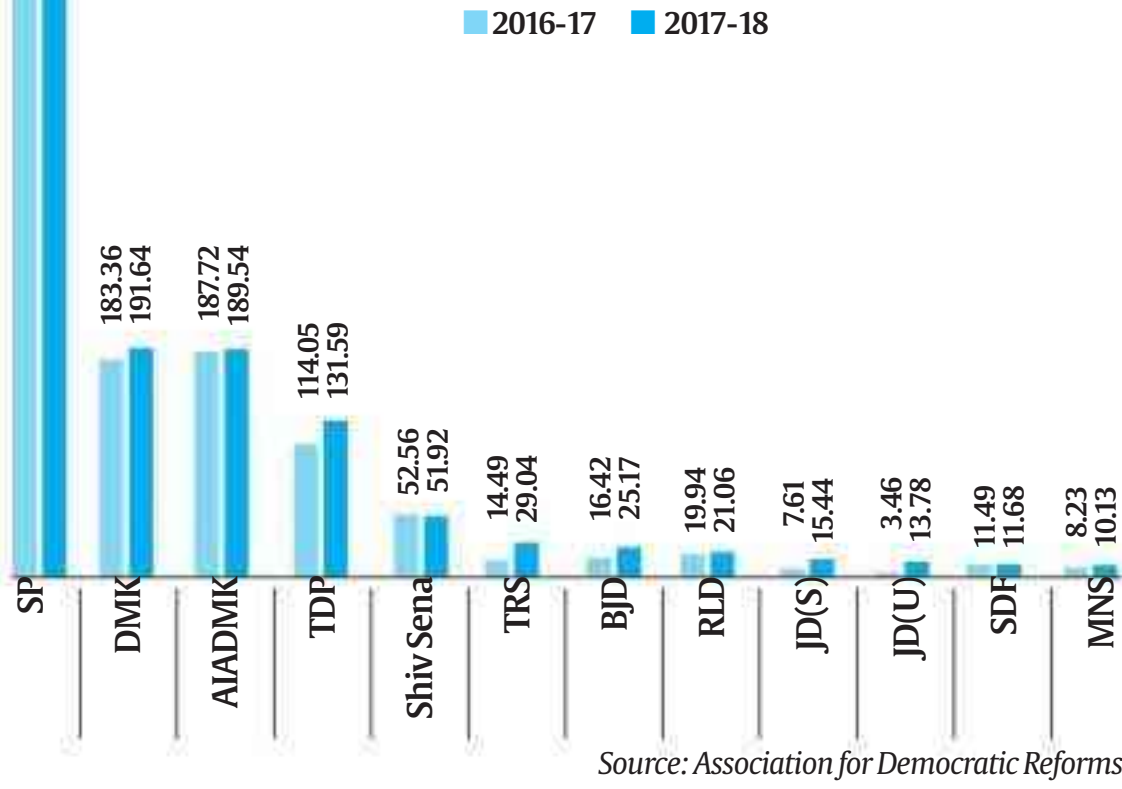


**TELLING NUMBERS**

**Regional parties own Rs 1,320 cr; SP richest, JD(U) assets multiply**

**TOP 12 ASSET-HOLDERS, 2017-18 (IN ₹ CR)**



A NEW report by the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) has analysed the assets and liabilities declared by regional parties in 2016-17 and 2017-18. The number of regional parties who declared their holdings has increased from 39 in 2016-17 (Rs 1,267.81 crore declared) to 41 in 2017-18 (Rs 1,320.06 crore). Their liabilities in the two years were Rs 40.33 crore (39 parties) and Rs 61.61 crore (41 parties). The Samajwadi Party holds Rs 583.29 crore, which is 46 per cent of the assets declared by all 41 parties in 2017-18. The regional giants of Tamil Nadu account for another 15 per cent each, with the DMK holding Rs 191.64 crore and the AIADMK holding Rs 189.54 crore. The TDP is the only other party that has declared more than Rs

100 crore. Besides these four, eight more parties have declared more than Rs 10 crore, with the AAP at 13th place with a little over Rs 6 crore. The JD(U)'s assets have increased almost threefold from Rs 3.46 crore to Rs 137.78 crore. The assets of two other parties in the top 12 have doubled — from Rs 14.49 crore to Rs 29.04 crore for the TRS, and from Rs 7.61 crore to Rs 15.44 crore for the JD(S). These assets were declared by the regional parties under six major heads: fixed assets, loans & advances, FDR/ deposits, TDS, investments and other assets. FDR/fixed deposits comprised two-thirds of their total assets in both years — Rs 809.52 crore (63.85%) in 2016-17 and Rs 859.89 crore (65.14%) in 2017-18.

**THIS WORD MEANS**

**BUNAD**

Norway's traditional costume; comes in many forms



Amb. Hans Jacob Frydenlund, wearing a bunad, presents his credentials to President Kovind last month. Rashtrapati Bhavan

WHEN NORWEGIAN Ambassador Hans Jacob Frydenlund went to Rashtrapati Bhavan to present his credentials to President Ram Nath Kovind recently, he was wearing his country's traditional folk costume. Called a "bunad", it is not a single kind of costume but an umbrella term with several regional variations. A bunad often includes an apron, a headdress, and a scarf or shawl, and is embellished with buckles, ornaments,

jewellery and at times, blades. Bunads are expensive and typically worn on festive occasions. The University of Oslo estimates that one in two Norwegians owns a bunad, which is about 2.5 million bunads. There are 400 different variations that come in different styles for men and women. In 2012, Norway's Ministry of Culture appointed the Bunad and National Costume Council to promote the use of bunads and other national costumes.

**SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER**

**How plan for clean air works**

Stricter measures under Graded Response Action Plan in Delhi-NCR from October 15. How has the plan worked in Delhi so far, what is being extended to NCR towns, and where do other states figure in it?

**MALLICA JOSHI**  
 NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 8

STARTING OCTOBER 15, some stricter measures to fight air pollution will come into force in Delhi's neighbourhood, as part of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). The action plan has already been in effect for two years in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR). What is new in the recent announcement is that measures aimed at stopping the use of diesel generator sets will, from next week, extend beyond Delhi to the NCR, where many areas see regular power cuts.

The measures that are coming into force will be incremental. As pollution rises, and it is expected to as winter approaches, more measures will come into play depending on the air quality.

All these measures are part of GRAP, which was formulated in 2016 and notified in 2017. Experts working in the field of air pollution have credited this list of measures with causing the dip in Delhi's air pollution over the past few years.

**What is GRAP?**

Approved by the Supreme Court in 2016, the plan was formulated after several meetings that the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) held with state government representatives and experts. The result was a plan that institutionalised measures to be taken when air quality deteriorates.

GRAP works only as an emergency measure. As such, the plan does not include action by various state governments to be taken throughout the year to tackle industrial, vehicular and combustion emissions. When the air quality shifts from poor to very poor, the measures listed under both sections have to be followed since the plan is incremental in nature.

If air quality reaches the severe+ stage, GRAP talks about shutting down schools and implementing the odd-even road-space rationing scheme.

GRAP has been successful in doing two things that had not been done before — creating a step-by-step plan for the entire Delhi-NCR region and getting on board several agencies: all pollution control boards, industrial area authorities, municipal corporations, regional officials of the India Meteorological Department, and others. The plan requires action and coordination among 13 different agencies in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan (NCR ar-



**GRADE BY GRADE**

**SEVERE+ OR EMERGENCY**

(PM2.5 over 300 µg/cubic metre or PM10 over 500 µg/cu. m. for 48+ hours)

- Stop entry of trucks into Delhi (except essential commodities)
- Stop construction work
- Introduce odd/even scheme for private vehicles and minimise exemptions
- Task Force to decide any additional steps including shutting of schools

**SEVERE**

(PM2.5 over 250 µg/cu. m. or PM10 over 430 µg/cu. m.)

- Close brick kilns, hot mix plants, stone crushers
- Maximise power generation from natural gas to reduce generation from coal
- Encourage public transport, with differential rates
- More frequent mechanised cleaning of road and sprinkling of water

**VERY POOR**

(PM2.5 121-250 µg/cu. m. or PM10 351-430 µg/cu. m.)

- Stop use of diesel generator sets
- Enhance parking fee by 3-4 times
- Increase bus and Metro services
- Apartment owners to discourage burning fires in winter by providing electric heaters during winter
- Advisories to people with respiratory and cardiac conditions to restrict outdoor movement

**MODERATE TO POOR**

(PM2.5 61-120 µg/cu. m. or PM10 101-350 µg/cu. m.)

- Heavy fines for garbage burning
- Close/enforce pollution control regulations in brick kilns and industries
- Mechanised sweeping on roads with heavy traffic and water sprinkling
- Strictly enforce ban on firecrackers

Rural areas are, however, being left out of this stringent measure because of unreliable power supply.

**Has GRAP helped?**

The biggest success of GRAP has been in fixing accountability and deadlines. For each action to be taken under a particular air quality category, executing agencies are clearly marked. In a territory like Delhi, where a multiplicity of authorities has been a long-standing impediment to effective governance, this step made a crucial difference. Also, coordination among as many as 13 agencies from four states is simplified to a degree because of the clear demarcation of responsibilities.

Three major policy decisions that can be credited to EPCA and GRAP are the closure of the thermal power plant at Badarpur, bringing BS-VI fuel to Delhi before the deadline set initially, and the ban on Pet coke as a fuel in Delhi NCR.

The EPCA, headed by retired IAS officer Bhure Lal and including members from the Centre for Science and Environment, was constituted in 1998 by the Supreme Court. The initial mandate of the body was to ensure the shift of Delhi's bus and auto fleet to CNG — a mammoth task that was among the most crucial ones in cleaning Delhi's air in the late 2000s.

The body continues to monitor pollution and assists the Supreme Court in several pollution-related matters.

**What measures have been taken in other states?**

One criticism of the EPCA as well as GRAP has been the focus on Delhi. While other states have managed to delay several measures, citing lack of resources, Delhi has always been the first one to have stringent measures enforced. In a recent meeting that discussed the ban on diesel generator sets, the point about Delhi doing all the heavy lifting was also raised.

In 2014, when a study by the World Health Organization found that Delhi was the most polluted city in the world, panic spread in the Centre and the state government. The release of a study on sources of air pollution the following year also gave experts, NGOs and scientists a handle on why Delhi was so polluted.

All of these things, state government officials say, have made Delhi the obvious pilot project.

For GRAP as well as EPCA, the next challenge is to extend the measures to other states effectively.

**FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY**

**What does 'no dengue deaths' really mean?**

**ABANTIKA GHOSH**  
 NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 8

ON MONDAY, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted the "stunning results" of his government's campaign to get people to invest 10 minutes every week to stop dengue mosquitoes from breeding: "The number of cases in Delhi so far is just 356, compared to 650 by this time last year", he posted; "most importantly, we have not lost a single life yet".

To put this success in perspective, it is important to note three things.

**This is a low dengue year**

The data sheet on the "Dengue/DHF Situation in India" uploaded by the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare contains numbers up to only May 26 of this year — well before the onset of the dengue season. Until then, the country had seen only five dengue deaths —

three in Kerala, two in Maharashtra. More recent data — albeit of dengue cases, not deaths — were furnished to Rajya Sabha by the Ministry in July. Until the end of June, only 8,058 cases of dengue had been reported countrywide — less than 8% of the 1,01,192 cases reported by NVBDCP for the entire year in 2018. Four deaths from dengue were reported in Delhi last year, according to the NVBDCP data.

The data given to Parliament show that until June, the largest number of dengue cases this year were reported in Karnataka (1,933), followed by Tamil Nadu (1,100), and Maharashtra (969). Twenty-two out of 34 states and Union Territories that reported data had fewer cases than in Delhi (91). West Bengal has stopped reporting cases to the Centre.

**Dengue comes in cycles**

Most experts agree that dengue comes in cycles — which means, it is only after every few years that a significant spike is seen in the incidence of the disease. The NVBDCP data

show 15,867 cases in Delhi in 2015, followed by 4,431, 9,271, and 7,136 cases in 2016, 2017, and 2018 respectively. Factors such as the amount of rainfall in a particular monsoon, levels of public awareness, and the efficiency of the state's response also play a role.

Dr P K Sen, a former director of the NVBDCP, said: "Dengue is cyclical, every 3-4 years there is a spurt. During the last few years, IEC (Information, Education and Communication) activities have been stepped up across the country, and measures have been taken early. People are more aware about the dangers of accumulated water; the breeding of Aedes mosquito (which is the carrier of dengue) has gone down greatly in the last three years. Environmental factors such as El Niño (which has an impact on the monsoon) also influence the virulence of the outbreak."

**Confirmation is not critical**

A dengue death is not classified as one unless the serological tests that isolate and identify the virus returns positive. Dengue is a no-

tifiable disease, but a case is required to be notified only when the confirmatory test has been done in the lab. Importantly, however, the confirmation of dengue infection is not key to its treatment, which can proceed and even conclude without that test being done.

"A suspected dengue case can be treated without any compromise in the quality of care even without confirming the suspicion. It is a viral fever, so doctors have to essentially watch out for dehydration, provide symptomatic relief, and keep a sharp eye on the platelet count so that the fever does not progress to the haemorrhagic variety," said a senior doctor at a Delhi government hospital, who did not want to be named.

"All of this", the doctor said, "can be done without the serological test, and this is routine in government hospitals where resources are limited. It also keeps the official 'dengue numbers' low. In theory, therefore, it is possible to have zero dengue deaths even when people have actually succumbed to the disease."

**What we know about the universe: the science behind Physics Nobel Prize**

**KABIR FIRAQUE**  
 NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 8

THIS YEAR'S Nobel Prize for Physics, announced on Tuesday, recognises research that helps us understand our place in the universe.

Canadian-American cosmologist James Peebles, 84, won one-half of the Prize for his theoretical work helping us understand how the universe evolved after the Big Bang. The other half went to Swiss astronomers Michel Mayor, 77, and Didier Queloz, 53, for their discovery of an exoplanet that challenged preconceived ideas about planets.

**How the universe evolved**

Modern cosmology assumes that the universe formed as a result of the Big Bang. In decades of work since the 1960s, Peebles

used theoretical physics and calculations to interpret what happened after. His work is focused largely on Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) radiation, which is electromagnetic radiation left over from the early universe once it had cooled sufficiently following the Big Bang.

Today, CMB can be observed with detectors. When it was observed for the first time in 1964 by radio astronomers Arnold Penzias and Robert Wilson — who would go on to be awarded the 1978 Physics Nobel — they were initially puzzled. They learnt later that Peebles had predicted such radiation.

Peebles and colleagues have correlated the temperature of this radiation with the amount of matter created in the Big Bang,

which was a key step towards understanding how this matter would later form the galaxies and galaxy clusters. From their work derives our knowledge of how mysterious the universe is — just 5% known matter and the rest unknown, as dark matter (26%) and dark energy (69%).

**Exoplanets**

The hunt for extraterrestrial life, if any exists, depends on finding habitable planets, mainly outside our Solar System. Today, exoplanets are being discovered very frequently — over 4,000 are known — which is remarkable progress from three decades ago, when not even one exoplanet was known. The first confirmed discoveries came in 1992, but these were



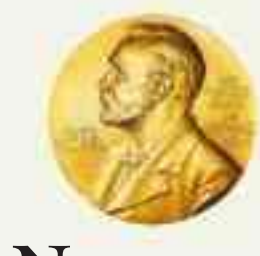
James Peebles (left) won one-half; Michel Mayor, Didier Queloz shared half.

orbiting not a star but the remains of one. The planet discovered by Mayor and Queloz in 1995 is 50 light years away, orbiting the star 51 Pegasus that is similar to our

Sun. Called 51 Pegasus b, the exoplanet is not habitable either, but it challenged our understanding of planets and laid the foundation for future discoveries. Using a spectro-

graph, ELODIE, built by Mayor and collaborators and installed at the Haute-Provence Observatory in France, they predicted the planet by observing the "Doppler effect" — when the star wobbles as an effect of a planet's gravity on its observed light.

It is a gas giant comparable to Jupiter, yet it very hot, unlike icy cold Jupiter; 51 Pegasus b is even closer to its star than Mercury is to our Sun. Until then, gas giants were presumed to be cold, formed a great distance from their stars. Today, it is accepted that these hot gas giants represent what Jupiter would look like if it were suddenly transported closer to the Sun. The discovery of the planet "started a revolution in astronomy", as described in the official Nobel Prize website. "Strange new worlds are still being discovered... forcing scientists to revise their theories of the physical processes behind the origins of planets," it said.



**NOBEL IN PHYSICS**

known — which is remarkable progress from three decades ago, when not even one exoplanet was known. The first confirmed discoveries came in 1992, but these were





## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# Uncaging India

The steel frame has become a cage. A \$10-trillion economy needs deep civil service reform



MANISH SABHARWAL

## RSS REPLAY

Last year, Sarsanghchalak signalled flexibility. His Dusshera speech is disquieting for how it looks inward, what it overlooks

THE BJP WON a second term with a larger mandate, its government is putting in motion its core ideological projects, Article 370 has been abrogated — and yet. A summary of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's Dusshera speech this year would have to begin with the "parantu (but)" he inserts into his address after acknowledging, and owning, the Modi-BJP's triumph. "Parantu is sukhdh vatavaran mein alsa kar hum apni sajagta va apni tatparta ko bhula dein... aisa samay nahin hai", this is not the time to be lulled into complacency, he says. The rest of the speech is mostly a bristling statement of the dangers and spectres that ostensibly afflict and confront Hindutva and the "Hindu Rashtra", as the RSS and its chief have always defined, and continue to define, the nation. "Hamaare saamne kuch sankat hain jinka upaay hamein karna hai", we are faced with dangers we must resolve. These, in Bhagwat's telling, are visible but also hidden, more internal than external — "kuch sankat saamne dikhayee dete hain, kuch kuch baad mein saamne aate hain". They are born of India's diversities, which, he says, are manipulated to widen cleavages and fault lines. They come from attempts to defame Hindus, as in the case of lynchings, which, he says, are communal problems that are not one-sided, "dono taraf se aarop-pratyarop chalte hain" (there are allegations and counter-allegations).

In a speech that paints a state of siege, from family to nation, Bhagwat's description of lynchings stands out for its stark denial of a brutal reality. That these incidents of violence, most often in the name of the cow, have seen the targeting of poor and vulnerable Muslims, is documented in the videos shot and publicised by the perpetrators themselves. That such mob violence and vigilantism is emboldened by a mix of religious passion and cold calculation of impunity, a majoritarian triumphalism, is there to see. For Bhagwat to suggest otherwise may be predictable, but it is still chilling.

The RSS chief's inward-looking tone on the economy is disquieting. Even as he acknowledges the economic slowdown, albeit by attributing it to global currents, and while defending the Modi government's efforts to find a way out of it, he returns to the RSS's pet themes of "swadeshi", "swavalamban" and "swanirbharta" (self-reliance). In times when the BJP government is faced with the challenge of reviving the economy by resuscitating trade and investment, Bhagwat's articulation is a worrying reminder of the pressures an insular RSS vision can bring to bear on a government it calls its own. Bhagwat takes this theme forward — "swa bhasha (indigenous language)", "swa bhoosha (indigenous attire)", "swa sanskriti (indigenous culture)". These formulations — purveying spectres, imposing sameness — are, of course, ill fitting in a diverse democracy. They are also a retreat from what seemed to be the RSS chief's own breakthrough moment a year ago. During a chintan shivir in September 2018, Bhagwat had suggested that the RSS may be rethinking its certitudes and prejudices — most notably, by urging that Golwalkar's anti-Muslim formulations be seen in the context of their time. This harking back puts a question mark on that step forward.

## TROUBLE WITH CREDIT

Collapse in credit flow to commercial sector is worrying. Time to ensure a quick and orderly resolution of stressed NBFCs

THE MONETARY POLICY Report of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) paints a worrying picture of credit flows in the economy. Between April and mid-September this year, the flow of funds to the commercial sector collapsed to Rs 90,995 crore, down from Rs 7.36 lakh crore over the same period last year. Non-food bank credit has declined, as have flows from NBFCs. Foreign flows, though, have picked up during this period. While, typically, credit flows in the first half of the year tend to be subdued and pick up in the second half, the decline this time around compared to the previous year is staggering.

The sharp decline appears to be due to a combination of two factors — a collapse in demand and risk aversion. An over-leveraged corporate sector is in the midst of a much needed deleveraging exercise. And in the current environment of subdued demand and low capacity utilisation rates, there is little incentive to launch fresh investments. On the other hand, banks appear to be reluctant to cut rates to boost lending. Instead, they are parking more funds in government securities and with the RBI. As the RBI report notes, banks have increased their SLR portfolios (statutory liquidity ratio), holding excess SLR of 6.9 per cent at the end of August 2019, as compared to 6.3 per cent at the end of March 2019, indicating a reluctance to lend. The shift in the liquidity stance from deficit to surplus mode has also not helped boost credit flow to the larger economy. It is also plausible that, in the face of growing economic uncertainty, banks have tightened credit norms, reducing those eligible for credit. Further, the crisis in the NBFC segment has only deepened. With bank credit and the commercial paper market remaining shut for NBFCs, credit flow from NBFCs to the larger economy has suffered, the fallout of which is visible in the decline in household debt fueled consumption.

A slowdown in economic activity will only exacerbate the situation, as stress on the repayment capacity of borrowers will increase the rise of default, making lenders even more cautious. Breaking out of this vicious cycle may be a long drawn out process. But the first step towards rebuilding trust, and addressing the stress in the financial sector in order to get credit flowing, should be to ensure a quick and orderly resolution of stressed NBFCs.

## JUST TAKE THE METRO

Expensive 'innovations', like tracks for self-driving cars, are being touted as an ecological solution. It's not a new idea

ANTHROPOLOGICAL CIRCLES, especially in the study of tribes, an object is considered a fetish if it is thought to be imbued with magical powers, often because it is inhabited by a spirit. Between the contemporary obsession with technology, and the near-divine worship of start-up culture, it may be time to shift the focus of that definition. The latest tech "innovation" to make news is placing on roads copper coils to make it easier to charge electric vehicles. More importantly, such dedicated roads could remove much of the uncertainty and danger around self-driving or driver-less vehicles — Elaine Herzberg became the first person to be killed by a self-driving car in 2018.

If a dedicated lane or road to provide safe, eco-friendly transport which spares commuters the trials and tribulations of driving through urban mazes seems like a familiar idea, that's because it is. Wooden rails were used as early as 1515 and the carts that plied on them have never been accused of an over-sized carbon footprint. Closer home, and closer to our times, Kolkata still sports proudly the most nostalgic form of public transport — the tram. Paris, too, has them, albeit slicker, faster versions. Sadly, trains and trams still require drivers. But for would-be commuters, what does it matter how they get there, as long as they don't have to do the driving themselves?

The tram-track idea for electric, self-driving cars has come from a start-up. By employing new-sounding, if not novel, jargon — "eco-friendly", "futuristic", etc — the company has figured out what second-hand car salesman have long known: Slap a coat of paint on it, and sell the shine. As for the substance of the proposal, track-based transport is an excellent idea for urban conglomerations that can no longer support the luxury of fuel-guzzling, space hoarding private vehicles. Fortunately, someone already thought of the metro.

IN SEPTEMBER 1984, J R D Tata responded to retired bureaucrat P N Haksar's letter taunting him that businessmen were not doing enough for India's development with "I began my 55-year-old career as an angry young man because I couldn't stomach foreign domination... I end it as angry old man... because it breaks my heart to see the continuing miserable fate of the vast majority of our people, for much of which I blame years of ill-conceived economic policies of our government. Instead of releasing energies and enterprises, the system of licences and controls imposed on the private sector, combined with confiscatory personal taxation, not only discouraged and penalised honest free enterprise but encouraged, and brought success and wealth, to a new breed of bribers, tax evaders, and black marketeers". Reforms over 35 years since J R D's letter — delicensing, deregulation, Aadhaar, UPI, inflation targeting, Bankruptcy, GST, lower corporate taxes, etc. — are India's strong foundations for a \$5-trillion economy. But reaching a \$10-trillion economy and a per capita income close to what China has today needs a new human capital regime for India's 20 million civil servants.

Let's imagine India's \$10-trillion economy. Eighty per cent of our labour force works outside farms (the only way to help farmers is to have less of them). We have 200 cities with more than a million people (today we have 52). Our cities meet the Marchetti constant (people have 30-minute work commutes). Our government borrows at less than 4 per cent. Our Aadhaar-linked land markets equalise rental yields and mortgage borrowing rates. PSU banks are governed by an independent holding company with no access to taxes. Our credit to GDP ratio rises to 100 per cent (from today's 50 per cent) because our financial institutions know how to lend and recover money. Government school enrollment stops declining because learning outcomes improve (if anything should be free with quality, it should be schools). We have attracted China factory refugees that are going to Vietnam and Malaysia today. The global capital glut of negative interest rates chasing growth underwrites our investment needs. Fiscal discipline delivers low inflation. Fifty per cent of our college-going-age kids go to

This horrible hostility to private enterprises comes from toxic civil service thought-worlds like prohibited till permitted, know-it-all rather than learn-it-all, too small for big things but too big for small things, poor and jerky law drafting, contempt for execution complexity, immaculate conception over continuous improvement, stereotyping the private sector as big companies rather than MSMEs, only using punishment to enforce policy rather than design driven by domain specialisation, and not viewing wealth creators as national assets.

diverse higher education system (today 25 per cent are in a homogenous system). Policy encourages formal hiring (today's labour laws are like marriage without divorce). Our reformed social security system covers 60 per cent of workers (today's cover only 20 per cent because the Provident Fund and ESI provide poor value for money).

Prosperity needs productive firms and workers. But India's capital is handicapped without labour and labour is handicapped without capital because of our regulatory cholesterol universe for employers of 57,000 compliances, 3,100 filings and 4,000 changes a year (details verifiable at [www.teamlease.com](http://www.teamlease.com) and [Rulezbook.com](http://Rulezbook.com)). This horrible hostility to private enterprises comes from toxic civil service thought-worlds like prohibited till permitted, know-it-all rather than learn-it-all, too small for big things but too big for small things, poor and jerky law drafting, contempt for execution complexity, immaculate conception over continuous improvement, stereotyping the private sector as big companies rather than MSMEs, only using punishment to enforce policy rather than design driven by domain specialisation, and not viewing wealth creators as national assets. Listed PSUs have destroyed \$150 billion in value over the last decade, consistent with the Gujarati saying "Jahan raja vyapaari, wahan praja bhikhari" (where the king is a businessperson, the population is a beggar). Cutting this regulatory cholesterol needs a climate change for civil servants.

A new human capital regime starts with two projects each in six areas of structure, staffing, training, performance management, compensation, and culture. Structure Project 1 involves rationalisation: We don't need hundreds of PSUs and departments in 55 central ministries (Japan has nine, the US has 14, UK has 21). Structure Project 2 involves reverting the cylinder to a pyramid on the way to becoming an Eiffel Tower (250+ people in Delhi with Secretary rank).

Staffing Project 1 eliminates the sanctioned and actual strength gap because this is possible only with good people being overworked, non-urgent work neglected, or squatting on unnecessary posts. Staffing Project 2 creates cognitive diversity and competition

with 20 per cent lateral entry. Training Project 1 involves restructuring how courses are chosen (demand rather than supply driven), how course nominations choose people, how courses are evaluated, and how course results integrate with performance management. Training Project 2 involves making learning continuous rather than episodic.

Performance Management Project 1 involves a forced curve for appraisals of outstanding (20 per cent), good (60 per cent) and poor (20 per cent) because 98 per cent of people can't be outstanding. Performance Management Project 2 involves replicating army thresholds where people retire at 50 if not shortlisted for promotion. Compensation Project 1 involves moving to a cost-to-government number by monetising benefits. Compensation Project 2 involves freezing salaries at the bottom (we pay too much) and raising them at the top (we pay too little).

The two culture projects are the most difficult — tone from the top around corruption and differentiation. Too many civil service leaders overlook graft among subordinates or don't question the processes that breed corruption. And leaders punish good performers by writing performance appraisals that don't differentiate between *gaddha* (donkey) and *ghoda* (horse), giving top jobs by seniority, and allowing automatic promotions that create a pool of "promotable but not postable". Differentiation needs a fear of falling and hope of rising.

The current economic slowdown is short-term pain for long-term gain because of overdue medicine. This climate change for employers — ability and strategy only becomes valuable with competition and bankruptcy — needs replication for civil servants. Cutting edge economics views development as a game of scrabble where vowels provided by the government enable the private sector to make more words and longer words. The current civil service fails to provide enough vowels; the steel frame has become a cage. For too long, the brain of the Indian state was not connected to its backbone. Since that has now changed, it's time to connect the backbone to its hands and legs.

The writer is with Teamlease Services

## A TRIANGULAR AFFAIR

Delhi will have to accept China's role in Bangladesh while shaping its ties with Dhaka



C UDAY BHASKAR

PREPARATIONS ARE afoot for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to receive Chinese President Xi Jinping at an informal summit (October 11-12) in Mamallapuram. While a formal announcement is still awaited (at the time of writing this article) and uncertainty lingers, a tweet by the Chinese ambassador to India highlighting the need to "further unleash the positive effect of Wuhan" is seen as a signal that the Modi-Xi meeting is on.

The first informal summit between the two leaders was held at Wuhan in April 2018, necessitated by the earlier military stand-off between the Asian giants at Doklam. Prudence at the highest political level enabled the two nations to arrive at a *modus vivendi* in Wuhan, though the long-festering territorial dispute and an unresolved 4,000 km-plus Line of Actual Control are tenaciously alive.

The just-concluded visit (October 6) to India by Bangladesh's prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, provides an instructive cue as to how the strategic ties between India and China have evolved and future lessons to be drawn from this bilateral relationship. The Bangladesh-India-China triangle is often obscured by the high visibility accorded to Pakistan in the uneasy relationship between the two Asian giants.

India enabled the birth of Bangladesh in December 1971 when it militarily assisted the erstwhile East Pakistan to acquire freedom from its oppressive western wing and this is still venerated as the Liberation War. At the time, the Pakistani army unleashed a

massive genocide of its own citizens of Bangla ethnicity. More than 10 million persecuted citizens of East Pakistan fled to India and, as per official, post-liberation estimates in Dhaka — three million people were killed over a two-year period by the Pakistan army.

In the run up to the 1971 Bangladesh war, the US and China, which had begun their own rapprochement, supported Pakistan, and were opposed to Indian assistance to the East Pakistan political leadership — symbolised by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Yet, with tacit support from Moscow, India achieved what may be described as a spectacular military victory — it liberated Dhaka and handed over power to Mujibur Rahman.

It may be conjectured that this emphatic Indian military victory of 1971 led to a strategic reappraisal in Beijing about its democratic neighbour, whom it had militarily humiliated in October 1962. It is my argument that the seeds of the strategic-security anxiety in China about India were sown at that time. For a communist country that implicitly believed that power flowed from the barrel of the gun, an emphatic military victory that resulted in the division of a state (Pakistan) and the creation of a new nation (Bangladesh), could not be treated as one more regional upheaval. The victorious power (India) had to be fettered.

Beijing's response was to invest in Pakistan and, in the intervening decades, a deep and opaque Sino-Pak strategic and security relationship was nurtured. This in turn emboldened Rawalpindi, the HQ of the

Pakistan army, to embark upon a proxy war against India (with terrorism as a tool) that began in 1990 and has continued to date.

Hence, India's abiding regional strategic objective ought to be one which ensures that Bangladesh does not morph into a Pakistan, either by way of being compelled into choosing Beijing over Delhi; or nurturing radical Islamic ideologies domestically.

It is to the credit of the leadership in both Dhaka and Delhi that despite some missteps and hesitation, the bilateral is currently described as the "best ever" and a template for India's ties with its other neighbours. Dhaka also has robust ties with Beijing and this triangular relationship, if managed with integrity and perspicacity, can unleash the positive potential latent to the Bay of Bengal littoral.

Currently, Bangladesh is an active partner of the Xi Jinping-led BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) that Delhi has steadfastly not signed up to. In the security sector, Bangladesh is also a major recipient of Chinese military inventory, including submarines.

India will have to accept this as part of the evolving regional strategic calculus enabled by China's economic-trade-fiscal clout and shape its own ties with Dhaka in such a manner that a truly win-win-win option can emerge.

The maritime domain, and the Bay of Bengal in particular, with Dhaka as the crosswain, ought to be envisioned at Mamallapuram.

The writer is director, Society for Policy Studies, New Delhi



## OCTOBER 9, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

### JP PASSES AWAY

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN, WHO inspired the people before and after independence and relit the lamp of democracy, died in deep sleep around 5.45 am. The death came barely a week after the celebration of his 78th birthday, on Vijayadashami day.

In a signed front-page editorial, Express editor, S Mulgaonkar wrote: "In the death of Jayaprakash Narayan there departs a man who wielded on several aspects of life in India a moral influence second only to that of Mahatma Gandhi. JP was by any reckoning one of the three greatest Indians of this century. But he himself would have taken more pride in being recognised simply as a good

man. He was caught up from his early youth in the struggle for independence and other political causes. Throughout all this and beyond it what set him apart was his deep concern for the human condition. It has been said that he shrank from political power.

The real explanation was that for JP politics could never provide the entire answer to his quest for the freedom and dignity of the human spirit, a quest which for him embraced not only the cause of Indian independence but the struggle against imperialism and authoritarianism everywhere. It was during this phase that JP was attracted to Marxism. He was soon disenchanted with the practitioners of Marxism. JP was never again to be

a slave to political dogma and though he took the lead in launching the Congress Socialist Party he had already lost his appetite for sectarian politics... (In the 1970s) JP's ideas of total revolution were beginning to engulf other parts of the country. This brought JP in direct confrontation with Mrs Gandhi's government at the Centre... The climax was a mammoth rally in Delhi's Ram Lila grounds addressed by JP on the evening of June 25, 1975. Within a few hours JP was arrested with many other opposition leaders...

JP died a sad, unfulfilled man. Nobody deserved such a fate less. For nobody ever brought so much high-mindedness and sincerity to the purposes for which he lived.



# 11 THE IDEAS PAGE

## Mahatma for the last man

The fearless dissenter and village worker who had a plan to make the countryside hum with life — that is the Gandhi India needs, more than ever



RAJMOHAN GANDHI

THERE ARE AT least three reasons why I need Gandhi today.

One emerges from this true tale. In February 1908, right after a satyagraha that Gandhi had organised in South Africa's Transvaal region, there was a bid to kill him in the region's biggest city, Johannesburg. A man called Mir Alam and his associates were angry with Gandhi's settlement with Transvaal's white government, which for the time being had ended the satyagraha.

Thirty-eight at the time, Gandhi was walking on a street in the heart of the city when a club swung from behind his back hit him on his face. Mumbling "He Raam," he fell and fainted.

Joseph Doke, a white Baptist minister who had walked with him, took Gandhi to his home, where a recovering Gandhi, unable to speak because of stitches on the cheek and mouth, wrote out a request: 'Would Doke's little daughter sing *Lead Kindly Light* to him?'

John Henry Newman's 1833 verse, which Olive Doke sang softly at the door, began with these lines:

*Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom, / Lead Thou me on; / The night is dark, and I am far from home, / Lead Thou me on; / Keep Thou my feet; / I do not ask to see / The distant scene; / one step enough for me.*

Scenes like this from Gandhi's life fortify me in moments of concern or disappointment. Taking a single next step, be it simple or tiny, pleasant or painstaking, raises my morale.

Secondly, I enjoy Gandhi the dissenter. As a lad, Mohan dissented from his mother when she asked him not to touch Uka, the Dalit youngster who came to clean the family home in Rajkot. He dissented again when asked by the mother to avoid Sheikh Mehtab, the wayward athlete in his school. When his caste forbade him from going to London, Mohandas said he would go anyway.

As a law student in London, where he joined the Vegetarian Society, 20-year-old Mohandas unsuccessfully backed the society's controversial dissenter, Thomas Allinson, when its head Alfred Hills, a prominent industrialist, wished to oust the doctor for advocating artificial birth control.

A dozen years later, when Gandhi was in Johannesburg, his readiness to dissent captured a young white associate called Symonds, who teasingly told Gandhi that "he would withdraw his support" if Gandhi was "ever found in a majority".

In August 1942, when the Congress voted overwhelmingly (in Mumbai) in favour of his "Quit India" call, Gandhi praised the dissenters: "I congratulate the thirteen friends who voted against the resolution." His August 1942 remarks also contained these lines: "I have read a good deal of the French revolution. Pandit Jawaharlal has told me all about the Russian revolution. But I hold that though theirs was a fight for the people, it was not a fight for real democracy... My democracy means every man is his own master."

Gandhi thought India's independence would mean little unless it also meant the independence of every Indian. This came across in February 1946, when a mutiny by Indian ratings in ships of the Royal Indian Navy created considerable excitement.

Although no Indian officer joined the mutiny, thousands of workers in Mumbai struck work in sympathy. When he heard that mutiny supporters were forcing people



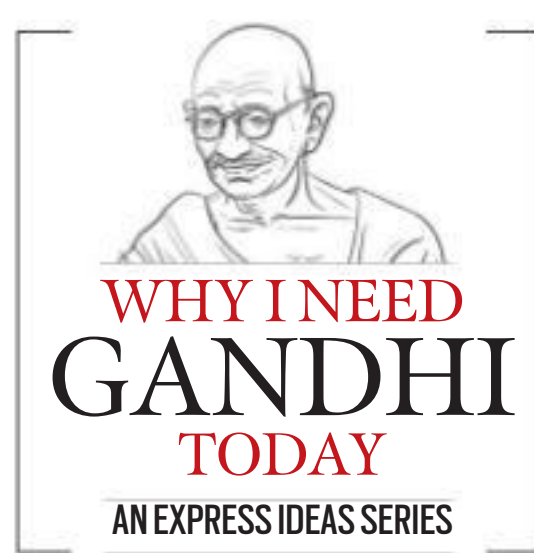
CR Sasikumar

to shout "Jai Hind", Gandhi intervened. If "a single person is compelled to shout 'Jai Hind', or any popular slogan," he declared, "a nail is driven into the coffin of Swaraj in terms of the dumb millions of India".

In 1934, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German dissenter, had written to Gandhi of his wish to travel to India to meet him. Gandhi replied immediately with a welcome, warning, however, that he might be in prison when the German arrived. Unable, in the end, to travel to India, Bonhoeffer was executed in Nazi Germany in April 1945.

There's a third reason why we need Gandhi: His commonsense grasp that if India's vast numbers are to find even minimal comfort, our countryside has to hum with life. The countryside Gandhi envisions in 1937 is sustainable, ultra-modern, egalitarian:

"An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation built of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. Village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells, accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary



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and secondary schools in which industrial education will be central, and it will have (a) Panchayat for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruits, and its own khadi."

Presented in 1946, Gandhi's picture of "a holistic village worker" is also refreshing: "(He) must know everybody living in the village and render them such service as he can. He will so win over the villagers that they will seek and follow his advice.

Supposing I go and settle down in a village with a *ghani* (an oil-press), I won't be an ordinary *ghanchi* earning 15-20 rupees a month. I will be a Mahatma *ghanchi*! I have used the word in fun. What I mean, is that as a *ghanchi* I will become a model for the villagers to follow.

I will be a *ghanchi* who knows the Gita and the Quran. I will be learned enough to teach their children. The villagers will come to me and ask me: 'Please make arrangements for our children's education.' I will tell them: 'I can find you a teacher but you will have to bear the expenses.' And they will be prepared to do so most willingly."

Who wouldn't want such a person in their village?

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### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"No forcible solution will be accepted by the Kashmiris, and New Delhi, as well as the world powers, must realise that only through a democratic political process can the issue be resolved." —DAWN

## Learning from Bhavkhedi

Absence of remorse in the collective response to the murder of two children is a disturbing sign of indifference to the violence against Dalits



KRISHNA KUMAR

THE RECENT KILLING of two Scheduled Caste children in Bhavkhedi village in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh brings into focus a larger social reality. A formal inquiry into this incident is likely to proceed along two lines. They are both relevant from a legal perspective and are sure to affect the judicial outcome of the murder case. One line of inquiry is the local history of relations between the scheduled caste families and the higher placed "other backward classes". Reports show that the person who fatally hit the children on their heads belongs to the latter social category. The other line of inquiry will interpret the spate of anger he felt when he saw the two children defecating by the roadside. The prosecution and the defence will look at the anger that the sight of open defecation occasioned in the mind of the accused. Contrasting arguments will enable the case to proceed in a customary manner. We can be sure, however, that the judicial verdict on the crime committed will not cover the deeper ground this incident reveals.

It is a tempting thought that the incident is specific to this particular area of MP. An equally reasonable temptation is to think that the old problem such incidents reflect is now confined to rural areas. Several commentators have taken the second line, but the first is not altogether unpopular. The fact that both lines are reasonable strengthens our endurance for the horrible death of the two children. The basic elements of the story — village, poverty, caste division and dominance — do indeed assure us that we need not feel unwarrantably disturbed or alarmed. As readers, we have gone through several similar reports of terrible cruelty against victims of caste or religious prejudice.

In addition to these familiar social triggers of violent anger, the Bhavkhedi story offers a third basis to comprehend the incident. It refers to the national drive against open defecation. Bhavkhedi has attained the status of an "no open defecation" village. Status tags of this kind are not new. Murderous rage at the sight of two children indulging in an officially eradicated practice is.

Remorse and guilt are important emotional resources available to a society or a nation for recovery after going through a trauma. In the case of atrocities against the Scheduled Castes, public recognition of their trauma is rarely granted. A visit by political leaders is all that happens in a few cases that gain prominence and visibility. Society delegates to its leaders the responsibility to convey remorse. Visits by social activists and journalists sometimes play this role, demonstrating society's formal concern. Expression of collective guilt or *glani* for atrocities on the Scheduled Castes is rare, both at the local and national levels. Society just does not stop its normal activities to find

time, howsoever short, to worry about the absence of any such guilt. The Bhavkhedi incident is no exception. We will just move on, as they say we must, after any outrage.

Both children were studying at the local government school. Correspondents who visited the school have reported that caste discrimination is a routine matter. The teacher in charge is reported to have said that Dalit and OBC children don't sit together or eat their mid-day meal together. A child from the latter category talked about the behaviour he has learnt at home with regard to the presence of Dalits in his class. If he happens to touch them, he said, he is supposed to wash his hands. News reporters have also talked about the display of caste-wise data on the school wall. This practice is not new, and the bureaucracy that governs the school system considers it necessary. If you ask a state-level official, he will tell you that caste-wise and gender-wise display of numbers enrolled and present ensures transparency. The matter is regarded exclusively from the point of view of governance, not in terms of the impact it might make on children.

Similar practices are followed for the monthly distribution of scholarships. The day the scholarship money comes, the teacher calls aloud the names of the Scheduled Caste children, asking them to get up and collect their money. No one thinks this can be done more discretely. Caste is treated as something routine and real, not worth hiding for the sake of higher ideals. Routinised recognition of caste and religion is at the heart of school governance. It helps to conceal prejudice and hatred. In any case, no one has time to encourage empathy in our schools. Local or national happenings that may cause pain are simply ignored. A school runs like an office; reflection on what is happening around it is not among its jobs. Studying the prescribed syllabus and preparing for the exam are.

It is hard not to think of Gandhi in the context of Bhavkhedi incident. It occurred barely a week before Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary. But irony means something only when it is felt. Gandhi is a global icon of non-violence, and his birthday is recognised by the UN as Ahimsa Day. But, of course, it is a date like any other. Last year, a murder that was internationally recognised for its brazen horror occurred on October 2. Even the UN chose to ignore this coincidence perhaps because the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi immediately became a political matter.

As the 150th year of Gandhi's birth progressed, numerous collective killings took place in our country, indicating that the value that Gandhi held dear was not doing well. Nor is his constructive programme for alleviating the suffering of the castes involved in sanitation. Death in a sewer while it was being cleaned has become a familiar episode in our cities. That such deaths fail to evoke even a temporary public outrage indicates a culturally entrenched contempt. The truth of Bhavkhedi is that there is more hatred around than we realise.

The writer, professor of education at University of Delhi, was director of NCERT from 2004 to 2010

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### CONG DECLINE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The withering' (IE, October 8). It is the season of political turncoats changing their colours, so it is unsurprising to see leaders leaving the Congress and joining other parties. What is really unfortunate is that the Congress, which lost badly in the last Lok Sabha elections, has not learnt its lessons. It is tragic that even when Rahul Gandhi has paved way for his mother to lead the grand old party, there seems to be no change in the way the party functions. If Sonia Gandhi is also unable to stop this downside, then its going to be a huge disadvantage to our democracy. **Bal Govind, Noida**

#### TAKE A JOKE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Joker, the Incel' (IE, October 08). A film can't be criticised for portrayal of a violent character. Cinema of any genre represents art. It is the hard work of thousands of people who devote their time, working day and night, for its success. In the end, it depends upon the viewers and how they interpret it. Viewers should always try to understand the crux of the movie rather than pay attention to the possible aftermath. **Aayush Sapra, Ujjain**

#### LAW AND DISORDER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Two

#### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to [editpage@expressindia.com](mailto:editpage@expressindia.com) or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

wrongs' (IE, Oct 8). There has been an onslaught on the freedom of expression and personal liberty by the current government. It has resorted to a parochial interpretation of the law and, often, conveniently equates dissent to sedition, as it has done with university students. The arbitrariness of the law requires a relook. In the wise words of Justice D Y Chandrachud: "Dissent is like a safety valve of democracy." **Yogesh Singh, New Delhi**

values are the practices that are nurtured in the name of secularism," the editorial claims.

It also accuses the Congress of being hand-in-glove with the communists. "The communists who put Lenin and Stalin above Gandhiji or any other Bharatiya hero, who considered Mao even above Nehru have been the ideological torchbearers of the Congress Sonia Gandhi is battling for. Piggybacking with the communists, standing with the breaking-Bharat forces and speaking for the corrupt dynastic practices are definitely not the ingredients of the Gandhian legacy," the editorial asserts.

It suggests that the Congress rise above party politics and let the RSS take the lead on Gandhi's ideas.

"If RSS is showing the right path for this let it be; do not kill Gandhi again just because you desist RSS. As a revenge perhaps, Congress should claim legacy of Dr Hedgewar, the founder of RSS, who himself was the Congress member," the editorial said.

#### ILLIBERAL LEFT

AGAINST THE BACKDROP of Union minister Babul Supriyo being allegedly roughed up in Kolkata's Jadavpur University and MoS PMO Jitendra Singh facing protests in JNU over Kashmir, *Organiser's* latest cover story is titled 'Liberally Fascist'.

Talking about the opposition faced by Singh in JNU while speaking on Kashmir, the article accuses the Left of "intellectual fascism". "A protest to register point of view is

natural in democracy, but what is being preached and practised by Communists not just in JNU but wherever they are dominating is nothing but continuation of the communist tradition, intellectual fascism," the article says.

The article claims that the Left is not ready to hear the other point of view. "AISA and other students' organisations once again have shown their mindset where they do not want to listen to any viewpoint they do not agree with... If they are so serious about rights, democracy and free speech, why they do not stand for the rights of Jammu and Ladakh people and many communities of Kashmir Valley who were discriminated through Article 370, is the natural question being asked on the campus. In the process, communist organisations reminded (sic) the recent incident at Jadavpur where they had a violent scuffle against another Union Minister Babul Supriyo and exposed themselves," the article claims.

On the Jadavpur incident, another article sees the Left aggression as a response to the rise of the ABVP: "Having seen an upsurge of ABVP, the Left students' wings have become restless; they are fighting their existential wars in the campuses. Their patrons who are teachers are more worried. Their forte is under threat. That is why they are using the violent method in sheer rage of losing the battle. For the left intellectuals campuses were their shops... The compromises were being made between the Congress and Left parties. The Congress was given the parlia-

ment to run the political show and the Left handles the universities."

#### NO MODI MEDIA

WITH TV MEDIA being regularly criticised for its over-the-top pro-government reporting, allegedly under pressure from the powers that be, the latest issue of *Panchjanya*, the Hindi mouthpiece of the RSS, has defied the government. In an article titled 'Silent Public Interest Media', the magazine has alleged that the almost "laughable" reporting by the TV channels on the Narendra Modi government is more a result of the PM's popularity among the masses than any pressure from the government. It has argued that the media was, in fact, not criticising other governments for their misdeeds enough.

Pointing to TV programmes titled "World Cup Dilayenge Modi" and "Chand Par Modi Modi" shown by certain Hindi TV news channels, the article said, "When viewers criticised such laughable content, the editors began spreading the lie that they were under pressure from the government. In fact, such unrealistic and laughable programming causes more damage to the government than doing it any good. Narendra Modi was popular even when media used to criticise him day and night."

The article said that TV channels are doing this because adding Modi to any programme garners higher TRPs.

Compiled by Deeptiman Tiwary