to BJP's Lalubhai Patel as several people of the territory loyal to congress has been longing to see the grand old party in action in this small UT district.

With Ketan back in action, congress workers are back putting their best efforts to springboard the prospects of congress and their Daman & Diu leader



Ketan Patel who now has yet another opportunity to showcase his mettle to prove his party bosses that they have made the right choice in him to challenge the formidable BJP in the forthcoming general elections. It should be interesting to watch the challengers, BJP and Congress, sweating out to grab this territory.

Dr. Mallik For BSP

Port Blair: Dr Arun Kumar Mallik has been named by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati as its candidate for the UT of Andaman & Nicobar islands cluster for the forthcoming Lok Sabha election.

Dr Mallik, a seasoned Health Sector professional, is a local islander holding impressive credentials and is MD in Community Medicine from AIIMS, New Delhi and has worked in various capacities taking on different roles in different organisations. Most notably he was the WHO coordinator- Health Cluster (HCC) and had been with UN Agencies such as UNDP/UNV, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNIOM, UNFAO & WHO. Dr Mallik also was associated with institutions like Bangkok School of Tropical Medicine and several NGOs in the health sector. His association also extends with RMRC/ICMR and the Andaman & Nicobar Administration through DHS, AAJVS & ANIMS, to name a few. Dr Mallik is also a known face owing to his social service orientation. This would be first time BSP has fielded a candidate from this islands cluster.



past has achieved in this UT district.

Daman and Diu came into existence as a separate union territory following the Goa, Daman and Diu Reorganisation Act of 1987.

Till then it remained as a part of Goa after it was liberated from Portuguese rule. The territory then came under the mainstream of politics returning alternatively Congress and BJP candidates in the past, but BJP overshadowing all other political parties since last 15 years. BJP's Lalubhai's challenger this time around also is Ketan Patel of Congress. Lalubhai is waiting eagerly for his fourth consecutive win to return to the Lok Sabha to represent his people and continue the developmental programs for the territory and his people.

RED CARD SCANDAL

ROSO ANGAPPAN

Ration Card issuing system in the UT of Punducherry is the new green pasture target of the wrong-doers. Interesting are the ways how cleverly some circumvent, bend or ignore framed laws, rules and guidelines and accepting forged and fake documents to mint money fearlessly in several hundred crores in short time frame, that too without getting caught. Agents Raj continues in the UT of Puducherry even after so many checks and monitoring with the connivance of few fearless thick skinned unscrupulous government servants in the Department of Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs that is responsible for the PDS in the territory.

The Public Distribution System (PDS), initiated by the Food Corporation of India (FCI), aims to ensure food security and adequate nutrition for the Indian population. The key to this system is the Ration Card that holds utmost importance.

The Department of Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (DCSCA) has been designated to implement the PDS in the Union Territory of Puducherry. This department is responsible for providing the timely distribution of essential commodities like wheat, rice, sugar, pulses, kerosene oil, etc., at subsidised rates. Individuals holding valid Puducherry Ration Cards only are eligible to purchase these food items at subsidized low prices. The colour of the Ration Card that is issued after several checks including personal verifications defines the eligibility criteria of the defined target and the prices of the commodities in the PDS. Ration card is a vital multi-purpose document that entitles the resident of a state to obtain essential goods at highly subsidised rates through the Public Distribution System (PDS). Ration card helps to efficiently implement the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and the provisions of the National Food Security Act (NFSA). It also helps to ensure food and social security. Ration



cards also are considered as identity proof of the head of household along with details about all of the family members with their name, age, relationship with the head of the family, gender, income levels, etc. and further also serves as a proof of one's residence. It is annoying while it is also mind shattering to know how these all important government issued cards are issued to non-bonafide residents just to loot the government exchequer, as apart from food and other household supplies certain target groups also get cash assistance through Direct Transfer System! Puducherry government issues five different types of cards based on annual family income, AAY, Red, Yellow, Green and PHH. It is the Red Ration Card that is most misused as it is linked several free and low price items benefits in addition to cash assistance at special times. Red Cards are for the economically weaker families who earn Rs 15,000 or less annually, Green Cards are for the families with annual income more than Rs. 1,20,000, Yellow Cards for families whose annual income is greater than Rs. 15,000 but lower than Rs. 1,20,000, Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) for the specially identified most economically disadvantaged households. These apart

there is a PHH Ration Cards for Priority Household households, which are given special consideration in government programs.

AAY Ration Cards issued to beneficiaries falling under the government's AAY program, specifically targeting the 'most economically disadvantaged households'. Under this category, the program focuses on providing essential commodities to the poorest of the poor, which often referred to as BPL (Below Poverty Line) Ration Cards. AAY cardholders receive 35 kg of food grains per month, mostly at far low heavily subsidized prices.

Of all it is the Red Ration Card that has now come under severe criticism and pointing to a greater 'easy to do' PDS card scam that allegedly runs into several hundred crores in a short time span with the booty split from top to bottom of the unscrupulous within this division in the administration.

It is being alleged that the DCSCA issued over 50000 Red cards, either new or downgraded from Yellow and Green cards, that too in just 3 months, to those who were not entitled to using false declarations and fake or forged documents. It is alleged some top notch government servants are involved in this scam, allegedly

taking bribes for making this interesting card that allegedly runs into several hundred crores.

It is being alleged that anywhere between Rs 3500 to Rs 10000 are taken as bribe to make this card to those who are not entitled to. It is also being alleged that these red cards have been issued to the affluent families, who have made these cards in greed to grab the freebies and subsidized items through the Fair Price Shops (FPS) in the PDS. Not just this, but bribery goes into the FPS system as well so as to favour certain select strong and affluent owners FPS, who play along with the games of some unscrupulous DCSCA officials. Buy why the Red card? It is understandable from the sleu of benefits, priorities and subsidised items which are available only to the Red card holders.

Latest statistics has shocked all. Of the near 3.60+ Lakh cards issued to Puducherry families, over 2.05+ Lakh are Red cards, while the AAY cards number just around 25000. It is alleged that the alleged scam involves not only the officials from the DCSCA, but allegedly also several officials from SQUAD division who wield huge powers in authorising the entitlement. Honest staff in the department say that when previous Director Shaktivel and Additional Director Ravichandran were at the helm they were strict and had sternly warned all that appropriate ration cards pwer factual entitlement only should be issued and there was strict vigil on wrong-doers both within and outside the department that was ruled by officials favoured Agents. They were insistant that Red card should be recommended only after a personal visit and assessment on rightful entitlements of families that they are all really poor and economically weak requiring government assistance.

Those days are gone people say. It is being alleged by botht the people and the honest in the department that no work of any nature of the public gets done, allegedly without paying a bribe to the unscrupulous

government servant.

It is being seriously alleged that just one top official in the concerned department alone, along with his accomplices, had pocketed several crores for converting yellow to red cards in addition to issuance of new Red cards. It is shocking to note that allegations are being made that this top official alone makes over 2-3 Lakhs a day. Even though majority dealings are in hard cash, people and the honest say that even a simple investigative audit or just by scanning their UPI-linked accounts of digital-pay platforms like Gpay, PayTm, PhonePe to name a few and also a close scrutiny of their phone call records should easily support these allegations. Most interestingly apart from the most favoured outside independent Agents, even several officials through benami names and chosen outside individuals act as Agents to pocket the entire bribe money, it is being alleged. It is alleged that even a Superintendent rank official is minting money in several thousands a day.

There are allegations that even several in the Squad & Levy Section team are corrupt and favouring chosen FPS owners with abundant quality supplies. The squad section is functioning with one Tahsildar and one Deputy Tahsildar with the assistance of Civil Supplies Officers and Inspectors. They are vigil about the movement of the PDS commodities and seizure of articles illegal transportation of PDS items. When this system itself becomes corrupt can the public expect anything more ill where their interests are grossly compromised.

These are just allegations? The statistics doesn't subscribe to anything otherwise. When will the Administration take effective action to book the culprits and halt these corrupt practices? With an effective and able Chief Secretary to support will the Pondicherry Chief Minister take note of these irregularities and initiate immediate corrective actions to assure the public and regains their confidence in him?

BJP's Smart Number Game

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has unveiled its audacious "Mission 400+", a battle cry aiming to win a staggering 400+ LS seats in the upcoming most keenly contested and globally watched with anxiety the 2024 Lok Sabha election. This staggering number is not just a number to flaunt, but real dream number signifying a near-absolute majority, rewriting the Indian political landscape.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi horning this magical number again and again is not just to flaunt BJP's dominance, but with a Nationalistic minded bigger picture that escapes the narrow mindsets of majority media and political pundits. While the 370+ for BJP and 400+ for BJP-NDA combine looks difficult, it is not impossible.

BJP winning three prime plum states in the Hindi heartland and expanding impressively its footprints in regions where its influence till now thought to be negligible, South and part of North East demonstrates its growing dominance. The recent 3 State wins just ahead of the forthcoming general elections impressively is a prelude to the grand 2024 finale that is to catapult Prime Minister Modi straight into his 3rd term should be read between the lines and the undeniable fact that this re-exposed the weak opposition. Massive BJP victory in these states signify Congress is in disarray.

Team Modi is going to go for the kill as it sniffs a chance to create history and cross the magical mark of 400+ seats. A weak, aimless and directionless opposition, especially the Congress, fires up BJP's well-oiled machinery might to work extra hard and help the party score a hat trick so that their long term ideological goals are established.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who cherishes a long term goal of being in power, remains the most popular figure, and his image carefully cultivated as that of a uncompromisingly decisive leader navigating a complex world. The party's machinery is well too oiled and fully battle-tested, adept at mobilising its core Hindutva base and strategically



wooing new voters as the weak opposition is still on its catching up game and seems ill-equipped to match the powerful and disciplined BJP's juggernaut.

Foremost question is, in a nation so vast and as diverse and politically vibrant as India, is such an ambition of "Mission 400+" a strategic masterstroke waging a stunning psychological war against the fragmented and weak opposition, a bridge too far or there is something that goes beyond the thinking of others? Right now BJP is formidable and sure to get to their straight 3rd term which in itself would be historic and mindboggling for a party that had just 2 MPs in a 543+ LS house few decades ago.

The BJP's confidence in crossing the 400 mark stems from its meticulous groundwork and inclusive mass outreach. Over time, BJP has cultivated a broad-based support network, navigating smartly and cautiously the social divides from SC-ST to OBC communities. Over time with its developmental programs and well thought, planned and budgeted welfarism schemes aimed at all, without any divides or appeasement, has struck awe even in the minority communities, especially the Muslims who never have voted for BJP a decade ago.

This expansive acceptance across caste, religious faiths and economic statuses signifies a seismic shift in Indian political arena, where BJP has transcended traditional barriers.

The 2024 elections

promise to be a historic battle, and "Mission 400" serves as a stark reminder of the high stakes involved. But how does the numbers add upto? BJP in the first place needs to retain its 2019 tally of 303 LS seats. In fact it has to improve upon this tally right from the Hindi heartland where there are still several seats it can garner as it has been working overtime proactively for the past 3 years focusing on seats it lost, won with smaller margins and those it never won and also where it has no allies. So it has made the stupendous futuristic-vision based spadework to add more seats right in the Hindi heartland to start with. Announcements of candidates in advance on weaker seats providing extra time for campaigning is another master strategy to improve its winnability in areas it fared lesser than expected.

Its current list of candidates for the 2024 LS election is reflective of its strategies and caste and other equations. The current list has over 52% from SC-ST-OBC, 47%+ young faces of those less than 45 years targeting the over 50% voter population in 18-35 years bracket and of course 18%+ women candidates. There are hundreds of more seats yet to be announced.

It is also fielding several Chief Ministers and MLAs to swing voter influences. For instance Haryana CM Khattar and MP CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan moved from state to LS. Its alliance strategies in the South and East belt supported

by PM Modi's repeated visit with outstanding welfare and developmental programs are sure to make a dent in the regional players bastions and this time around could expect BJP to grab decent numbers it never won to add up to its run for 270+. Many those got into controversies have been dropped signifying PM Modi will not accept communal hurt sending a clear message to voters that BJP is for all faiths in true secular sense.

BJP's alliance strategies trumpet its resolve to add up to its numbers in regions where it is weak and to ensure communities those vote less for BJP are magnetized towards it. For instance its alliances in Kerala and the merger of Kerala Janapaksham of P C George with BJP is indicative to pull the Christian minority too towards BJP. Its alliance seals with those disturbing its vote pulls like in UP with RLD Jayant, Chirag Paswan in Bihar, TDP-JSP in Andhra Pradesh, bringing together smaller parties in Tamil Nadu are significant enough to prove BJP's number bells are not just talking but to really aimed at going beyond 400+.

It intrigues many as to why PM Modi coined this 370+ for BJP and 400+ for BJP-NDA combine number. Why nothing lesser or more. It possibly unfolds a possible secret agenda of absolutely Nationalist minded master politician mind game to play the bigger picture. BJP needs at least a two thirds majority in a joint session of LS-RS in Parliament for smooth

passage of several of the key bills and aggressive reform laws to change the dark spots in the Indian constitution. Well if the number game goes PM Modi-Amit Shah duo way, India would be set on a new journey for the good of all, people and the Nation.

But it is to be kept in mind the weak opposition may be scattered and fragmented, but not vanished or extinguished. They cannot be totally discounted as non-players. Regional parties are becoming stronger at the cost of Congress that is dwarfing elections after elections as it moves aimless and directionless with a vast leadership vacuum at all levels. BJP has to face this challenge amidst its master strategy moves to cross the magical 400+.

Amit Shah, like PM Modi, never liked to play caste politics and believed that all round development alone could take the country to greater heights. From the bricks of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya to the ink of Uttarakhnad's UCC bill and now the CAA, Amit Shah has ensured PM Modi's Hindutva chariot rolls on unhindered, as BJP defines 'New India brand of Secularism' through its "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas" along with "Atma Nirbar Viksit Bharat" is more than a blunt congress brand secularism, naturally has struck awe and admiration across the board cutting across caste and religious lines.

The 2024 elections sure would be a historic battle of one its kind never seen in recent times in India and globally watched with anxiety and bated breath. High stakes are involved. Opposition weak though is in the fray with its own strategies if not to win but at least ensure reduction in BJP numbers and not let them reach the magical number as it has all the potential to shut their shops those they have been running for decades without opposition till a decade ago. In essence, for BJP-NDA the battle for 2024 is essentially a campaign to make India a developed nation viewed from its periscope and telescopic ideologies and nationalist mindsets.

P&S Bank 'Window Dressing' Scam

Latest revelation of account manipulation irregularities effected in Punjab & Sind Bank has shocked the people, experts in the banking sector and also the stock market wizards. Punjab & Sind Bank (P&SB) is alleged to be manipulating its financials to artificially project a sound financial health. The bank allegedly orchestrated a 'Window Dressing' of its account holders during the third quarter financials of FY 2023-24. In a latest, P&SB is alleged to have indulged in stage-managed irregularities that had all the potential to trigger serious implications on the stability and integrity of the financial system affecting the interests of bank's retail shareholders.

Allegations are that the P&SB's CMD pressurized the employees to get the unutilised credit limits of loans of customers availed for a short duration of a week to artificially spike the bank advanced loans business transaction figures. As per audited results during the Q3 ending for the Financial Year 2023-24 the total business of the bank stood at ₹2,01,914 crore inferred out of ₹83,559 advances and ₹1,18,355 Crore deposits. It is alleged that

the unutilized loan limits were unethically shown as availed by transferring the available amounts in the sanctioned loan and other limits in customer accounts to customer's savings or current account as was applicable.

This orchestrated window dressing of accounts was to enhance the total of advances as well as deposits to tweak the health of the bank in the balance sheet. This is also to artificially make the bank appear healthy to spike its share prices in the market and also to upgrade its overall valuation, and possibly to show achievement of projected targets for the financial year.

To give shape to this window dressing irregularity initiative, the CMD's office of P&SB is said to have sent two eMails to all its branches and zonal offices. First eMail was sent on 27, December 2023 containing a detailed list of 89,565 account holder details spread over 1500 branches of P&SB, having unutilized loans and limits balance of over ₹50,000 amounting to ₹4,917.93 Crores.

This was, It is alleged, followed by a second eMail of 29, December 2023 where progress of window dressing was sought and given in brief.

Additionally, it is alleged that majority Field Staffs were personally called and were advised to debit the respective Over Draft (OD) and Cash Credit (CC) limits of the loaned customers and credit these funds appropriately in Savings and Current Accounts of the same customers. This artificial stage-managed exercise resulted in artificial increase in advance and sanctioned loan utilisation figures of the bank customers. It is said that the CMD of the bank was desperately trying to cross the bank's business transaction figure of Rs 2 lakh Crore. Way back in January 2024 P&SB CMD Swarup Kumar Saha had said that P&SB is expected to cross the Rs 2 Lakh crore milestone on the back of robust growth in loans, adding that the 3rd quarter of 2023 the bank had witnessed good growth. He had added that Topline growth was in line with drawn out guidelines while other key parameters like asset quality and slippages were also under control. Financial Institutions operate in a dynamic and competitive environment. It is essential that they adhere to the highest standards of transparency and accountability. Any form of



manipulation or misrepresentation of financial statements undermine investors' confidence, erode public trust, and pose systematic risks to the overall financial health of the Nation's economy. The banks undoubtedly shoulder greater responsibility playing a highly significant role in creating a robust economy for the Nation.

The alleged window dressing at Punjab & Sind Bank appears to involve actions that may artificially improve the appearance of the bank's financial health and position in the market, potentially misleading stakeholders and regulators.

Such practices have the potency of far-reaching consequences for the economy. We need to

have a robust and transparent financial system. Given the gravity of the situation, the need of the situation is for the Central Bank, regulators and the Finance Ministry to immediately intervene, initiate immediate and comprehensive investigations into these allegations, book the wrongdoers and also halt such and other misleading actions of banks in their quest to project good health, spike share prices and hoodwink achieving the missed targets. The public have the right to know that their financial institutions are operating with highest global standard ethics and compliances. It is also imperative that the results of the investigations are made public to ensure transparency and to pin accountability.

₹150 Cr P&SB Guarantee Scam

People and the bank employees themselves were stunned and shocked when the Economic Offense Wing (EOW) raided Punjab and Sind bank branch in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. It has now come to light that the case pertains to liquor mafias and contractors, in which several hundred crores of rupees siphoned off the bank coffers in the name of bank faked bank guarantees and collaterals. EOW sleuths accuse bank officials of intentionally illicitly benefiting contractors and the liquor mafia lords against possible personal gratifications.

EOW had received information about faked, improper and or improperly verified bank



guarantees and collateral securities including incomplete documentation, suspecting connivance of some unscrupulous Punjab and Sind bank officials.

The Economic Offense Wing suspects that there has been fraud bank guarantee scam touching at least a minimum of Rs 150 crore in the said Indore branch

alone. Based on a tip off and investigated information EOW raided Punjab and Sind Bank office in Rajbara, Indore.

Liquor contracts bids were held in February every year. For this, each contractor had to provide a bank guarantee of 12% before bidding and deposit the remaining amount in installments. But sever of the liquor

contractors participated, bid and bagged the contracts with bank guarantees issued by the bank on the basis of incomplete, fake and or unverified collateral and guarantee documents, after which many did not return the money which raised several questions and several complaints were filed with the EOW by unidentified persons.

Most of the contractors associated with the liquor syndicate have accounts in the Rajbara branch of Punjab and Sind Bank. The complaints were also that in many cases the bank guaranteed and issued guarantee documents exceeding the value of the property and other forms of bank collaterals and guarantees to

the liquor contractors who all got the contracts for which they in reality were not entitled to and that huge amounts were bribed to the conniving bank employees to mete out this favour to them.

This is not an isolated case of such frauds and scams. There are several of them which come to the fore only when they are caught. Aggressive reforms, stringent checks, close monitoring are all good but only stringent laws are framed and implemented to book and heavily punish the culprits including ceasing of all their ill earned assets and stringent punishment including life term to death penalty could possibly deter people from even thinking of wrong doing.

Aimless Opposition

Now it is all about Aimless Opposition Vs Confident Committed Modi's BJP-NDA might? Forthcoming 2024 general elections is becoming more interesting than electrifying as the touted unity of the opposition is collapsing one after another like a crumpled pack of cards. Thanks to the aimless and directionless opposition, Advantage BJP!

The grand alliance envisioned by the opposition, christened I.N.D.I. alliance has spectacularly imploded. What was meant to be a united front for a more than challenging fight against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) now lies in total ruins, with Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC), Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Farouq Abdullah's National Conference (NC) choosing to go solo, and Janata Dal United (JDU) and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) returning to the NDA fold. Even where Congress has forged poll seat share deals have mostly been cosmetic, aggravating and dissatisfying several within the party, just to save grace than a poll winning united aggression motive. Merely opposing a common adversary is insufficient. A cohesive agenda is indispensable. They should have at least agreed to a Common Minimum Program without which the opposition unity is fragile and success surely elusive. The failure of the opposition alliance to focus on a unified stance on critical issues highlights the absence of a shared vision. While some parties vehemently opposed certain policies, others offered indirect support or remained indecisive, exposing deep cracks within the opposition grouping.

To effectively counter BJP's powerful and disciplined electoral machinery might and ideological strongholds, opposition parties should have compromised individual ambitions at least to forge a common ideological framework, strategy, and alternative vision. Coalition politics demands compromise, consensus, and clarity of purpose. Without these foundational pillars, opposition alliances naturally have crumbled under the weight of internal discord and external pressures.

As the political landscapes evolved, opposition parties failed to recognise that unity in opposition requires more than mere opposition to PM Mode. It

demanded a shared commitment to principles and a coherent vision for the nation's future. These were lacking and the opposition unity naturally went in for a terrific shot in the hands of the progressive looking BJP and PM Modi.

While publicly proclaiming a shared goal of ousting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP-NDA, the actions of the opposition parties indicate otherwise. In states like Punjab, where the BJP's presence is minimal, the focus shifts to intra-party rivalries, as seen between the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress. Similarly, in West Bengal, the opposition's internal divisions overshadow the broader goal of countering the BJP. While the TMC is attempting to decimate the Congress and the left in the State, Congress is trying to forge an alliance with the left to defeat the dream run of its own ally TMC in the state. Crucially, the grand alliance failed to address nuanced state-level dynamics during their meetings, highlighting a glaring absence of strategic planning. This lack of clarity underscores the persistent issue of traditional and regional rivalries hindering opposition unity. Without substantive discussions on strategy, these parties remain fragmented, unable to present a cohesive challenge to the BJP. This triggers the question of intent looming large, casting doubt on the opposition's ability to effectively counter the ruling party's dominance.

This dramatic fragmentation raises critical questions about the future of Indian democracy and the opposition's ability to offer a viable alternative to the strong and confidently forward marching BJP led by its formidable and strong leader PM Modi, with rising not only Indian but global popularity. Indian opposition not only is aimless and directionless, but also has become mindless. They are at a loss to understand and counter Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his formidable team's moves, strategies and absolute affiliation to nationalism where their thinking starts when and where others end.

Touted opposition unity to take PM Modi and his BJP-NDA head-on has only proved advantageous to BJP in every way from sloganeering to welfarism. Here is one uncompromising, politically unpredictable master politician who has become a formidable unchallenged leader who is, to the sur-

prise of the opposition, is exerting the public to work hard, as he assures taking care of them, to become the best and powerful instead of appeasing them and luring them with freebies and above all that is making him more popular, powerful and formidable in a country with diverse cultures and caste and religious divides that the opposition is mindlessly trying to take advantage of, failing all the time. Every uttering of the fragmented opposition is only becoming a unbeatable springboard for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to invent newer nationalist mass appeal slogans. Latest being the 'hum hai Modi ka Pariwar'. Opposition, sadly, also has not been able to neutralise the BJP's New Age New India secularism that takes the whole country together and forward, a great blow to the appeasement politics that had helped the opposition to rule for decades.

Opposition that has become weak and unpopular as their touted unity shatters to pieces has still not been able to counter the BJP's developmental push with smart 'New India brand of Secularism' through its "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas" along with "Atma Nirbar Viksit Bharat" is more than a blunt congress brand secularism, naturally has struck awe and admiration across the board cutting across caste and religious lines. Several factors contributed to this nightmarish scenario of the opposition, foremost being the alliance lacked a clear united vision and is solely focused on defeating the PM Modi as each party in the new opposition grouping harboured individual ambitions that clashed on the national stage. Strikingly the absence of a unifying agenda beyond ousting PM Modi and BJP fuelled internal competition, particularly on contentious issues like Hindutva, economic policies, and social reforms. Another key factor is that personal ambitions of newly formed grouped alliance partners trumped collective goals. Leaders jockeyed for dominance, insisting on narratives centered around their individual personas, leading to disengagement and infighting when individual expectations weren't met. But the most crucial reason being communication breakdowns that plagued the alliance. Inconsistent messaging and a lack of coordination between the Congress party's central and state leadership exposed deep fissures. Contradictory

stances from regional units, like West Bengal and Delhi, further hampered the development of a cohesive message.

Most significantly the Congress party's approach lacked pragmatism. Symbolic gestures like Rahul Gandhi's Nyay Yatra took precedence over actively addressing alliance challenges, neglecting the strategic adjustments crucial for effective coalition management. To summarise in short Opposition's Lack of Clarity Undermined Anti-BJP Front and its touted unity exposing opposition's lack of clear intent.

Every component party of the new opposition grouping invariably are facing corruption charges against their stalwarts and are under the complex web knit by the central investigations agencies to book them one by one steadily and in a well structured phased manner has been plaguing each one of them. The opposition parties are trying to find avenues to escape from the wrath of these determined agencies rather than putting up a united show.

As the 2024 general elections loom, the opposition parties have failed to realise that personal egos should not supersede the greater goal of providing a credible alternative to the ruling party. By prioritising power plays over genuine collaboration, opposition parties risk undermining their own credibility in the eyes of the electorate. The path to effective opposition lies in transcending individual ambitions and embracing a shared vision for the nation's future. Only through genuine cooperation and a commitment to collective goals can opposition alliances hope to garner public trust and present a compelling alternative to the status quo. As the Indian electorate awaits the outcome of the upcoming elections, opposition parties are not heeding to this lesson and prioritise their unity over ego. Why should voters trust a group that crumbles at the first word to and repeatedly plays the "post-poll alliance" card? This isn't an entertainment game. It's all about the nation's future. Voters yearn for leadership, not a fragmented spectacle. Playing the victim and blaming the BJP won't suffice. The opposition must listen to the people's concerns, offer concrete solutions, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to unity, now, not after the elections. This pretention must end. They should stop treating vot-

ers like idiots playing their games. The opposition has to offer the nation a credible alternative, or step aside for the able ones who can, like the current government and its formidable leader.

The fractured opposition presents a clear advantage to the BJP in 2024. Unless the coming months see wild dream of regrouping efforts which is unlikely as the time has run out, the new opposition grouping dream lies shattered, raising concerns about the ability of the opposition to function as an effective check and balance to BJP-NDA alliance. This political earthquake's aftershocks will resonate far beyond the upcoming elections, shaping the future of Indian politics in the years to come. However, the picture behind the closed doors is totally different. Plagued by the change in political dynamics triggered by BJP's unpredictable newer moves every passing day that takes them all off guard, the opposition unity has collapsed to downgrade their united fight against BJP to saving their faces and grace in public eyes and now appear more focused and keen on not defeating PM Modi, but to reduce his BJP-NDA numbers to below 200 so that BJP is forced to form a weaker coalition that will ensure the opposition to block BJP engineered developmental programs and push their own ideologies and schemes to save their skins from public disgrace in the coming times and more so escape from the onslaught of the investigating agencies.

The opposition's pretention of a "united front" against the BJP has run its full course. Pretending at unity while actively announcing solo campaigns is not only absurd, but insulting to the very voters they hope to woo. Indians crave stability, a strong government that delivers. But the fractured, disillusioned, weaker and directionless opposition offers only chaos and uncertainty. Indian voters are no more a pack of idiots even in the rural. Voters can no more be fooled. They know who is true and who is pretending. They know who is honest and who is not. The forthcoming Lok Sabha elections is going to be unique and noteworthy in more ways than that meets the eye. It is going to be a fight between political adversaries to know who wins, the weak, aimless directionless opposition that is pretending unity or the one who promises to take the country ahead with its "Viksit Bharat" promise.

KULDEEP Renomination



Andaman & Nicobar (A&N) Islands cluster is to witness a fierce poll fight between the island's two popular leaders of BJP and Congress. Sitting MP Kuldeep Rai Sharma, a Presidential award winning of three times for being the best Parliamentarian, has been chosen by the grand old Congress party to challenge BJP's Bishnu Pada Ray in the forthcoming general elections scheduled to be held in April-May this year.

Congress Leader and sitting MP of this remote islands cluster has been rising in his popularity owing to his good work championing the cause of the islanders by making all out efforts to resolve their problems and raising the issues of the territory in the Parliament regularly. This has earned him the vast support of his Congress party workers and the love of the people of this remote islands cluster.

This remote islands cluster territory had witnessed only neglect despite several party stalwarts having held the positions of power wielding great influence in corridors of power in Delhi. But sitting MP Kuldeep Sharma tried to change this scenario of neglect with his proactive initiatives and being vocal in the parliament, continuously raising the issues plaguing the islands cluster territory. Sharma efforts triggered starting of fast-paced all round development. Following the visit of Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi to this island cluster few time earlier had helped further and now is witnessing large infrastructure projects moving fast in full swing.

In his current term of five years, Kuldeep Sharma had worked hard attempting to resolve several of the critical issues affecting the people of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Sharma's efforts had included an array of concerns of the islanders many of which had seen resolutions with long term benefits. Adding to the developmental programs focused on key areas has been Sharmas's carefully identified, well planned and budgeted projects whose expenses had been chipped out of his MPLADS (MP Local Area Development Scheme) Funds. His MPLADS funds allocation were utilized in a variety of developmental projects Soft spoken Sharma's, an absolutely lovable gentleman, cordial relations with all including the opposition party leaders and the bureaucracy in the Administration has enabled him solve quickly several of the problems of the people of the island, majority of whom are innocent and poor tribals.

It is not surprising that Sharma has been the natural choice of the Congress party for the forthcoming LS elections whose announcement is just few days away. BJP will have a tough challenger in Kuldeep this time too.

Choice of Modi

ABDUL SAJID

This time around Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had not ventured on adventures and has wisely chosen to field their three times MP Bishnu Pada Ray for the fourth time.

Ray, a popular BJP leader of this UT of Andaman & Nicobar islands cluster was first elected to Lok Sabha from this UT constituency in 1999, when he defeated Congress candidate Kuldeep Rai Sharma by 2,990 votes. He was re-elected in 2009 and also in 2014 with comfortable margins. In the past, Ray had raised his voice against a section of his own BJP activists, alleging that they were misusing the BJP banner and are involved in corruption and were working against the interest of the party. This had made him unpopular with some BJP leaders who campaigned his nomination and that was Vijay Jolly, yet another popular leader of the BJP in this remote islands cluster territory was nominated in 2019 but who eventually lost to current sitting MP Kuldeep Sharma.



It was widely believed that Ray's tirade against corruption against his own party workers was the reason for the BJP to deny nominating him against popular peoples' wishes. But the BJP central command appears to have realized their mistake in 2019 and now to get into a corrective course and ensure BJP bags this UT, Bishnu Pada Ray has rightly been chosen to challenge the current sitting Congress MP. "The central government has done a lot for Andaman and Nicobar Is-

lands, and in future, I will also work as a dedicated soldier of BJP to take the archipelago on the developmental path," Ray said after his nomination to fight the forthcoming LS election from this islands cluster territory.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) presence is very strong in the islands. Bishnu Pada Ray had been BJP MP thrice from this island territory and wields very good influence and commands love of the islanders. In a recent survey both Congress and BJP are at the same level of popularity among the people of this remote UT island clusters. Congress and BJP candidates this time around would be formidable too. Both Kuldeep Sharma of Congress and BJP's Ray are sure to have sleepless nights burning midnight oil sweating out to beat their adversaries in an interesting and challenging poll fight for supremacy in this remote islands cluster. Ray or Sharma? Soon the islander would decide their fates as to whom they chose to represent them in the parliament this term!

New Challenger Paul

In a territory that has seen a keen poll fight between two national parties Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress, there appears one new challenger to them in Manoj Paul in the fray in the remote UT of UT of Andaman & Nicobar island clusters. Manoj Paul with his Andaman Democratic Congress Party banner a Mumbai IITian, has been fighting for the rights and good of the local islanders with the local administration and some sections of political parties in this islands cluster.

A young leader of strong convictions, Manoj says he knows what exactly are the needs, aspirations and wishes of the islanders and why many in polity are missing the correct links for mass connect with the people and why they are not able to resolve the islanders problems those are there for decades. Manoj Paul, a very active socio-political activist, now has become a well known name among several sections of the society. He once particularly appeared to have had the whole hearted support of majority of the settlers in the island from states like Jharkhand, Bihar, Bengal and Andhra Pradesh regions who have all now made this island their homes. But this has changed as Paul now has gained the love of all in the society and now is consid-



ered an effective voice of all in the society. The extended mass support to Paul from the islanders is potentially changing the political landscape in this tiny remote UT islands cluster. For Manoj Paul it is only the interests of the people of this island clusters from all sections in the society that that matters and is of prime focus in his life and career. He is championing the causes of the youth of the island fighting for them against unemployment which is the key factor causing unrest among the youth of the island.

He is also one staunch activist fighting against the drugs menace and the drug crime syndicates. He is convinced that drug addiction is destroying the life and career of the youth in the island. Majority of the drug-lords and criminals in this remote UT island cluster are all outsiders, having come to the islands cluster in search

of jobs and business opportunities. The innocence of the islanders and the enormous potential the territory offered to businesses offering tourist infrastructure and facilities to visitors and tourists to the island, they settled in the island and slowly firmed up their businesses. Paul says several of them today own several Hotels, Inns, Tourist Homes and Huts, hi-fi restaurants, etc. He says it is the people from outside the island who are flourishing and having fun time. Manoj, the new activists who is growing in popularity is fighting against the exploitation of local people and the precious local resources and is fighting for the just rights of the local islanders. He was once very active BJP worker who went on to become the Zilla Parishad Member, but eventually came out of BJP. Paul's popularity stems from his cordial relations with all in the political parties and also officials and staff in the Andaman Administration.

Paul, a close trusted confidante of Paritosh Halder, current supreme of Andaman Democratic Congress Party, is taking his party prospects to the next levels. It is nice to see a new face in the island's politics growing steadily to challenge the might of BJP and Congress in this remote island.

US\$ 12.5 BLN Land Scandal

Vietnam's largest financial fraud case got under way, with real estate tycoon Truong My Lan facing the death penalty. She is accused of being the mastermind in a fraud scam totaling US\$12.5 billion. The amount involved is equivalent to about 3 per cent of Vietnam's GDP in 2023.

Early March 2024, Vietnam's largest financial fraud case began, with real estate tycoon Truong My Lan risking a life term to death penalty.

According to investigators, Lan and her accomplices are accused of siphoning off 304 trillion Vietnam currency dong (US\$12.46 billion) from the country's largest bank, Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank (SCB). Lan effectively controlled SCB through dozens of proxies and is accused of swindling the cash.

This case is part of Vietnam government's anti-graft drive against widespread corruption in the country. The trial, expected to last until the end of April 2024 at

the People's Court of Ho Chi Minh City, is part of a much wider campaign against corruption in the country which the leader of the ruling Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong, has pledged for years to stamp out, with no tangible results yet.

The anti-graft drive has led in recent months to multiple high-profile arrests and the resignation of top figures, including the country's former president last year, but the trial for the chairwoman of real estate developer Van Thinh Phat Holdings Group is unprecedented for its scale, with thousands expected to be summoned and about two hundred lawyers participating in the proceedings, according to state media.

Real estate tycoon Truong My Lan and her accomplices are accused of siphoning off 304 trillion dong (US\$12.46 billion) from the country's largest bank by assets, Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank (SCB), which Lan effectively controlled through dozens of

proxies, according to investigators.

Lan has for years been a central figure in Vietnam's finance and orchestrated the merger of SCB with other two lenders in 2011 to salvage the troubled banks in a plan coordinated with the central bank. She owns several properties in Ho Chi Minh City's richest districts and has multiple assets overseas in prime premium locations, according to investigators and public information.

In addition to charges of embezzlement, Lan is also accused of giving huge bribes and of breaching banking regulations. Among the other defendants are Lan's husband, a Chinese national, and 15 central bank officials, including a senior inspector accused of taking bribes worth \$5.2 million from Lan.

Despite years of the anti-graft campaign, known locally as "blazing furnace", corruption remains widespread in the Southeast Asian country, leading many to question mo-

tives behind any arrest. In some provinces, up to 90% of applicants for land certificates paid a bribe, and kickbacks are also extremely common to receive medical services in public hospitals, according to a report published in March 2023 by the United Nations Development Programme and other organisations.

Bribe-taking amounts that would trigger citizens' denouncements ranged between 20 million dong (\$810) and 43 million dong (\$1,742) with the upper value being five times the average monthly salary in the country, indicating citizens' levels of tolerance of bribe-taking acts in the country.

For a country whose regime was founded as a land-to-the-tiller movement, one would have expected the Vietnamese government to be more sensitive to real estate issues. While abuse and corruption have been a persistent irritant in the countryside, they've increasingly spread to the cities and impacted the

middle and emerging middle classes in Vietnam.

Land has always been a very sensitive issue in Vietnam. Technically, the state owns all land, but since the Doi Moi reforms and the implementation of a contract based agricultural system in the mid-1980s, people can acquire leases. Yet, not all land is created equal, and the best often goes to local officials and their cronies. Local-level officials routinely appropriate land for development projects or to profit from urban sprawl. Farmers keep complaining of unfair compensation. And even when compensation is market value, their forced sale has always remained an irritant. Farmers are often not provided with new skills to make a living. If proved, it could be one of the largest financial frauds in Asia. Even Malaysia's 1MDB corruption scandal involved for instance only about \$4.5 billion and the Vietnam land scam surpasses to a mindboggling US\$12.46 billion.

EFTA To Boost US\$ 100 BLN

India and the four-nation bloc European Free Trade Association (EFTA) comprising Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein signing the coveted free trade agreement, officially dubbed as the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), is built on a progressive plan to attract US\$100 billion in investments over a period of 15 years. This is to benefit India in more ways than the conventional bilateral trade agreement. Prime Minister Naredran Modi has sealed this agreement and has rightly called this as a new turn and a watershed moment for India.

India seeks \$50 billion investment in first 10 years, another \$50 billion in next five years. This deal is expected to benefit industrial goods exports from India to the 4 European Nations bloc. The direct investments will create direct employment job opportunities of over 1 million. This commitment would be linked to duty reduction under the agreement.

The agreement has 14 chapters, including trade in goods, rules of origin, trade in services, investment promotion and cooperation, government procurement, intellectual property rights (IPRs), technical barriers to

trade, and trade facilitation.

This TEPA free trade agreement is all important to India and also the 4 European Nations. Sectors related to almost all industrial goods exported from India to the EFTA. There would be more easy access to agricultural produces and products also are expected to benefit from the free trade agreement. Sectors such as pharma, medical devices and processed food items also would get a great boost.

Items such as dairy, sensitive agricultural products and soya, among others, would be kept on the exclusion list, which means no duty concessions would be provided in the agreement for these items.

Under free trade agreements, two trading partners significantly cut down or omit customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them, besides easing norms to foster trade in services and investments.

India's exports to EFTA nations during 2022-2033 stood at \$1.92 billion against \$1.74 billion in 2021-2022. Imports aggregated at \$16.74 billion during the last financial year as opposed to \$25.5 billion in 2021-2022, leaving a trade deficit of \$14.8 bil-

lion. With this EFTA agreement the deficit is expected to drastically reduce in the coming years of implementation of this agreement, benefiting India in all ways from inward investment to export trade and millions of job creation opportunities.

Of the four nations, Switzerland is the largest trading partner of India, followed by Norway. India's main imports from Switzerland include gold, machinery, pharmaceuticals, cooking and steam coal, and optical instruments and orthopaedic appliances, among others. Meanwhile, major exports from India include gems and jewellery, shops and boats, machinery, certain types of textiles and apparels, and chemicals, among others. The bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$17.14 billion in the last fiscal as against \$14.45 billion in 2022-2023.

Switzerland has some of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, including Roche and Novartis, both of which have a presence in India. Furthermore, India has received about \$10 billion foreign direct investments (FDI) from Switzerland between April 2000 and December 2023, and is the 12 largest investor in India.

S Korea Doctors Against Doctors!

It should be intriguing as to why the doctors in South Korea have been on a strike since last two weeks. About 8,940 medical interns and residents in S Korea have left their worksites in protest, disrupting the operations of major hospitals forcing the government to deploy their defense personnel help attend the patients. Why are the doctors up in arms? Reason: They are against the government to offer more seats in medical colleges which they see as increase in competition in the jobs market! Very intriguing indeed. Thousands of junior doctors in South Korea have been refusing to see patients and attend surgeries since they walked off the job Feb. 20 in response to the government's push to recruit more medical students. The government plans to raise South Korea's yearly medical school admission caps by 2,000, from the current 3,058. The enrollment plan is meant to add up to 10,000 doctors by 2035 to cope with the country's fast-aging population. Officials say South Korea has 2.1 physicians per 1,000 people, far below the average of 3.7 in the developed world. The striking doctors-in-training say schools do not have the required infrastructure and hence, can't handle an abruptly increased number of medical students. Doctors are among the highest-paid professionals in South Korea, and the trainees' walkout has so far failed to win public support, with a survey showing that about 80% of respondents support the government's recruitment plan. Several critics, however, say the striking junior doctors simply oppose the government plan because they worry adding more doctors would result in a lower income. The walkouts have led hospitals to cancel numerous planned surgeries and other medical treatments. In some major hospitals, junior doctors account for about 30%-40% of the total doctors, playing the role of supporting senior doctors during surgeries and dealing with inpatients. The strikers are among the country's 13,000 medical residents and interns, and they work and get trained at about 100 hospitals in South Korea. When the youth across the globe sweat it out to get into medical profession using one way or the other, here is a country where their own doctors are up in arms against more aspirants entering their profession. Sometimes few stand out as stranger than fiction.

CORPORATE

BUSINESS

Fake Drugs Scam Busted

Fake medicines are a big malady and on the rise in India. There is a complex interstate intricately twined web of producing and distributing fake and counterfeit medicines fearlessly that poses a big threat to the public health and well-being.

In a shocking latest incidence that the DCA Telangana busted a spurious drugs racket, the team found the fake medicines ingredients contained were Just Chalk & Starch Powder!

The Drugs Control Administration (DCA) of Telangana in a meticulously coordinated inter-state joint operation with the State police, code named 'operation JAI', recently busted a spurious manufacturing and inter-state distribution network. They also seized fake medicines containing chalk powder and starch valued at several lakhs from a fake medicines distributor kingpin in Telangana. The officials found that the fake medicines were being sold by a non-existent company, Meg Lifesciences. Following the seizure, all medicines from Meg Lifesciences were subjected to a "Spurious Drug Alert and Stop-Use Notice" from the DCA. Based on the intelligence gathered by the investigating team, it was detected that fake medicines containing just chalk powder and starch, were being sold in medical shops by a non-existent company, "Meg Lifesciences", mostly as anti-biotic. Interrogations of the fake medicine distributor in Telangana revealed that they were all be-

ing manufactured by at Nector Herbs & Drugs facilities located at Kotdwar, Pauri Garhwal, District, Uttarakhand. The investigations further revealed that this fake medicines making and distributing racket has been going on for the past several years fearlessly fanned by the Uttarakhand firm. The complex network involved from fake medicine manufacturer to distributors and the retailers who consciously sell them for huge profits, at the cost and risk of the public health hazards.

An ASSOCHAM study says 25% of all medicines in India are fake, counterfeit, substandard and or mislabelled mostly with several spell mistakes, all of them bearing names of top pharma brands. Fake drugs constituted a staggering US\$4.25 billion (Rs 352 crore) of the total US\$14-17 billion (Rs 14 trillion) of the Indian domestic drug market. Approximately 10% of medicines in low- and middle-income countries prove ineffective because they are substandard or falsified, says the World Health Organization (WHO).

All these indicate the prevalence of counterfeit medications is far more widespread than one might think them to be, making the identification of fake medicines really too challenging. However, the Health Ministry actions to curb fake medicines spread in the market is far more wanting. Most of the time it appears that the government stands helpless with not stern action plans

to halt this spurious medicines menace in the market that is affecting the health of the people. In addition the names of good brands being used by the fake medicine mafia and greedy fraudster gangs are also damaging the reputation of the big pharma brands that they built over years of hard work and intensive research in the search for effective medicines for the good of the society. The reforms in the health sector appears more focused on curbing the undue profits the big pharma companies make than dissuading the fake medicine makers. The mass promotion of generic medicines and introducing reforms in doctors prescription methodologies and their role in promoting premium priced pharma brand medicines are good to streamline this part of the health sector. But drastic reforms in the form framing stringent laws to punish the counterfeit medicine makers and distributors are still wanting as these fraudsters when caught face only simple prison terms after which they into the same racket of fake medicines. This could be halted by framing so stringent punishments that they do not dare again ever to commit the same crime again. It is also imperative that the State Health department should also become proactive and keep on the look out through their own intelligence network to hunt and finish the counterfeit medicine makers and dealers.

HAMDULLA TO Challenge Faizal



Forthcoming general elections whose schedule is expected to be announced anytime in the next few days again is creating grounds for an interesting poll war in this tiny remote islands cluster between the traditional foes of this decade Congress and Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

Congress is in disarray, as in the mainland. Though proactive always, BJP has faced religious bias in this totally tribal Muslims populated islands cluster. However, politics is heating up in this remote UT islands cluster riding on the newer popularity buzz triggered by the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Mod's visit to the islands cluster.

Congress has pinned its hopes and has chosen Mohammed Hamdullah Sayeed, son of late P M Sayeed, as its candidate again for the Lakshadweep LS constituency. Hamdulla won this LS seat in 2009 to become the youngest MP of the 15th Lok Sabha, who was 26 years at that time.

Congress MP Hamdulla Sayeed, was humbled by NCP's Mohammed Faisal in a fierce contest in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep in 2014 and again in 2019. Hamdulla is resolute to win

this seat back from NCP's Faizal who is riding high in his popularity despite piling controversies and disqualification threats.

A decade ago, Hamdullah, always a shy young lad who grappled with stage fear in mock court trials in law college, could not have imagined addressing the electorate in 2009 when he won the LS seat from Ut of Lakshadweep. Two successive incidents change his career outlook thrusting him into the political arena that his late father PM Sayeed ruled for four decades in this islands cluster. His father P M Sayeed losing the 2004 Lok Sabha elections from Lakshadweep for the first time in 40 years and the former Union ministers death the next year changed young Hamadulla's mindset to pursue politics to take his father's legacy forward, dumping his career dreams to pursue law as a profession. UT of Lakshadweep has a voting population of 68,000 who will chose their next MP to represent them in Delhi. Hamadullah Sayeed faces a formidable challenge from the two times sitting MP Mhd Faizal of NCP. This tiny remote island is set to see an interesting poll war in the forthcoming LS election.

Political Slug Festival

State Bank of India, SBI, that was initially in fix has now submitted the details of Electoral Bonds to the Election Commission of India (ECI) against the Supreme Court order which in turn is to upload on its website soon for public viewing. The apex court's decision to publicise political fund donors has undone the political funding reforms the government had initiated. The idea was to slowly switch from hard cash to banking routes and at the same keep the donors details

away from public viewing to avoid any political vendetta against the donor later. It idea of the electoral bonds was that cash donations to political outfits does not get into accountable transaction channels and the government was keen to bring this unrecorded transactions onboard the banking system. In cash transactions no one knows who the donor is as the donors never want their names disclosed owing to fear of political vendetta later. The government's electoral funding re-

form was also to keep this most sensitive factor intact. But the apex court thought it otherwise and ordered disclosure of the donors.

SBI has complied with the apex court order by submitting the details of electoral bond buyers. It has stated that total of 22,030 electoral bonds had been redeemed out of 22,217 bought

The amount of electoral bonds was not encashed by poll parties within the validity period of 15 days, it was transferred to the Prime

Minister's relief funds, the SBI said. SBI's ready records in which the date of purchase, denomination, and name of the buyer were recorded, and [in relation to the political parties] the date of encashment and the denominations of the bonds encashed were recorded."

The State Bank of India submitted records include all the relevant details such as date of purchase of each Electoral Bond, the name of the purchaser, the denomination of the Electoral Bond purchased, the date

of encashment of the Electoral Bonds, the name of political parties who have received the contributions.

What more is needed for the media and the political parties to start a slug festival pointing accusing fingers at the donor and received of these political contributions. It is going to fun for the public witnessing an interesting accusations and counter accusations festival adding more entertainment to the forthcoming 2024 general elections!

₹12,000 Cr HUMAN HAIR SMUGGLING

As China and few other Eastern countries battle Baldness, a whopping ₹12,000 Crore Human Hair smuggling racket, spanning a complex money trail and alleged money laundering through the three-point-corridor, has been unearthed in Hyderabad, Telangana. ED busts ₹12k Cr hair racket leading to 'balding' China and few other Eastern countries. The ongoing ₹12K crore ED probe has revealed a complex web of money trail and alleged money laundering.

An ongoing ED probe has thrown up a Rs 11,793-crore human hair smuggling racket spanning a complex money trail and alleged money laundering through the three-point-corridor. Human Hair was smuggled to Myanmar, Bangladesh, Vietnam and China from Hyderabad airport and through land routes via Mizoram and Kolkata.

Indian authorities are cracking down on human hair smuggling by investigating smuggling operations, finding out the modus operandi and tightening enforcement measures. Human hair smuggling, the illegal trade, not only poses a loss for the country's economy but also undermines export and other related tax revenues due to evasion and also poses challenges for enforcement agencies, prompting stricter measures to combat the problem. The Indian human hair smuggling often is done through land routes via neighboring countries.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has uncovered a massive US\$1.5 billion hair smuggling racket, with China being the primary buyer, due to high demand for Indian human hair. Indian officials are cracking down on this illegal trade, which involves smuggling human hair worth billions to countries like China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Vietnam, to name a few. The land routes is traced to Hyderabad-Mizoram-Myanmar "front" which has been offering illicit human hair as raw material for the



hair items making industry.

China and few Eastern countries are experiencing a significant epidemic of hair loss, leading to a high demand for wigs and hair extensions. In addition, Indian human hair is globally preferred by manufacturers due to its perceived quality, described as lightweight, lustrous, and of fine quality, particularly the Remy hair with intact cuticles.

Raw Human Hair are mainly collected from households, beauty parlours, salons, and more so majorly from temples and these primarily cater to the beauty market globally. The Indian human hair export trade clocked US\$145 million last financial.

Two Types of Human hair are collected in India: Remy, the best grade collected from temples where pilgrims donate their hair as part of a religious vow and Non-Remy, slightly lower quality in terms of length and other attributes which are collected from households and non-temple sources by small groups in villages and cities which are segregated and sold to hair dealers.

Illegal trading from Hyderabad to Myanmar was uncovered by ED, linked to ₹11,793 crore human hair smuggling. Investigation reveals suspected money laundering scheme involving benami

shell companies, overly undervalued exports, and hawala transactions. This smuggling operation reportedly involves transportation from Hyderabad airport and through various land routes to neighboring countries. Shockingly, whole of the scam was orchestrated by just one company based out of Hyderabad, Nayla Family Exports Private Ltd.

In 2021, action was taken against Nayla Family Exports Private Ltd, based in Hyderabad, for their involvement in the smuggling racket. They were accused of utilizing benami import-export codes, engaging in impersonation, and committing forgery in connection with the illicit operation. The alleged money laundering activities were conducted through what is termed as a "three-point corridor" involving Hyderabad, Mizoram, and Myanmar.

Amid the hair loss issue affecting the Chinese population, hair smuggled from Hyderabad has been transported to China, as well as other countries such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. The report provided details on how the illicit funds are routed back to Hyderabad from traders operating in Myanmar and other countries where the items eventually illegally reached. A significant

amount of cash totaling ₹2,491 crore, which accounts for over 21% of the total sum of ₹11,793 crore, was deposited into various accounts after being routed through a complex web of multiple channels.

In February 2022, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) carried out extensive searches across the country, revealing a clandestine operation focused on exporting hair to Myanmar. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) took prompt action, initiating cases in 2021 against Nayla Family Exports Private Ltd for allegedly participating in illicit practices, including the use of fictitious Import-Export Codes (IEC), impersonation, and forgery. Nayla allegedly created multiple shell (benami) companies to export hair at drastically undervalued prices. According to reports, these shell entities are dissolved whenever they come under scrutiny from tax authorities, with new IECs subsequently created. Payments, estimated at around ₹8,000 crore annually, are believed to have been received through "mule" bank accounts, or hawala networks or through Chinese apps like Dokypay and Linkyun. These shell companies, majorly in the Northeast and Kolkata, from where the mass shipments were sent on-

ward via land, first to Myanmar and then to China.

Indian human hair, discarded as waste after haircuts, holds immense value overseas. Indian human hair is highly sought after, globally, contributing significantly to Indian export industry. Raw Human Hair are mainly collected from households, beauty parlours, salons, and more so majorly from temples and these primarily cater to the beauty market globally. The Indian human hair export trade clocked US\$145 million last financial, excluding billions those were traded illegally.

Two Types of Human hair are collected in India: Remy, the best grade collected from temples where pilgrims donate their hair as part of a religious vow and Non-Remy, slightly lower quality in terms of length and other attributes which are collected from households and non-temple sources by small groups in villages and cities which are segregated and sold to hair dealers. Addressing this human hair smuggling is challenging and may take time due to its complex nature and widespread implications. Human Hair exports were earlier allowed without any restrictions which was making human hair smuggling easier without any easy detection methodology. However, DGFT is looking at ways to totally halt the illegal trading. Looking at the huge illegal trading of Indian human hair, export rules were amended. Now an exporter would have to seek specific permission or licence from the Directorate of Foreign Trade (DGFT) under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. This move according to hair industry, would help in checking alleged smuggling of the product from India and also streamline the export trade. It is also imperative that the government frames more stringent punitive laws to terrorise and dissuade them from taking to illicit routes to make illegal money.

420 DAMODARAN IN THE DOCK AGAIN

OUR CORRESPONDENT

There is widespread resentment among the people of UT of Puducherry related to the hurried legalization of the illegal Cricket Association of Puducherry (CAP) building constructed on the government land illegally grabbed by Siechem's Damodaran. Added is that Whistle Blowers and social activists fighting against wrong-doing, corruption and government land grabbing are threatened with goons, allegedly orchestrated by Damodaran, with police standing as a silent spectators. When the Siechem's owner Damodaran thought that with the legalization of the grabbed land all would go silent has proved wrong and the same has come back to haunt him all over again. It is only natural that this legalization of grabbed fertile and premium government land is allowed to be retained by the illegal grabbers post legalization per special government orders, this would become a precedent and encourage several others to willfully grab huge pieces of government land.

Grabbing of huge government land and converting this into legal land for the Cricket Association of Puducherry (CAP) managed by Damodaran of Siechem Technology Private Limited has come into the fore all over again. In fact Siechem itself has been charged with encroaching upon government land and that it has let out on lease a portion of this for CAP and construction of illegal Cricket ground on this illegally grabbed land.

Allegations are that Damodaran's Siechem company in Thudipatta village next to Bagur in Puducherry, has encroached upon and grabbed huge pieces of fertile government land along with a canal used for agriculture purposes, a part of which it has leased out to the CAP. Interestingly the special legalization of the grabbed fertile government land has been ratified for



whole of the Siechem occupied land in the name of Siechem and not specifically in the name of CAP. People in the territory allegedly refer his as 420 Damodaran, as he had hoodwinked the administration bosses to legalise his fearlessly grabbed government's fertile land.

Investigations against complaints then, including that of Bharathidasan Cricket Club of Puducherry, then had proved the prime premium fertile government land grab worth several hundreds of cores by Damodaran's Siechem.

The then bold firebrand Lt Governor Kiran Bedi ordered immediate demolition and possession of the grabbed land. The then Collector Dr Arun took steps to implement the LG order re-confiscate the alienated lands, for which he was unceremoniously transferred when the Rangasamy government came to power in 2021. Meanwhile, the smart and cunning Damodaran managed a stay from the court to halt the demolition and taking over of the grabbed land by the UT government.

It is alleged that it was then the allegedly corrupt Vallavan, touted to be close to the Chief Minister, was appointed in place of Dr Arun and was also give several other plum departments to Head. When Vallavan was appointed, the work



Name	Residence	Name	Residence
Sagar utheshi	Mubai	Priyam asheesh	Andra pradesh
Shelton jacson	Gujarath	Ragu sharma	Punjab
Pangaj singh	Rajasthan	Aaseeth rajiv	Karnataka
Farose dokra	Himachal pradesh	Vinaykumar	Karnataka
Abin mathue	Kerala	Akshay jain	Rajasthan
Fabid ahmed	Kerala	K.Pavankumar	Andra pradesh
Sagar thrivethi	Mubai	Iqlas naga	Kerala
Ameer jaseen	Kerala	Abishek nair	Hydrabad
K.P.Nair	Kerala	B.S.Dhamor	Mumbai
Arjuna shetty	Mumbai	Lathika sanvan	Delhi
Sithak singh	Mumbai	Karuna v jain	Karnataka
Paras rathna	Mumbai	Nithish salekar	Mumbai

of transferring the alienated lands to Siechem Technology Private Limited started.

It is alleged that the former Collector of Pondicherry Valavan orchestrated a meeting between Damodaran and N Rangaswamy who had just taken over as the new Chief Minister of the UT and ensured the grabbed land was legally handed over to him against withdrawal of the complaint Damodaran filed to get the stay to halt demolition of the CAP cricket ground illegally built.

For this illegal lease, Puducherry Town Country Planning Board Committee meeting was held on 5.8.2022. It is alleged that the former Collector with the approval of the CMO and Lt Governor ensured legal approval was given to the grabbed fertile government land to Siechem Technology, allegedly against huge illicit bribe money, say the public. The legal lease order was issued by then Kantar Selvan, Chief Executive Officer of City Planning. Subsequently, it is alleged, the lease deed was publicly registered in the office of the Sub-Registrar, Willianur. The irony is that the deed mentions that the lessor is Siechem Technology Private Limited and the lessee is Cricket Association of Puducherry (CAP). So its was not a government land lease to CAP but direct handing over of the grabbed

land to Damodaran in his company Siechem name, who in turn leased it out to CAP, making the government land grab absolutely legal.

People are annoyed that even both Pondicherry CMO and Lt Governor acted passively and endorsed the decision to award legal status to the illegally grabbed fertile government land.

There are several other allegations too that Damodaran has been acting for the businessman Srinivasan who once owned directly the Chennai Kings team in IPL. Allegations, to the shock of sports persons, are piling up against Damodaran that he in connivance with some administration officials and staff, with the blessings of top bosses in the government and the administration, have been illegally inducting outsiders into the Puducherry Cricket team using forged personal identity documents to illicitly prove that they are local residents of the UT. Naturally, these are done allegedly against huge bribe money. The local talents are denied entry into the cricket team.

Several Social Service organizations with evidence had pointed out that players from Andhra, Kerala and northern states are being fraudulently included in the Puducherry cricket team. Lawspet Chandiran, a honest Social Worker, has been raising his voice

from time to time about the Cricket Association of Puducherry (CAP)'s impersonation scandals and government land encroachments and legalizing illegal land grabbing. At one point he even approached the Madras High Court for justice. He has been fighting for return of the illegally grabbed government land and that only bona-fide genuine UT of Pondicherry talents be inducted into the cricket team, trained and made to participate in Ranji Trophy, T20 and other matches and all the illegally inducted players against forged documents be removed immediately. But he was allegedly thrashed by hired goons to silence him and his alleged fight against Damaodaran.

These sent shock waves across and the public were aghast that how Chief Minister Rangaswamy is being coaxed by few officials and outsiders to damage the CM's clean image.

People now demand that the order of former Lt Governor Kiran Bedi, be upheld, demolish the illegal CAP structure and reclaim the illegally grabbed and awarded land to Siechem. People of the territory who are passionate about their Chief Minister want this government land reclaimed and the wrong-doers punished so that the CM who was coaxed into this comes out clean.