

The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

Start all over again

Robust monitoring needed for leprosy control

IN the year 2005, a confident India prematurely declared to the world that it had eliminated leprosy as a public health problem. Twelve years later, it seemed unsure, with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announcing in the Budget speech that the country would eliminate leprosy by 2018; an apparent admission that the disease was quite alive. The alarm had gone off after the Union Health Ministry reported that over a lakh new cases had been detected.

There are several reasons for the resurgence. The National Leprosy Elimination Programme was rather hastily integrated into the broader healthcare spectrum in 2005, hitting the funding for leprosy prevention and awareness programmes. The stigma and social ostracism associated with the disease forces those afflicted with it into the cold background. They are ghettoised in leprosy colonies, existing in most towns, away from public glare. Social conditioning is oblivious to the management of the disease and its treatment, the multi-drug therapy that makes patients non-contagious. Until recently, leprosy was a ground for divorce, even though it is curable if detected in time. Unlike a relentless nationwide door-to-door Pulse Polio programme, a blitzkrieg campaign against leprosy has been absent.

The picture is grim: India accounts for nearly 58 per cent of the world's leprosy cases. A dedicated wider diffusion of information is required. Amitabh Bachchan's 'Do boond zindagi ki' appeal found resonance in the anti-polio drive. A celebrity can be roped in as a driver of change to remove fear from the minds of patients and society. There is a need for massive resource allocation. Surveillance must be strengthened, each case recorded and fresh ones identified. Post-treatment follow-up is also essential to check for any drug-resistant strain or relapse. Unless the clock is turned back and a robust monitoring mechanism — led by front-line health workers and volunteers — evolved, all efforts would have been lost to the lurking disease. India can't afford to get it wrong again.

The Behbal Kalan saga

Punjab Police's professionalism on examination

THE Punjab and Haryana High Court's green signal to Punjab Police to probe the killing of two civilians at Behbal Kalan has predictably set the force in high gear. The first to be netted was Charanjit Sharma, the senior-most official on the spot when the police fired at protesters on October 14, 2015, killing two persons. Sharma's arrest by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) is aimed at unravelling the 'chain of command' of officers who used force against those protesting police inaction in cases of sacrilege.

There are bound to be questions about a fair, impartial and speedy investigation undaunted by political pressure as it is undertaken on the eve of the General Election. But it has to be noted that it was only a few days back that the High Court cleared the decks by dismissing petitions against the Justice Ranjit Singh Commission report submitted last June. The Punjab Government had to also cool its heels because of a petition seeking the involvement of the CBI. This, too, was rejected on the grounds that the CBI had hardly made any headway in the case. And accepting the plea would have amounted to the accused seeking investigation by an agency of choice — a right which he does not have (*Romila Thapar vs Union of India*).

Now that the court has ensured that the investigation will not be partially handled by two separate agencies, it is incumbent on the Punjab Police to heed the High Court's observations asking it not to be swayed by the observations of commissions since these were only meant to instruct the government to prevent such incidents in future. The Behbal Kalan SIT has only to take the cue from another SIT that has made progress and arrested the accused in sacrilege cases. Admittedly those in the sights of the Behbal Kalan SIT are much bigger fish and its exertions will have a direct impact on the state's politics since the 'chain of command' may have stretched to Chandigarh. It is incumbent on Punjab Police to achieve closure on those unholy incidents as well as book those guilty for the deaths, keeping in mind that its professionalism is on the line.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Every modern war has had its roots in exploitation. —

Helen Keller

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1919

Punjab Hindu Conference.

IT has been decided to hold a session of the Punjab Hindu Conference at Lahore on the 15th and 16th February next during the Holi holidays. There is a general impression that the interests of the Hindus of this Province have not been adequately safeguarded in the scheme put forward by the local authorities in connection with the Reforms Scheme, and it is naturally felt that if these interests are not to be allowed to suffer materially, the community must raise a strong and well-considered protest on the subject. This feeling, which is widespread and keen among the Hindus of the Province, has necessitated the holding of a session of the Punjab Hindu Conference which will focus and voice the community's feeling, and put forward necessary proposals in that behalf. The organisers of the Conference, therefore, make a strong appeal to the Hindus of the Province to muster strong to make the session a success.

The League of Nations.

THE keynote of the great speech made by President Wilson in moving his resolution on the League of Nations at the Peace Conference may be said to be furnished by the following words:—"The United States should feel that its part in this war had been played in vain if there ensued upon it a body of European Settlements. It would feel that it could not take part in guaranteeing those European Settlements, unless that guarantee involved continuous superintendence of the peace of the world by the associated nations of the world." "The Associated nations of the world" is a fine inspiring phrase. We sincerely hope the thing will correspond to the phrase.

America is at it again

With its massive oil and gold reserves, Venezuela is now on US radar



MK BHADRAKUMAR
FORMER AMBASSADOR

THE South Block has issued a wishy-washy statement, counselling that 'it is for the people of Venezuela to find a political solution to resolve their differences through constructive dialogue and discussion without resorting to violence'. The statement went on to state an obvious fact, namely, 'We believe democracy, peace and security in Venezuela are of paramount importance for the progress and prosperity of the people of Venezuela.' Pray, who are we propitiating with such pious homilies?

This waffly statement fudges the real issues involved in the crisis brewing in Venezuela. India may very soon have no option but to pop its head above the parapet and stare at what is so patently obvious to most countries on the planet — that a slow motion US-sponsored coup attempt is under way to grab power in Caracas and make Venezuela a vassal state. Of course, 'America First' is the motivation — Venezuela has the biggest known oil reserves and gold deposits. Like watching a black-and-white talkie, the mind wanders back restlessly to the era of gunboat diplomacy and Jallianwala Bagh.

It is exactly four years since PM Modi and then US President Barack Obama issued on the margins of Republic Day celebrations in 2015 the infamous Joint Strategic Vision Statement on the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region. Among other things, Modi and Obama called on 'all parties to avoid the threat or use of force and pursue resolution of territorial and maritime disputes through all peaceful means, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea' and sought 'to work together to promote the shared values that have made our countries great'. What the US is doing in Venezuela is the exact opposite of what Obama and Modi agreed to do. It is patently obvious that a US plot to undermine and overthrow the present government led by President Nicolas Maduro has been afoot for quite a while. The US has lately gone to the extraordinary extent of inciting an opposition politician to usurp power. What it is doing is in direct contravention of international law and the UN Charter. Indeed, such unilateralism has become a characteristic of US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era starting with the dismemberment of the former Yugoslavia. The US went on to invade Afghanistan and landed troops at the Bagram air base, ignoring the feeble protest of then Foreign Minister in Kabul, Abdullah Abdullah. Two years later, it invaded Iraq on the basis of what turned out to be a pack of lies and destroyed that



THE BIG BULLY: Such unilateralism has become a characteristic of US foreign policy.

Not wanting to go against the US, India's stand on the emerging crisis is, disappointingly, wishy-washy.

country, committing war crimes of horrific proportions. Today, it is in occupation of a third of Syrian territory and has grabbed that country's oil fields and principal water resources. India would know that a leopard cannot change its spots. But the new mantra is that the US-India relationship has gone from being a bilateral relationship to a global partnership. Venezuela shows the grotesqueness of any pretensions of India having global partnership with the US. Actually, by consorting with the US, the Modi government may also have acquired some of the leopard's spots. India, too, has begun selectively preaching democracy in its neighbourhood. Curiously, the US and India also collaborate in such ventures — be it Sri Lanka or the Maldives — and, ironically, even choose to pardon the one South Asian country where there has been a glaring retrogression of democratic values, Bangladesh.

Who is the jury and the judge to pass verdict on democratic practices? Democracy is a many-splendoured thing. Its Indian mutation has hardly anything in common with Ger-

many's. At any rate, Russian PM Dmitry Medvedev asked a very pertinent question: 'How would the American people respond, for example, to the Speaker of the US House of Representatives declaring herself the new President against the backdrop of the government shutdown?' Arguably, President Trump should not even be holding office, having failed to secure majority in popular votes. Our own government has ruled on the basis of a mandate from less than one-third of votes cast in the 2014 poll. Yet, Maduro won with over two-thirds votes in an election last May, where despite the opposition's decision to boycott it, 48 per cent of the electorate had cast votes.

Indeed, some big issues are arising. The US diplomats have incited the Venezuelan military to revolt. A flashpoint is reaching because the US embassy in Caracas is now notionally accredited to the illegal government led by the opposition figure Juan Guaido (who declared himself President following a call from US Vice President Mike Pence), whom Trump promptly gave diplomatic recognition. Washington has threatened to punish Caracas if it expelled US diplomats. Meanwhile, all assets of the state of Venezuela in the US are being frozen. True to British history, Bank of England leads the pack of predators by refusing to hand back gold bars worth \$1.2 billion, which belong to Venezuela. According to Bloomberg, the Bank of England's decision to deny Maduro officials' withdrawal request comes after top US officials, including Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton, 'lobbied their UK counterparts to help cut off the regime from its overseas assets'.

Are things any different from the era of the East India Company? That is precisely what makes the Modi government's supine statement on Venezuela humiliating. There are times when a proud nation must be able to remember its own cruel colonial past.

Rohith's note and political gods

AMOL SINGH

ON January 17, three years ago, Rohith left a suicide note. A part of the letter, in which he expressed disillusionment with Ambedkar Students' Association and Student Federation of India, and their ambitions to change the world, was struck out. He had been a part of both.

What stands out is the despondency about the political situation — the hopelessness of our times. None of the present politics provides us with real utopia; something to believe in and fight for.

On the one hand, there is recognition-based Dalit politics, limited to issues concerned with middle and upper middle-class people. Their despise for 'the green snakes hidden in green grass' (Kanshi Ram's

phrase for communists) is detrimental to the 90 per cent Dalits living in conditions created by neoliberal capitalism. Dalit politics without an anti-capitalist stance is the politics of the particular class of Dalits. Along with caste-based oppression, Dalits are being exploited by the present production paradigm more than anyone else. Moreover, the same class position makes them the worst sufferer of the state expenditure cuts on health, education and other basic facilities.

On the other hand, we have orthodox Left parties still stuck in the 1930s. Their theoretical framework has become redundant to make sense of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. They have been unable to move beyond the obsolete theoretical questions of the past 50 years: American road or Prussian road? New democratic

revolution or socialist revolution? Chinese path or the Russian route?

Since the Vemula struggle, many mass assertions have emerged on the political horizon. Jignesh Mavani tried to deal with material issues of Dalits, but with a narrow vision and an almost no organisational structure, he failed to have an impact. Chandrashekar Azad of the Bhim Army seems to follow in Kanshi Ram's footsteps, ignoring structural inequalities. These movements might play a crucial role in the BJP's defeat, but so far, they have failed to create alternative politics.

The third kind of politics, which focused on material wellbeing, was the mass procession of Adivasis to Mumbai for their land rights and the gathering of lakhs of peasants in Delhi. These movements were backed by

local organisations, most of them Left. However, the baffled Left fails to strategise and make something of these rare opportunities.

We have to first shed the attitude of political correctness. The stifling political culture created by the Left and identity politics — all have their own pantheons of gods. If you question these gods, you will be declared a 'Brahmanwadi', 'Manuwadi', 'postmodernist' or 'Trotskyite' by the missionaries of the great causes. This culture of political correctness is deadening in these depressing times. The culture that impedes us from having a political debate without fear and shame should be discarded. The creation of hope demands a political culture where ideas are exchanged, applauded, criticised, and denigrated without apprehension.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Priyanka factor

Reference to 'Priyanka gambit unnerves regional satraps (Jan 28); the BSP-SP should have given a respectable figure of 12 seats to the Congress, because in the last Lok Sabha elections, the party won two seats, but stood second in 10. This alliance would have given a direct fight to the BJP. In the present scenario, the Congress will get sizeable vote from Dalits, Muslims and upper caste sections, thus hitting hard the BSP-SP alliance and the BJP. Priyanka factor is going to pay a high dividend to the Congress.

NARESH MOHAN JOHAR, AMRITSAR

Fillip to Congress

Ahead of the 2019 elections, the entry of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra into politics is welcome ('Priyanka gambit unnerves regional satraps'; Jan 28). It will improve the organisational structure of the Congress and restore its national identity. Mayawati and Mamata Banerjee are the only women regional leaders. Instead of being upset, they should keep their ambition of becoming the PM in check. Since the general election is fought on national issues, they should negotiate with the Congress. Nothing but a strong, united opposition can take on the BJP successfully and change the present

political narrative of the country.

TAJPREET S KANG, HOSHIARPUR

Unusual haste

Refer to 'Kochhar family booked' (Jan 28); there has been an unusual haste at the fag-end of the Modi government to simultaneously bring to a head a number of cases of high-level financial misdemeanours. In the ICI-CI case, there seems to be many gaps in the narrative to stitch together a sound case. In the 2G case, the courts had dismissed the charges as high on conjecture and low on evidence. Traducing high financial institutions and big business in haste is bound to relegate the nation too far down in the ease of doing business index.

R NARAYANAN, NAVI MUMBAI

Financial bunglings

Refer to 'Importing a public sector malaise' (Jan 28); it is astonishing how stakeholders in various companies are deceived in the name of NPAs. With the disclosure of former ICICI CEO Chanda Kochhar involved in corrupt practices, even the private sector is at stake. How cleverly people at the top fill their pockets with public money and then declare their companies in loss! If only they applied so much brains in making their company prof-

itable, they would have succeeded. If the top-level authorities are devoid of ethics, the nation can't grow.

SHIVANI BANSAL, RAMPURA PHUL

A long way to go, still

The article 'Women haven't reached centre stage yet' (Jan 28) is a convincing and realistic portrayal of society's patriarchal mindset. Though there is a great hype regarding women empowerment, the real situation remains far from satisfactory. Most important decisions are taken by men occupying prestigious administrative posts. There is a clear-cut demarcation between jobs for men and women. Teaching, nursing etc., are considered a women's domain while men vastly outnumber women in occupying administrative, political and judicial positions. Gender equality can be ensured only if we change our attitude to allow women to have more say in decision making.

VIMAL SETHI, KAPURTHALA

Not quite there

The article 'Women have not reached centre stage yet' (Jan 28) was thought-provoking. There is, no doubt, that at the time of convocations and annual functions, the visibility of girl students is in abundance. But the same number

declines, when it comes to college function guests. Mostly men occupy the chairs, as they are in high positions. If women's empowerment means greater participation in the decision-making process, equal spaces, indeed, would have been created for men and women. The difference between major groups should be minimised for the betterment of the gender cause.

SUBHASH C TANEJA, GURUGRAM

Why the vacancies?

The report '4,500 cases per HC judge pending; 2.91 crore backlog in lower courts' (Jan 28) is very disturbing. So far, all successive governments have failed to resolve the issue, in spite of the fact that providing efficient and speedy justice to the public is the foremost principle of any administration. It is baffling why the vacancies of judges at various courts are allowed to persist.

JAGDISH CHANDER, JALANDHAR

Patchwork job

'Now it is clean, now not' (Jan 25) is a ground reality. The efforts made by municipal officials are just to please the inspection team. In some cities, the situation is worse since MLAs do not even know that there is a 'swachta survekshan'!

RASHI RAWAL, JALANDHAR

Congress on course to go into revival mode



NEERJA CHOWDHURY
SENIOR POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

RAHUL Gandhi faces a 'long term versus short run' dilemma, which has often dogged political leaders. Should he focus only on defeating Narendra Modi in 2019, which would mean giving primacy to alliances, and may entail more of 'give' than of 'take', in the interest of the larger goal? Or should he concentrate on reviving the Congress at the grassroots?

A judicious mix of both is easier said than done. As the Congress chief found out in Uttar Pradesh, when the party was left out of the SP-BSP alliance, barring the seats of Amethi and Rae Bareilly. Sensing the possibility of revival after its win in three states, it had sought 20 seats, but the SP-BSP was willing to give it no more than eight. Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati announced their pact unilaterally, taking 38 seats each, and leaving two for the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD). That two is expected to be increased to four, under a new formula that two SP leaders would fight under the RLD banner.

Rahul Gandhi's decision to bring Priyanka Gandhi Vadra into active politics at this stage shows that the Congress now wants to go into a revival mode, while striking alliances

in states, wherever possible.

It is not as if there is a national alliance against the Modi-led NDA in the offing, or being pursued seriously. Chandrababu Naidu flagged the idea, but he seems to have given up on it. K Chandrashekar Rao has talked about forging a non-Congress, non-BJP 'federal front', but it is really geared to weaken the Congress in the opposition space.

There is an acceptance that a national *mahagathbandhan* is possible only after the elections, if the numbers are there to favour its creation. For now, it is nothing but a photo-op, of the kind seen in Bengaluru when HD Kumaraswamy took over as Chief Minister, or more recently in Kolkata, when 20 parties shared the stage with Mamata Banerjee at a rally organised by the Trinamool Congress.

It is possible for opposition leaders to address rallies together in different parts of the country to create a *mahaul* (environment) against Modi and the BJP that would help all of them in their individual fiefdoms. But to fashion a country-wide alliance, working out a division of seats among them, is an impossible task.

An alliance without a leader is meaningless and the question of leadership cannot be settled before the elections. The Congress is too weak at the moment for its leader to be accepted by all regional satraps, even though, interestingly enough, it is the southern chieftains — MK Stalin, Chandrababu Naidu and HD Kumaraswamy — who have projected Rahul Gandhi for the PM's chair.

This, however, is not the case with Mayawati or Mamata Banerjee.



GAME PLAN: Priyanka's entry is likely to redefine the contours of the Congress' relationship with UP's regional parties.

It is Uttar Pradesh that has proved to be tricky, and it is here that the mother of all battles is going to be fought. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has been given the charge of eastern UP. She is expected to take on Modi in his territory, and try and shift the national narrative in the Congress' favour.

Mamata's mega rally positioned her as a possible prime ministerial candidate, and it was calculated to fuel regional sentiment in her favour to enable her to consolidate her hold on West Bengal. Mayawati talked about the desirability of the next Prime Minister being from Uttar Pradesh, if nothing else, to bring more Dalits to her side.

It is *gathbandhans* at the state level which are more critical and could pose a problem for the BJP. The Congress has already tied up with the NCP in Maharashtra, giving sleepless nights to the BJP, given the Shiv Sena's hostility towards it.

In Karnataka, the Congress and the JD(S) are partners in the government and are expected to sew up an alliance for the Lok Sabha polls, even though the clouds over the beleaguered

Kumaraswamy dispensation have not yet lifted. In Jharkhand, the Congress has an alliance already in the works with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and smaller parties. So is the case in Bihar, with the RJD, RLSP and others.

It is UP that has proved to be tricky, and it is here that the mother of all battles is going to be fought. Hence Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. She has been given the charge of eastern UP, is expected to take on Modi in his territory, and try and shift the national narrative in the Congress' favour.

If she clicks, it is not inconceivable that Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav may decide to fashion an 'informal understanding' with the Congress on a number of seats so that it can become a win-win situation for both. Many suspect that Mayawati was trying to play hardball in the first place in

the hope that the Congress would leave seats for it in states outside UP — in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Punjab — which would help her acquire a national profile.

The Congress may damage the BJP's prospects on some seats with upper-caste concentrations. Even in 2014, it had got over one lakh votes in 11 Lok Sabha constituencies, most of them in east UP. However, without an 'understanding', it would also hurt the SP-BSP *mahagathbandhan* (triangular contests would confuse the minorities), which could help the BJP. And yet the Congress has decided on a strategy to rebuild its organisation and maximise its numbers to be able to wield post-poll clout.

Priyanka's mission goes beyond 2019, and Rahul Gandhi made this clear — that he had brought her, and Jyotirditya Scindia, to look after UP not just for two months. The Congress, it goes without saying, cannot become a national player without winning back UP.

Her entry, if she evokes a response, is also likely to redefine the contours of the Congress' relationship with the regional parties in the weeks to come.

After its victory in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, people are undoubtedly looking at India's grand old party with new eyes and the Congress senses this subtle change of mood.

The trouble is that while the Congress has to revive itself to become a player again, any signs of its revival will trigger off insecurities in the regional parties, with whom it has to align to be able to defeat the BJP.

Patronising communication in era of gender equity



VIKASH NARAIN RAI
FORMER DIRECTOR, NATIONAL POLICE ACADEMY, HYDERABAD

The Army Chief justified the exclusion of women from combat roles, citing their sexual vulnerability if captured by the enemy. Would a male soldier, say at the volatile Pakistan border, be considered less vulnerable even though he had risked torture, mutilation and death? Yet no one from the establishment has called these arguments sexist.

WELCOME the social hostility that helped neutralise loads of repulsive gendered communication emanating from public stages recently. The directly prejudicial variety, crass or subtle, easily occupied the centre of criticism, such as cricketer Hardik Pandya boasting of his lewdness on a TV show or Rahul Gandhi taunting Rafale-ducking Narendra Modi about hiding behind his female Defence Minister. However, the less noticed critically but more harmful to the cause of gender parity would be the metacommunication variety that remained shrouded in the patronising version. The underlying message of disparity in this genre seeps into mundane activities as well as fresh initiatives as it draws from the organisation's retrograde cultural profile eroding the concept of equality between man and woman. To borrow a related research paper title, organisation becomes a gendered communication act.

Albert J Mills and Peter Chiaramonte's paper focuses on the metacommunication character of organisation, its impact upon the gendering of persons, and that organisations, as social constructs, are reflections of a gendered reality, i.e., the concept of organisation has been significantly shaped by sexist understandings. Through an emphasis upon metacommunication, the paper takes issue with the notion that sexual discrimination can be addressed through improvements within organisations if the concept of organisation is left unquestioned; that changes in patterns and styles of interpersonal communications can lessen discrimination if questions of metacommunication go unexplored.

Metacommunication is a secondary communication about how disguised information is meant to be interpreted. The organisation of the family, most patronising of them all for girls, the steely fulcrum of gender spin, was given a *jumla* push by PM Modi right in the beginning of his innings, through the *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* call from the historic battleground of Panipat in Haryana. His government has since then rewarded improved sex ratio statistics, opened namesake one-stop centres, set up outdated Mahila police stations and flaunted death penalty as the ultimate deterrent to crimes against women. Underneath the façade of this tough veneer, the family is left to its old ways of nurturing two equal sexes into two unequal genders. This they do by organising and showcasing boys as boys and girls as girls, while denying daughters their lawful share in parental assets.

These days, a large number of middle-class Indian families, even of rural origin, take pride in claiming that they have brought up their girls as boys. How many would like to raise their boys as girls? One unintended fallout of China's single-child policy of four decades is reflected in their free flow of parental investment in the education of the girl child. I met Ting Wang Lowan, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Legal Studies at Kenyon College, Ohio, last September. In her early thirties and possessing excellent driving skills, a PhD from the University of Kansas, she would have ended up as a small-time taxi driver in her native town near Shanghai, like her parents. There are millions of Tings to be found inside and outside China. The impact of this



DOUBLE STANDARD: A female Defence Minister is in order, but not a female soldier.

generation on Chinese society is such that even the shift to a two-child policy since 2016 has failed to disturb gender parity within the family set-up. Ironically, it has even upset the government's campaign to arrest the trend of declining youth population in China.

How sexist can organisations be! The Indian Army Chief recently justified the exclusion of women from combat roles, citing their sexual vulnerability if captured by the enemy. Much like the era when wars were fought for women? Or, is it that a male soldier's existence, say at the volatile Pakistan border, would be considered less vulnerable even though he had greatly risked humiliating torture, mutilation and death? Another supporting voice would make us believe that female officers leading male troops at borders

might vitiate the combat environment within the unit itself. Yet no one from the establishment has ever called these arguments sexist. Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has instead expressed the intention to induct women in a small fraction into the military police, for the limited purpose of dealing with allegations involving women and children.

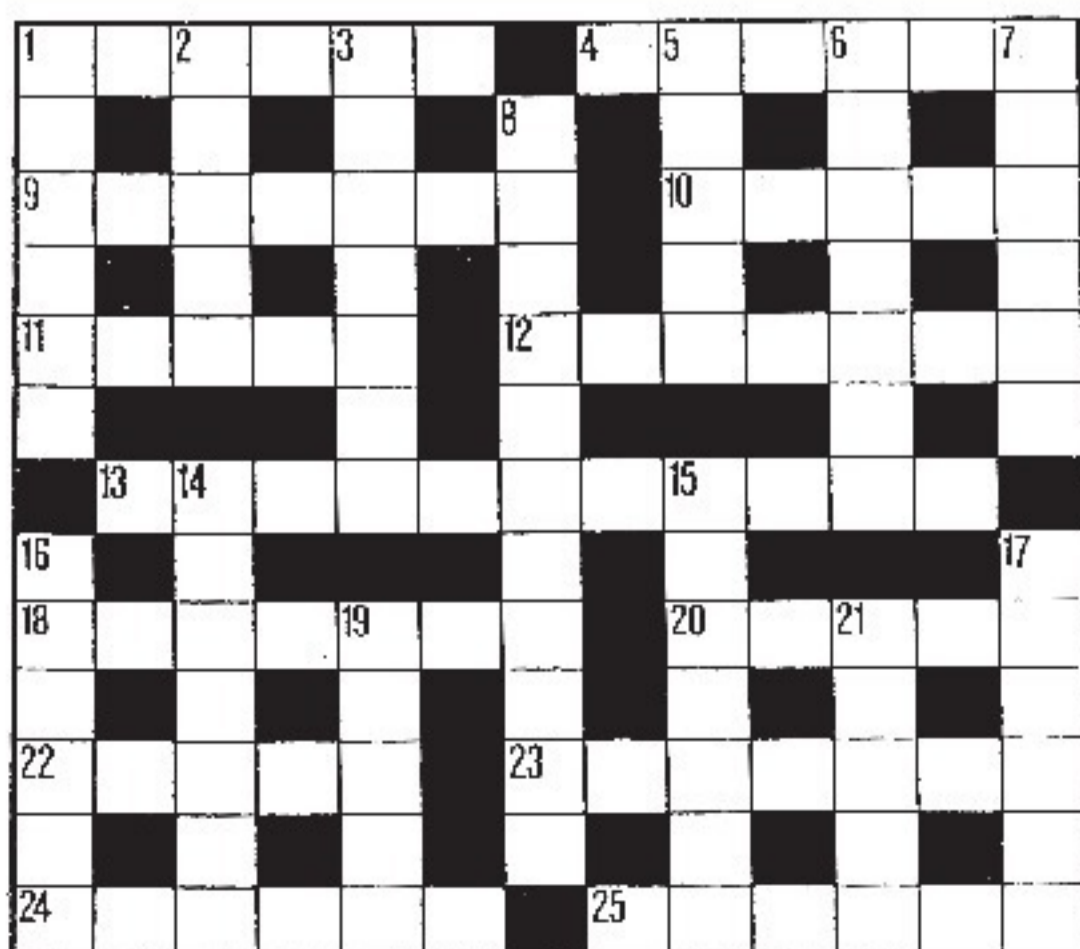
That should take the cake. Control under the guise of care! In the meantime, adorn your Republic Day parades with ornamental female contingents. A female Defence Minister is in order, but not a female soldier. Don't extremist groups enter female combatants in real-time skirmishes? What about increasing women intake in allied branches of the Army? The government's own report in early 2018 had pointed out the extremely unacceptable low female percentage in the armed forces. It quotes the strength of women officers in the Army as 1,561, compared to 41,074 of their male counterparts. Notwithstanding innumerable excuses and promises, and countless talks on employability, no announced ground map is in place to indicate the Army's intent to move against its chronic deficiency in female employment. Nowhere has it happened overnight. The US struggled with the gender employability debate throughout its Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria conflicts, obtaining only in 2016 the clearance for 'all positions to all sexes' approach to staffing. Can this be a route for the Indian Army to overcome its dilemma of not garnering enough officers from a gender-constricted job market?

The Supreme Court, which is never shy of patronising the cause of women in the fight against social, moral and

religious policing, faltered in two important matters recently. It ended up reinforcing the cultural norms of women as a source of obscenity and religiosity, respectively, while still extending the liberty-enhancing model of gender justice to Mumbai bar dancers and Sabarimala women devotees. On the face of it, the constitutional right of dancers to work and earn a livelihood and that of devotees to religious freedom has been upheld. However, the two verdicts are likely to remain symbolic and support the patriarchal vulnerability of women, socially, politically and administratively.

Let us recall here the limitation of the apex court's intervention in a series of reported instances of sexual exploitation of girls in government-linked shelter homes, which were supposed to be run as pious models of patronisation. There are any number of punitive inquiries ordered since then all over the country into the working of individual shelter homes, but only within the scope of their existing cultural character and administrative profile. Without questioning the gendered origin of the institution of shelter homes, it is petering out to be another exercise in familiar metacommunication. Even within the framework of government models, the independent orientation of a working women's hostel would be far more metamorphosing for shelter home inmates, provided the policy emphasis is shifted to strengthen their earning skills rather than a patronised existence. While attacks on sexist outbursts are definitely serving some purpose, let us view the sexist origin of organisations and institutions wherein these assertions are rooted as the real culprits.

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Important person (6)
- To pound (6)
- Great circle of Earth (7)
- Fertile area in desert (5)
- Completely (5)
- Apparent (7)
- Relevant example (4,2,5)
- Sharply sarcastic (7)
- Discharge of guns (5)
- Examination of accounts (5)
- Jumpy (7)
- Haughty (6)
- In addition (2,4)

DOWN

- Gap made by force (6)
- To estimate (5)
- Deeply felt (7)
- Home (5)
- A specified task (7)
- Give up office (6)
- Reasons for and against (4,3,4)
- Apart (7)
- Mediocre in quality (2,5)
- Untidy writing (6)
- A bite (6)
- Complete (5)
- Unfastened (5)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION
Across: 1 Flatter, 5 Sober, 8 In the same boat, 9 Tempt, 10 Offence, 11 Father, 12 Priest, 15 Recline, 17 Prone, 19 Hole-and-corner, 20 Royal, 21 Refusal.
Down: 1 Faint, 2 Automatically, 3 Theatre, 4 Reason, 5 Sheaf, 6 Brownie points, 7 Retreat, 11 Further, 13 Reproof, 14 Vendor, 16 In all, 18 Enrol.

SU DO KU

			7	8	9		6	
2		7	4			1		
	3				5		9	
9		4	5		1		8	6
7								3
8	1		9		6	5		4
	5		8				4	
		6			4	2		9
7			6	1	2			

V. EASY

CALENDAR

JANUARY 29, 2019 TUESDAY

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Magh Shaka 9
- Magh Parvishte 16
- Hijari 1440
- Krishan Paksh Tithi 9, up to 2.41 pm
- Vridhi Yoga up to 5.46 am
- Vishakha Nakshatra 3.14 pm
- Moon enters Scorpio sign 8.59 am.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

5	3	9	7	4	2	6	8	1
8	1	4	3	6	5	7	2	9
7	2	6	9	1	8	5	4	3
1	4	3	2	9	7	8	5	6
9	8	5	4	3	6	1	7	2
2	6	7	8	5	1	9	3	4
6	7	2	1	8	4	3	9	5
3	5	8	6	2	9	4	1	7
4	9	1	5	7	3	2	6	8

FORECAST

SUNSET: TUESDAY 17:55 HRS
 SUNRISE: WEDNESDAY 07:16 HRS



City: Chandigarh, New Delhi

CITY	MAX	MIN
Chandigarh	19	07
New Delhi	19	05

PUNJAB

Amritsar	17	05
Bathinda	18	05
Jalandhar	18	05
Ludhiana	19	08

HARYANA

Bhiwani	19	06
Hisar	19	06
Sirsa	17	07

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Dharamsala	12	02
Manali	08	-07
Shimla	10	-01

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Jammu	18	04
Leh	-01	-15
Srinagar	08	-04

UTTARAKHAND

Dehradun	21	04
Mussoorie	09	-01

TEMPERATURE IN °C