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Ladakh waits while Central laws made applicable to J&K

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While the Ladakh region, after being declared a Union Territory, is still waiting after two years for new central laws, in the same time, Union Territory Jammu and Kashmir got hundreds of central laws extended and many of the laws were modified post 5 August, 2019.

In this August itself, prior to the second anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, for the first time, the leadership of Leh and Kargil gave a joint press conference, demanding statehood, legislature and safeguards for the region under Article 371. Both Kargil and Ladakh leaderships have decided to fight together to get the status of the state, while they repeated that they will not accept any central law being extended to them without these safeguards.

On the second anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, the government of Jammu and Kashmir released a document to show the achievements in the UT of J&K. According to this document released by the government as a booklet titled "Jammu and Kashmir Marching To A New Era", 890 laws have been extended to J&K, especially those laws which pertain to rights to weaker sections, rights of children and senior citizens, laws for good governance, new land laws, and domicile laws.

The leadership of Ladakh and Kargil wants Union Home Minister Amit Shah to keep his promise that the BJP government will ensure their rights on the land, jobs and their identity is safeguarded with some new law. Prominent leader of Kargil Asgar Ali Karbalai told this newspaper that now the joint leadership of Ladakh wants not only statehood but also constitutional safeguards under Article 371 to save their distinct identity. He said that in the past two years, the central government has not extended any law to UT of Ladakh, with the result that they are waiting for the BJP government to take a call on the new laws for Ladakh region.

They have also demanded from the central government that there should be two seats for the Parliament and also a seat for the Rajya Sabha from Ladakh so that the people get proper representation at the Centre. Recently, the UT administration of Ladakh had sought applications for government jobs without defining who is the permanent resident of Ladakh.

Kargil Democratic Alliance and Leh Apex Body of politicians have already said that they will not accept any domicile law extended to Jammu and Kashmir and have asked the government to treat their state subject of the erstwhile J&K state as their identity. After the recent meeting, they have said that very soon, they would meet the central government with their fresh demands.

On the second anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 the PAGD held a meeting at the residence of Farooq Abdullah who is a sitting MP from Srinagar and is heading this political amalgam. After the meeting, the PAGD said that they will knock every door including that of Parliament for the restoration of Article 370 and said that all the changes done by the Government of India on August 5, 2019, were unacceptable to them.

The PAGD claimed that the situation was worsening in Jammu and Kashmir with each passing day following abrogation of Article 370. "They promised on the floor of Parliament that statehood would be restored when the situation becomes normal. They have not restored the statehood which means the situation is worsening," spokesman of PAGD Muhammad Yousuf Tarigami told media on Thursday after their meeting at Farooq Abdullah's residence.

TOP OF SATURDAY

PORNOGRAPHY CASE

HC DISMISSES APPLICATIONS BY RAJ KUNDRA, RYAN THORPE SEEKING IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court on Saturday dismissed applications filed by businessman Raj Kundra and Ryan Thorpe challenging Magistrate Court's remand order and seeking immediate release in connection with the pornography case. The High Court, in its order, said that there was nothing wrong in the Magistrate Court's order when it remanded Raj Kundra to police custody. On 27 July, a court in Mumbai sent actor Shilpa Shetty's husband and businessman Raj Kundra along with his associate Ryan Thorpe to judicial custody for 14 days. Kundra was arrested by police on July 19 along with 11 other people on charges related to the alleged creation of pornographic films. Earlier on 2 August, the Bombay High Court reserved its order on their petitions. During the proceedings of the court, the investigating officer had told the court that 68 pornography videos were found on Kundra's laptop. "There was a PowerPoint presentation (PPT) on Kundra's laptop with details of the Hotshots app. The PPT has financial projections, marketing strategies and what the app is all about," police informed the court. Police added that a film script with sexual content was also found on Kundra's personal laptop. "Kundra has deleted his i-cloud contents," police said adding they "cannot be mute spectators of a potential crime if the accused does not cooperate and tries to destroy evidence." Earlier on August 5, the metropolitan magistrate court rejected the bail pleas of Raj Kundra and his associate Ryan Thorpe in the pornography case. ANI

SHOWING AGGRESSION

IS RAHUL READY TO RELINQUISH BACK-SEAT DRIVING?

The Gandhi scion signals his willingness to be on the front foot!

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi now appears to have made up his mind to play on the "front foot" on the political pitch. The way the Gandhi scion made aggressive efforts to unite the Opposition during the Parliament's monsoon session against the Modi government is an indication of the same.

According to sources, the Congress is now discussing several key steps that might determine the future political course. One of the key steps under discussion is that Rahul Gandhi should now take reins of the party officially and in the capacity as party boss should continue to implement the aggressive strategy against the government. Efforts towards this end are understood to have been initiated. Strategists believe that this

will help the party to create an atmosphere in the poll-bound states.

Secondly, the party is likely to take a call on whether or not to project AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as Congress' face for Uttar Pradesh assembly elections. Similarly, a decision is also likely on poll strategist Prashant Kishor's entry in Congress. Rahul Gandhi has to take a call on these issues. If he defers decisions then it will impact the poll prospects of the party in the seven states where assembly elections will be held next year. Congress' political future hinges on the outcome of these elections. Congress has a chance to perform well in states such as Uttarakhand, Himachal and Punjab.

Moreover, the grand old party may pose a challenge to BJP in states such as Goa, Gujarat and Manipur. The party is weak in UP where



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, along with other leaders of Opposition, take part in a farmers' protest against farm laws at Jantar Mantar, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

the SP and the BSP are averse to stitch up any alliance with it. So, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is the only hope for the Congress in UP. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra won't be able to ensure Congress' win in UP, but her projection could boost the morale of the party workers. Now, what is to be seen is whether Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will be willing to

be the party's face. Observers believe that she might be reluctant to be like that. So far, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has been handling the party affairs in Uttar Pradesh from Delhi only. Moreover, she is in favour of striking an alliance with regional parties. She will be returning from the USA this week where she had gone to meet her daughter, Rahul Gandhi

is expected to talk to her after she returns from abroad. Now, another key issue is that of Kishor's future. He has resigned as advisor to Punjab CM Amarinder Singh. Sources say that Kishor, in fact, is keen to join Congress so as to be seen on the national political arena to take on PM Modi. But it won't be easy for Kishor to join Congress as a big faction is against him. However, Rahul Gandhi may take a call on this after consulting some leaders after the monsoon session.

Meanwhile, a big group of the party is said to be making efforts to ensure that Rahul Gandhi agrees to be Congress chief. Several state elections are going to take place ahead of Lok Sabha polls of 2024, but the party is without any regular president. Another thinking is that the party should have a core committee of senior leaders for taking quick political de-

isions. Strategists believe that the political situation in the country is volatile after the Bengal poll outcome and Covid-19 pandemic.

What the developments in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh have indicated is that the BJP high command is now flexible and accommodating the views of the state leaders as well. If BJP's fort crumbles in its states which are going to polls next year, then it will not augur well for the saffron party for 2024 general elections. However, all depends on how the Gandhi family carries things forward. What is to be seen is whether the Gandhis play on the front foot or remain on the back-foot. Rahul Gandhi's action during the monsoon session so far has indicated that the Gandhi scion is willing to be on the front foot. The real challenge for Rahul Gandhi is to first settle the internal party matters.

IN LIMBO

MLAs' wait for cabinet gets longer in Rajasthan

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

The MLAs' wait for "sporting red beacons" on their vehicles is getting longer, with the cabinet expansion in Rajasthan continuing to be in limbo. AICC general secretary Ajay Maken, who returned from Jaipur with leaders' views, is still waiting to meet the Congress high command.

Interestingly, Maken, who had given the leaders in Rajasthan the impression that his say will be final, has ended up waiting for an appoint-

ment with Rahul Gandhi in Delhi. The former Congress boss is said to be busy in what is his priority—national politics. There are some factors in Rajasthan which indicate that Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot will not carry out the cabinet expansion anytime soon. Announcement of panchayat elections in six districts, preparation for by-elections in two Assembly seats and the risk of a third wave of Covid-19 are some of these factors.

However, CM Gehlot may carry out a reshuffle whenever he wishes to, for panchayat

elections and bypolls make no difference to the same technically. But it seems that the CM wants reshuffle to be done after by-elections.

Gehlot is believed to have a plan to announce his expanded team all of a sudden like what he had done in his second term. One of the reasons for this is that Gehlot has to remove some of the ministers. In view of the intense internal fight in Congress in Rajasthan, it will be a difficult task for Gehlot to axe some of the ministers. On being shown the exit door, these ministers may

create problems. Some of them were said to be with Sachin Pilot earlier.

To recall, Gehlot had surprised everyone by taking resignation of all the ministers in the third year of his second term as Chief Minister. National media was flooded with reports speculating one thing or the other about Gehlot being summoned by Sonia Gandhi at that point of time. But the speculation turned out to be far from reality. The same night, Gehlot released a list of new ministers after reshuffle, removing six min-

isters. Ministers like Ram Lal Jat and Pramod Jain Bhaya had been axed then. Raghu Sharma, who is quite a popular minister presently, was given promotion during that reshuffle. To the surprise of one and all, Gehlot had done it without making any visit to Delhi. The situation in Rajasthan is just like that. If cabinet expansion does not happen now, then it will be deferred till November. Panchayat polls will take place by the end of this month. If Assembly bypolls are announced, then the expansion may be postponed till Octo-

ber. In fact, the CM is finding it difficult to zero in on the names that could either be removed from or included in the team. Sources say that complaints of corruption and misbehaviour against some ministers have reached the high command. The complaints against the sons of a couple of ministers are also there. Recently, Maken spent three days in Jaipur, trying to create a positive atmosphere. He kindled hopes among some leaders who are seeking to be ministers. But their wait is getting longer with every passing day.

BE RESPONSIBLE

Trash turns into treasure in new plastic economy

In the circular economy, the product is made from recycled materials and ends up being recycled itself.

SHANTANU GUHA RAY
NEW DELHI

India's new circular plastic economy is turning trash into treasure, reducing plastic at source in flexible packaging and lowering carbon footprints.

This is good news for India, and also those in the Big Plastic Debate. There are some companies in this business, and some very efficient entrepreneurs. I met one last week who is at the heart of this new makeover of plastic business across the world.

He is a young Indian who shuttles between India and the United States and explains to his employees and clients across the world that there was a time when plastic was not hated. It was developed as an environmentally friendly material and used to preserve, among other things, trees. And that time has returned.

Anantshree Chaturvedi, vice chairman and CEO of Uflex Films International, shaped his studies and career mostly out of the West—where he developed a taste for rugby—but still wears tulus beads on his wrist for a hotline to his mother and the Gods.

Every day, he explains to his clients and friends, and also to bureaucrats of the Indian government that in a traditional linear economy, products are made from raw materials and everything—byproduct waste and product alike—end in the scrap heap. But in the circular economy, the product is made from recycled materials and ends up being recycled itself.

In short, he is saying let us not hate plastics anymore, and let us be responsible towards disposing of the product. Chaturvedi knows it is a herculean task in India. He is pushing his company to do what it takes to turn plastic into a genuinely-loved product.

His work has earned him accolades, the company has been awarded by the Indian government.

"The linear economy is at an end. I really believe it is over," says Chaturvedi, whose plants across the world—stretching from Poland to Mexico to the United States—has drawn praise for safe environmental practices over the years.

To limit global warming below 2°C, rapid reduction in global energy consumption is required. Experts say



Post consumer PET bottle waste for upcycling.



Anantshree Chaturvedi, Vice Chairman & CEO, Uflex Films International.

the plastic industry has been focusing on reducing sectoral greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from production (supply-side) of widely used resources.

Chaturvedi says this can be achievable only when reduction in supply-side emissions is complemented with demand-side management. And it is here that a circular economy can do wonders through better demand management and create op-

portunities to reduce the demand for virgin resources and emissions associated with their production. Globally, in 2019, the GHG emissions from production and incineration of plastic were estimated to be more than 850 million tonnes (equal to the emissions from 189 500MW coal power plants).

"Plastic hazards are widely talked about but not widely understood. In the simplest form, plastic has a stock problem and a flow problem. In an economy, resources get allocated as per their highest utility importance. But plastics are the most inefficient ways of resource allocation," says Chaturvedi. He told me plastics get allocated based on creating a stockpile of plastic. Now it could be glass, aluminium or plastic. There are loads of new products that get added to the world every day, like the polymers his company makes. "So the new wave of plastic is to take a holistic look at the stock problem and the flow problem."

Like Uflex Films, many are using plastics owing to their substantial benefits of being lightweight, flexible, durable, and providing long shelf life, which are far greater than their draw-

backs. The pandemic has seen a significant rise in the use of plastics, particularly in the form of personal protective equipment (PPE) and because of growth in e-commerce packaging, or in light of safety and hygiene aspects of product packaging.

Chaturvedi says packaging is the key end-use sector accounting for the highest share. Packaging plastics with mostly shorter product lifetimes, compared to plastics used in other applications such as building and construction (B&C) or in automobiles, are significantly contributing towards India's circular economy and help create a transition from the take-make-use-throw linear model.

In India, 60% of plastics are recycled. However, these are mostly downcycled in an informal setting. Chaturvedi says the roadmap for circularity in plastics aims to decouple plastics production from virgin fossil feedstock.

A study by Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) says out of the total polymer consumption of 16.8 million tonnes per annum in 2018-19, 90% was for plastic and the remaining 10% was for non-plastic consumption.

From the total plastic waste generated, about 60% is actually recycled, 8.5% reutilized for energy recovery and repurposing, and about 31.5% is mismanaged plastic waste. Chaturvedi says that number needs to be reduced, and his plants are already doing that. The zero-waste movement across the world, which aims to reduce garbage through reducing consumption, reusing materials and recycling residual waste, has been around for some time. But Chaturvedi says it is now finding new prominence, thanks to new products flooding the market.

He is sounding like a priest, he knows the religion of the circular plastic economy. He has found new—preferably profitable—uses for what would have once been waste. He knows modern recycling plants have become more competitive by becoming more efficient. He is confident that he will satisfy his increasingly environmentally conscious customers. And once he is done with his work, Chaturvedi will think about the future plans.

That would be Chaturvedi 2.0.