

**Special on the Punyatithi of
Pt. Deendayalji**

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यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ ।
समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय ह्यवलपते ॥

Arjuna, the wise man to whom pain and pleasure are alike, and who is not tormented by these contacts, becomes eligible for immortality.
Bhagavadgita, Chapter 2, Text 15

Editorial

With prices rising
UPA giving aam aadmi death in
bits and pieces

Death doesn't come on one's asking. At the same time, it is increasingly becoming difficult to live in the present conditions of life with sky-rocketing prices and shortages. It is beyond comprehension why doesn't the Congress-led UPA government feel the pain of the aam aadmi. The incidents of farmer suicides are not in hundreds and thousands, but their number during the last about six years, has swelled to lakhs. Now a new trend seems to be emerging. People have started entering into collective suicide bids. Every other day there are the whole family collectively committing suicides because they can no longer live the life they are living. An investigation into all such suicides has come out with the startling disclosure that the members of the family concerned resorted to this extreme step because of want and hunger.

It is a shame that even in the face of the aam aadmi's misery the UPA government has turned so heartless that instead of feeling concerned to stem the rot and do something to alleviate the sufferings of the people, it is indulging in the luxury of hurling excuses and allegations and counter-allegations. Is this the kind of justice this government is dispensing to the people about whose welfare it otherwise swears every moment. UPA-II had promised to bring down prices in 100 days but eight months have since elapsed since it came into power but its hundred days of promise are still not over. The country had never been pushed to such a pitiable condition during the last 61

"Hunger knows no friend but its feeder."

- Aristophanes

years of the republic.

This government has the constitutional duty to provide *roti, kapda aur makaan* to every citizen of the country. Instead of performing this sacred duty, the UPA government is indulging in playing the blame game and internal bickerings within its own constituents. From their behaviour at times it looks as if politics has been reduced just to grabbing political power and is not concerned with the people. The spectrum of Indian politics and administration getting distanced from the human feelings is a dangerous trend which does not bode well for the country. What a paradox that this government is confessing that people are dying but their misery is not moving it to do something to reduce prices. Nothing concrete has so far been done in this behalf.

It is ironical that this Congress-led UPA government elected by the people is spreading the message of death with the gift of rising prices. Bharatiya Janata Party is framing a roadmap of agitation against rising prices all over the country. BJP should expose the government which is cheating the people who voted for it. People give a big hand to a

party organization which wages the peoples' fight and in the process undergoes great sufferings and sacrifices to protect the interests of the people.

For taking up the peoples' causes BJP has to wage a relentless struggle from the every village and town in the country and take up to Parliament even. It must take the fight to its logical conclusion. People puts the garland woven with flowers of power only in the neck of that party which fights for its causes not just for a day, but every day of the year and even works overnight, overtime.

The Congress yuvraj Rahul Gandhi seems to indulging in a research to secure the degree of Ph.D. in the subject of political propaganda. He seems to be under the impression that by keeping himself in the news in the media by indulging in political stunts is the only panacea to remove the pain and problems of the people. He may be under that impression but that certainly does not display his political intellect. How far can such actions, which to a great extent are childish ones by any politician, take the country down is the example being set by Shri

Rahul Gandhi.

A question is hovering in the mind of the people: Why is Shri Rahul Gandhi not undertaking a tour of the country to feel the pain and suffering of the poor, the dalits, tribals and backwards? Why is he maintaining a dubious silence on the burning issues hurting the people? Reality is that after coming into power the Congress has kneeled before the lobby of industrialists, blackmarketeers, hoarders and profiteers. And that is why instead of harking to the cries of the common man, it is giving a patient ear to the pleadings of industrialists and people like Shri Sharad Pawar.

Why should do it also? The rich people are doing a lot for the Congress Party to turn it dumb to speak, deaf to the bewailings and blind to the plight of the aam aadmi. That Congress is silent even when in power and Shri Sharad Pawar is being targeted for all the blame. Congress does shed crocodile tears but only when not in power. It is in these circumstances that the aam aadmi doesn't want to come out of the wounds inflicted by the rising prices but prefers to embrace death. ■



The whole country was his home

By Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Panditji's was a life of devotion. He devoted every moment of his life and sacrificed every drop of his blood for the nation. The entire country was his home and the whole society was his family. He had just one dream in his eyes to realize and one vow of his life to be respected.

Politics was the means and not the end in itself. It was the way to his destination, not the destination itself. He wanted to inject spiritualism in politics. He derived inspiration from the glorious past of India and wanted to make her future still more

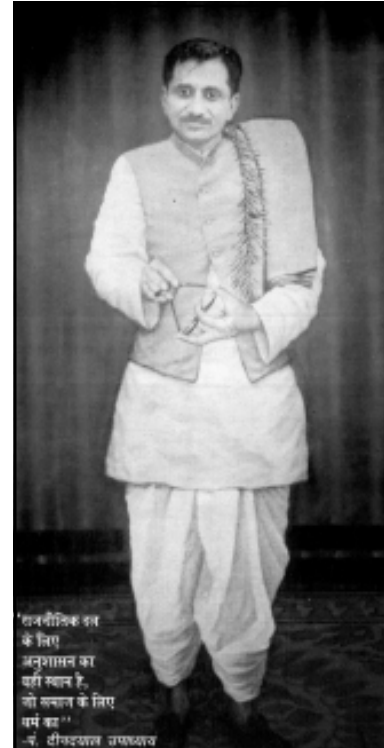
Politics was the means and not the end in itself. It was the way to his destination, not the destination itself. He wanted to inject spiritualism in politics. He derived inspiration from the glorious past of India and wanted to make her future still more magnificent.

magnificent. His faith took inspiration from indestructible roots of ancient India but he was never a conservative. He started his journey of life with the sole object in mind to make India a prosperous and modern

nation.

He was a great thinker. He did not believe in treading on the same path in the field of ideology. That is why he evolved such a model of Jansen which takes inspiration from the illustrious past of India and was ready to face the challenges of the future. He was never fascinated by any post. He was not a member of parliament himself; rather he was the maker of parliamentarians. He never hankered after office. It was after a great persuasion that he could be made to accept the office of President of the Party. It was he who inspired us to go to Kanyakumari across Vindhyanal where the sea is washing the feet of Bharatmata to infuse the unity mantra of India. Under his leadership we had taken a vow for emotional unity of the country from Himachal down to the Indian ocean.

Party's session was held at Calicut. We went there. The session was a grand success under his presidentship. The people said the Jana Sangh had presented a historic display of commitment to ideology. People had concentrated all their hopes and aspirations in Panditji. People from India and abroad said that Jana Sangh had acquired a new identity at the Calicut session. In reality, there was a



change in the perception of people rather than change in Jana Sangh. Some among these people were those in whose eyes reflected the sin within their heart, a spark of jealousy and sense of violence. They could not digest this change of scene and today they have deprived us of Pandit Deendayal. In what circumstances he died, nobody is sure about it. A person for whom millions of people were ready to sacrifice their life and were bound together under him, he was pushed into the lap of death in the dark night far away from his followers and his countrymen ■

Nitin Gadkari elected BJP President

From Our Special Correspondent

The very announcement of the poll schedule for the election of National President of Bharatiya Janata Party for February 9 by the Rashtriya Chunav Adhikari, Shri Thavarchand Gehlot, had set the mood of the party in the Central Party Headquarters from the morning itself. The Party had completed organisational elections in more than half the States in the country, paving the way for setting in motion the process for election of the National President as per the Party constitution.

the Rashtriya Chunav Adhikari Shri Gehlot in the chair to receive nomination papers. In all 19 nomination papers were received by him till 12 noon, the time by which the nominations could be filed. In all 19 sets of nominations (18 from States and one from the BJP Parliamentary Party) were filed - all proposing only one name: Shri Nitin Gadkari. Shri Gehlot scrutinized the papers and found all the nominations in order. He waited till 1 PM, the time set for withdrawal of nomination papers. After that time

Presidents Shri Rajnath Singh and Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Vice-Presidents, Shri Bal Apte, Shri Shanta Kumar, and Smt. Karuna Shukla, General Secretary (Organisation) Shri Ram Lal, Regional Secretary Organisation Shri Saudan Singh, Deputy Leaders of BJP Parliamentary Shri Gopinath Munde in Lok Sabha and Shri S. S. Ahluwalia in Rajya Sabha, General Secretaries Shri Ananth Kumar and Shri Vijay Goel, National Secretary Shri Prabhat Jha, Shri Balbir Punj and Sushri Saroj Pandey, National Treasurer Shri Ramdas Aggarwal, Shri Navjot Singh Sidhu, MP, Shri Jial Oram, Shri Satyanarain Jatia, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, Shri Prakash Javadekar, Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Shri Bhagat Singh Koshiari, Minority Morcha Chief, Shri Shahnawaj Hussain, Yuva Morcha chief, Shri Amit Thakkar, BJP Headquarters incharge Shri Shyam Jaju, Shri Kirit Somaiyaa, Shri Chandan Mitra, Investor Cell National Convener Shri Arun Singh, Chartered Accountant Cell National Convener Shri Gopal Aggarwal, Literature & Publication National Convener Shri Amba Charan Vashishth, Media Cell National Co-Convenor Shri Sanjay Mayukh, State Presidents Shri Rahul Sinha (West Bengal), Shri O. P. Kohli (Delhi), Shri Raman Deka (Assam), Shri P. Radha Krishnan (Tamilnadu), Shri Ashwani Sharma (Punjab), Shri Sanjay Tandon (Chandigarh) and many others State BJP presidents, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Party MPs, MLAs, Mayors, Ex-MPs and ex-MLAs, former State Presidents and general secretaries.



Shri Gadkari had taken over as the National President on December 19 last year after Shri Rajnath Singh resigned on completion of his 3-year term and the Party's Parliamentary Board unanimously decided that Shri Nitin Gadkari should be the new President.

Though the sky was still downcast with clouds after last night's drizzle in the capital, but it displayed a silver lining too. The mood in the Party office was of celebration and jubilation. The process commenced at 10 A.M. with

he formally declared that Shri Nitin Gadkari had been elected unopposed as the BJP's National President. Shri Gehlot invited Shri Gadkari to the dais to receive the certificate of his election, which Shri Gadkari did.

The announcement of Shri Gadkari's election was received with thunderous applause and clapping by all those present, including the Chairman of BJP Parliamentary Party, Shri Lal Krishna Advani, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, former

Earlier, on his arrival in the party headquarters, Shri Gadkari was received with a traditional welcome by cultural troupes from Tamilnadu, Uttarakhand and Punjab to the beating of drums and playing of music interspersed with bursting of ear-deafening crackers. As he was about to enter the hall, small drops of rain, considered *shubh* (auspicious), also started dropping from the sky.

After the announcement of election, Shri Nitin Gadkari was escorted to the dais where Shri L. K. Advani, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Shri Rajnath Singh, and Shri Thavarchand Gehlot gave him company.

In his address, Shri Gadkari thanked the party *karyakartas* and leaders for electing him as the National President. He said he felt honoured that he was to share the chair which was once graced by the great veterans like Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Shri L. K. Advani who took the party to great heights.

He said it is an honour, responsibility and a challenge which he will discharge to the best of his ability with the support, help and guidance of all his seniors. "I am junior to many of the leaders present in the Party", he admitted. Although I am the President, Shri Gadkari declared, all the decisions will be collective in consultation and guidance from my colleagues.

He once again stressed that it is only in BJP that a person, like me, who launched his political career as an ordinary *karyakarta* pasting posters and doing wall writing for the party could one day be the national president of the Party. I was

not fortunate to be the son of a prime minister or the *naati* of a national president. This cannot happen in any other party and that makes BJP a party with a difference, he added.

"During the last five weeks I have been in office", Shri Gadkari said, "I have tried to ensure consensus in the party with the consent of all. Whenever I was faced with a problem," he said, "I went to Shri Advani, Shri Arun Jaitley, Smt.

support of everyone.

Shri Gadkari also appreciated the role of the *Rashtriya Chunav Adhikari* who had conducted the elections in the States and at the national level in an orderly manner sticking to the word and spirit of the Party's constitution.

As Shri Gadkari came out of the hall, the dark clouds had vanished and the sun was shining bright, giving the message that a bright future lay ahead for the party under his leadership.

After the function was over, Shri Gadkari was escorted to a stage specially erected for the occasion where central leaders, newly elected State Presidents and office-bearers of the State party other leaders garlanded him and extended their good wishes.

A party from Punjab regaled the workers with performance of exotic *Bhangra*. Cultural troupes from Uttarakhand and Tamilnadu also delighted the people by playing their traditional musical instruments. ■



Sushma Swaraj and other senior leaders to consult and discuss matters."

Shri Gadkari said we have to take the Party to greater heights and it will be possible with the help and



Don't include beef in the Commonwealth Games menu

By Justice (Retd) Dr M Rama Jois

We can be proud of the fact that notwithstanding the fact that India may be economically poor when compared to other rich nations, from the point of view of cultural values, India is the richest Nation. One of the greatest values of our culture is the sense of gratitude. There is another value to the effect that "there is no God greater than Mother". Both children and elders are sustained by cow's milk. It is in view of this in our culture the cow has been raised to the status of the mother. This value has been incorporated in the following verse in a touching manner:

श्रुक्त्वा तुणनि शुष्कानि
पीत्वा तोयं जलाशयात्
दुग्धं ददति लोवेफञ्च्यः
गावो विश्वस्य मातरः
(Bhuktwa Thrunani Shuskani
Peetva Thoyam Jalashayath
Dugdham dadati lokebhyaaha Gavovishvasya Mataraha)

"Cow eats dry grass, drinks

In view of all these, Mahatma Gandhi had given greater importance to ban on cow slaughter than Independence.

water from the tanks or other water resources and gives milk to humanity. Therefore, the cow is the mother of the world".

Apart from that, milk, curd, butter and ghee prepared out of it constitute the richest food and further, cow dung and urine are held sacred and extremely useful for

human beings. It is a matter of distinction that while cow dung and urine are considered sacred whereas the same of other animals and even of greatest personalities are rejectable [thajya].

In view of all these Kautilya's Arthashastra composed 2300 years ago which constituted the constitutional law

of ancient India had stated thus:

कौटिल्यः वत्से वृषो धेनु श्वैषाम् अवध्यः

(Vatsovrusho

Dhanuschaivamavadhyam)

Slaughter of cow, calf and bullocks are prohibited. [page 129]

In view of all these, Mahatma Gandhi had given greater importance to ban on cow slaughter than Independence. As a result of all these, the founding fathers of the Constitution included Article 48 as a directive principle of State Policy in Part-IV of the Constitution.

Muslim leaders who were members of the Constituent Assembly clearly stated that though they do not entertain the same feeling towards cow as the Hindus have, they are agreeable for the inclusion of Article 48 in the Constitution as they respect the feelings of overwhelming majority of the people of this Country. Accordingly, Article 48 was included in the Constitution.

Despite this, it is unfortunate that thousands of cows are being slaughtered mercilessly every day and their blood is flowing which is heart rending. It is also unfortunate

Inclusion of beef in the menu for players of Commonwealth Games an affront on our Culture and Constitution.

that these highest values which is a mark of distinction of our nation has become the victim of dirty electoral politics. In fact it would be appropriate to prohibit slaughter of cows and their progeny by shifting Article 48 to Part-III of the Constitution just as Article 17 was incorporated to abolish untouchability in Part-III.

It is for these reasons I have introduced a Private Members Constitution Amendment Bill to incorporate prohibition of cow slaughter by introducing Article 17-A in Part-III of the Constitution itself. In this background, it would not only be violation of the provisions of the Constitution, but also an affront on our cultural values to include beef in the menu for players coming to our Country for Commonwealth Games. ■

(Justice (Retd) Dr. M. Rama Jois, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Former Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court and former Governor of Jharkhand and Bihar.)

(Courtesy: The Organiser)

Indian food security being pledged to MNCs: Gadkari

Faulty economic policies pursued by the Congress-led UPA government are responsible for the current inflation and demanded that 17 essential commodities permanently be taken out of the commodities exchange and action be taken against hoarders and black marketers" said Bharatiya Janata Party President Shri Nitin Gadkari while speaking to press persons on January 31st in Bangalore.

He lambasted the UPA at Center for ignoring food security and changing policies to benefit multinationals, corporates, exporters-importers, speculators and manipulators.

Shri Gadkari charged the Centre with importing edible oil, food grains and sugar at the cost of the farmers and poor consumers. Debunking the claim of the Union Government that it was maintaining food security, he said while farmers were getting Rs. 9 to Rs. 10 a kg for rice and Re. 1 to Rs. 1.50 a kg for wheat in the last three years, the common man was

getting rice at Rs. 32 a kg, wheat at Rs. 24 a kg and sugar at Rs. 45 to Rs.50 a kg. Wheat production had touched 2,348 lakh tons in last three years and there was bumper stock but still the price had doubled due to forward trading, he said.

"While the UPA government is harping on seeing double digit GDP growth, we are likely to see double digit inflation growth," he said taking a dig at the rosy prospects painted by the UPA government about India's future growth scenario. He said 78 per cent of the populations spend nearly 80 per cent of their monthly income on food articles. The PMO's Tendulkar committee report had said there was 12 per cent increase in poverty, he said. Referring to sugar, he wanted to know why the government had not created a buffer sugar stock. The government gave export and transport subsidy to exporters, encouraging export of 48 lakh tonnes of sugar in 2008-09 at Rs 12.50 per kg. Now the Centre was



importing raw sugar at Rs 36 per kg. A sugar exporting country has been converted into an importer, he said.

On price hike in Dal and edible oil, he said, "Slowly and steadily Indian food security is being pledged to foreign MNCS and commodity exchange players. Revenues of these companies have trebled in last one year."

Despite bumper crop and buffer stock, an artificial climate of shortage was created, he said. With government transferring many of these essential items in future and forward trading, it has impacted prices of food articles. Shri Gadkari also demanded that the government ensure food security, create buffer stock of wheat, rice, sugar and other essential commodities, stop the policy of robbing farmers and customers and take action to stop hoarding and black marketing by MNC and corporate dealing within the essential commodities.

He said that the BJP, which had held rallies in Kerala and West Bengal, was organising a national campaign in New Delhi and he would consult other Opposition parties on exerting pressure on the Centre to act immediately. On Ayodhya issue he said that his party was open to the idea of seeking court help or an Act of Parliament or dialogue between Hindus and Muslims for constructing the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. ■ (FOC)

Indians have the right to live in any part of India : BJP President

"It has been the consistent stand of the Bharatiya Janata Party and earlier of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh that the constitutional guarantee under Article 19(1) (e) that all Indians shall have 'the right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India' aids and enables national unity and integration" said BJP President Shri Nitin Gadkari in a press statement on January 1.

He added, "It is on the basis of this principle that we have always opposed Article 370 in the context of Jammu & Kashmir as an impediment in national unity. The Bharatiya Janata Party has always recognized linguistic, regional and religious identities as a reality of India. But the strength of India's unity in diversity is achieved when all these identities eventually converge into a larger national identity of Indianness."

"There is and can never be a conflict between these" he emphasized. He said "All citizens of India may be attached to a particular language, region or religion. These identities have never diluted their Indianness."

"The Bharatiya Janata Party will never accept the philosophy that there is a conflict between the two" he said. ■ (FOC)

Not hoisting Tricolour a meek surrender : Javadekar

In a press statement on January 27 BJP National Spokesperson Shri Prakash Javadekar condemned the Government decision not to hoisting the National Flag at Lal Chowk in Shrinagar on Republic Day. He said that it was a meek surrender by the Government before the separatist elements in the valley. "More serious is the reason given for such a shameful decision, that unfurling of National Flag would provoke separatists and extremists and is a Needless Provocation" he claimed.

He said "For last 19 years the Tricolour is being hoisted by BSF and CRPF on Independence Day and Republic Day every year. This tradition started after BJP launched nationwide Ekta Yatra under the leadership of the then President of the party Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, amidst the challenge from separatist and Pak sponsored militants. Security forces used to have their



own Republic Day celebration at Lal Chowk and distribute sweets after hoisting tricolour on the clock tower in Lal Chowk". "Govt. decision is demoralizing for security forces and Indian public" he added. He said "This decision must be seen on the backdrop of continued practice of Hurriyat observing Bandh on 26th January every year.

Added to this, is the latest effort of Pakistan to push large number of terrorists in India across the borders coupled with heavy exchange of fire at various points along the border." "It is pertinent to note that last year, Kashmiri people participated in large numbers in flag hoisting ceremony at Lal Chowk.

Govt. should have encouraged such participation but instead it chose to cancel the flag hoisting itself" he said. ■

Padma Bhushan to Chatwal has shown political bankruptcy: BJP

BJP has opposed Granting Padma Bhushan award to Shri Sant Chatwal. It has urged the Government's decision to bestow Padma Bhushan on Chatwal was a 'mistake' and it has shown political bankruptcy by rewarding a 'broker'.

"The UPA Government is committing mistakes after mistakes, one by one. Now they have given Padma Bhushan to Shri Sant Singh Chatwal, who had earlier declared himself bankrupt," BJP Spokesperson Shri Prakash Javadekar said.

"What can be more politically bankrupt than to honour one who has declared himself bankrupt," he added.

Even the Indian Embassy in Washington DC, which had first-hand knowledge of the NRI community's advocacy, had declined to nominate Shri Chatwal when asked by the Prime Minister's Office to do so. ■ (FOC)

BJP rejects Committee on Telangana , it's delaying tactics

BJP has rejected the five-member committee on Telangana and said the committee was simple delaying tactics. "There is neither any time frame nor terms of reference spelt out. The committee is an eyewash and adding insult to the injured sentiments of the people of Telangana. Thus, it is just a delaying tactics and futile exercise," BJP spokesman Shri Prakash Javadekar told reporters on February 3. BJP demanded the Centre to move the Bill for creation of Telangana in the forthcoming Budget session of the Parliament and extended its support to the Bill saying the BJP believed that the two States would co-exist peacefully and prosper rapidly. Advocating creation of two separate states of Telangana and Andhra, the BJP said it was essentially a political issue, which required firm political decision and action by the Central Government. "Instead of deciding the time frame to carve out two States, the Government has abdicated its constitutional obligation by shifting its responsibility to the shoulder of the committee. Appointment of a committee headed by a hon'ble retired Judge is irrelevant as no legal issue is involved," Javadekar added. He maintained that all parties had agreed for creation of Telangana in the meeting convened by Chief Minister Shri K Rosaiah in Hyderabad on December 7, but a couple of days later Congress, TDP and PRP made a u-turn and adopted double standards. "These parties started speaking in two voices, one in Telangana and another in Andhra. This u-turn has caused the turmoil in the State. These parties need to take a definite stand, which is a political process," Shri Javadekar said, asking the Congress and TDP to come clean on the issue and declare their official policy and position. ■

Tricolour at Lal Chowk a must

By Meenakshi Rao

Sometimes, being wise may not be appropriate. One glaring example of that is J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's decision to not hoist the Tricolour at Lal Chowk in Srinagar on R-Day, and the Central Government's silent agreement to this move.

True, the young Chief Minister of this sensitive State was guided by fears of spoiling the peace and apparently said that such symbolic gestures like an R-day flag hoisting can be given a go-by in the larger interest of non-violence.

Our Republic has been carrying on this "symbolic" gesture for decades though there might have been a thousand reasons to curtail this annual pride parade that marches into the Capital with a spring in the step. It is a show of Indian might and sprite, of tradition, of history, of culture, of patriotism and all else associated with a free and able nation. It's not as if the terrorists have not been looking for a grandiose disruption at Rajpath, an eventuality the Indian Government has kept at bay, without thinking of abandoning it for the good of the nation!

Lal Chowk, one needs to remind Abdullah, is part of this glorious Union and shouldn't have been allowed to become a casualty of "possible" terror trouble. A hit at Lal Chowk on January 26 would be as routine a diary entry in terror outfits' files as a spa is for a stressed diva on her day off. Does that mean, a Chief Minister should give undue importance to it, even if Lal Chowk

had become more sensitive than ever in the last few days, what with a terror attack in the area which took some days to end?

The main priority of any Chief Minister is to maintain law and order and that would be Abdullah's defence in deciding to relocate the Lal Chowk R-day event. But to do so, should he have cowed down to threats by disruptive elements, especially when they are aimed at bringing down a national tradition? Or should he have taken the trouble

more prudent to give it away to the Pakistanis than to lose so many Indian nationals, money and jawans in keeping it within our frontiers. On the face of it, this could be called a pragmatic approach. It would end the evil design of our neighbour to bleed India. It would save lives; it would bring peace and it would let India heave a sigh of relief. Or so they believe.

But in an era where nationality and territory is as closely guarded as your most precious heirloom, this kind of pragmatism is fraught with pits. And even if India and its citizens would generate the power of sporting this yogic mindset, what's the guarantee that the terror brigade from across the border would ditto our *aman ki asha* gesture?

Even if Omar Abdullah scraps a R-Day function in a bid to draw the terrorists into a passive zone, what's the guarantee of them not wanting to scrap a hundred other things? Wouldn't they want more and more? Like leave Siachen, shift to August 14 as India's Independence Day, observe August 15 as "Black Day" officially and, finally, don't hold an R-Day parade even at Rajpath!

If Abdullah does not realise it, he needs to be told that terrorism is an enemy which cannot be brought around by conciliation. The only way to end it is to well, end it, not urge it to self-destruct by measures like scrapping an R-day parade and thereby hitting at the very pride of the nation, in again a very symbolic gesture! ■

As CM, if it is beyond him to guard law and order at national functions, he should step down. Scrapping of gestures, howsoever symbolic, goes a long way in showing the absence of a backbone, and if one is candid, amounts to disrespecting the nation.

all administrators of J&K have taken all these 19 years and thrown up enough force to guard the ceremony which would have finished in less than an hour?

As CM, if it is beyond him to guard law and order at national functions, he should step down. Scrapping of gestures, howsoever symbolic, goes a long way in showing the absence of a backbone, and if one is candid, amounts to disrespecting the nation.

In all our living memory, the State of J&K has been a troubled area, drawing Indian blood on almost a daily basis. More than one opinion has gone over to the drastic zone to suggest that it would be

(Courtesy: The Pioneer)

Advani concerned over rampant corruption

From Our Correspondent

BJP Parliamentary Party Chairman Shri L.K. Advani has expressed concern over rampant corruption in society, particularly in judiciary. He also pointed out that in the beginning of the post-Independence era, the malaise affected the bureaucracy only and later politics, but now it has spread to judiciary.

Shri Advani was peaking to representatives of newly-elected civic bodies, including mayors, at a function at Bhopal on January 31. He said there was a time in the early post-Independence era when people used to look up to their leaders as examples of integrity. Whenever corruption was discussed, it was

largely in the context of the bureaucracy. Slowly but surely, the same disease seeped into the political arena, afflicting and poisoning the entire system of governance.

Relating an anecdote, Shri Advani said he first became aware of the sheer depth of the rot a few years ago when he heard about a chauffeur who threatened to walk away in case the minister (whose staff car he drove) insisted on personally driving the vehicle. He said, "*Yeh koi sarkar nahi hai jo bahgwan bharse chale*" (the car isn't like the government that moves along on God's mercy).



Shri Advani said it common to think that party MPs and MLAs set the trend in moral standards. But the real lessons were imbibed at the civic body level which was the gateway to politics. "Which is why the example you set will have a crucial bearing on the party's future."

That the BJP was still cleaner than most was evident from the recent statewide civic poll results: 8/13 mayorships; 91 of the 191 nagar palikas; and 2,396 of the 5,059 councillors were BJP

faithfuls.

Madhya Pradesh Chief minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan and other senior ministers were also present on the occasion. ■

Aam aadmi hit by price rise, security situation: Advani

"After 60 years of the adoption of the Constitution the common man is not happy owing to rising prices and the internal security situation in the country" said BJP Parliamentary Party Chairman Shri L K Advani on January 26 while talking to media after a flag-hoisting function at his residence in New Delhi.

He added, "Because of the potential of the nation, there is hope and confidence that in this century India will stand in the frontline among the developed countries. But the aam aadmi is sad about the present and is especially worried owing to price rise and security (issues)." Shri Advani also express his concern about another 26/11-like terror strike in India. "Those in power are not sure that such an event will not take place. Even our neighbouring country, which has a complicit role in such attacks, says we cannot confirm it will not take place," he retorted, adding that the "government should be concerned over this".

On the occasion he called for wider electoral reforms. "There is too much corruption and use of muscle power (in elections) and some people benefit due to this. The Election Commission should think about this. All the political parties and the Election Commission should take a pledge to make India an ideal democracy," Shri Advani said. ■

Shiv Shakti Bakshi awarded PhD



Shri Shiv Shakti Bakshi, a member of the editorial board of *Kamal Sandesh* has been awarded the

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree by the prestigious Jawaharlal Lal Nehru University, New Delhi for his research on "*A History of Conscience and Mentality of Missionaries and Converts: 1800-1950*".

He hails from Gridih district of Jharkhand. *Kamal Sandesh* Editor Shri Prabhat Jha and members of the *parivar* have congratulated Shri Bakshi and prayed for further success in his life and career. (FOC) ■

Politics being reduced to bigotry

By Tavleen Singh

There are weeks when I find myself defeated by all efforts to analyse Indian politics. This is one of them. The political events of the week gone by made little sense to me. But, since upon my humble shoulders rests the heavy burden of trying in this limited space to analyse concisely the political developments of the moment, may I say that India appears to be in the throes of a Monica Lewinsky moment. The reference is not to sexual hanky-panky in the corridors of power but to that time when the Americans were in endless thrall to their President's sexual escapades while Osama bin Laden was steadily preparing for 9/11.

It is my considered opinion that something equally bizarre is going on in India with a tawdry sideshow taking centre stage when we should be paying close attention to the jihadi convention next door.

While we obsessed over black flags and bigots in the city that was once Bombay, a mega convention of Islamists gathered on the other side of the Kashmir border and spoke publicly of their hatred of our beloved Bharat Mata.

While our news channels gave us a minute by minute account of Rahul Gandhi's perambulations in Mumbai, not only was the jihadi convention almost ignored but so was the Government of India's mysterious decision to proffer an

olive branch to Pakistan even as men with wild beards and hatred in their eyes announced a new phase of the jihad. Among the bearded fanatics was the founder of the Lashkar-e-Toiba, Hafiz Mohammed Sayeed, against whom the Pakistani government claims there is no evidence of jihadi activity. Before we send our Foreign Secretary off to make peace with Pakistan could we at least not ask what Sayeed was

young reporters told us how the future leader of India stopped to withdraw money from an ATM, how he ditched his chopper for a drive through Mumbai's crowded streets and how he threw security to the winds and hopped on to a local train. No news about the jihadi convention except in passing at the end of one bulletin.

It happens that Rahul Gandhi is my hero too for daring to tell the Shiv Sena to shove their bigotry up their you-know-what, but is this the time for a Rahul travelogue? Surely, we should be trying to understand what the Government of India was thinking when it chose the day of the jihadi convention to announce that an Indian was sitting in the Lashkar's control room during 26/11. This astounding information came from the Home Minister himself in an interview to Vir Sanghvi.

And, I wish I could explain to you either the Home Minister's timing or

As the jihadi convention entered its second day of Islamist deliberations, all our news channels were following Rahul Gandhi around Mumbai. Breathless young reporters told us how the future leader of India stopped to withdraw money from an ATM, how he ditched his chopper for a drive through Mumbai's crowded streets and how he threw security to the winds and hopped on to a local train. No news about the jihadi convention except in passing at the end of one bulletin.

doing at this convention? Does the Government of Pakistan see a gathering of jihadis as jihadi activity?

As someone who is obliged by the constraints of column writing to pay close attention to the news all day I was fascinated by the reportage last Friday. As the jihadi convention entered its second day of Islamist deliberations, all our news channels were following Rahul Gandhi around Mumbai. Breathless

his objective. Ever since the attack on Mumbai I have been told by Pakistani friends that there is in Pakistan a widely held view that 26/11 was the work of Indian intelligence agencies. One of the few things that convinced them otherwise were the Punjabi accent of Kasab and his companions and the Punjabi accent of their handlers in the Lashkar control room. Now the Home Minister of India admits that in that control room was an

Pakistan's Prime Minister has been so emboldened by Indian peace moves that on the day the jihadis met in Muzaffarbad he sent them an official message of 'moral support'

Indian. The least he should now do is explain why he needed to share this information with us at this particular moment.

Whoever was behind 26/11, we can now safely say that Pakistan is off the hook. It can rightly claim in the forums of the world that it has been wrongly blamed for the attack on Mumbai. Pakistan's Prime Minister has been so emboldened by Indian peace moves that on the day the jihadis met in Muzaffarbad he sent them an official message of 'moral support'. Other Pakistani officials said they would only talk to India if it agreed to have a 'composite dialogue'. What this means is less talk of Islamist terrorism and more of Kashmir.

Meanwhile, there is a map circulating on the Internet of India in 2020. It shows all of India as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with a small scrap of the Southern tip left as 'disputed territory'. How ironic that the Shiv Sena should with its attacks on Shah Rukh Khan and Rahul Gandhi be distracting our attention thereby inadvertently colluding with the jihadis convening next door. If India becomes the Islamic Republic of Pakistan they will be sure to realise their dream of restricting entry to Mumbai for Marathispeaking Muslims only. ■

(Courtesy: The Indian Express)

Modi: Centre to blame, why pass the buck to the States?

Gujarat Chief Minister Shri Narendra Modi on February 01, 2010 lambasted Prime Minister Shri Manmohan Singh for "shifting the blame" for price rise on the States.

"The Prime Minister's address at a meeting of the Chief Secretaries of States earlier in the day was very disappointing and unfortunate," he told the Gujarat BJP executive meeting in Gandhi Nagar. Controlling inflation was part of the UPA government's "100-day agenda" but it miserably failed to achieve the goal and remained a silent spectator to the continuous spiral of prices of essential commodities, breaking the back of the poor, he said. "It is now trying to shift the blame on the States to mislead the people. The Centre is not doing what it should do and does not even appreciate what we are doing in the States for the development of the country." ■ (FOC)



Shivraj Singh Chauhan urges people to help in State's development

"The state's all-round development will be possible only if society stands up alongside the government" said Shri Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan at Amarkantak after launching a *Madhya Pradesh Banao Yatra* on January 26.

"By undertaking creative work such as plantation, saving water and power, de-addiction and cleanliness, denizens can emerge as partners in state-building," he said. The government would ceaselessly continue work such as establishing schools, laying roads, setting up hospitals, generating electricity and empowering women, said Shri Chauhan who met, at the Girls Sports Council, 19 girls and two boys who earned laurels at the state and central level. ■ (FOC)



NCP & Congress busy in the blame Game: BJP

The Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party were busy trading charges against each other for the price rise that had hit essential food items" said Shri Javadekar while speaking to media on price rise. Speculators and hoarders profited by nearly Rs. 40,000 crore over the last six months - Rs. 20,000 crore as a result of the steep increase in the price of lentils, Rs. 10,000 crore on account of sugar and Rs. 10,000 crore as a result of high price of cereals, he alleged.

Even if the higher minimum support price for sugarcane, wheat and rice was to be taken into account, the price spiral witnessed in the last few months could not be justified, Shri Javadekar said. ■ (FOC)

Food Inflation is comprehensive failure of economic policies

*Salient points of BJP National President,
Shri Nitin Gadkari's Presentation on Food Inflation*

Food Inflation is the comprehensive failure of economic policies of congress led UPA government. It is an irony that a government led by economist Prime Minister has failed the "Aam Aadmi", who has to face huge hardships for managing *Dal Roti*.

It is a collective responsibility and failure of vision and action. Agriculture, Commerce, Food and Consumer Affairs, Finance Ministry are all responsible for present price rise.

Govt must study in details of how Commodity Exchanges are manipulated to jack up food prices. The record of last year transactions on forward exchange in essential commodities clearly establish that it is 99 % speculation & less than 1 % deliveries.

These exchanges are used for manipulation. BJP demands permanent de listing of essential food-agriculture commodities from forward trading list.

Mr Gadkari observed

- ◆ Its result of Failure of Govt. Economic Policies
- ◆ Wheat, Rice, Sugar, Dal price doubled in past few months.
- ◆ General Inflation and food inflation shows wide variations.
- ◆ In last six months general inflation grew from 1% to 8% but food price index went up from 12% to 20%.
- ◆ Government failed to manage buffer stocks properly.
- ◆ Consumers paying 3 times more than the price paid to farmers.

- ◆ Forward Trading of Essential Commodities resulted in 99% speculation trading, actual delivery less than 1%
- ◆ Beneficiaries of all these policies are Multinationals, Corporate Companies, Manipulators, Speculators and Black Marketers.
- ◆ Profit of Commodity companies gone up by 500 to 2,900 % in last quarter of 2009.

It is observed that whenever Congress comes to power inflation zooms up. Inflation was in double digit during Congress Raj in 1991/1995 when Dr. Manmohan Sing was Finance Minister. Now again Inflation is marching to 10%. Food Inflation touching 20% after 11 years.

- ◆ In spite of record production of Rice 991 lakh tons in 2009, Price increase from Rs.10/kg in 2004 to Rs.32/kg in 2010.
- ◆ Farmers got Rs.9.50/kg but Customer paying Rs.32/kg.
- ◆ Wheat Production is up from 758 lac tons of 2006/07 to 805 lac ton in 2008/09, Farmer got Rs. 10/kg, Consumer pays Rs. 24/kg. Forward Trading re-started in May 2009

At commodity exchange

- ◆ Out of 14 lac ton turnover actual delivery 1,400 ton
- ◆ 99.99% speculative trading during May to Dec 2009

Sugar

- ◆ Import-export Manipulation
- ◆ 48 lac ton exported in 2008-09 @ Rs.12.50/kg.

- ◆ Now importing Raw Sugar @ Rs.36/kg
- ◆ Govt. gave Export & Transport Subsidy to Exporters.
- ◆ Why govt. did not created buffer stock of Sugar ?
- ◆ Prices up from Rs 22 to Rs.45 to 50/kg in one year.

Speculation & Manipulation at Commodity Exchange

- ◆ 2009 Turnover 79 lac ton but delivery 1.11 lac ton
- ◆ Speculation 98.6%
- ◆ Banned from forward trading since May 2009

In the case of Pulses Price went up by 200 to 400%. In 2004 during the NDA/BJP Govt., Chana Dal available at Rs. 25/kg, which has gone up to Rs.56/kg in January 2010. Tur Dal that was available then at Rs.24/kg had gone up to Rs.100/kg in January 2010

- ◆ Tur Dal scored Century and Sugar Half century

Edible oil

- ◆ Price of Groundnut Oil gone up from Rs.40 to Rs.100 per kg.
- ◆ In 2008-09, India imported 75 lakh tons edible oil, i.e. more than 50% of its consumption.
- ◆ Indian food security is getting pledged to the foreign multinationals and Commodity Exchange players.

Manipulation & Speculation at Commodity Exchanges are horrible.

Channa

- ◆ Turnover 2, 59,43,840 ton - Delivery 50,710 ton.
- ◆ Speculation 99.80 %

Jeera (Cumin)

- ◆ Turnover 21,82,923 ton
Delivery 3,402 ton
- ◆ Speculation 99.84%
- ◆ Price went up from Rs.104 to Rs.146 per kg in 2009

Guar Seed

- ◆ Turnover 9,02,97,720 ton.
Delivery 21,550 ton.
- ◆ Delivery 0.02%.and 99.98% speculation.

Turmeric 'Haldi'

- ◆ Turmeric 'Haldi' is ideal example of Commodity Exchange Manipulation
- ◆ Turnover 1,32,72,060 ton
- ◆ Delivery 3,880 ton
- ◆ Speculation 99.97%
- ◆ Price went up from Rs 38 to Rs130/kg

Potato

- ◆ Inclusion of Potato in the list of Forward Trading is reflection of how Commodity Exchanges are misused in India
- ◆ Turnover 32,53,020 ton, actual delivery 4,080 ton
- ◆ Speculation 99.70% and delivery 0.30%
- ◆ Price went up from Rs.6 to Rs.14/kg.

BJP demands

- ◆ Removal of Food Articles from Commodities Exchange Forward Trading List
- ◆ Ensure Food Security and Create buffer stocks.
- ◆ Stop Economic Policy of Robbing Farmers and Looting Common Man
- ◆ Steps to bring down price of wheat, rice, sugar, dal by making these commodities available at subsidised rates through PDS to APL category along with BPL.
- ◆ Monitoring and Action against Hoarders, Black Marketers, Multinationals/Corporate Manipulation and Profiteers. ■

Indo-Pak Foreign Secretary-level talks should prioritise terror : Jaitley

Reacting to India's offer for high-level talks with Pakistan, Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Shri Arun Jaitley said on February 5 "Foreign Secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan will necessarily be "composite" in nature, and there is no way the Government of



India will be able to "prioritise" terror as the subject of discussion."

"There are eight working groups that are part of the India-Pakistan composite dialogue. The Foreign Secretaries are not members of any of these groups. When they meet, they are free to discuss any subject, and therefore, talks between them would have to be open-ended," he said reacting to India's invitation for talks to Pakistan.

The fact was, he said, the re-starting of dialogue was a direct outcome of the joint statement by Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani at Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, in July last. This had established that Pakistan's interpretation of that statement - which led to a controversy here because of the reference to Baluchistan - was "correct," while

what Prime Minister Shri Manmohan Singh had the country believe was wrong, he said.

In that statement, the Prime Ministers "recognised that dialogue is the only way forward. Action on terrorism

should not be linked to the composite dialogue process and these should not be bracketed. Dr. Singh said that India was ready to discuss all issues with Pakistan, including all outstanding issues," Shri Jaitley pointed out.

He expressed surprise whether India had bent under American pressure, as the U.S., he said, wanted Pakistan as its ally on its border with Afghanistan to fight the Taliban, while on Pakistan's eastern border, it was looking for concessions from India.

Shri Jaitley referred to the parliamentary resolution on Kashmir in the context of the main Opposition party saying it would categorically demand from Dr. Singh an assurance that no part of Indian territory would be compromised and India's hold on Kashmir not diluted in any way through that dialogue. ■

E-entry for BJP meet

Online registration for attending BJP Executive Council Meet

BJP President Shri Nitin Gadkari on February 5 inaugurated the e-registration for delegates who would be attending the party's national council meeting. The two-day meeting is beginning from February 18.

The Party's national executive is scheduled for February 17. Both meetings would take place in Indore. Shri Gadkari, after registering his name, said the party plans to use technology for wider political mobilisation and opinion making. ■

Line of Least Resistance

By Jagmohan

The report of the Kashmir Working Group, headed by Justice Saghir Ahmed, has once again brought the issue of autonomy to the limelight. This group was set up in pursuance of the decision announced by the Prime Minister of India at the Round Table Conference held in Srinagar on May 24-25, 2006.

The report, submitted in December 2009, is thick in volume but thin in content. After giving a detailed narration of the past events which are already known in knowledgeable circles, the report contents itself by saying: "The question of autonomy and its demand can be examined in the light of the 'Kashmir Accord' or in some other manner or on the basis of some formula as the present Prime Minister may deem fit and appropriate so as to restore the autonomy to the extent possible". It makes no specific recommendation with regard to withdrawal or otherwise of any Union law or provision of the Indian Constitution which had been earlier extended to the state and which is alleged to have eroded the autonomy of the state.

The predicament of Justice Saghir Ahmed is understandable. If he had examined each and every "extension", he would have found that all the extensions, made from time to time, were justified not only on legal and constitutional grounds but also on the grounds of establishing a smooth "working-relationship" between the Union and the state. He would have also found that none of these extensions has in any way undermined the personality or identity of Kashmir,

or what is loosely called "Kashmiriyat". Such findings would certainly not have endeared Justice Saghir Ahmed to all those elements who have for long been exploiting the constitutional illiteracy of the Kashmiri masses to secure their narrow political ends. He has, therefore, chosen to follow the line of least resistance, evade the real issues and make no concrete observations, suggestions or recommendations. His report would

While the citizens of J&K are citizens of India and have six members of Parliament as their representatives, the citizens of India are not ipso facto citizens of J&K. They cannot hold property in the state. They have no right to vote in elections to the Assembly, or the municipalities, or the panchayats.

provide hardly any guidance for practical action, either to the Union or state government.

Regrettably, over the years, attempts have been made by vested interests to present a misleading picture of the historical backdrop, hide facts and propagate that the autonomy earlier promised has been denied to the state. These attempts have not succeeded. But they have caused misgivings amongst the common Kashmiris. It is time the Union government takes energetic

steps to remove these misgivings and gives extensive publicity to the true facts and background of the case.

The actual position is that the Delhi Agreement, which was arrived at in 1952, after detailed discussions between Sheikh Abdullah and Jawaharlal Nehru, itself provided for establishing a working relationship between the state and Union, and this could be done by extending to the state certain laws and Articles of the Indian Constitution. For example, financial arrangements had to be made by abolishing custom barriers and providing Central assistance to the state whose own resources were wholly inadequate. At present, in addition to special packages granted from time to time, the entire planned expenditure and a substantial part of non-planned expenditure of the state are met by the Central government. The state is also treated as a "special category state". Whereas most of the states get central financial assistance in the ratio of 30 per cent grant and 70 per cent loan, Jammu and Kashmir receives 90 per cent grant and only 10 per cent loan.

This shows how deeply the state is linked financially with the Centre. What would happen if this link is severed? None of the protagonists of so-called autonomy cares to answer this question. The State Autonomy Committee, set up by the government and whose report was received in April 1999, merely contented itself by saying that "the matter needed to be discussed".

If funds continue to flow to Kashmir from the Union, as at present, and the state is allowed, as

is being advocated in certain quarters, to have an exclusive say on subjects other than defence, external affairs and communications, it could enact Islamic civil and criminal laws and even set up Sharia courts, on the same lines as has been done in Pakistan, and make it virtually a theocratic entity. Would not such a scenario violate the very Preamble of our Constitution and also amount to secularism financing a theocracy propelled by forces of fundamentalism?

The problem of J&K has not been insufficiency but surfeit of powers. During 1977-82, for example, Sheikh Abdullah established a sort of elective dictatorship in the state. He practically acted like the monarch of all that he surveyed. No one even checked him from doing what was, on the face of it, wrong. His recruitment of the erstwhile die-hard workers of the Plebiscite Front, the Al Fatah and such other subversive organisations in sensitive departments, was, obviously, fraught with grave risks to the security and stability of the state. And yet, he could go ahead unhindered. The Resettlement Act, 1982, legislated during Sheikh Abdullah's regime and formally enacted during Dr Farooq Abdullah's time, showed what a vast area of power was available to the state government.

The crucial questions that need to be asked of those singing the autonomy ode are: Do they want more autonomy to enact legislation like the one referred to above? In what way is any welfare or development work held up for want of powers? Where is any law or executive order or judicial pronouncement that has undermined the personality or identity of Kashmir or altered its culture or spiritual landscape?

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Venkaiah Naidu damns Karnataka Governor for indulging in politics

The BJP has attacked the Governor of Karnataka for rejecting a nomination proposed to the upper House, Legislative Council, and asked him to desist from making political comments.

Talking to mediapersons in Bangalore on February 7 senior Rajya Sabha MP Shri M Venkaiah Naidu maintained that the Governor must stop making political comments and urged him to steer clear of controversies. He said the Governor's office should not get into controversies.



"The Governor, since he came, has been giving a running commentary about the State Government. The Governor is "friend" and should guide the Government and should not criticise it in public. The Governor's office should not be allowed to be used for political purposes," said Shri Naidu.

A few days back, Karnataka Governor Shri HR Bhardwaj had rejected the nomination of former Minister V. Somanna to the Legislative Council by saying Somanna is a political defector and blamed defection as nuisance to parliamentary democracy. It is worth noting that HR Bhardwaj was minister in UPA government led by the Congress. Shri Somanna had joined the BJP, which created ripples in the Congress. This incident has angered the BJP and senior party leader Shri Venkaiah Naidu has asked the Governor about his propriety in rejecting the nomination of Somanna.

Shri Naidu has argued that the Governor has no purview of the matter and questioned the rule under which the Governor had rejected his nomination. Shri Naidu said, "Where is it written that a man who comes from another party is not qualified to become member of the Legislative Council. Somanna joined BJP by resigning his posts and he was not a defector." ■

It needs to be underlined that J&K is the only state of the Indian Union which has its own Constitution. Even the governor of the state is appointed under this Constitution. The special position of the state extends to many other spheres. While the citizens of J&K are citizens of India and have six members of Parliament as their representatives, the citizens of India are not ipso facto citizens of J&K. They cannot hold property in the state. They have no right to vote in elections to the Assembly, or the municipalities, or the panchayats. In the light of the foregoing analysis, it should be quite clear that Justice Saghir Ahmed would have rendered a valuable service to the nation if he had brought the above facts and background of the autonomy issue to the notice of the people and provided an informed platform for a precise and pointed public discussion. By doing so, he would have helped in removing the constitutional illiteracy that currently prevails with regard to various matters connected with the subject. ■

(Jagmohan is a former governor of J&K and a former Union minister)

BJP National President pays homage to Mahatma Gandhi at Porbandar

BJP President Shri Nitin Gadkari and Chief Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 31st January paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at his birthplace Porbandar.

The prayer meeting at Kirti Mandir on the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi was also attended by the State BJP president Shri Purushottam Rupala, Finance Minister Shri Vajubhai Vala, Health Minister Shri Jay Narayan Vyas and other dignitaries.

Showering praises on Chief Minister, the BJP President said that Shri Modi programmes for removing poverty are akin to Mahatma Gandhi's idea of welfare of the poorest.

Shri Gadkari also inaugurated an exhibition of sand sculptures on the Porbandar beach depicting the life of the Mahatma. He also attended the Garib Kalyan Mela.



BJP's new milestone achievement 82 out of 119 Muslim candidates win

From Our Correspondent

The people of Madhya Pradesh have given yet another lie to its opponents' tirade that it is anti-minority, particularly Muslims. The party has established a new milestone in giving proper representation to minority in local bodies.

An unprecedented 82 Muslims, including 36 burqa-clad women, were elected on the BJP symbol in the recent elections to 268 urban bodies. "Once the remaining bodies go to polls, the number will easily cross 100," claimed Madhya Pradesh Minority Cell President, Shri Kamalbhai Lalbhai a day after the newly-elected representatives were felicitated at the party headquarters in Bhopal.

Shri Lalbhai said the number of

Muslim BJP councillors in the state's urban local bodies had never crossed 25 earlier. This time, the party had fielded an unprecedentedly high number of 119 Muslim candidates. "Earlier we would find it difficult to get candidates from the community. And we would also not seek their votes," state BJP president Shri Narendra Singh Tomar told the meet organised by the party's minority cell on February 2. The felicitation ceremony began with the singing of *Vande Mataram*. State Minorities' Welfare Minister Shri Ajay Vishnoi presented councillors with medals. The urban local body elections had paved the way for the entry of Muslims into the Vidhan Sabha as well, he added. ■

Ensure safety of non-Maharashtra people; Demands Rajnath

Former BJP National President Shri Rajnath Singh has demanded that Maharashtra government should take action against anyone indulging in attacking non-Marathies in Mumbai.

He asked Maharashtra Congress led government to ensure the safety and security of North Indians living in the state. In a strongly worded statement, Shri Rajnath Singh demanded that the Maharashtra government should take action against those who are indulging in violence and spreading hatred among different sections of the society in the name of Marathi pride. ■ (FOC)

BJP wants Protection to small tax payer

From Our Correspondent

Bhartiya Janata Party has said the draft Direct Tax Code (DTC) is harsh on small taxpayers and traders. It has asked Finance Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee not to implement the Code in its existing form.

A BJP delegation included Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Leader of Opposition (Lok Sabha), Shri Arun Jaitley, Leader of Opposition (Rajya Sabha), Dr. Kirit Somaiya - Convenor, BJP Committee on DTC, Shri Surinder Singh Ahluwalia MP, Shri Anant Kumar Hegde MP and Shri Gopal Agarwal, National Convener CA Cell met Shri Mukherjee on February 2. While welcoming the rewriting of the 50 year old Income Tax Act, the Party delegation said some of the DTC proposals, such as an exempt-exempt-tax regime for savings products would hit senior citizens hard. At present, such products are exempt from tax at the investment, accumulation as well as withdrawal stage.

The party's concern about DTC arises from the fear that the middle class, traders and the urban populace would be affected by its provisions. "All contributions to the social security schemes including that of Provident Fund, LIC shall also become taxable," Smt. Swaraj said.

The BJP has called for raising the minimum exemption limit for purposes of taxation to Rs 3 lakh for all, at Rs 3.5 lakh for women and Rs 4 lakh for senior citizens.

It also sought the continuation of the present provision regarding tax benefit for housing loans and interest paid on such loans. It said women and senior citizens should have special incentives such as tax free interest income up to Rs25,000

a year.

BJP has said the idea to tax charitable and religious trusts and ignore their constructive activities was unhealthy and demanded that the limit on accumulation should be raised to 50 per cent from 15 percent now. The present system of MAT on the profit earning should be continued," the BJP demanded.

The party also said that NRIs must be treated at par with other

Indians. "Taxing the interest and investment income at flat rate 20 per cent to 35 per cent is objectionable," it said. It claimed that the code proposed arbitrary powers to the tax administration. "In the name of privatisation and liberalisation, the government has proposed inspector raj. All provisions extending such arbitrary power regarding opening assessment, etc, should be dropped," it said. ■

BJP urges govt to take action on attacks on Indian students in Oz

The BJP on Feb 1 expressed strong concern over the continuing racial attacks on Indian students in Australia and urged the government to raise the matter at human rights forum globally, calling for strong action against the culprits.

A high-level party delegation led by Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Smt. Sushma Swaraj met External Affairs Minister S M Krishna and submitted a memorandum to him demanding the government's intervention for the safety of the Indian students in Australia.

The delegation included Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Shri Arun Jaitley, Party Co-Convenor Foreign Affairs Cell Shri Vijay Jolly, BJYM President Shri Amit Thakkar and Member of Parliament Shri Navjot Singh Sidhu.

"The assurances of the Australian government have not reduced the intensity of these attacks. The Indian Government must explore the possibility of raising this issue on Human Rights forum globally," the memorandum said. (UNI) ■

Hindu temple attacked, idols destroyed in Bangladesh

Miscreants in Bangladesh's Narayanganj district vandalised an ancient Hindu temple, with assailants destroying six idols, a top official said on February 6. A gang of 30-35 men attacked the Sonargaon temple and broke six idols, said Md Yunus Ali, the local police chief.

He said the incident took place while the devotees were holding a religious function at the Sree Sree Rakshakali Temple at Ashrafdi village.

The miscreants vandalised the temple and four houses, injuring at least five people, in Narayanganj's Sonargaon subdivision on February 5, 2010, the private news agency said.

The gang attacked the temple following an altercation between a devotee and three youths of the village. They also damaged four adjacent houses and injured five people, it said. (PTI) ■

Advani asks EC to address misgivings on EVMs

BJP's Parliamentary Party Chairman Shri L K Advani has asked the Election Commission to address the issue of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and apprehensions in their functioning.

Drawing from experiences from the world over, Shri Advani said "there's no such thing called a tamper-proof electronic (voting) machine". "The Commission intends to discuss the question of paid news -- a form of media corruption that has besmirched elections lately. I suggest that this meeting should also include its agenda the misgivings that have been voiced in different parts of the world, and lately in India also, as to the

dependability and fairness of EVMs," Shri Advani posted on his blog on January 25.

"It is significant that Germany, technologically one of the most advanced countries of the world, regards EVMs so risky for fair elections as to ban their use altogether.

The USA has not gone that far. However, 32 out of the 50 states have passed laws mandating that EVMs can be used only if there is a paper back-up for every vote cast electronically," Shri Advani wrote on his blog.

"In the US, the VVPAT voting machine produces a paper record of every single vote cast by the voters on the machine. After casting vote

on the EVM the voter will examine the physical printout and if satisfied that there is no discrepancy, deposit the vote in a ballot box. There is a legislation pending in the US Congress seeking to make this state law a federal law. I hope the proposed meeting of the Election Commission with political party representatives would agree to have a similar law framed by the Indian Parliament also," Shri Advani wrote.

He had triggered the debate on the EVMs in the country saying that though his party never questioned the election results, there were apprehensions about the malfunctioning of the EVMs and that the concerns should be addressed by the EC. ■

Choose between veil and right to vote, rules SC

Women, according to the Indian Express, cannot be issued voter identity cards if they refuse to lift their veils to be photographed, the Supreme Court has ruled.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Shri K G Balakrishnan and Justice Shri Deepak Verma gave the order on January 22 while hearing a petition by Madurai resident Ajmal Khan, who had pleaded that printing photos of Muslim women in the voters list violates Islam and their fundamental right to practise and profess their religion.

The Supreme Court was not convinced, and asked him what Muslim women would do if they contested elections.

"What if you want to contest an election?" asked the court. "If you have such strong religious sentiments, and do not want to be seen by members of public, then do not go to vote. You cannot go with burqa to vote. It will create complications in identification of voters.

"If someone comes to vote in a burqa and the photograph was also taken with a veil covering the face, how would anyone identify the voter?" the court said.

Khan filed a plea in the apex court after the Madras High Court ruling dismissed his plea questioning Election Commission of India's move to have photographs of voters in electoral rolls.

"The religious custom and preachings of Holy Quran lay down that Muslim women should wear Purdah and 'burqa' and show their faces only to their husbands and close relatives," Khan said in his plea. ■

Two CMs a constitutional absurdity: Rudy

It's a strange case of two Chief Ministers in a state D Lapang who was elected leader of the Congress legislature party in Meghalaya was sworn in as CM.

However, on January 30 Lingdoh, the Deputy CM and state Congress President has now been elevated to the rank of CM by a government notification thus giving the Congress, obvious reasons to feel embarrassed. BJP Spokesperson Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy said "We can call it a constitutional absurdity because we are aware that under the Constitution the governor swears in the CM. But here we have a CM appointing another CM." ■(FOC)

India must be on guard against China's New assertiveness: Ravi Shankar Prasad

Press Statement issued by BJP National Spokesperson Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad MP on China on January 29 in New Delhi.

With the latest assertion on an official Chinese Government website that "it is their right to establish military bases overseas to conduct retaliatory attack within the country or, at the neighbouring areas of their potential enemies", it is now well established that Chinese assertiveness has acquired a new belligerence. It is now self evident that China has now completely discarded its earlier strategy of Den-Ziao-Ping to keep your head low and build yourself up.

China is now projecting at ease with its military ambition. There was attempt to even hack the computer of the PMO and the National Security Advisor as publicly confirmed by former NSA Shri Narayanan himself earlier. If the information in the PMO and the NSA is not safe then what can be more alarming than this.

Obviously, all this has serious implications for India. China is very rapidly expanding its geo-political interest in our immediate neighbourhood, be it Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangla Desh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and even Maldives. The rising Sino-Pakistan nexus is a cause for a very serious concern. Today, China contributes towards 70% of Pakistan's military hardware. Apart from navel frigate, it has supplied about 150 JF 17 fighter planes and a good number of J-10 planes to

Pakistan. The cruise missile "Babar" and the ballistic missile "Shaheen" in possession of Pakistan are basically of Chinese technology and that too in violation of missile technology control regime. Besides, there are other strategic build-up by China in Pakistan apart from the Karakoram Highway. China has also a very powerful presence in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) as well, which is a seriously disputed territory under illegal occupation by



Security Advisor Mr. Menon is widely perceived to follow a very soft line on China and Pakistan. There appears to be a very wide gap between the Government, the

It is now self evident that China has now completely discarded its earlier strategy of Den-Ziao-Ping to keep your head low and build yourself up. China is now projecting at ease with its military ambition. There was attempt to even hack the computer of the PMO

Pakistan. The very aggressive posture on Arunachal Pradesh is a part of this design as also the increasing instances of border incursion in and around Ladakh and other border areas.

Though, we do not advocate confrontation yet, we are surprised as to why there is a deliberate attempt to downplay the increasing belligerence of Chinese assertiveness. This low profile approach would seriously impinge upon our strategic security. There is indeed additional cause for concern because the new National

strategic community as also the military think tank about the concern emanating from China's aggressiveness which would only increase if there is a perception that India is unsure of its response towards this new assertiveness. It is important that we recognise

the problem take adequate measures including execution of infrastructure projects in the border area within a definite time frame develop proper and credible nuclear deterrent, properly upgrade our military hardware and setup new diplomatic initiative in the neighbourhood. It would be well advised for the Prime Minister to visit Nepal for resolution of outstanding issues which are getting complicated unnecessarily. We are not against dialogue with China but we should never underplay the concerns of our strategic interest. ■

BJP to oppose religion-based reservation : Dr. Joshi

Senior BJP leader and former Union Minister Dr. Murlidhar Manohar Joshi addressing a press conference in Kolkata on January 09 said that reservation in the name of religion is unconstitutional and BJP would oppose it. 'Any reservation in the name of religion is unconstitutional. It's a conspiracy to divide the nation and BJP will oppose this move,' Dr. Joshi said.

He said the West Bengal government had decided to adopt the Ranganath Mishra Commission's recommendations when the centre has not taken any concrete decision on it. He further added, 'Backwardness in India has no connection with religion'.

It is noteworthy that the Left government in West Bengal January 09 announced 10 per cent

reservation in government jobs for other backward classes among the Muslims.

Talking about Maoist violence in West Bengal and other eastern India states, Dr. Joshi said the central government must hold talks with all the state governments to resolve the Maoist issue. 'The Congress has been hand in glove with the Maoists in states like Andhra Pradesh but now when the cat is out of the bag the Home Minister P. Chidambaram is busy holding meetings across the country,' he alleged.

'We had pointed this when a police official was abducted by the Maoists and was declared prisoner

of war, we had warned the government at that time and the talks should have started then only, better late than never,' he said.



Dr. Joshi also blamed the central government for its 'wrong policies' which led the food price rise and inflation across the country. 'The price rise is solely due to the wrong policies of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. Although the major responsibility lies with (Agriculture Minister) Shri Sharad Pawar but it is the entire government that has to share the blame for this continuous price rise,' he said. ■

Victorian Police Commissioner suggestion outlandish: Rudy

BJP on February 5 described as "ridiculous and outlandish" a top Australian police officer's suggestion that Indians living there should look visibly poor and said some strong measures should be taken by the government to send across a message.

"The statement made by the Victorian Police Commissioner is ridiculous and outlandish. With a deep sense of pain and concern BJP would like to ask whether Australia as a nation subscribes to such statements which has undoubtedly shaken up



the international community," BJP Spokesperson Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy said.

Police Commissioner of Victoria, Simon Overland has advised Indian students living in Australia to keep a low profile and "try to look as poor as you can" to avoid attacks.

Rudy wondered if the Australian law and order system had "collapsed completely" compelling the authorities there to make such "bizarre remarks".

"More than hundred attacks in last one year, couple of them being fatal while leaving several injured

and yet the Australian Government has not been visibly forthcoming he said.

He added "It is indeed a matter of concern that Indian students crossing over a lakh constitute the second largest student population after the Chinese where they only remain vulnerable and fortunately no other community has been targeted or an incident reported so far."

He has lamented that in all this the response of the Indian Government has been extremely lackadaisical and disappointing

"They have racist tendencies. India needs to take some strong measures to send across a message," he added. ■

Educate voter about NDA performance in Bihar : Jaitley

"The party members should go out the voters and explain to them the basic differences between the NDA and other parties in Bihar that lacked moral values and vision inherent in both BJP and Janata Dal (U) leaders in the state said Shri Arun Jaitley at a function held at party headquarters in Patna to honor him for his nomination as the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha.

"You should go out and tell the people that you are proud of the performance of the NDA government in Bihar. You should also tell them that our policy is of development for all and not just for a handful of community that other parties strive for," he said. He further added the NDA had promised to bring crime down in Bihar and it did. It had promised to put Bihar on the path of development, and it did, he said adding these were the things that the BJP leaders needed to talk among the voters to earn their support. Shri Jaitley said that it was astounding why



witnessing sweeping change in the state.

"The developments taking under the NDA administration in Bihar is not a secret. It has been recognized by leaders from other states and major media outlets and yet, in order to advance their own political agendas, the opposition leaders in Bihar continue to deny credit to the NDA administration," he said.

Praising the cordial relationship between the BJP and JD-U in Bihar, Shri Jaitley said that the two parties were so much in sync with each other in Bihar that it has become a new standard in political alignments.

To honour Shri Jaitley for his election as the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Shri Nitish Kumar had arranged a sumptuous feast that included Bihari delicacies like 'Hara Chana Ghoogni', 'Bihia Poori' and a tableful of other delights.

The lunch meet was also attended by Deputy Chief Minister Shri Sushil Kumar Modi, BJP State President Shri Radha Mohan Singh, Shri Janardan Singh Sigrwal, Health Minister Shri Nand Kishore Yadav, Sh. Ashwini Choubey, Sh. Mangal Pandey, Prof. Sukhda Pandey, former BJP State President Shri Gopal Narayan Singh, among others. ■ (FOC)

Gadkari leads BJP protest against price rise in Delhi

The Bharatiya Janata Party on February 10 took its agitation against the price rise to the streets by organising a



dharna in New Delhi. with BJP National President Shri Nitin Gadkari and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Smt. Sushma Swaraj addressing thousandds of party workers at Jantar Mantar.

BJP supporters gathered at Jantar Mantar in large numbers with flags and posters to protest against alleged government apathy towards rising prices of essential commodities. Former Union Minister Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, BJP National General Secretaries Shri Ananth Kumar, Shri Thavarchand Gehlot (incharge Delhi affairs) and Shri Vijay Goel, BJP Headquarters incharge Shri Shyam Jaju, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Vidhan Sabha, Dr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, State President Shri O.P. Kohli, Prof. Jagdish Mukhi, were the other prominent BJP leaders who participated in the dharna. The crowd raised slogans like "sweet is not sweet" and also against Prime Minster Dr. Manmohan Singh, UPA Chairperson Smt. Sonia Gandhi and Agriculture Minister Shri Sharad Pawar.

"We will take this agitation to another level. Price rise is now a big scam. Prices of everything are shooting up. Ministers are involved in this. The Prime Minister, Smt. Sonia and Shri Pawar are involved. We have to expose this," Shri Ananth Kumar alleged while addressing the protestors. BJP has launched a nation-wide campaign against price rise. Gadkari had said in his press conference earlier this week that instead of GDP, food inflation was rising and hinted that such a "scam" was not possible without the support of politicians in power. "Prices are rising due to wrong economic policies of the government," he said. ■ (FOC)

Advani suspects US pressure on India to agree to Indo-Pak talks

From Our Correspondent

Chairman of BJP Parliamentary Party Shri L K Advani has expressed apprehension that the government's decision to start foreign secretary-level talks with Pakistan was the "upshot of a powerful nudge from Washington".

The offer of dialogue, he pointed out, came despite the government's earlier insistence on "steadfastly refusing to resume talks with Pakistan until Islamabad brings those behind the Mumbai attacks to justice."

"New Delhi's sudden announcement last week that India was willing to hold foreign secretary level parleys with Pakistan has naturally made many political analysts in the country ask: is this the consequence of (Barack) Obama's assertion being put into action?" writes Shri Advani in his blog on feb 8.

Shri Advani contended that India's change of stand had led to gloating in Pakistan. He referred to Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's remarks boasting "gleefully that it was international pressure that had forced India to return to the negotiating table!"

Shri Advani reminded the government of the February 22, 1994 parliament resolution on Jammu and Kashmir that condemned Pakistan's support to subversive activities in the state. "The country, the government as well as the world would do well to keep the above resolution in mind," Shri Advani said ■

Telangana state should be created peacefully: Sushma

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Smt. Sushma Swaraj has called for peaceful protests to meet the demand for a separate Telangana state.

Addressing a public meeting in Hyderabad on January 25 Smt. Swaraj said: "We will not take the protest to the violent level. It should be carried on in a peaceful manner. But when we speak of violence that means that it should not be towards others but also towards oneself."

She also mentioned the suicide that took place in the Osmania University campus in the cause of Telangana and said it was not the right way to voice one's demand.

She urged the students and youth not to sacrifice their lives but to live and fight for the Statehood denied to them for the last five decades.

"You should live to see your Telangana. Don't end your lives" she said.

She cited various examples of Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh that were carved out of bigger states with an objective of progress and development in the respective regions.

"Supporting Telangana does not mean that we are against Andhra Pradesh. But Telangana needs justice that is all what is our motto. Because, Telangana's development took place in an imbalanced manner," she said. (ANI) ■

Bihar Gram Gaurav Yatra launched

Bihar government along with the Water Aid India and Unicef has launched a month-long *Gram Gaurav Yatra* to make the state fully covered with sanitation. The Yatra is unique as it is first of such attempts in any state. The state Chief Minister and his cabinet are backing the Yatra. The Chief Minister Shri Nitish Kumar and other ministers will camp in villages, inspire people to take up toilet construction and right there give government commitment for it. PHED Minister Shri Ashwani Kumar Choubey announced the launch of Bihar *Gram*.

Gaurav Rath Yatra on January 28 that embarked on a movement towards the noble mission of restoring human dignity and the self-esteem of rural Indians through the "*Gram Gaurav Yatra*."

Bihar has to install around 1.12 crore [11.2 million] household toilets to achieve the targets set for universal coverage by 2012. So far only 20 lakh [2 million] toilets have been installed. PHED Minister Shri Ashwani Kumar Choubey said one crore 13 lakh [11.3 million] toilets would be constructed till 2012 all over the State.

Participating in the Yatra in a village he said that drinking water was government's top priority. He said that every household would have a separate toilet and added that a mass awareness about cleanliness is being created. To create awareness among the villagers, street plays were also staged while local folk songs were aired to attract the villagers. By 2012, the government has planned to build around 1.12 crore toilet units in the whole state, said Shri Choubey. He appealed to the villagers not to marry off their daughters to houses that have no toilets. ■

EC turns sixty; time to address concerns

By Vikash Anand

We have celebrated 60th anniversary of the Election Commission of India just a day before of 61st republic day celebration. In these 60 years Election Commission saw many ups and its down in terms of composition and independency. Through all these years it also did significant work the strength like increasing electorate, use of technology etc. But issue like its credibility and competency that is yet remain to be addressed.

Elections are the foundation stone of any democracy. Only healthy elections pave the way of healthy democracy. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has defined Democracy as "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures."

As per definition of UDHR's Article 21, consent (the will of the people) of the governed is most fundamental concept of democracy and its (democracy) most essential feature is it enables citizens to choose their representatives in free, fair, and regular elections. It means elections alone are insufficient to sustain it. The election should be free, fair and regular with freedom of choice to choose their representatives.

Election Commission is entrusted the task to conduct free, fair and regular elections. Keeping in view of its importance, architects our constitution have given

provision of Election Commission in a separate chapter of the constitution. That is why the Election Commission has been a part of the journey of our Republic since its very inception.

Article 324 of the constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections of Parliament, State Legislatures, the office of President of India and the office of Vice-President of India shall be vested in the Election Commission. The Election Commission an all-India body in the sense that it is common to both the Central and the State Governments.

The conduct of free, fair and impartial elections depends much upon the performance of the three stakeholders. They are - independent and impartial electoral machinery; political parties and candidates; and the electorate. All of them must act responsibly. The Indian election process has the Model Code of Conduct, that lays down the norms of behavior and actions which, parties and contesting candidates shall adhere to, at the time of elections. As it should, the Commission has been making every effort to create a level playing field between various candidates and has earned the reputation of strictly and impartially monitoring activities of candidates in constituencies through its Election Observers. The Commission has always been willing to use technology for modernization and for the better conduct of elections. In this context, over the years, several measures have been taken such as - computerization of

electoral rolls and Photo Identity Cards for voters. Some of the Chief Election Commissioners like T.N. Shesion are also credited with major reforms towards free and fair election in India and that has had far-reaching impact in streamlining the electoral processes in a democratic polity.

With the size of our electorate increasing from 176 million in the first General Elections in the country in 1951-52, to 716 million in the 15th General Elections held last year, the task of the Election Commission has increased manifold. Today, our electorate is almost equal to the combined population of the European Union and of the United States.

To organize elections for such a large voting population and in such a vast and difficult geographical area, requires exceptional management and co-ordination. The election process, in a country of more than one billion people, was followed, the world over, with great interest and admiration. Thus, not only, has the Election Commission helped strengthen democracy at home, but also helped to enhance the prestige of India's institutional mechanisms. It is for these reasons that the Election Commission of India has been called upon often, to share its experiences about the conduct of elections with other countries.

Since its inception in 1950 and till October 15, 1989, the Election Commission functioned as a Single Member Body consisting of the Chief Election Commissioner. On October 16, 1989 just a week before the commencement the 9th General

Election two more Election Commissioners were appointed. Thereafter, the Election Commission functioned as a multi-member Body consisting of three Election Commissioners. The appointment of two more Election Commissioners was perceived as an attempt to compromise the independency of Commission. On assuming power by the National Front government in January 1990 abolished the two posts of Election Commissioners. and the Election Commission was reverted to the earlier position. Again in October 1993, the President appointed two more Election Commissioners. Since then and till today, the Election Commission has been functioning as a multi-member body consisting of three Election Commissioners.

The credibility of the ECI(Election Commission of India) has been tarnished by some unfortunate incidents from time to time. Last year, N Gopalaswami allegation against his colleague Navin Shri Naveen Chawla has damaged reliability of the institution. Shri Gopalaswami recommended, giving several instances of wrongdoing on the part of Chawla in his 90-page recommendation, to the President seeking sacking of Chawla. This included regular leaking of election dates and showing partiality to the Congress. Even earlier Chawla's appointment as Election Commissioner had been challenged before the Supreme Court. Supreme is yet to give its verdict on the issue. It is being alleged that inspite of these serious allegations Chawla's removal was brought to halt because of his proximity to the ruling Congress party and by virtue of his being the senior most contender in the ECI, he has been elevated from

Election Commissioner to Chief Election Commissioner. This instance has brought to light the urgency of serious reforms in selection procedures of CEC. Here, it is worthy to note that the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, headed by Veerappa Moily has also highlighted the need for the same to rectify its various flaws. The Report has suggested that the CEC and his colleagues should be selected by a broad based collegium as is the case with the selection of the CVC. The collegium would comprise five members (Speaker of Lok Sabha, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, the Law Minister and the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha as its

At present, CEC is appointed by the President of India on the advice of the Council of Ministers leaving the scope for the appointment of a person with a prejudiced mindset, and this is a major drawback in appointment system of Election Commissioners.

members).At present, CEC is appointed by the President of India on the advice of the Council of Ministers leaving the scope for the appointment of a person with a prejudiced mindset, and this is a major drawback in appointment system of Election Commissioners. Inclusion of Opposition leaders in Parliament in selection committee will be able to bring unbiased EC and CEC.

Other important thing to be addressed to make Election commission an unbiased institution is to insulate the CEC from all sorts of favoritism and allurements for possible future appointments. Towards this direction it is essential to enact necessary amendments to

the existing constitutional provisions which will prohibit them to hold office of profit after retirement from their jobs. Former Chief Election Commissioner(CEC) M.S Gill's nomination as Rajya Sabha Member and his further elevation to Minister of State has given a very wrong precedent. It encourages partiality by CEC to the ruling party. Certainly this type of appointment diminish the credibility of the Institution. Election commission is the soul of democracy. Its fairness and impartiality construct healthy democracy.

Second major concern is of people's participation in voting. Election Commission's arrangement of polling booths are commendable.

The General Elections conducted in May last year has the set up of 8 lakh polling booths and the involvement of approximately 5 million polling staff. So meticulous were the arrangements, that a polling booth was set-up even where there was only one voter. Another polling booth was established at a

height of 15,300 feet. Despite such meticulous arrangements , it was unable to increase percentage of voting. Internet Voting can be considered as means to facilitate online voting. In India it should be followed.

Strengthening participatory democracy by making voting compulsory in Gujarat's municipal elections is a praiseworthy initiative. But simultaneously voting should be facilitated with the help of simplifying seemingly complicated voting procedures via maximizing the utilization of the advancement in Information and Communication Technoogy.

The above raised concerns should be addressed to strengthen democracy as soon as possible. ■

PUNJAB

Ashwani Sharma elected BJP State President

The Punjab BJP has elected Party General Secretary Shri Ashwani Sharma as its President.

Shri Ashwani Sharma was elected unopposed on February 4 in the presence of Party's Central Observer Shri Ram Lal Kovind.

In his speech after being elected the party would have to reach out to the people in the next two years to win their confidence.

The new State President also made it known that he did not like politics revolving around photo opportunities. "I would rather like to live in the hearts of party men", he said while advising legislators and



ministers to go to the people to win their respect. "It should not happen that you go too late (at election time)", he added.

The names of 13 delegates chosen to represent the state in the national council were also announced. These included Shri Swarna Ram, former bureaucrat Shri Som Prakash, Sita Ram Kashyap and Shri Vijay Sampla, Shri Balramji Dass Tandon, Shri Brij Lal Rinwa, Shri Madan Mohan Mittal, Shri Mohan Lal Garg, Shri Vinod Khanna, Prof Rajinder Bhandari, Shri Nirottam Dev Ratti, Gurcharan Kaur and Shri Vinod Sharma.

KARNATAKA

Eshwarappa is new BJP State President

Shri K S Eshwarappa, who held Energy portfolio in the State Cabinet, was elected unanimously as the



president of State BJP unit in Bangalore on Jan 28.

He has tendered resignation as minister in pursuance of one person one post principle followed in the party. He will hold the office for three years.

The BJP National General Secretary Shri Vijay Goel was the central observed for the organisational elections in the State. This is the third time that Shri Eshwarappa, is leading BJP in the State.

He was earlier two-time BJP State President in 1993 and in 1995. His third term will conclude in January 2013.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Khimi Ram elected BJP State President



Himachal Pradesh BJP has formally elected Shri Khimi Ram as the State President for a three-year term. On the induction of the then State President Shri Jairam Thakur in the State Cabinet, Shri Khimi Ram who was then Deputy Speaker, was nominated as the President for the remainder of the term. He resigned as Deputy Speaker on assuming the charge of State President six months back.

Speaking to media after his election Shri Khimi ram said "We must highlight the achievements of the government which has performed really well".

Shri Khimi Ram is a second term MLA from Banjar in Kullu district. Both Chief Minister Prof. Prem Kumar Dhumal and Shri Khimi Ram said efforts would be made

to have better coordination between the government and the party so that the BJP was strengthened in the State.

Former Chief Minister and BJP National Vice-President Shri Shanta Kumar, Prof. Prem Kumar Dhumal, Shri Dile Ram from Mandi and Smt. Vimla Kashyap from Shimla were elected to the National Council of the Party.

GUJARAT

R.C Faldu new BJP State President



Shri RC Faldu, three-time MLA and chief whip of the BJP in Gujarat, was unanimously elected president of the state unit on February 1, 2010.

Shri R.C. Faldu was elected unopposed State Unit President at a state executive meeting in Gandhinagar. National

General Secretary Shri Gopinath Munde, who was the central observer, announced the election of Shri Faldu to succeed Shri Purshottam Rupala. Faldu was the only candidate to have filled the nomination to head the party's state unit.

Chief Minister Shri Narendra Modi had proposed Shri Faldu's candidature, which was supported by all the district- and block-level presidents and state executive members.

Shri Faldu is a three-time legislator from Kalawad constituency in Jamnagar district of Saurashtra region. "BJP is a party of common workers and my elevation suggests that a common worker can rise to become the state party head," Shri Faldu said. "I am always a common worker of the BJP," he said. "Now, as state party head, I will work as a common worker to strengthen the organisational base of the party."

CHHATTISGARH

Raman Singh takes on UPA for rising food prices

Taking a swipe at UPA on rising prices Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Shri Raman Singh has asked Congress to reveal what happened to the UPA's poll promise to provide 25 kg of rice or wheat to families living below the poverty line. Announcing withdrawal

of entry tax of 0.25 per cent being levied on sugar, Shri Singh told the Congress in the Assembly, "Sugar is now being sold at Rs 40 per kg as against Rs 10 five years ago. Now the poor cannot even afford to have onions. Where is your subsidised rice and wheat scheme? Please find out." During the last Lok Sabha elections, the Congress had pledged to enact a law to provide 25 kg of rice or wheat a month at Rs three per kg to BPL families. A food security scheme giving subsidised food grains to the poorest of the poor is already being implemented by the state

BIHAR

Bihar wants Atal instead of Sonia on highway billboards

The Bihar Government has objected to the National Highway Authority of India's decision to erect 1,500 billboards of Prime Minister Shri Manmohan Singh and UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi along the national highways and has demanded that pictures of the Congress Chief be replaced with those of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Bihar Road Construction Minister Shri Prem Kumar said that it was known to the entire nation that Shri Vajpayee was the one who brought a revolution in the road sector and conceived the idea of the Golden Quadrilateral.

"It is unfortunate that the UPA Government removed Shri Vajpayee's picture after coming to power. I can understand if Manmohan Singh is there, but Sonia's photograph on the billboard is not justified. We would request the Centre to replace Sonia's photograph with that of Shri Vajpayee," Shri Kumar maintained.

ANDHRA PRADESH

HC quashes Andhra law on quotas for Muslims

Andhra High Court has, according to Indian Express, overturned state law for reservation on religious ground on February 8, 2010.

Stating that religion cannot be the basis for quota, the Andhra Pradesh High Court quashed a law made by Andhra Government providing four per cent reservation in government jobs and educational institutions to 15 socially and educationally backward classes among Muslims.

A seven-member constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice A R Dave, said the law on quota for minorities was "unsustainable" and "could not be implemented".

The bench, however, said that admissions granted since 2007 under the minority quota would remain valid.

MADHYA PRADESH

MP against GM crops

THE BJP government in Madhya Pradesh has is against Genetically Modified GM crops. Farmers' Welfare and Agriculture Development Minister Dr Ramkrishna Kusmaria spelt out his government's stand while asking Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh not to allow commercial cultivation of Bt Brinjal.

"Madhya Pradesh government strongly opposes westernization of agriculture science and a narrow-minded approach," Dr Kusmaria wrote to Ramesh on January 28 "The state government can't compromise on its policy of agriculture growth with organic farming."

Dr Kusmaria said more than 250 varieties of brinjal are grown over 16,000 hectares in Madhya Pradesh, mostly by small and marginal farmers. The government won't allow its bio resources to be damaged, he said.

The state government said it would not let Bt Brinjal enter the state, saying the genetically modified crop could take a toll on the health of consumers. While the jury is still out on the technology, the state has already made up its mind. Immediately after the GEAC's nod to Bt Brinjal, the state had announced that it would ban the crop because "it's not in the interest of our farmers and land." ■

UTTRAKHAND

Nishank book for Mauritius schools

In a rare recognition, the Government of Mauritius has decided to introduce a book written by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, "Sparsh Ganga", in the school syllabus of the island nation.

Releasing the seasoned poet-politician's book at a special ceremony held at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in the island nation, Mauritius President Sir Anerood Jugnauth lauded the Chief Minister's efforts back home to clean the mighty Ganga through a recently launched "Sparsh Ganga" campaign. He also pledged full support of the Mauritian Government for the campaign.

Gopio award

To celebrate the occasion, an organisation of non-resident Indians Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (Gopio) honoured Shri Nishank with "Gopio International Award" for his contribution towards art, literature, public service and environment conservation. ■



BJP constitutes Ladakh team

There have been credible reports in the media quoting Government agencies and sources that China has encroached into India's Territory in Ladakh. This is a serious issue. The BJP President Shri Nitin Gadkari has constituted a Five Member Study Team to visit Ladakh and prepare a report to submit to the early leadership.

Members of the Team for Ladakh are:

1. Shri Bhagat Singh Koshyari, MP and Ex-CM, Uttrakhand
2. Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy, MP & BJP National Spokesperson
3. Shri Rajan Sushant, MP
4. Shri Tapir Gao, Ex-MP
5. Shri Nirmal Singh, Ex-J&K BJP State President