

Bihar police close sedition case against 49, to book complainant

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, OCTOBER 9

A WEEK after filing a case of sedition against 49 leading personalities including Mani Ratnam, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Shyam Benegal and Ramachandra Guha for signing an open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over rising incidents of lynching and intolerance, Bihar's Muzaffarpur Police decided Wednesday to close the case and instead book the complainant for filing a "false" report.

Police said they had filed a case on the orders of a Muzaffarpur court in response to a complaint from local lawyer Sudhir Kumar Ojha who had alleged that these personalities tried to "tarnish the image of the country and undermine the impressive performance of the

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DELHI, BEIJING ANNOUNCE MODI-XI INFORMAL SUMMIT

Wrinkle in Xi's red carpet: China and Pakistan raise Kashmir, India objects

China 'opposes unilateral action' in J&K; India says not for others to comment

SHUBHAJIT ROY & SOWMIYA ASHOK
NEW DELHI, BEIJING, OCT 9

HOURS AFTER New Delhi and Beijing officially announced Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to India for the second informal summit in Mahabalipuram on October 11 and 12, India took strong exception to a reference to Kashmir in a meeting between Xi and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan. India said it is "not for



A welcome arch comes up at Mahabalipuram where Modi and Xi will meet for an informal summit starting Friday. ANI

other countries to comment" on its internal affairs.

While government sources said Delhi will not raise Jammu and Kashmir unless Xi brings it up, the Ministry of External Affairs' official spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said: "India's position has been consistent and clear that Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of India. China is

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PAGE 9

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



PMC BANK FRAUD

Several red flags fluttered right under RBI's nose

Reserve Bank works on setting up new cadre of supervisory officers

GEORGE MATHEW & ANIL SASI
MUMBAI, NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 9

THE LAST time Reserve Bank of India was forced to issue a statement on the robustness of India's banking system was back in October 2008 in the wake of the global financial crisis. So, on October 4, after the implosion at the Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank, when the RBI reiterated that the banking system was "safe and sound", quite a few eyebrows were raised.

Not just because this was seen as an over-reaction, disproportionate to the rumblings at a mid-sized, Maharashtra-based cooperative bank with a deposit



INSIDE THE SCANDAL
AN EXPRESS SERIES-PART I

base of just Rs 11,000 crore, but also because the RBI itself has a few questions to answer.

For, the PMC scam went undetected for around 11 years despite the RBI requiring all regulated entities — including cooperative banks — to submit

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

In first three replies to HC, J&K drops PSA charge after challenge

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 9

IN ITS first three responses to more than 250 writs of habeas corpus challenging preventive detentions under the stringent J&K Public Safety Act, the state Home department has informed the Srinagar wing of Jammu & Kashmir High Court that it has revoked the PSA slapped against the detainees.

Confirming the dropping of the PSA charge, J&K Senior Additional Advocate General BA Dar informed the single-judge bench of Justice Ali Mohammed Magrey that it has revoked the detention orders passed by the District Magistrates in the

EXPLAINED
Majority challenge
PSA Sec 22

THE J&K decision to drop the PSA charge in the first three challenges is significant given that the majority of over 250 writs of habeas corpus filed since August 5 — 147 petitions — challenged detentions under Section 22 of the PSA, saying it was 'not in good faith'.

three cases.
All the replies were filed by
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Don't terrorise us on tax, Rafale engine maker tells Rajnath

ADITI KHANNA
PARIS, OCTOBER 9

ANNOUNCING THAT his company plans to invest nearly \$150 million in India, the CEO of the French company that manufactures the engines for the Rafale jet told Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Wednesday that India should provide an attractive business environment and not "terrorise us" with its tax and customs rules.

French multinational Safran, the manufacturer of the M88 state-of-the-art engines fitted in the Rafale jets acquired by India, gave a presentation of its facility to Singh, who took a tour of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

AVOID SIDE COMMENTS, SAYS PARTY After Khurshid, Scindia: Cong needs to introspect, take corrective measures

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 9

A DAY after senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid said the party could not "analyse the reasons" for its defeat in the Lok Sabha elections because Rahul Gandhi had "walked away", CWC member Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Wednesday that there was need to "introspect" and carry out "corrective" steps if needed.

However, veteran leader M Veerappa Moily argued that Rahul had not "deserted" the party, and rejected Khurshid's statement as "outdated."

Speaking to *The Indian*



There are no two ways about it, he says

Express, Scindia said: "Of course, there is a need for introspection. There are no two ways about that. There is nothing wrong in saying that. Not only introspection, but take some correctives also." Asked how the party should carry out the introspection, he said, "that is for the party to decide... how can I say that."

Scindia, however, declined to comment on Khurshid's

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Jhansi man's killing: Named in FIR, brother says was in Delhi

ANAND MOHAN J & AVANEESH MISHRA
JHANSI, LUCKNOW, OCT 9

AS THE killing of Pushpendra Yadav in an alleged encounter in Jhansi triggered a political row with Opposition leaders flocking to his home and targeting the BJP state government, the UP Police Wednesday registered an FIR into the encounter.

Another FIR was registered earlier against Yadav, his brother

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Pushpendra Yadav's wife Shivangi. Gajendra Yadav

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

PROTEST IN DARK TIMES

BY PRATAP BHANU MEHTA
PAGE 14

GERMANY

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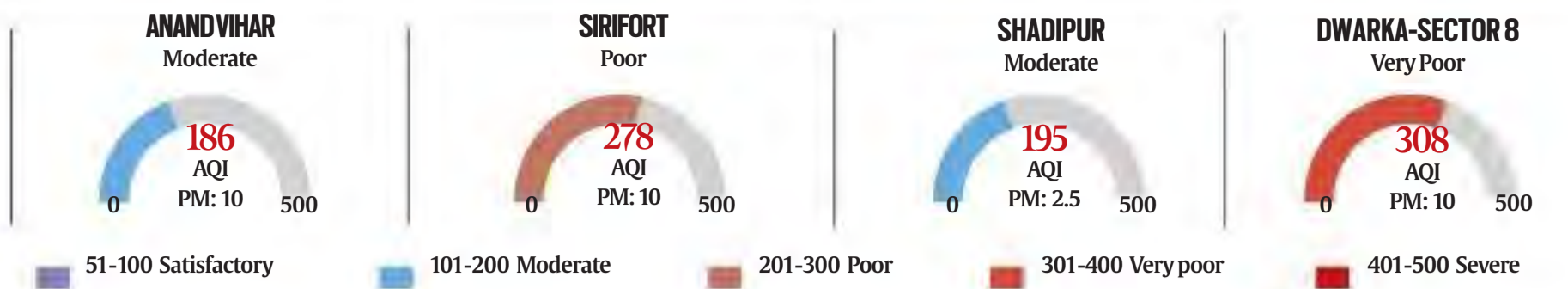
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Day after idol immersion, clean-up drive begins at 89 artificial ponds

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 9

IDOLS RANGING from a few inches to several feet and ghats full of debris—a day after idol immersion for Durga Puja took place for the first time in artificial ponds in Delhi, agencies started the mammoth clean-up even as a few more people trickled in to immerse idols. In a first, the Delhi government made 89 artificial ponds across the city for people to immerse idols in, so that pollutants do not enter the Yamuna, with the National Green Tribunal (NGT) keeping close watch. A similar approach was tried during Ganapati Visarjan in August. At the Kalindi Kunj site, trucks loaded with the idols and filled to the brim with people kept pouring in even on Wednesday. A couple of police officers sat at the site, ensuring order as groups danced and celebrated the festival to drumbeats and music. A worker from the South civic body was at the site to shovel garbage and debris into his truck. Many idols immersed on Tuesday also lay around. “We aren’t touching the idols yet, only garbage, plastic bags and debris,” said Akash, the sanitation worker. An SDMC official said, “After the government notified the ads of using artificial ponds, we informed RWAs. In SDMC zones, we identified 168 idol makers and registered them. The cleaning process was underway yesterday and even today.” Another official said, “The ponds will be drained and used for watering plants by horticulture departments. We will take the sludge and mud idols leftover, and send it to landfill sites. They are biodegradable.” On Tuesday, thousands of people who came to different immersion sites were met by police officers and district administration staff, who directed them to the artificial ponds. In areas near the Yamuna, stricter checking was ordered to ensure no one immersed idols in the river. Over the years, the number of



associations and individuals who come to immerse Durga Puja idols has gone up in the city. NGT and environmentalists have been raising the issue of pollution, and government reports over the years have shown that the quality of water in the river deteriorates significantly after immersion is complete. Using materials such as plaster of paris and toxic paints has also been banned. On Wednesday, too, police personnel were posted at immersion sites. “We are here just to ensure that everything is peaceful,” said Anoop Singh, an officer-in-charge at Kalindi Kunj. Many from nearby slum clusters loaded the wooden sticks used for idol structures to construct their own makeshift houses. Mohammad Aslam, a labourer with four children, said, “Police said we could load up our cart to use them in jhuggis.” At a park in Mayur Vihar Phase III, where four ponds were made, Sushil Kumar Modi, a vendor, and some others complained that there wasn’t enough water in the ponds. “Three out of four ponds are empty and the one which had water was only a few feet deep. We cannot immerse any idol here” he said.

CM HAD TO SKIP COPENHAGEN SUMMIT

Trip politics: Javadekar says summit was for mayors, AAP cites Sheila’s visit abroad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 9

THE CENTRE Wednesday defended its decision to deny permission to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to attend the C40 World Mayors’ Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark, with Union Minister Prakash Javadekar saying it was a “mayor-level conference” and a West Bengal minister is going to attend it. The Aam Aadmi Party, however, asked how, then, was former CM Sheila Dikshit given clearance to attend the same summit in 2007 in New York. Kejriwal, along with seven other delegation members, was to leave for the summit on Tuesday and address two sessions and a joint press conference over three days. “The frivolous reasoning given by Mr Javadekar does not stand scrutiny. He did not check his facts before speaking. Had he done so, he would have known



Javadekar defended the Centre’s call on travel nod denial

that in 2007, then CM Sheila Dikshit had led the Delhi delegation for the C40 climate change summit which was held in New York that year... Javadekar is clearly unaware of the administrative structure of major cities and states. For example, the Commonwealth Games held in Delhi in 2010 were inaugurated by the then CM, whereas in other major cities these are inaugurated by the mayors,” said AAP leader Raghav Chadha. The summit is being held in Copenhagen between October 9 and 12 and representatives from different countries and cities will speak about innovative action taken to reduce pollution. Over the past seven years, particulate matter concentration in Delhi has fallen steadily. An MEA spokesperson, meanwhile, said: “A considered decision on political clearance by the Ministry of External Affairs is based on multiple inputs and takes into account the nature of the event, the level of particu-

lar participation, type of invitation extended, etc. In the instant case, the participation of the Chief Minister of Delhi as a speaker at a panel discussion was not commensurate with the level of participation from other countries. The Chief Minister of one of the largest and populous cities in the world, which is also the capital of India, was therefore advised not to attend the event.” Central government sources later said a separate protocol is followed for chief ministers and rejected suggestions that opposition parties were being targeted. The Delhi BJP also targeted Kejriwal and Delhi government for trying to “replace Mayor of Delhi”. “Till now, Kejriwal was trying to defame the municipal corporations of Delhi. Now, he wants to defame the country at an international summit... He should have proposed a mayor’s name, but he tried to take credit for work done by other agencies,” Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari said.

Drugs found in car of bureaucrat’s husband

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 9

SECURITY AGENCIES went into a tizzy Wednesday evening, after CISF personnel found a “suspicious vehicle” parked outside the Electronics Niketan in CGO Complex. Police were also called in, and they found 550 grams of charas from inside the car, officers said.

On further investigation, it came to light that the car belonged to an IAS officer’s husband. Police have registered an FIR at Lodhi Colony police station under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and further investigation is underway. JCP (Southern Range) Devesh Srivastava said: “We have registered an FIR and initial probe has revealed that the car belongs to the husband of a

bureaucrat posted in Rajasthan,” he said. Police said the incident came to light at 8.15 pm, when security personnel received information that a “suspicious hatchback” was parked in the parking area of the Electronics Niketan. “They first looked for the owner and then informed police. After conducting a search, they found a suspicious packet from inside the car, which they

suspected was contraband. In the meantime, the owner of the car was also traced. He works as a consultant with one of the departments in the complex,” a senior police officer said, adding that he was taken to Lodhi Colony police station, where police questioned him to ascertain where he got the packet of contraband from. An officer said the man’s department has been alerted about the incident.

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FOR:	POST NAME	SC	ST	OBC	EWS	UR	TOTAL	VACANCIES					
								ESM	MSP	PWD (Refer: 1.5)			
POST CODE								CAT A	CAT B	CAT C	CAT D		
0401	Administrative Assistant 'A' (English Typing)	4	3	7	7	33	54	1	0	1	0	0	1
0601	Security Assistant 'A'	5	0	8	0	27	40	6	1	1	0	0	0
1101	Fireman	1	0	4	1	14	20	1	0	0	0	0	1

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POST CODE	POST NAME	SC	ST	OBC	EWS	UR	TOTAL	VACANCIES					
								ESM	MSP	PWD (Refer: 1.5)			
								CAT A	CAT B	CAT C	CAT D		
0401	Administrative Assistant 'A' (English Typing)	4	3	7	7	33	54	1	0	02	0	0	02
0601	Security Assistant 'A'	5	0	8	0	27	40	6	1	0	0	0	0
1101	Fireman	1	0	4	1	14	20	1	0	0	0	0	0

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

The test in protest

Serial authoritarianism picks out targets one by one, and tires out challenges



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

DENYING DENMARK

Government says it's sure-footed on global stage. So, its refusal to let Delhi CM attend climate summit overseas is petty, cussed

ARE THERE SOME in this government, that rules the Centre with such a handsome mandate, who feel insecure by the prospect of an Opposition leader going overseas... especially if the latter also has a perceived success story to showcase? This is the dispiriting question prompted by the curious denial of permission by the Ministry of External Affairs to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to attend the C40 Cities Climate Summit this week in Copenhagen.

As an elected chief minister, Kejriwal would have been among unequals at a mayors' conference, it has been suggested. But by the same token, surely an elected chief minister has the right to decide to attend, or not to. And since when has the BJP government become such a zealous minder of the AAP leader's status, anyway? While the BJP has seldom been seen to be respectful to rivals and opponents, or a keeper of the federal spirit, the jousting and hostilities between the BJP-led Centre and AAP's Delhi government, relatively muted for some time, have always been special.

Either way, the scuppering of Kejriwal's travel plans sends out messages unflattering to the BJP — and to India. The government prides itself on being more self-possessed and sure-footed on the global stage. That image is dented when it is seen to show mean-spirit-edness to another leader, especially of the Opposition, in full view of the world.

LESSONS FROM AAREY

Governance cannot be a cat and mouse game with the people. They must be treated as stakeholders

THE TUMULT IN Mumbai over the cutting of trees for building a depot for one of the many metro lines coming up in the city carries many governance lessons. One of them is transparency, to which governments pay much lip service, while acting in exactly the opposite way. In the case of the Aarey controversy, this has been quite literally so. The Bombay High Court had ruled in favour of felling over 2,000 trees in a small patch of Mumbai's largest green area to make way for the project.

Delhi Metro showed the way in how people can be won over by the simple method of talking to them. The first managing director of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, E Sreedharan, placed much emphasis on interactions with residents along the metro route to explain to them the benefits the transport system would bring. As a result, Delhi Metro was able to cut more than 31,000 trees and transplant 6,000 more without much opposition, while also finding a way to accommodate the concerns of tree activists at the location of one car shed.

Another issue that the controversy has highlighted is the high value people accord to trees, green areas, and open spaces in India's overcrowded, poorly planned cities. Aarey is spread over 1,278 hectares, and the car shed will take up just 33 hectares of this space. Environmentalists have made the case that this patch is a vital part of the entire "urban forest", precious in concrete-filled Mumbai. As more and more small towns become cities, and generate demands for better infrastructure, clearer definitions of forests and green areas are needed.

HOW THINGS WORK

Nobels in medicine and physics have gone to researchers who have discovered basic secrets of the universe

THE FIRST NOBEL prizes announced this year honour fundamental discoveries of the processes which run the universe and living things in it. Both also look ahead to a better and more interesting future. William G Kaelin Jr, Sir Peter J Ratcliffe and Gregg L Semenza have won the prize for physiology or medicine for discovering the pathways by which cells adapt to oxygen availability. Of considerable medical use, it is perhaps the most significant step towards understanding cellular respiration since 1937, when Hans Adolf Krebs and William Arthur Johnson discovered the cycle mediated by adenosine triphosphate, which powers life.

Half of the prize in physics went to James Peebles, whose theoretical framework describing the universe from the Big Bang to the present underpins all of physical cosmology. Most evocative, both for the layperson and the scientist, is the conclusion that we can sense only 5 per cent of the universe. The rest is dark matter and dark energy, whose presence can only be inferred by their influence on phenomena. These remain areas of mystery, and will prove to be fertile breeding grounds for future physics laureates. The other half of the physics Nobel prize is shared by Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz, for the discovery in 1995 of the first exoplanet, orbiting the star 51 Pegasi. Their technique, using Doppler spectroscopy, supplemented the traditional transit method, and has led to the discovery of 4,000 planets circling distant suns.

Is there life on exoplanets? Peebles appears to be convinced that even if there is, we may not recognise it, because it may not use Hans Krebs' cycle at all. And anyway, we are unlikely to encounter it in the gulf of space. Unless, of course, we adapt to long space journeys on low or no oxygen. The possibility does seem remote.

THE noose is tightening around all independent institutions in India. The episode featuring seditious charges against eminent writers and directors — now belatedly withdrawn — is a reminder of the peculiar nature of the crisis of liberal institutionalism in India. The true register of the crisis is not that liberal ideas might be losing, or that elites identified with liberalism might be discredited. Both those phenomena have occurred in the past. What is new is the choking up of the channels of protest in the time of civic oppression.

We cannot rely on the law. A liberal polity relies on unglamorous institutions and processes to keep open the windows of light against the darkness of untrammelled power. We have often relied on some putative motivating power of the law to deliver a modicum of protection, if not justice. The law has often disappointed deeply; and it often protects elites more than others. But the cowardly, almost impeachable, abdication of the judiciary in the face of threats to civil liberties has now made an appeal to the law akin to an appeal to the majestic benevolence of an odd judge at best, and a laughing joke at worst.

We cannot rely on artfully using fragmentation of power. Let power check power. But the fragmentation of power that we took for granted as a check against undue concentration no longer holds. Regional parties are as likely to navigate with this authoritarianism, as against it. India's fragmented social identities are now available for new forms of re-configuration in the nationalist project; they are fuelling nationalism as much as they are resisting it.

Nationalism has a single focal point, one thing that keeps BJP supporters and organisations united. Gandhi's organisational acumen, feel for organisation and exemplarity is invoked a lot these days. But it is sobering that even those techniques worked largely in the context of nationalism. Civic freedom does not seem to give that focal point for this reason.

likely to navigate with this authoritarianism, as against it. India's fragmented social identities are now available for new forms of re-configuration in the nationalist project; they are fuelling nationalism as much as they are resisting it. In any case, a fatalistic belief in sociological determinism to save us was the Left's version of anti politics, as if there were ready-made coalitions of minorities and other oppressed groups who will automatically appear to resist.

But if social power is not fragmented, in the same way neither is the power of money — Indian capital was seldom a defender of liberty. But now its taciturn silences are being replaced by a demonstrable alignment with not just state power, but the ideology of the state. It is having to devote all its capital, political funding, philanthropic commitment, media ownership, and even its symbolic capital, to the BJP and RSS. The BJP's insurgency against the Congress was always sustained by deep material support, from Nusli Wadia in the Eighties to regional capitalists more recently. No opposition, political or in civil society, can now count on that kind of material support.

It is undeniable that advocates of liberal institutionalism in India have always been uncomfortable with the grammar of civic protest. The preference for process over protest, discussion over organisation, law over civil disobedience, order over a fear of anarchy, petition over movement, individual authenticity over social solidarity, leaves it open both to the charge of passivity and elitism. But it could survive these preferences when the institutional windows through which this sensibility could do some moderate work, were open. But that time seems to be long gone.

It is a fair criticism of liberals that they have seldom aligned with social movements: Farmers, labour, Adivasis, Dalit etc. Often, they have worked against them, in weakening the legitimacy of their claims. In the lead up to protests against the Emergency, many of these movements were the disruptors that fuelled a general sense of discontent. But now there are two challenges that make it difficult to enlist these demands in a broad-based protest against civic oppression. There is no mechanism by which these movements translate into electoral politics and prove a threat to the

ruling party. And, it is actually easy for the government to satiate the demands that fuel these movements. For instance, each time there is the hope that Dalit discontent will translate into a movement, whether over SC Atrocities Act or something else, the government can satiate demands; each time there is a farmers' movement, the government can announce a policy change. A movement centred on policy change does not necessarily translate into a movement for defending civic freedom. That is how the government has out-manoeuvred those who thought social discontent will erupt.

The protest against civic oppression does not have a focal point. Nationalism has a single focal point, one thing that keeps BJP supporters and organisations united. Gandhi's organisational acumen, feel for organisation and exemplarity is invoked a lot these days. But it is sobering that even those techniques worked largely in the context of nationalism. Civic freedom does not seem to give that focal point for this reason. The government engages in what you might call serial authoritarianism, picking out targets one by one. The advantage of this strategy is not just that others are complacent that they will not be the victims of civic oppression. It is also that it tires out protest, by making each transgression require a separate and discrete form of protest. So we don't yet have a contest between democracy and authoritarianism. What we have are protests against individual transgressions — sedition, lynching, NRC, Kashmir. These are still seen as individual transgressions in a system that is still, overall, legitimate.

But even as we prepare our legal challenges, write in public, organise protests, mobilise and look for slivers of social resistance that can be harnessed in the service of civic freedom, we should be prepared that things will have to get worse before they get better. After all, if we still have the luxury of acting as if the system is legitimate, the system will hoist us with our own petard of legitimacy. This is not a counsel of despair, only an analytical judgement, that the crisis will have to be projected as deep, systemic and wide-ranging, before resistance finds a focal point.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express



RAJIV TULI

A VISION FOR BHARAT

RSS chief's Vijaydashami speech highlighted a culture that has no place for violence

THE YEAR 2019 will hold a special place in the history of Bharat. It not only marks the 550th "prakash varsh" of Guru Nanak and the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi; the celebration of Dattopant Thengadi's birth centenary is also starting from November 10. All three figures shared the same cultural values and civilisation. They are the guiding spirits of this nation. This was one of the key messages sent by the RSS across the globe as the sarsanghchalak shared his thoughts at the Vijaydashami celebration in Nagpur.

The annual address by the RSS chief holds great importance as the organisation is seen as an ideological mentor to not only to the ruling government but many other organisations that are run throughout the country by swayamsevakas, with a vision of building character to rebuild the nation.

He appreciated the decision made by the present government to revoke Article 370. The people of Bharat showed faith in the strong leadership of the country in the elections. And the government responded by delivering its promise of "one nation, one constitution".

Mohan Bhagwat focused on the Indian economy and areas that Bharat needs to work on. The speech highlighted the misguiding of the Indian masses by spreading the fear about the alleged slowdown of the economy. He emphasised the importance of self-reliance by focusing on the need for the growth of the

MSME sector. He revisited Thengadi's vision for a "third way" by not looking at the capitalist or communist models of development but developing an indigenous Bharatiya model. The great emphasis given in our culture to unity in diversity is also important. The RSS's idea of diversity is that one might follow any path of worship but we all consider ourselves Hindus. Some may prefer to use "Bharatiya" instead of "Hindu". The RSS doesn't have a problem with that. Bhagwat made it clear that "terminologies" are not that important, what is really important is the "essence" and "intention".

Bhagwat also took up the key issue of Swadeshi. The Sangh believes that Bharat does not need FDI in low-tech products. He categorically reiterated that we need to be careful about who the real beneficiary is and not be misguided by mere optics when it comes to FDI.

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This core idea of the oriental model of economic development is discussed in length by Thengadi in his book, Third Way. Thengadi is one of the most prominent ideologues of the Sangh. He was instrumental

in the formation of Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, Bhartiya Kisan Sangh and Swadeshi Jagran Manch. He also predicted the fall of communism and rise of Bharat in 21st century in 1989, which happens to be the birth centenary year of K B Hegdegar.

Bhagwat's speech also discussed the fear that has been spread among minorities by introducing words which are alien to Bharat, like "lynching". Efforts are underway to defame our country and the entire Hindu society. Many of these cases have been found to be false or exaggerated. He highlighted that the legal system in India is competent to curb such incidents. Indian culture has no space for violence but only for peace and acceptance to all. It goes beyond tolerance to coexistence.

For the first time, the need to look at the borders beyond land is highlighted. The world is moving towards new dynamics in maritime security. With huge maritime boundaries, Bharat needs to take care of its islands as well.

Bhagwat concluded his speech by discussing the need to realise the symbolic meaning of Vijaydashami celebration. The victory of the good over evil is only possible if we strengthen ourselves as individuals, as a community and a nation and to lead the world with an example.

The writer is member of the state executive of Delhi RSS. Views are personal



OCTOBER 10, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

SC STAYS EXECUTIONS

THE SUPREME COURT stayed all executions in the country on an application by a convict under sentence of death who has challenged the constitutionality of capital punishment. The SC order was ex-parte, but the acting chief justice, P N Bhagwati, and Justice V D Tulzapurkar, ordered that copies of the apex court's order be communicated to all states and Union Territories. The court listed the matter to come up for further directions on October 10. It also allowed the petitioner, Mal Singh, to amend his application to implead all state governments and Union Territories as parties so that appropriate orders can be passed.

CHINA FOR BOURGEOISE

IN ITS ZEALOUS efforts to catch up with the modern world in economic development, China is turning to its former capitalists inside the country and to the masters of commerce outside — the overseas Chinese. The most famous of the businessmen who stayed in China when the communists took over 30 years ago was Rong Yiren, head of a giant textile works. Today, Rong is back in the Peking limelight as chairman of a huge new state-sponsored corporation designed to entice foreign investors into joint ventures in China.

FACING FAMINE

"BOLL LUKHRI PHULA kaans, barsa ka ghar

hoi gaya naas", is a saying in the local dialect in Banda, Uttar Pradesh. It means that the howling of jackals and the blooming of kaans — a variety of grass — are indications that the rains have come to an end. The kaans is in full bloom here even as the farmers are trying desperately to sow their rabi crops. Surrounded by the waters of the Jamuna and Ken rivers on three sides, this Bundelkhand district is in the grip of a drought raging in the region. The kharif crop has been declared destroyed. Ten per cent of it that still stands will not bear fruit. For the rabi crop, farmers are keeping their fingers crossed while their women have undergone all penances to please the rain god, but without luck.

SILICON VALLEY IN THE CROSS-HAIRS

The tech offensive

The battle lines of an American regulatory assault on technology companies are being drawn

THE BILL, PROPOSED in America's Senate, reads like a coding manual for software developers. "Infinite scroll", which makes social-media apps display more content as users swipe up, would be prohibited, as would automatic playlists for videos. Social networks would need to show how much time users spend on them and set a default limit of 30 minutes a day.

Parents of teenagers mustn't get their hopes up: the Social Media Addiction Reduction Technology (SMART) Act is unlikely to become law. But the fact that it exists—and was put forward by a Republican senator, Josh Hawley of Missouri—shows how quickly the tide has turned in Washington against big technology firms. After decades of letting them do more or less as they please, the state is ready to strike back. Voters are on board: one recent survey found that two Americans in three support breaking the companies up.

Big Tech is worried. Its bosses, once infrequent visitors to the Beltway, have become a regular fixture. Last month Mark Zuckerberg spent a week there, meeting President Donald Trump and lawmakers. On October 1st a recording surfaced of Facebook's boss describing the plans of Elizabeth Warren, a left-wing Democratic presidential hopeful, to break up his firm and others as an "existential" threat. Google's parent company, Alphabet, has recruited as its top lobbyist a former chief of staff to a Republican senator. Wall Street wants to know what all this means for the business models of America's biggest companies. Microsoft, Apple, Amazon and Alphabet are the world's four most valuable listed firms. Add Facebook, which is the sixth, and they are worth a combined \$4.3trn.

Tech bulls can argue, with justification, that all the frenzied activity amounts to little more than exercises, with the odd warning shot. Some tech firms' share prices have been dented by the trade war. None, as yet, has been badly hurt by the techlash at home. Even so, the contours of a battle plan against the industry are emerging. It has two prongs. Officials are using existing laws to pursue the companies, particularly over anticompetitive behaviour. And politicians are drafting new legislation. Neither is yet an all-out assault. Both portend a prolonged pitched battle.

Start with the investigations. The Department of Justice (DOJ), the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the House antitrust subcommittee have all launched inquiries. In a sign that Alphabet's new pointman will be busy, a congressional committee sent the company a 17-page letter last month demanding a decade's worth of emails between senior executives on a range of matters and, on September 9th, 48 state attorneys-general launched an antitrust probe into the company. Any day the attorney-general, William Barr, is expected to announce an investigation into Facebook.

gafa prone

Most of these efforts so far amount to fishing expeditions. Their precise scope has yet to be determined. Even the division of labour between the investigators is unclear. Although they reportedly agreed to one in June, the DOJ and the FTC have yet to decide which tech titans each will go after, as became apparent when senators quizzed Makan Delrahim, who heads the DOJ's antitrust division, and the FTC's



US president Donald Trump with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and senior executives of the social media giant in White House last month. White House

chairman, Joe Simons, on September 17th.

Even if the FTC and the DOJ argue for radical measures such as break-ups, and convince lower courts, most federal appeals-court judges (not to mention the conservative majority on the Supreme Court) are reluctant antitrust enforcers, steeped in old teachings of the University of Chicago, which urge that companies be left alone so long as they do not harm consumers.

Still, the general line of attack is clear. Amazon, Apple and Google are being taken to task over their chokehold on e-commerce, app stores and search engines, respectively. Google and Facebook face scrutiny over online advertising, which they dominate. The giants will have to show that buying startups like CTRL-Labs (which develops brain-computer interfaces and has just been acquired by Facebook) is not simply a way to neutralise rivals.

It is a similar story on Capitol Hill. Bills to regulate tech have mushroomed. Mr Hawley alone has introduced half a dozen since join-

ing the Senate in January. Besides the addictiveness of tech, they cover children's privacy, online gaming and content moderation. Some have Democrat co-authors. One, nicknamed the DASHBOARD Act (don't ask), would require online platforms to disclose the value of data they collect on users; Mark Warner, a former venture capitalist, helped write it. Another, backed by Richard Blumenthal and Ed Markey, would ban video games from letting players (including under-age ones) pay a fee and receive random awards, which looks an awful lot like gambling.

With the possible exception of a federal privacy bill, which tech firms are promoting

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before a strict California state law enters into force in January and becomes de facto law of the land, most existing proposals may not get far. Impeachment proceedings against Mr Trump will distract lawmakers for months. If elected next year, a President Warren may not be able to ram her ideas through what is likely to remain a Republican-controlled Senate.

But Big Tech will be under fire whoever wins the presidency. Agencies and politicians are "on a steep learning curve", says another lobbyist. The FTC has a dedicated "tech task force" and two activist commissioners. One, Rohit Chopra, cut his teeth at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, where he led ef-

orts to reform America's student-loan system. The House has hired Lina Khan, author of an influential paper on Amazon's power, as counsel.

Trustbusters and lawmakers are also gathering intelligence. Besides the missive to Google, the antitrust subcommittee has sent requests for information to Amazon, Apple, Facebook and dozens of other firms. Oracle, a software-maker and old foe of Google's, got one from Texas's attorney-general. Snap, a social-media firm, is said to keep a dossier documenting Facebook's anticompetitive actions, which it is sure to share with regulators and Congress.

Think-tanks which get pots of money from Big Tech are no longer the main resource available to its opponents. Less conflicted brain trusts backed by diverse donors, such as the Electronic Privacy Information Centre, which used to specialise in consumer-data protection, or Public Knowledge, once focused on media regulation, now study antitrust, too.

Tim Wu of Columbia Law School and others have devised a legal strategy to make Facebook spin off Instagram and WhatsApp. In September a report from the Booth School of Business at the University of Chicago, of all places, called for vigorous merger control and a "digital authority" to oversee online competition. Republicans, who are friendlier to big business but accuse tech platforms (without evidence) of discriminating against right-leaning content, have set up the Internet Accountability Project.

Big Tech is not standing still. Its lobbyists will try to disarm radical proposals. It has squadrons of lawyers on hand. Firms are adapting in anticipation of rules to come. Facebook, Google and others plan to make it easier for users to move their data between services. Neither Silicon Valley nor Washington is bracing for a Blitz. Rather, prepare for a grinding war of attrition.

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CHAGUAN

Reasons to be fearful

Xi's embrace of false history and fearsome weapons is worrying

THE MOST revealing moment of the national day parade through Tiananmen Square on October 1st lasted just a few seconds. It came as China's fearsome new DF-41 nuclear missiles, capable of striking any city in America, neared Chaguan's press seat on the Avenue of Eternal Peace. Loudspeakers came to life as their camouflaged, many-wheeled carriers growled towards the grand gateway of the Forbidden City where President Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders waited on a rostrum. Unseen voices explained how the weapons would ensure that China always retains a deterrent capability, thus safeguarding peace. Turning lyrical, the voices compared the missiles to large dragons that can hide in massive mountains or boundless seas before delivering earth-shaking blows. The hand-picked crowd erupted in spontaneous cheers.

Those cheers reflect two messages conveyed by the parade, which marked 70 years of Communist rule. The first is that China wields such firepower that no country may safely defy it. The second is that China is great again thanks to the Communist Party which is, and has always been, a force for good.

That second message was pressed home by the civilian half of the parade, which began with open-topped, gold-painted buses carrying red princelings and other descendants of Communist China's founders and martyrs. One was a grandson of Mao Zedong, squeezed into a general's uniform. The point was reinforced by marchers dressed as Mao-era farmers, soldiers and workers, dancing and singing in celebration of party-ordained campaigns of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s to tame nature, mo-

China's boss has not hidden his motives. He links the Soviet Union's collapse to the moment that Russian leaders disavowed crimes by Stalin and other Communist leaders. Mr Xi has chosen another course, curtailing the party's previous, limited tolerance for historical candour.

bilise the masses and turn China into an industrial power. Such sanitising of the Mao years is indecent. On balance those were lost decades that left millions of Chinese dead, whether from man-made famines, class warfare or ideological purges. Yet under Mr Xi, the twists, turns and dead-ends of party rule have been tidily woven into a glorious story of national progress. China's boss has not hidden his motives. He links the Soviet Union's collapse to the moment that Russian leaders disavowed crimes by Stalin and other Communist leaders. Mr Xi has chosen another course, curtailing the party's previous, limited tolerance for historical candour.

Previous parades have nodded to live debates. On national day in 1984 Deng Xiaoping, then China's leader, said the country's primary task was to reform the economy to remove obstacles to growth. That parade included busts of leaders purged or sidelined under Mao, and

a float from Shekou, a pioneering special economic zone that Deng's leftist critics called capitalist.

In elite settings, largely for the benefit of insiders, Mr Xi has repudiated past crimes by ultra-leftists who were deemed by Deng to have deviated from the party line. Honouring revolutionary heroes on the eve of this year's national day, Mr Xi remembered Zhang Zhixin, a party member executed in 1975 for speaking out against Mao-era excesses, though not before her larynx was cut to stop her calling to fellow inmates as she died.

No such candour is offered to the masses. The true story of China's recovery from Maoist ruin was written by hundreds of millions of individual Chinese. They were enabled to raise themselves from poverty through hard work and risk-taking, after Deng pragmatically embraced market forces. Yet in this year's parade, a vast painting of Deng in a Mao suit was escorted by identically dressed dancers waving fronds of grain, as if he were the skilled boss of a collective farm rather than the man who let peasants grow their own crops, transforming rural lives. Later floats, lauding the Xi era, showed such centrally planned glories as high-speed trains and space rockets. Some of the few visible representatives of private enterprise were delivery drivers on scooters, a low-paid group once praised by Mr Xi for being like diligent bees. In apparent homage to this simile, the parade's delivery drivers wore yellow and black hats topped with bee antennae, like heroes in a children's book. As if vanquishing the ghosts of the Tiananmen protests of 1989,



The most revealing moment of the national day parade through Tiananmen Square on October 1 lasted just a few seconds. It came as China's fearsome new DF-41 nuclear missiles, capable of striking any city in America, neared Chaguan's press seat. Reuters

students from the city's universities marched beneath their college flags, hopping with excitement as they saw Mr Xi, through air still heavy with the fumes from parading tanks.

China's nationalism is the world's problem

It is understandable, indeed inevitable, that a wealthy China would seek to become a great military power. What was not inevitable was that Mr Xi would embrace populist, nostalgic, red-flag waving nationalism, while glossing over the party's terrible mistakes. Traditionally, those urging China to reckon honestly with the past have appealed to rational self-interest. Brave, embattled liberals have called for more open debate about the

Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, to prevent such mistakes from being repeated. That argument feels weak today. Mr Xi is not a revolutionary like Mao, bent on dismantling the party. Rather, he is an authoritarian obsessed with stability, determined to assert the party's absolute authority. To that end his team is happy to harness Maoist rhetoric, nostalgia for a simpler, less materialist China and the public's justifiable pride in the endurance of past hardships. Judged cynically, such propaganda is astute domestic politics. Mao-style strongman rule is still a danger, but there is little risk of a return to the mayhem of the Cultural Revolution.

Other countries may have more to fear from Mr Xi's embrace of false history. By telling

his people that Communist China has never taken a wrong turn, he is stoking an impatient, hair-trigger nationalism in which criticism from abroad equates to hostility.

China is not the first rising power to seek fearsome weapons. Its people's patriotism cannot be dismissed as brainwashing. Many are clear-eyed and rational in their love for their country and support for Mr Xi. But heavily armed, self-righteous nationalism can start wars. Both China and the rest of the world would be somewhat safer if party chiefs were to acknowledge their fallibility. That Mr Xi is heading in the other direction should alarm everybody.

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